

The logo features the text "Hear Our Voices! 2025" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, centered within a circular arrangement of colorful dashed lines. The lines are in shades of blue, green, orange, red, and purple, creating a festive, confetti-like border.

Hear Our Voices! 2025

Being heard. Being seen.

Report about Hear Our Voices! self-advocacy events in 2025

Hear Our Voices! is a big self-advocacy event.

It happens every two years in different countries in Europe.

It is a time for self-advocates to meet, talk, and make change happen!

The conference is organised by self-advocates for self-advocates.

The [European Platform of Self-Advocates \(EPSA\)](#) organises the event, deciding on topics and speakers.

EPSA is part of Inclusion Europe.

The first conference was organised in 2009.

More than 2,500 people have attended Hear Our Voices! self-advocacy conferences.

Learn more about the history of [Hear Our Voices! here.](#)



Table of contents

Hear Our Voices! is a big self-advocacy event.	2
Table of contents	3
Hear Our Voices! 2025	5
1,237 participants in 18 countries.....	6
What happened at Hear Our Voices! events	7
 Armenia	7
 Austria	8
 Cyprus	10
 Czechia.....	11
 Estonia.....	12
 Finland.....	13
 Georgia	15
 Germany	16
 Greece	18
 Hungary	19
 Iceland.....	22
 Ireland	23
 Italy	24
 Lithuania	28
 Poland	29

 Portugal	30
 Romania	33
 Spain	34
Final event: Bringing self-advocates together at European-level.....	35
What self-advocates said about different topics	39
Right to live independently and to be included in the community.....	40
Housing and support.....	41
Education.....	42
Employment	43
Healthcare	44
Sexual health, relationships, and rights.....	44
Gender equality	45
Representation	46
Self-advocacy.....	47
Art, culture, and sport	48
Who helped us organise Hear Our Voices! 2025	49
What's next for Hear Our Voices!	50
What else Inclusion Europe does to support self-advocates:	50

Inclusion Europe

avenue des arts 3, 1210 Brussels, Belgium

December 2025

Hear Our Voices! 2025

"This year, Hear our Voices! is about Being Heard. Being Seen.

We want to build an inclusive Europe.

I believe that we can do it together!"

László Bersce, Chair of the European Platform of Self-Advocates



1,237 participants in 18 countries

The 2025 Hear Our Voices! was a series of events to make self-advocates visible and vocal in their countries and at the European level too.

There were 23 events in 18 countries.

1,237 people participated in these events.

Thank you to everyone who contributed and took part!

**23 events
18 countries**



What happened at Hear Our Voices! events

Self-advocates and their organisations organised Hear Our Voices! 2025 events in 18 countries.

This is what those events were about:

Armenia

Participants: 15

Main topics:

- self-advocacy in practice;
- disability rights;
- participation in decision-making;
- cross-disability networking;
- learning from international experience.

Main messages:

- people with intellectual disabilities want their voices to be heard and respected.
- we want to understand our rights and speak up about them.
- self-advocacy helps us become more confident.
- we want to support each other and work together.
- we need spaces and groups where self-advocates can meet and speak freely.

Conclusions:

Inclusion means knowing your rights and having the confidence to speak up about them.



Self-advocates want to build strong groups where they can support each other, be heard by society and decision-makers, and take part in shaping change together.

“I want to know more about my rights and talk about them with others.”

Vanik Grigoryan

**“Today I understood that my voice is important.
I want to be more confident when asking for reasonable
accommodation in various meetings”.**

Gagik Galustov

Austria

Participants: 136

Main topics:

- personal assistance for people with intellectual disabilities;
- awareness/understanding of personal assistance;
- practical barriers in access and quality.

Main messages:

- better information in easy language.
- more flexible funding (money rather than fixed hours).

- reliable assistants with proper employment conditions.
- training and wider dissemination.

Conclusions:

Inclusion means having real choice and control over personal assistance.

Self-advocates want clear information, flexible support, and systems that allow them to decide how assistance is used so they can live independently and take part in everyday life.

“The assistance hours I get are enough for the bare necessities.

Leisure activities or holidays are not possible.”

Klaus Brunner

“I’d rather have an amount of money than approved assistance hours.

Then I can fulfil my assistance requests more flexibly.”

Hanna Kamrat

“I didn’t know what Personal Assistance was.

Andreas informed me. I now also want Personal Assistance!”

Marcel Hofbauer

Cyprus

Participants: 25

Main topics:

- right to love and relationships
- family and parenting
- freedom to choose partners
- social isolation

Main messages:

- self-advocates want recognition of their emotional lives and family aspirations.
- open dialogue is crucial in closed or conservative societies.
- being heard strengthens confidence and social participation.

Conclusions:

Inclusion means being free to love, form relationships, and start a family if you choose.

Self-advocates want society to listen to them, respect their personal choices, and stop treating relationships of people with intellectual disabilities as something to control or limit.



"It's important to get to know someone and to start a family."

Eleftheria Cleanthous

Czechia

Participants: 80

Main topics:

- independence
- dignity
- rights
- friendship and relationships
- a common voice for self-advocates

Main messages:

- dignity is a right for everyone, even though people are different.
- acting together strengthens self-advocates' ability to claim and defend their rights.
- friendships and relationships matter and should be respected.
- parents and guardians need to accept that relationships between people with intellectual disabilities can work.

Conclusions:

Inclusion means having control over your own life and being able to stand up for your rights.

Self-advocates want a common voice and strong cooperation across the country.

“If there are more of us, we can help each other in asserting our rights.”

“Every person has dignity; even though we recognise that we are all different.”

“Parents and guardians should hear that relationships can work here too.”

Estonia

Participants

- 31 participants

Main topics:

- local elections
- political participation
- accessible election information
- discrimination in support systems

Main messages

- include self-advocates in local councils
- make information that is easy to find and easy to read
- give equal opportunities
- end the need to prove disability

Conclusions:

Inclusion means taking part in local politics and public decisions.

People with intellectual disabilities want accessible information and equal chances to be involved.

“Why do I always have to prove that I have a disability?”

“What are my chances of joining a political party and becoming a politician?”

Finland

Participants: 14

Main topics:

- self-advocacy training
- employment barriers
- parenting and family life
- public awareness

Main messages:

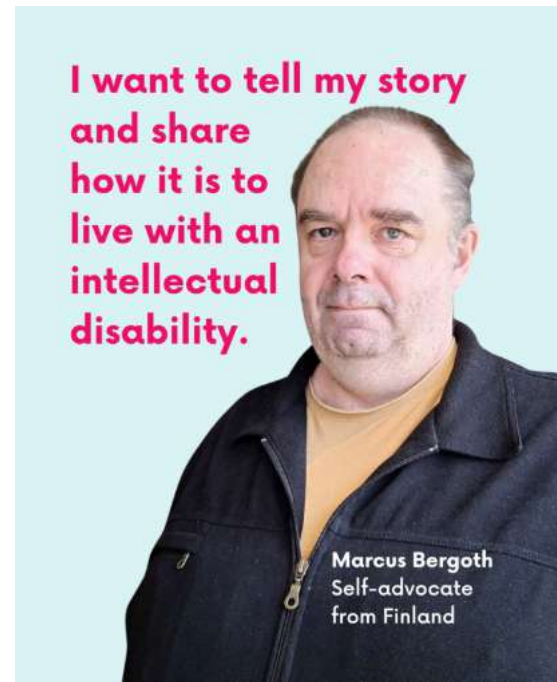
- training builds confidence and public-speaking skills
- self-advocates are experts in their own lives
- employment discrimination remains a major issue
- we need to challenge stereotypes



Conclusions:

Inclusion means having the confidence and skills to speak publicly about your life.

Self-advocates want equal access to work, family life, and opportunities in society.



“I want to tell my story, how it is to live with an intellectual disability.”

Marcus Bergroth

“I want to talk about how hard it is to get employment when you have a disability.”

Paulina Bäckström

“I want to talk about the challenges and opportunities of being a mother with an intellectual disability...”

Andrea Westerlund

Georgia

Participants: 132

Main topics:

- healthcare
- education
- independent living
- accessibility
- art, friendship, equal rights
- self-advocacy and public participation

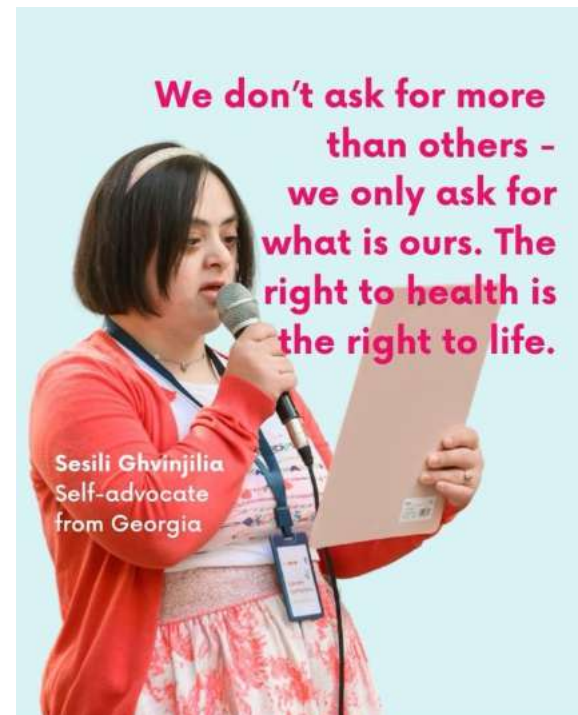
Main messages:

- self-advocacy reframes inclusion from a service to a shared social responsibility
- when people with intellectual disabilities speak for themselves, real social change follows
- equality depends on listening to lived experience

Conclusions:

Inclusion means listening to people with intellectual disabilities and respecting their voices.

Self-advocates want to be equal partners in society and take part in decisions that affect their lives.



We don't ask for more than others – we only ask for what is ours. The right to health is the right to life.”

Sesili Ghvinjilia

“I don't want special treatment – I just want what you have.”

Levan Gotsadze

“Everyone has the right to play their own game.”

Sandro Chkhetia

Germany

Event 1 — 25 September 2025 (Online)

Participants: 23

Main topics:

- how to participate effectively in assemblies
- voting rights and submitting proposals
- use of easy language in meetings
- visibility of people with high and complex support needs
- meeting and engaging with politicians

Main messages

- meetings and decision-making spaces must be accessible
- self-advocates should actively support each other to participate

- people with high and complex support needs must be better involved and visible in society
- politicians need direct knowledge from lived experience, not only expert opinions

Conclusions:

Inclusion means being able to take part in meetings and political life in an accessible way.

People with intellectual disabilities want support from each other and better inclusion of people with high and complex support needs.

“Use your chances to participate in meetings and don’t be afraid to speak up.”

“People with high/complex support needs need to be seen and involved more in society.”

Event 2 — 6 October 2025 (Online)

Participants: 25

Main topics:

- words used and respectful language
- how society trusts (or mistrusts) the abilities of people with intellectual disabilities
- self-advocacy as representing a group, not only individual needs

Main messages:

- use the words that people with intellectual disabilities choose for themselves
- discriminatory and stigmatizing language must be eliminated

- self-advocacy is about collective representation and shared interests, not only personal concerns.

Conclusions:

Inclusion means using respectful words chosen by people with intellectual disabilities themselves.

Self-advocacy means speaking for the group and being trusted as capable members of society.

Greece

Participants: 35

Main topics:

- political participation
- voting rights
- movement building

Main messages:

- self-advocacy builds confidence and democracy
- we need to continue talking
- families must understand rights
- we need equal access and respect in democratic institutions

Conclusions:

Inclusion means being confident to speak up and take part in public and political life.

People with disabilities want accessible spaces and equal treatment, even in places like parliament.

“Through self-advocacy, I’m learning to stand on my own two feet.”

Chara Papatheodorou

“We all have rights, and our families need to understand this.”

Giouli Raissi

“I want us to keep having self-advocacy meetings; they are the most interesting because we talk about ourselves.”

Christos Ntafos

Hungary

In-person workshops

Participants: 41

Main topics:

- independent living
- deinstitutionalisation
- support networks
- rights awareness
- everyday self-advocacy



Main messages:

- institutional living limits independence and inclusion
- knowing one's rights is the foundation of self-advocacy
- society should not decide on behalf of people with disabilities

Conclusions:

Inclusion means knowing your rights and being able to ask for support in everyday life.

People with intellectual disabilities want to live independently, work, and be part of their communities.



“Self-advocacy means learning our rights and who can support us.”

László Petrovics

“We have to believe that we are capable of great things!”

Ilona Sallai

Online (Women with Intellectual Disabilities)

Participants: 20

Main topics:

- gender-based discrimination
- rights education
- self-assertiveness

- european perspectives

Main messages:

- women with intellectual disabilities face multiple discrimination
- training and accessible information are essential
- speaking up is necessary for change

Conclusions:

Inclusion means women with intellectual disabilities are safe, informed, and supported.

Women want to understand their rights and speak up without fear of discrimination or violence.

“We must be brave and know that our opinions matter.”

László Bercse

“We should not be deprived of our rights, but supported in exercising them. We need information that we can understand and use to make decisions.”

Ilona Sallai

Iceland

Participants:12

Main topics:

- media visibility and representation of people with intellectual disabilities
- using one's own voice in the media
- challenging stereotypes
- accessible and easy-to-read language in media
- education access and inequality
- using social media and non-traditional media for advocacy

Main messages:

- people with intellectual disabilities should speak for themselves in the media
- media should use accessible, easy-to-understand language
- people with disabilities must be represented as citizens, not only as service users
- inequality in access to education must be addressed
- supporting each other in self-advocacy strengthens impact

Conclusions:

Inclusion means people with intellectual disabilities speak for themselves in the media.

They want accessible language, fair access to education, and support to challenge stereotypes together.



“It’s important to be your own spokesperson and not let anyone else decide what disabled people should say.

The media often uses complicated language, so it’s important to have easy-to-read content in the media.”

Atli Már Haraldsson

Ireland

Participants: 8

Main topics:

- housing and lack of real independent living options
- over-control in group homes
- stigma and being treated as children
- work, benefits, and fear of losing support
- accessible voting and political information
- governance and leadership pathways

Main messages:

- real community-based supports for independent living
- clear and fair rules around work and benefits
- accessible political and voting information
- respect for adulthood and decision-making

- address staff shortages that restrict freedom

Conclusions:

Inclusion means having real support to live independently, with clear rules about work, benefits, and housing.

People with intellectual disabilities want systems that support their freedom, not rules and shortages that limit their lives.

“If you don’t agree to something, say something!”

Self-advocate from Ireland

Italy

Genoa / Liguria / Milan

Participants: 150

Main topics:

- rights of people with intellectual disabilities and neurodevelopmental disorders
- regional differences in policies and support
- Lived experiences of self-advocates across Italy
- collaboration between organisations, institutions, and self-advocates

Main messages:

- recognition of social dignity as a fundamental right for every person
- greater sensitivity and awareness around disability in society and policymaking

- stronger involvement of self-advocates in shaping policies that affect their lives
- promotion of co-programming and co-design with people with intellectual disabilities

Conclusions:

Inclusion means equal rights and services across all regions.

Self-advocates want to help design policies together with organisations and decision-makers.

“Every person has the right to social dignity.”

Ilaria Bonanni

Urbino

Participants: 75

Main topics:

- technology and cognitive disability
- accessible design
- communication tools
- augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)
- importance of relationships and community

Main messages:

- technology must be designed with and for people with intellectual disabilities
- participatory approaches improve accessibility and usability

- technology should be less expensive and easily available
- technology works best with supportive relationships

Conclusions:

Inclusion means technology is designed with people with intellectual disabilities, not just for them.

Self-advocates want accessible tools that support communication and participation.

“In the end, it always comes down to relationships.”

Lucia Marcolini

“I really enjoy writing my thoughts on the computer.”

Andrea Cocci

Milan

Participants: 60

Main topics:

- independent living
- social inclusion
- women with disabilities
- active citizenship
- social life

Main messages

- independent living is about autonomy, responsibility, and choice
- independent living it is not isolation
- women with intellectual disabilities need specific protection and support
- joy, friendship, and visibility are rights

Conclusions:

Inclusion means being able to choose where and how to live, work, and take part in social life.

People with disabilities want trust, support, and the freedom to make their own decisions.

“I would like to have my own home, not with my family, but with other people.”

Tony Sanchez

“Women with intellectual disabilities should get help to recognize and say no to violent behaviour.”

Isabel Ananos

Lithuania

Participants: 83

Main topics:

- meaning and value of self-advocacy
- self-representation and speaking up
- expressing opinions and making decisions
- supporting and training other self-advocates

Main messages

- people with intellectual disabilities should not be afraid to speak up
- self-advocacy means independence and decision-making
- self-advocates can train and support others
- being heard and taken seriously is essential
- learning together strengthens the movement

Conclusions:

Inclusion means being able to speak for yourself, make your own decisions, and be taken seriously.

Self-advocates want more chances to share their experiences, support and train others, and be heard by professionals and institutions.

“I am happy when I speak on my own behalf and others listen to me carefully.”

Justina Markevičiūtė

“What I like most about representing myself is being independent.”

Ernesta Protasova

“I can speak and be heard and understood, and most importantly, I feel useful.”

Jūratė Lesnikauskaitė

“What I like most is sharing knowledge and learning new things.”

Kristina Meigytė

Poland

Participants: 23

Main topics:

- self-advocacy leadership
- inclusion Europe & EPSA
- skills for advocacy
- deinstitutionalisation
- make It Real manifesto

Main messages:

- inclusion means full participation in all areas of life
- support should enable autonomy, not segregation

Conclusions:

Inclusion means being able to work, learn, vote, and make choices about one's own life.

People with intellectual disabilities want to live in the community, not in institutions, with the right support to be equal members of society.

“I want us to be equal members of society.”

László Bercse

** Portugal****CERCILISBOA**

Participants: 20

Main topics:

- gender-based discrimination
- violence and abuse
- lack of accessible information about rights
- overprotection and lack of autonomy
- barriers to speaking up safely

Main messages:

- recognition of women with intellectual disabilities as rights-holders

- protection from violence and abuse
- accessible information about rights and support services
- safe spaces to speak openly
- support to build confidence and self-advocacy skills

Conclusions:

Inclusion means that women with intellectual disabilities are safe, respected, and able to speak up about their lives.

Women want clear information, support, and safe spaces so they can understand their rights and live free from violence and discrimination.

“Women with intellectual disabilities suffer violence and discrimination, and often nobody believes them.”

“We need safe spaces where women can talk without fear.”

ARCIL

Participants: 90

Main topics:

- self-advocacy as a path to citizenship and inclusion
- communication as a core self-advocacy skill
- role of facilitators (supporting, not replacing voices)
- building national self-advocacy networks
- collective empowerment

Main messages:

- self-advocates can organise national-level events
- communication skills are essential to be heard
- organisations must prioritise self-advocacy
- more spaces where self-advocates lead and speak

Conclusions:

Inclusion means being heard and taken seriously as a citizen.

Self-advocates want to organise, communicate, and speak up together so they can be treated fairly and take part fully in society.

“The event overcame my expectations; I hope we can take this further.”

Rosa Bernardo

“There is a lot to be done for persons with disability to be treated fairly and with equity.”

Pedro Tomás

“It was good to speak up... I enjoyed the fact that so many people were interested in our event.”

Sara Simões

Romania

Participants: 40

Main topics:

- institutionalisation
- lack of community-based services
- learning from other European countries
- accessibility and local participation
- situation of women with intellectual disabilities

Main messages:

- close all institutions
- develop community-based and mobile services
- support for women to understand and exercise their rights
- international learning and exchange is important

Conclusions:

Inclusion means living in the community with proper support.

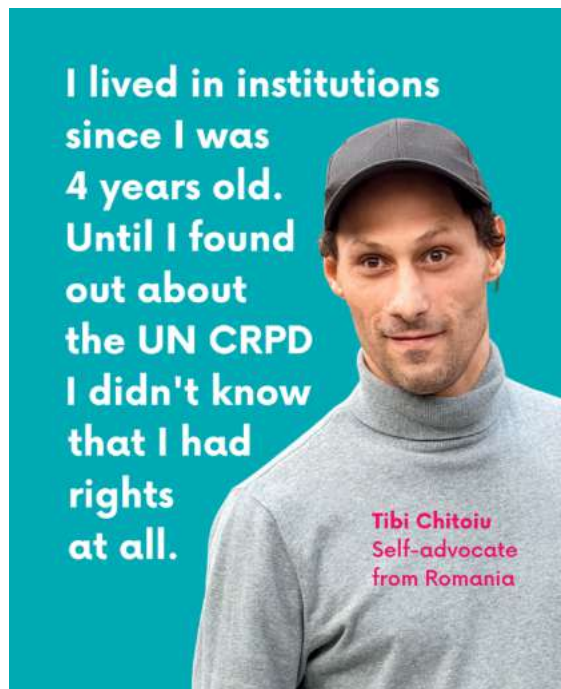
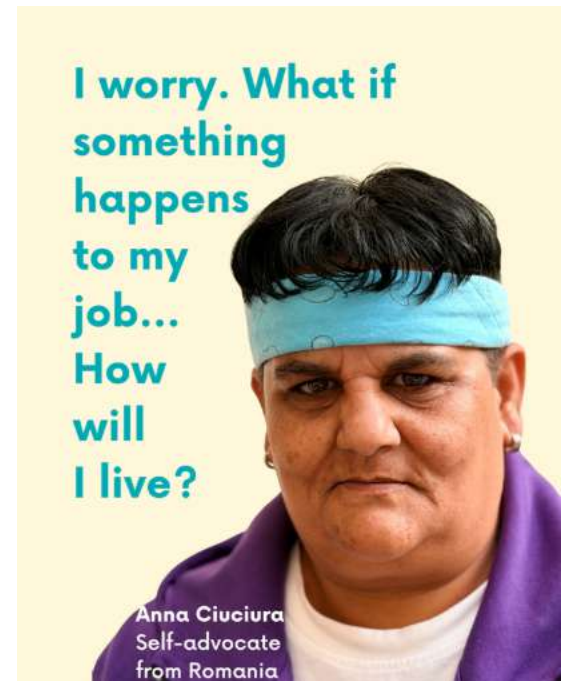
Self-advocates want political commitment, better services, and to learn from other countries.

“Close institutions.”

Collective message, Romania

“If we don't speak up, nothing will change!”

Elisabeta Moldovan



Spain

Participants: 99

Main topics:

- community living and support
- independent living
- “Mi Casa” project
- self-directed support
- use of inclusion indicators as motivation

Main messages:

- independent living is a fundamental right
- choice and control over support
- institutions violate rights

Conclusions:

Inclusion means independent living with choice and control over support.

People with intellectual disabilities want community-based solutions instead of institutions.

“Living independently is a fundamental right.”

Monica Rivero

“This pilot project is about starting where we almost never start: with the person.”

Ana Naranjo

Final event: Bringing self-advocates together at European-level

Hear Our Voices! 2025 ended with a final event in Brussels.

On 2 December, 45 self-advocates and their supporters came together in person and online for the final Hear Our Voices! 2025 event.

Self-advocates shared the messages and demands from different countries.

These messages reflected self-advocates' experiences and highlighted common priorities such as independent living, participation, accessibility, dignity, equality, and being heard in political and public life.

“We are the experts on our own lives.”

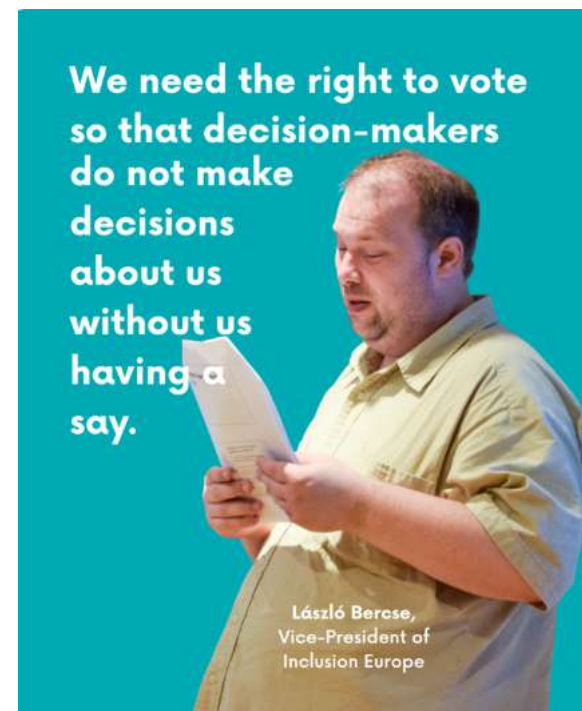
“Independent living is our right, not something we have to earn.”

“We want to be heard, respected, and included in decisions that affect us.”

During the event:

László Bercse, Chair of the European Platform for Self-Advocates (EPSA) and Vice-President of Inclusion Europe, spoke about why self-advocacy and inclusion are important. “Self-advocacy means that we dare to stand up and make our voices heard.”

Elisabeta Moldovan spoke about the Q&A session self-advocates led during Inclusion Europe's visit to Timișoara, Romania. Self-advocates asked about the situation of people



with intellectual disabilities across Europe. They compared Romania to other European countries. They spoke about the stigma they face in everyday life, and the inaction of decision-makers.

Ilona Sallai from Hungary said: “We are just like everybody else. Everyone in Europe should know that.” Hungarian self-advocates met to discuss the right to live independently in the community, life after institutions, and how to ask for support. For many, moving into the community brings freedom, stability, and a chance to build real relationships. They also spoke about the importance of self-advocacy to make these rights a reality.

Mariam Berikelashvili talked about the two-day conference in Georgia, 12 self-advocates had the chance to speak to representatives from the United Nations, civil society, and the Embassy of Denmark. They gave speeches on healthcare, education, employment, independent living, and accessibility.

Sandra Marques, from Inclusion Europe, described the Hear Our Voices! events organised in Portugal.

Self-advocates from Cyprus talked about the right to love and be loved. They said that relationships are as important for people with intellectual disabilities as for everyone else. In Cyprus, many families are still overprotective of their adult children with intellectual disabilities. Especially when it comes to romantic relationships. Stigma and cultural barriers hold people with intellectual disabilities back from living life the way they want to. “Family members and decision-



makers must respect our right to love, to be loved and to choose our partners freely!” said Cypriot self-advocates.

Jónína Rósa Hjartadóttir, self-advocate and committee member of Átak, spoke about the education and media visibility workshops that took place in Iceland. In Iceland, less funding for education has impacted one of the only university-level programmes for people with intellectual disabilities. Now higher education in Iceland has become inaccessible again, and people with intellectual disabilities are restricted in their right to education. Equal education is key for inclusion and social as well as economic participation.

Soufiane El Amrani from Inclusion Europe gave an overview of the Hear Our Voices! events that took place in Belgium, Armenia, Austria, Italy, and other countries.

After the presentations, self-advocates asked each other questions.

They recognised many of the same problems across the different countries.

Their messages to European decision makers were clear:

- People with intellectual disabilities want to make their own decisions and be treated equally.
- Independent living must be a priority. This means supported housing, personal assistance, and easy-to-understand information must be available, accessible, and affordable for people with intellectual disabilities.
- Close institutions now. Support people to live in the community.
- People with intellectual disabilities want real jobs with fair pay.
- European leaders must make sure that all people can exercise equal rights, have access to the services they need, and participate fully in all parts of life. That requires not only nice words, but real action.

You can read an [article about event here](#).

You can also read about [another event in Brussels that week](#), where self-advocates spoke in the European Parliament.



What self-advocates said about different topics

During Hear Our Voices 2025 events self-advocates spoke openly about their lives.

They shared what inclusion means to them.

They said **inclusion is about having real choices in everyday life:**

Not just on paper, but in real life.

Many people talked about independent living and housing.

They explained that **living independently means choosing where and with whom to live, having support that works, and feeling safe and respected in the community.**

Too many people said they still cannot make these choices for themselves.

Education and work were also very important topics.

Self-advocates said **education should help people live with dignity as part of society.**

They spoke about how hard it is to find a job and keep support at the same time.

They want fair chances to work, earn money, and build their own future.

Self-advocates said healthcare is a basic right.

Self-advocates spoke strongly about relationships and family life.

They also said that **loving someone, having a partner, or starting a family should never be denied because of disability.**

Many women with intellectual disabilities shared difficult experiences.

They talked about discrimination, violence, and not being taken seriously.

They asked to be seen as adult women, to be listened to, and to have safe spaces where they can speak openly and get support.

Across all countries, one message was clear: Self advocacy matters.

People want to speak for themselves, tell their own stories, and be heard.

They said that learning about rights, supporting each other, and speaking up takes courage, but it is necessary.

Without self-advocacy, nothing changes.

Right to live independently and to be included in the community

“I can decide where to live. I live with my family at the moment, but I am planning to move to a supported house with other people with disabilities I know, when my family no longer can support me.

I chose the supported house for myself, and I have already tried living there for a month and liked it.

I got to know this supported house through my work, when we did trainings and workshops for the people living there, so we became friends. Unfortunately, many people with disabilities in Hungary cannot decide where to live.”

László Bercse, Hungary

“For us, independent living is not only about living alone.

It also means taking responsibility, taking care of ourselves, taking care of our home, feeling free to choose how to spend our time, managing our behaviour, and dealing with unexpected or difficult situations.”

Greta Rubino, Italy

“Independent living means that I am trusted to make decisions about my own life.”

Michael Ghambashidze, Georgia

Housing and support

“I would like to go out and find a job.

I want to have money saved just for me.

I want to live in safe neighbourhoods; with the services I need.”

Tony Sanchez, Italy

“I want to have my own home.”

Francesco Famigliola, Italy

“I would like to live alone. But right now I couldn’t because I don’t have a job or money.”

Self-advocate from Spain

“I like that our house is close to the city centre, so I can easily access my office or free time activities.”

László Bercse, Hungary

“I like it a little where I live, but it’s a very small town and not very accessible. There are lots of hills and people are very nosy.”

Ana Martinez, Spain

“The assistance hours I get are only enough for basic needs. Leisure activities or holidays are not possible.”

Klaus Brunner, Austria

“I would rather receive money than fixed assistance hours so I can organise my support myself.”

Hanna Kamrat, Austria



Education

“We learn not only for knowledge, but to live independently, with dignity and participation.

Learning helps me understand my rights and explain them to other people.”

Gigo Shiukashvili, Georgia

“Education should be accessible for everyone, including universities. We want the same opportunities as everyone else.”

Jónína Rósa Hjartadóttir, Iceland

Employment

“I know how hard it is to get employment when you have a disability. I have experience from sheltered workshops, supported employment without pay and work with a salary.”

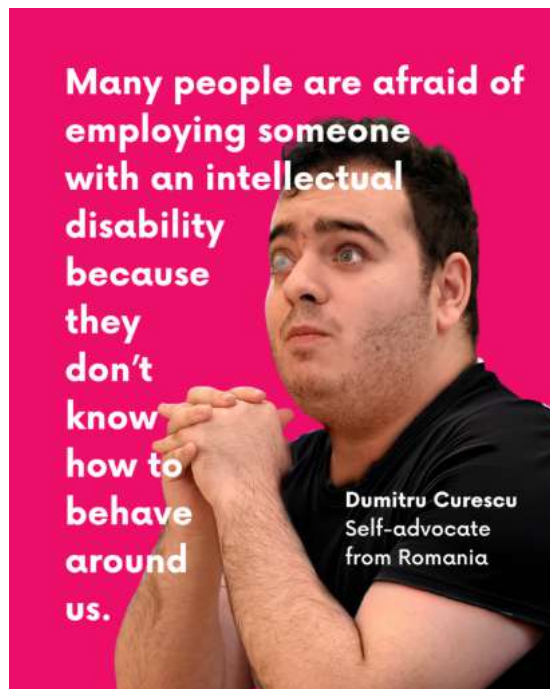
Paulina Bäckström, Finland

“I don’t want special treatment. I just want what you have. You studied and found work; I studied, and I want to work too.”

Levan Gotsadze, Georgia

“Work helps me feel useful and respected.”

Irakli Tevzadze, Georgia



Healthcare

“We don’t ask for more than others – we only ask for what is ours.
The right to health is the right to life.”

Sesili Ghvinjilia, Georgia

Sexual health, relationships, and rights

“I would like to share the difficulties I have with my family.
I want to know how to raise my children so they don’t fall into bad
company.
To have a family and children I need a good partner.”

Lili Chokrisvili, Cyprus

“It is everyone’s right to have a family. No one can stop anyone from
loving.”

Tereza Onoufriou, Cyprus

“Everyone wants to have a family – it’s a beautiful thing.”

Alexis Georgiades, Cyprus

Gender equality

“I’m 22 years old and want to be seen as an adult woman – with feelings, dreams, and goals.

I want to live independently and work with children.”

Mariam Berikelashvili, Georgia

“It is important that all women, especially women with intellectual disabilities, get help to recognise and say NO to violent behaviour. They should be able to find people who can listen to them and give them support.”

Isabel Ananos, Italy

“I want to talk about the challenges and opportunities of being a mother with an intellectual disability.

People with intellectual disabilities are different; some might not be ready to be parents, but some are.”

Andrea Westerlund, Finland

“This event made me reflect that both men and women with disabilities still experience so much discrimination.

When will we be seen and heard simply as people?”

Albino Silva, Portugal

Representation

“The important thing about our meeting is that our voices are being heard.
We need friends for the good times and the hard times.
My family gives me love. If I have my own child, I will give them the right
tools to stay safe. We want our voices to be heard.
We live in a closed society.
People with disabilities are not being heard.
I want to help change that.”

Kostas Kosta, Cyprus

“I believe that every person has the right to social dignity.
There is a need for greater sensitivity and awareness in the field of
disability in general.”

Ilaria Bonanni, Italy

“I want people with disabilities to be able to get their dream job and study
what they want.”

Atli Már Haraldsson, Iceland

“We should never stop dreaming, setting goals, getting educated, and
enjoying life as other people in the world.”

Anna Ghazaryan, Armenia

Self-advocacy

“We must be brave and know that our opinions matter!

We must make our voices heard!

Tell others what you think and feel, and what you need.

We are the experts on our own lives.”

László Bercse, Hungary

“We must fight and work, because if we don't speak up, nothing will change!

Take part in as many self-advocacy activities as possible!

Fight for your rights when they are not respected!”

Elisabeta Moldovan, Romania

“As self-advocates, we work for other people with intellectual disabilities so that we can all live good lives. We also work for our supporters.”

István Horváth, Hungary

“We have to focus on our strengths and abilities!

We have to believe that we are capable of great things!”

Ilona Sallai, Hungary

“Today I understand that my voice is important.

I want to be more confident when asking for reasonable accommodation in meetings.”

Gagik Galustov, Armenia

“I want to know more about my rights and talk about them with others.”

Vanik Grigoryan, Armenia

“Through self-advocacy, I’m learning to stand on my own two feet and not expect everything from others.”

Chara Papatheodorou, Greece

“I want us to keep having self-advocacy meetings; they are the most interesting because we talk about ourselves.”

Christos Ntafos, Greece

“When we participate in these events, we show everyone our abilities.”

Ana Carolina Cunha, Portugal

Art, culture, and sport

“Everyone has the right to play their own game.”

Sandro Chkhetia, Georgia

“Art should not depend on disability. It should depend on your heart.”

Aleksandre Kupatadze, Georgia

Who helped us organise Hear Our Voices! 2025

The events in 18 countries were organised by these organisations:

Country:	Organiser
Armenia	Inclusion Armenia
Austria	Lebenshilfe Austria
Cyprus	The Committee for the Protection of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (EPANDA) + Inclusion Europe.
Czechia	Rytmus
Estonia	EVPIT
Finland	Steg för Steg
Georgia	Georgian Down Syndrome Association (GDSA) Supported by UNDP Georgia and the Danish Embassy.
Germany	Council of People with Disabilities of Bundesvereinigung Lebenshilfe e.V.
Greece	PEGKAP
Hungary	ÉFOÉSZ
Iceland	Átak
Italy - Urbino	Held at the University of Urbino+AIAS Pesaro
Italy – Genoa/Liguria	Anffas Nazionale + the regional Anffas associations
Italy – Milan	Sorriso Association in Milan.
Lithuania	VILTIS
Poland	Psoni Koło w Jarosławiu
Portugal	GARCIL - ARCIL
Portugal (Lisbon)	SOMOS – CERCILISBOA
Spain	Plena inclusión

Thank you!

What's next for Hear Our Voices!

Hear Our Voices! continues to bring self-advocates together to learn from one another, to support each other, and to work together for their rights.

Every year, there will be Hear Our Voices! online meetings for self-advocates.

These online meetings will bring self-advocates together to talk about important topics.

In 2026, there will be Hear Our Voices! online meetings in June and in September.

The next in-person [Hear Our Voices! self-advocacy conference](#) will be in 2027.

What else Inclusion Europe does to support self-advocates:

- Many self-advocate will lead sessions and will attend the [Europe in Action conference](#) this May.
- There will be a training for self-advocates in summer 2026.
- We publish [Europe for Us easy-to-read magazine](#), in 8 languages.
- We support self-advocates [to speak directly](#) with decision-makers.
- The [European Platform of Self-Advocates](#) brings together our self-advocacy members. Join them!

If you want to know more about any of this or want to join self-advocacy activities: send us an email – self-advocacy@inclusion.eu.



Self-advocates and family members spoke in the European Parliament, 2 December 2025.

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