

Europe for Us



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Celebrating 25 Years of Europe for Us

We are celebrating 25 years of Europe for Us this year!

Europe for Us started in November 2001.

Europe for Us is an easy-to-read magazine.

Europe of Us is published 4 times a year.

Europe for Us explains topics important to people with intellectual disabilities and shares news about self-advocacy from across Europe.



The first Europe for Us was published only in English.

Later, Europe for Us was published in more languages:

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

To celebrate 25 years of Europe for Us,

we are adding new languages:

- Swedish
- Czech
- Slovenian
- Ukrainian
- Portuguese

Europe for Us will also tell more stories of self-advocates.

If you have a story you want to share,
please write us an email to comms@inclusion.eu.



European Union News



Disability Conference in Cyprus



In May, there was a conference about **supported decision-making** in Cyprus.

Hadja Lahbib, the **European Commissioner for Equality**, presented new changes to the **European Disability Strategy**.

People at the conference talked about how supported decision-making can help people with intellectual disabilities:

- To be more independent,
- To understand complicated information,
- And to participate fully in society.

Government officials from Malta, Ireland and Spain talked about what they are doing for supported decision-making in their countries.

Agreement on protection of adults across the EU

The **Council of the European Union**
and the **European Parliament**
agreed on new rules about **legal capacity**.

These rules are for when a person with **restricted legal capacity** goes from one country into another country in the European Union.

The rules are there to make traveling and moving to different countries in the European Union easier for people restricted legal capacity. People will be able to have an online document that shows their legal capacity situation.

The rules also say that a person must be listened to before a decision about their life is made.

The rules also say that information about people who need support needs to be deleted.

This is good because it protects people's privacy.



Lithuania is working on changing laws for supported decision-making.

In 2024 Lithuania changed its law to make supported decision-making part of the support system.

The Lithuanian government talked with many people across the country to learn how to make the law work in practice.

New tools and services for supported decision-making are being developed.

But some laws still limit the right to decide. This is why the government is talking about making even more changes to the law, so that people with intellectual disabilities can have more control over their own lives.

While more change needs to happen, it is good that Lithuania goes in the right direction!



Europe in Action Conference

Europe in Action conference took place in the city of Vicenza, in Italy, in May 2026.

Europe in Action is a conference that

Inclusion Europe does every 2 years.

It is a conference for people with intellectual disabilities, their family members, and organisations that work for the rights of people with intellectual disabilities in Europe.

This year, there were over 500 people at Europe in Action conference.

People at the conference talked about many different and important topics.

For example about what good support looks like.

About the problems that people with intellectual disabilities and their families experience every day.

And about what countries and organisations are doing to change these problems by supporting people with intellectual disabilities.



Inclusion Europe General Assembly

Inclusion Europe had its General Assembly.

The General Assembly is a meeting where all Inclusion Europe members come together and decide on important things.



Inclusion Europe members welcomed the new president.

Her name is Jeanne Nicklas-Faust.

4 people were elected to become Board members of Inclusion Europe:

- Olena Melnyk from Ukraine.
- Roberto Speziale from Italy.
- Ashley Ryan from Scotland.
- Rosa Couto from Portugal.

3 new member organisations joined Inclusion Europe:

- Inclusion Armenia
- Keystone Moldova
- PIAM

PIAM is the National Self-Advocacy organisation from Italy.

Self-Advocacy News



EPSA has a new Steering Group member!

Ellis Jongerius was elected as member of the Steering Group of the European Platform of Self-Advocates in April.

The European Platform of Self-Advocates is called EPSA for short.

The EPSA brings together self-advocacy organisations and groups that are members of Inclusion Europe.

The EPSA Steering Group is made of 5 self-advocates who meet to talk and decide about EPSA work during the year.

Ellis Jongerius has been a self-advocate for many years.

Ellis is the director of LFB.

LFB is a self-advocacy organisation in the Netherlands.

Ellis said:

“Having an intellectual disability comes with many challenges.

These challenges don't stop at the border of the Netherlands.

Together, we can achieve more in Europe.”



First members with intellectual disabilities elected to Board of European Disability Forum.

Soufiane El Amrani and Joachim Busch became the first persons with intellectual disabilities elected to the Board of the European Disability Forum.

The European Disability Forum is an organisation that represents people with different disabilities from all around Europe.

The European Disability Forum is sometimes called EDF for short.

Soufiane El Amrani was nominated to the EDF Board by Inclusion Europe.

Soufiane was elected to represent European disability organisations.

"I want to make information easy to read and improve accessibility and participation. My other big priority is for Europe to stop putting people in institutions. Everyone needs to be able to live in their own home and in the community as everyone else."

Soufiane El Amrani

Joachim Busch was nominated to EDF Board by
the German disability council.

Joachim was elected to represent national disability organisations.

Both self-advocates were elected
at the General Assembly of the European Disability Forum
in Cyprus in May 2026.

"I am happy that I got elected and that I can
contribute with my experience."

Joachim Busch



Self-advocate from Ireland represents people with intellectual disabilities at Youth Policy Forum

Tamara Byrne took part in a Youth Policy Dialogue in Brussels.

Tamara Byrne is a self-advocate from Ireland.

Youth Policy Dialogue is a meeting organised by the European Commission where young people meet with one of the European Commissioners.

There were 20 young people with disabilities at this Youth Dialogue meeting to talk about:

- jobs,
- independent living,
- access to the digital world,
- and equal participation in the community.

Tamara Byrne spoke with Hadja Lahbib,
the European Commissioner for Equality.

Tamara spoke about the importance of having a job.
She said that many people with disabilities are still at risk of poverty,
and that people with intellectual disabilities need
the same opportunities to get a job as everyone else.

Tamara called for more support
for people with disabilities and employers.
She said that people with disabilities need to be able to work
and not lose their disability benefits because of it.



Self-advocate from Romania represents people with intellectual disabilities at Youth Forum on Sport

Andrea Herbei is a self-advocate and Co-president of Ceva de Spus, a Romanian self-advocacy organisation.

Andrea is also a wheelchair basketball player.

Andrea met with Glenn Micallef, the European Commissioner for Youth, Sport, and Culture, in Brussels in May 2026.

The meeting was part of a Youth Dialogue.

Youth Dialogues bring young people together with European decision-makers.

They are a chance for young people to share their ideas and experiences.

Andrea joined 25 people from across Europe
to talk about the future of sport.

Andrea spoke about the importance
of sport for people with intellectual disabilities.

Andrea said that sport helps people
build confidence, make friends,
and feel part of their community.

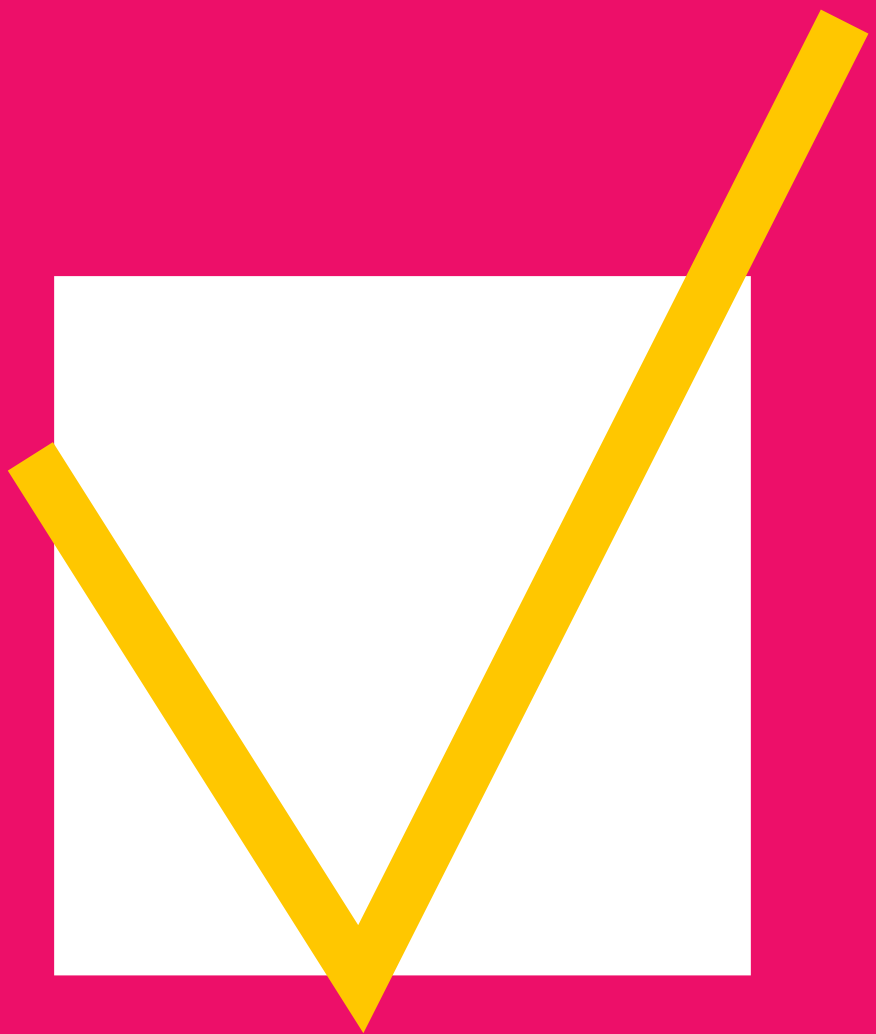
Andrea also said
that 1 million people with intellectual disabilities
still live in institutions across Europe.

“We all want a full life in the community”

Andrea Herbei



Supported Decision-Making: What it is and why it matters



Editor's Note

Life is full of decisions.

What should I wear?

Where do I want to live?

Who do I want to vote for?

Some decisions are big and other decisions are small.

Some decisions are easy and some decisions are hard.

When a decision is hard, I ask someone I trust.

I ask my family or my friends.

I also ask my support person.

I ask questions and I take my time.

Then I decide.

This is normal.

Everyone asks for support sometimes.

But some people think that because I have an intellectual disability,

I cannot decide for myself.

That is wrong.

Decisions about our lives belong to us.

That is our right.

Still, many of us face barriers.

Information is not always easy-to-read and
decision makers do not always speak clearly.

Some people do not listen to what we want.

We do not need others to take over our lives.

We need people to give us the right support.

Then, just like everyone else we decide about our own lives.

Soufiane El Amrani



The right to make your own decisions

People make decisions every day.

Making your own decisions is important.

It helps us grow and builds confidence and independence.

Deciding is a right.

But in many European countries, people with intellectual disabilities are not allowed to make their own decisions.

This often means that **legal capacity** is taken away.

Legal capacity means that the law recognises your decisions.

When your decisions are not recognised,
it means that you are stopped from:

- Using your own money.
- Deciding about your healthcare.
- Choosing where and with whom to live.
- Voting.

When this happens, the court decides
that someone else makes decisions for you and about you.

This person is called a “**guardian**”.

A guardian decides about your money, your home, your health, and other important parts of your life.

When you have a guardian, you are “**under guardianship**”.

Some people say this protects people with intellectual disabilities.

But it is not a protection when it takes away your rights.

Having a guardian can be a problem

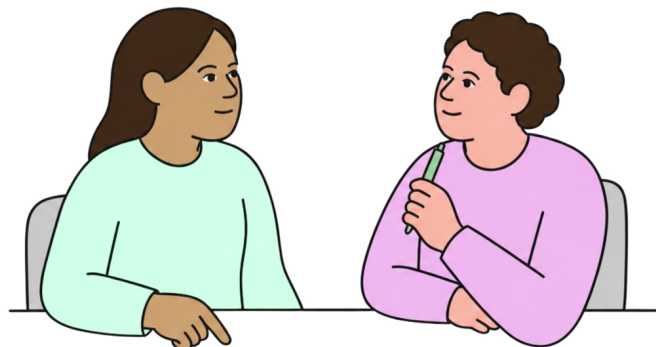
because it leads to **substitute decision-making**.

Substitute decision-making means someone decides for you and does not respect your decision.

When you get support from someone that:

- Explains things clearly,
- Gives advice if you ask for it,
- Helps you say what you want,
- Respects your decision,

this is called **supported decision-making**.



This person is called a supporter.

Your supporter should be someone you trust.

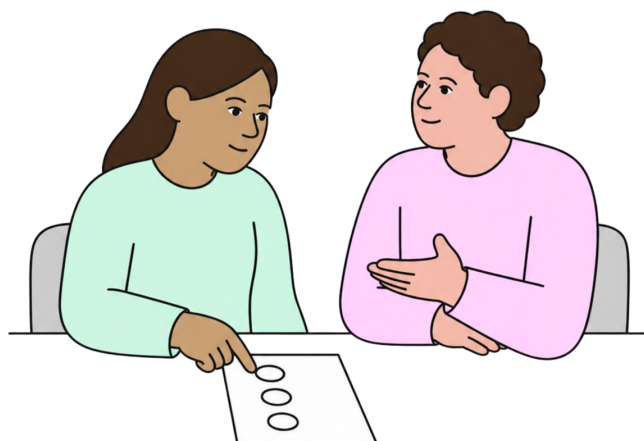
Your supporter can be a friend, a family member, or a service provider.

As long as it is someone that respects your decision.

Even if your decision is different from their advice.

Supporters can help you with:

- How to use your money.
- Voting.
- Marriage and family.
- Where to live.
- What job to have.



Some people do not use words to communicate.

They might use gestures, sounds, facial expressions,
or pointing at pictures instead.

People who do not use words to communicate have
the same right to make decisions as anyone else.

Some people may need more time to make their decision.

Support persons must understand how the person communicates,
and respect what the person wants.

“We need to be brave and know that our opinions matter!

We are the experts of our own lives.

We know what support we need!”

Self-advocate from Hungary

“Now I’m the one who decides with or where I go on weekends.

Before, others decided for me”

Self-advocate from Spain

What needs to change: Problems

Supported decision-making works.

But only if countries make sure the right mechanisms are in place.

This is not always the case.

Sometimes:

1. Support is not the same everywhere.

In some areas, like healthcare, housing and banking,
the law does not work as it should.

And supported decision-making is not used.

In **Germany** some doctors only ask your guardian for permission.

This is a problem.

When doctors don't speak to you directly, they can't know your decision.

2. Supporters are not trained.

They do not know:

What supported decision-making is.

- How to communicate clearly.
- The rights of people with intellectual disabilities.

In **Sweden** supporters sometimes behave like guardians.

This means they make decisions themselves,
instead of listening to the person and supporting them to make
their own decision.

3. There are not enough supporters or services.

When this happens, it's hard to find good support.

In Hungary there are more people that need support
than services that provide support.

4. Families of people with intellectual disabilities do not have enough information.

When this happens, families do not understand
what supported decision-making is or how to use it.

5. People think supported decision-making does not work for everyone.

Some people think supported decision-making
doesn't work for people with higher support needs.

In **Switzerland** when the law says you cannot make decisions,
it takes away your legal capacity.

This happens a lot to people with higher support needs.



What needs to change:

Solutions

To make sure that supported decision-making works for everybody it is important that countries change.

Countries must:

1. Change the laws.

Countries must change their laws so that people with intellectual disabilities can make their own decisions and have all the information they need.

The law must make sure that supported decision-making is:

- available to everyone,
- easy to access,
- affordable
- and respects the person's wishes.

2. Give money to support.

Governments must give money to good support to make decision-making work.

Money should be used for:

- Training supporters.
- Creating easy-to-read information.
- Supporting self-advocacy groups.



3. Trust people with intellectual disabilities to make their own decisions.

People with intellectual disabilities are experts in their own lives.

People with intellectual disabilities must be trusted in knowing what is best for them.

People with intellectual disabilities might make a wrong decision sometimes,
as does everyone else.

Making mistakes is a normal part of life.

People learn from their mistakes and their decisions.

Making mistakes is not a reason to take away someone's rights.



Examples of Supported Decision-Making in Europe

More countries understand that they must use supported decision-making.

In some countries there are positive changes:

Laws are changing to restore the right to decide.

Ireland changed its law in 2023.

Now people can choose someone they trust to help them make decisions.

Cyprus is also making changes.

The government is giving money to support people with intellectual disabilities.

Poland and Italy have projects that:

- Make communities more supportive.
- Make information more accessible.
- Practice decision-making in daily life.
- Build confidence for people with intellectual disabilities.

These projects provide accessible information and support communities.



Educating people in decision-making

1. Judges

In **Hungary**, training judges gave them practical experience in understanding supported decision-making.

In **Spain**, guidance for judges has helped them use the new laws correctly and respect legal capacity in decision-making.

“I really enjoyed the training; it gave me a different perspective. It was particularly important that people with disabilities were also given a voice.” (Judge from Hungary)

2. Supporters and family members

Training for supporters and family members is important. Training teaches them how to support you in everyday life and when you make decisions.

In **Czechia and Bulgaria**, training helped supporters:

- Communicate better.
- Understand what people needed.
- Understand what supported decision-making is.
- Learn to trust people with intellectual disabilities.

People with intellectual disabilities have more access to clear information to make decisions.



In **Sweden and Germany** people with intellectual disabilities have access to easy-to-read information on:

- Their rights.
- What a guardian can do.
- What a guardian cannot do.
- How to change guardians.
- How much things cost.

Inclusion **Czechia** made new easy-to-read guides about everyday topics, helping people understand:

- Their rights to their bodies.
- How different relationships work.
- Decisions about their private life.

In **Spain** they have more easy-to-read options.

These are available in banks and **notaries**.

These changes help people with intellectual disabilities feel safer and respected.

These examples all show that supported decision-making can work.

It can also work in your country.



What You Can Do

If you want to help and make supported decision-making real in your country, speak up!

- Talk to friends and family about supported decision-making.
- Ask for easy-to-read information.
- Join a self-advocacy group.
- Share your experiences and what supported decision-making means to you.
- Organise a workshop or an event and talk about supported decision-making.
- Find out what your local government is doing and tell them they must change for you and others.

When people with intellectual disabilities and supporters speak up together, governments listen.

Your voice matters.

The right to decide belongs to you.

Together, we can make sure supported decision-making becomes real across Europe.



Glossary

Advisor

An advisor is a person who helps you understand choices.

An advisor can explain information and help you think.

An advisor must not decide for you.

Court

A court is a place where legal decisions are made.

A judge works in a court.

A judge can decide about important legal questions.

Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union

is where the national ministers from the countries
of the European Union meet.

They meet to adopt laws and talk about politics in the European Union.

The Council of the European Union is also called
Council of Ministers.

European Commissioner for Equality

The European Commissioner for Equality is a leader in the European Commission.

The European Commission makes plans and rules for the European Union.

The Commissioner for Equality works to protect the rights of:

- People with disabilities.
- Women.
- Older people.
- People with different sexualities.
- People from different backgrounds.

European Disability Strategy

The European Disability Strategy is a plan from the European Union.

The plan is there to protect the rights of people with disabilities.

The plan is for the years 2021 to 2030.

When the plan is halfway through, the European Commission checks

- What has worked well.
- What still needs to change.
- What new actions are needed.

Then the European Commission makes changes to the plan, to make it better.

This is called a half-time review.

European Parliament

The European Parliament is a place where important decisions of the European Union are made.

For example: laws.

The Members of the European Parliament make these decisions and speak for all the people who live in the European Union.

Every five years, the people who live in the European Union vote who becomes a Member of the European Parliament from their country.

Guardian

A guardian is a person that can make decisions for you.

A guardian can decide about:

- Your money.
- Your home.
- Your health.
- Important papers.

Guardianship

Guardianship is when a court decides that another person can make decisions for you.

This person is called a guardian.

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.

Legal Capacity

Legal capacity means the law accepts you as someone who can decide.

For example:

- Signing a contract
- Opening a bank account
- Voting
- Making decisions about your health

If the law does not allow you to do these things you have restricted legal capacity.

Notary

A notary is a type of lawyer.

A notary can help you:

- Sign legal documents and contracts
- Make things legal
- Verify documents

Services

Support for people with intellectual disabilities.

Substitute Decision-Making

Substitute decision-making means someone else decides instead of you.

This often happens under guardianship.

Supported Decision-Making

Supported decision-making means you make your own decisions with the support you need.

Support can mean:

- Easy-to-read information.
- Help to think about choices.
- Help to say what you want.
- Help to communicate your decision.

The final decision is still yours.

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