



Europe for us

Representation matters



Find explanations for words in **bold** at the end of Europe for us on pages 29 to 37.

Europe for us is available in:

- English
- French
- German
- Hungarian
- Italian
- Dutch
- Romanian
- Spanish
- Ukrainian

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Editor's Note

Soufiane El Amrani





In Europe,
the right of people with intellectual disabilities
to vote and run for office is different in each country.



Some countries changed their laws
to make it easier for people with disabilities
to take part in politics.



In 2016, Denmark passed a law
allowing people with intellectual disabilities
who are under guardianship to vote in elections.



In 2018, Spain changed its law
to give adults under guardianship
the right to vote.



In 2019, France changed its law,
allowing adults under guardianship to vote.



In 2019, Germany changed its law,
allowing adults under guardianship to vote.



In 2022, the European Parliament asked for a law
to ensure that all EU citizens have the right to vote,
no matter their legal status
or if they are living in institutions.



In 2023, Luxembourg changed its law,
allowing adults under guardianship to vote.



In 2024, Slovenia changed its law,
allowing adults under guardianship to vote.



Inclusion Europe expects
Belgium, Hungary, Lithuania,
Portugal, Romania,
Czechia, Malta, Estonia,
Bulgaria, Poland, and Cyprus,
to change their laws too.



All people must be allowed
to vote or run as a candidate
regardless of their legal capacity situation.



In this Europe for us magazine,
we show it can be done.



We are sharing stories
of people with intellectual disabilities who not only vote
but who also get elected for office.

I hope you enjoy reading about them!

**Previous *Europe for us* editions relevant
to the topic of people with intellectual disabilities
in governments:**



Our issue on disability vote talks about people with intellectual disabilities voting in the 2024 European elections.



Our issue on inclusive democracy focuses on the barriers people with disabilities face in political participation.



Right to vote and stand for elections





The Inclusion indicators report,
highlights the situation
for people with intellectual disabilities
in 31 countries.



In 11 countries,
legal capacity can be fully removed
and the right to decide is not respected:

- Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, Ukraine.



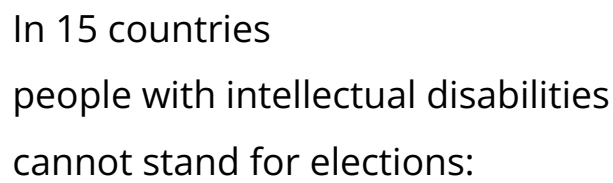
Only 4 countries
fully respect the right to decide
and should provide support
in decision making:

- Iceland, Norway, Scotland, Spain



In 14 countries,
people can be denied the right to vote
because their legal capacity was removed:

- Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine



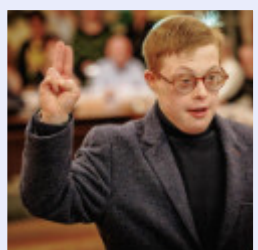
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People with intellectual disabilities represented in governments

People with intellectual disabilities can make a difference in politics.

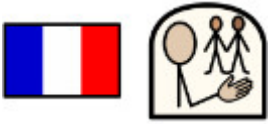
Eléonore, Mar, Fintan, and Nicolas are proof of this. They work hard to improve their communities and speak up for the rights of people with disabilities.



Eléonore Laloux



Image source: SÓ NOTICIA BOA (VIA [ACTU](#) and [CSMonitor](#))



Eléonore lives in France.

She was elected as a municipal councillor in 2021.



Eléonore has Down syndrome,

and she is the first person in France with Down syndrome to become a public official.

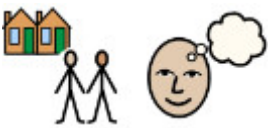


She works in the city of Arras.

Eléonore wants to make her city more inclusive.



She cares about the environment,
making the streets safe,
and helping people with disabilities.



Eléonore says

everyone should be able to make decisions
for their community.

She shows that people with Down syndrome
can take on important roles.

"Believe in yourself.

Your difference is your strength.

You have a unique view that can help
improve things.

Find people who support you
and your goals.

Stay true to yourself and your values.

Politics can be hard,
but don't give up.

Every step you take makes a difference.

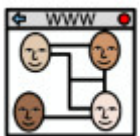
You can help build a better and fairer world."



Éléonore faced many challenges.
Politics is not easy,
and she had to adapt to the political world.



She met the head of the electoral list she joined.
She attended events and meetings
to learn about local issues.



Her parents helped her deal
with media pressure.
She also used her skills with social media
to talk to people.



Éléonore created a program focused on
accessibility for people with disabilities.



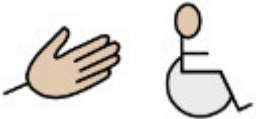
She suggested actions to improve the lives of people in her city.

She showed that her experience and perspective are strengths.



She worked hard to stay true to her values.

Éléonore worked on many projects to help people with intellectual disabilities.



She started an event called "Incluthon." This event happens every year.



It includes cultural and sports activities to raise awareness about differences.



She helped make public spaces easier to use for everyone.

These changes made it easier for people to take part in city life.

Mar Galcerán



Image source: Getty Images



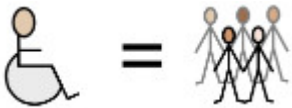
Mar Galcerán is from Spain.
She became the first parliamentarian
with Down syndrome in Spain in 2024.



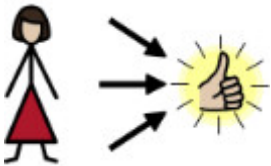
She says people with intellectual disabilities
should be included in politics.



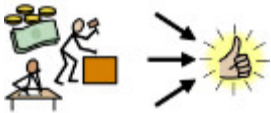
She wants to speak up for people with disabilities
and make sure their rights are respected.



Mar believes that people with disabilities
should have the same opportunities as everyone else.



Mar says that women with
intellectual disabilities
need opportunities.



Work is a right for everyone,
but rights are not enough
if woman don't have opportunities.



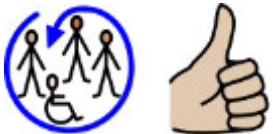
Mar is thankful to her
parents that believed in her skills,
and showed her that nothing is impossible.



Mar says that people with disabilities need to be at the frontline for better rights and opportunities, because no one knows our situation, our challenges better than us.



Mar says that people with disabilities have many barriers as persons with disabilities because they have to face people who don't understand what they are capable of.



Mar says that if we have an inclusive society we will have a better society.

Inclusion and accessibility should be compulsory in our society.

"I learnt by doing, and by making mistakes.

It was not easy, but it has been worth it.

I will never forget the day I received my diploma of being an official.

I was so proud,
I was so grateful to my parents
for having helped me to reach that."

Fintan Bray



Image source: Westmeath Examiner



Fintan is from Ireland.

In 2022, he was elected as the first person with Down syndrome to hold public office in Ireland.



Fintan works hard to support people with disabilities.
He wants people with disabilities to have a strong voice.



He believes that everyone has a right
to take part in society.



Fintan wants to help make laws
that protect the rights of people with disabilities.

His election was a big step forward for Ireland.

"I'm very proud to be able to
represent people with disabilities
and making sure our voices are heard.

One day I will be in the European
Parliament."

Nicolas Vanwinsen





Nicolas Vanwinsen lives in Belgium.
He was elected as a municipal councillor in 2024.



Nicolas is the first person with Down syndrome
to be elected in Belgium.



He wants to improve his community
and make it more accessible for everyone.



Nicolas believes that people with disabilities
can bring new ideas to politics.



He hopes to show people
that everyone deserves a chance to be heard.

"I wanted to go into politics after

I went to the city council a few times
with my dad.

I was excited to experience
something like that.

I already knew a lot about politics
because my grandparents were
mayor in Heist.

People with disabilities
and people without disabilities
should have equal opportunities.

I want to be an example
for people with a disability.

Now, it is very segregated,
and I want to bring it together.

There has never been a person
with a disability on the city council,
and I want to change that.

My biggest dream is to be elected.

I would have loved for my grandparents to
see it happen.

They will be proud up there."

Inclusion Europe





Inclusion Europe advocates for equal rights and full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.



We represent 20 million people with intellectual disabilities in Europe.



An important area of our work is advocating for accessible information.

All information must be accessible to people with intellectual disabilities.



Most information is often difficult to understand and therefore inaccessible, it causes big issues for people with intellectual disabilities.



Accessible information is very important for people with intellectual disabilities to have access to important information to make their own decisions and choices.



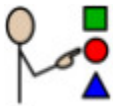
Easy-to-read information is written in a clear and easy to understand way.

Many people with an intellectual disability
as well as other groups of people find it useful.

Easy-to-read information lets
people with intellectual disabilities:



- learn new things,



- make their own choices,



- know their rights,

- advocate for themselves.



Anyone who wants
to make information easy to read and understand
can use the European standards.

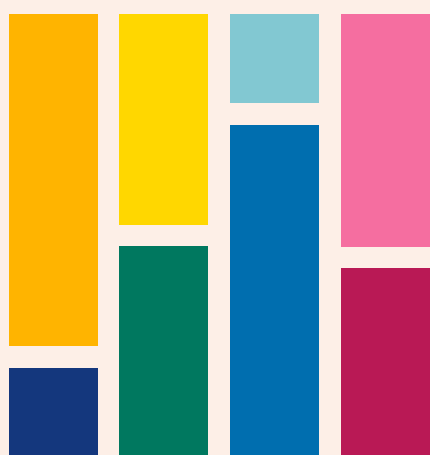


Accessible information is key
to involve more people with intellectual disabilities
in decision making and politics.



This will allow for more people with intellectual disabilities
to advocate for their rights and make their own decisions.

Eurocities



EURO CITIES



Eurocities is a network
of 190 cities in 39 countries.



Eurocities aims to ensure
a good quality of life for people in cities.



Eurocities runs campaigns
to engage city leaders to commit
to principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.



European Pillar of Social Rights is designed to ensure
fair and inclusive labour markets and welfare systems
across the European Union.



It aims to improve living and working conditions
for everyone in Europe.



Eurocities made a study in 22 cities
from 14 EU member states.



The study shows how cities work
to promote disability inclusion.

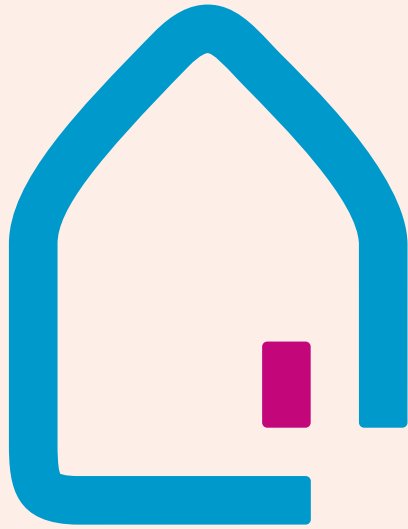


The study shows that cities have many challenges
related to resources, accessibility, and employment.



The study offers recommendations
for improving disability inclusion in cities.

Handéo



handéo

Bien vivre chez soi
et dans la cité



Handéo is an association in France with a mission that includes research.



Research helps create knowledge.



To produce this knowledge, Handéo gathers input from:

- people with disabilities,
- family caregivers,
- professionals.



As part of its research mission, Handéo coordinates a project called HandiPPolitique.



HandiPPolitique is a research project focused on the political involvement of people with disabilities.

The research explores two main topics:



1. People with disabilities holding an elected position, regardless of their situation.



2. The right to vote for people under guardianship and those with multiple disabilities.

More information about the project:

[HandiPPolitique Project](#)

Explanations



Accessible

Something that is easy to use for people with disabilities.
Such as:

- ramps to get into a building
- information in easy to read
- information in sign language



Charter of Fundamental Rights

A paper that says what basic rights every person has.
For example, the right to freedom, the right to education.



Commissioner at the European Commission

A Commissioner is a person who is responsible
for a field of work at the European Commission
and manages a lot of people.



Community

People that belong to something.

For example, neighbourhood community.

People who live in the same neighbourhood.

Or religious community.

People who have the same religion.



Community-based services

Support given by people from the community.



Convention

An agreement between countries or

organisations which talks about many topics.



Deinstitutionalisation

Deinstitutionalisation is helping people
to move out of institutions.

It is when the people who lived in institutions get help
so they can live independently in the community.



Educate

Educate means to teach.

It means to make sure people have access to training so they can learn new skills.



European Union

The European Union (in short, EU) is a group of 27 countries.

We call these countries “member states”.

They have joined together to be stronger politically and economically.

The EU makes laws on many important things for the people who live in those countries.

The EU makes laws in different areas.

Some examples are:

- laws to protect the environment
- laws for farmers
- laws to protect consumers

A consumer is someone who buys things.

The EU also makes laws that are important for people with disabilities.

It also made a law that gives people with disabilities more rights when they are travelling.

The EU also gives money to its member states.

Some of this money is used for people with disabilities.



Fund

To give money to someone or to an organisation which helps people or organisations.



Inclusion Europe

Inclusion Europe is an organisation for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

We fight for their equal rights and inclusion in Europe.
We also want to make a difference to the laws in Europe.
We started in 1988.

We have 79 members in 39 European countries.
We are based in Brussels in Belgium.



Institutions

Institutions are places where people with intellectual disabilities live with other people with intellectual disabilities.

They live apart from other people.

This is what we call “segregated”.

Sometimes this happens against their will.

People who live in institutions have to follow the rules of the institution and cannot decide for themselves.



Intellectual disability

If you have an intellectual disability, that means it is more difficult for you to understand information and learn new skills than it is for other people.

This makes some parts of life harder.

People with intellectual disabilities often need support in learning or at work.

Intellectual disability often starts before you are an adult.

It affects you for your whole life.

There are things that can make life easier
for people with intellectual disabilities.

For example, information in easy to read language.

Some people say learning disabilities
instead of intellectual disabilities.



NGO **Non-governmental organisations**

Non-governmental organisations, or NGOs are
generally defined as nonprofit and independent of
governmental influence.



Online schooling

Online schooling is a way for students to attend
their classes using a computer or another device
to connect to the internet.

These classes happen with the help of online
applications for meetings or online classrooms.



Organisation

A group of people who work for the same thing.



Segregation

Segregation is when someone is set apart from others for an unfair reason.

For example, because of their disability.



Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is when people with intellectual disabilities speak up for themselves.

These people are called self-advocates.



Services

Support for people with disabilities.



Training

A class often given at work where people learn new things.



Ambitions. Rights. Belonging.

Contact us and share your self-advocacy stories!



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