

# Inclusion Europe

The European Association of Societies  
of Persons with Intellectual Disability and their Families



**For an inclusive Europe**

People with intellectual disability and their families  
in Accession and  
Central and Eastern European Countries

This paper includes  
summaries in easy-to-  
read language for  
people with intellectual  
disability.



\_\_\_\_\_ **Position Paper** \_\_\_\_\_

With the Policy Document “For an inclusive Europe!” Inclusion Europe wants to state its basic positions and demands regarding the relationship between the European Union and the former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Since these relationships are developing very fast, for example in the context of enlarging the European Union, this Policy Document is subject to constant update and review.

### **Human Rights for all**

Inclusion Europe believes that all citizens of all European countries have the same basic human rights as laid down in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, which has been adopted by all European countries. It furthermore maintains that citizens with disability should have equal opportunities as described in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Standard Rules for the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, and the Charter for Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

A cornerstone for guaranteeing the human rights of disabled people is effective protection from discrimination and social exclusion. Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty gives the European Union the means to enact binding non-discrimination legislation at European level that will also become binding for the accession countries.

Inclusion Europe explains in this paper what should be done for disabled persons in Central and Eastern European countries. Central and Eastern European countries are European countries which are not member of the European Union. Inclusion Europe will add more information in this paper if needed in the future.

All people in all European countries have the right to fair and equal treatment. These Human Rights count for disabled persons as well. This is stated in several documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty is very important for disabled persons. This European law makes it possible to fight discrimination. Discrimination is when persons are treated badly because they are different. This law is also important for countries in the European Union and the Accession countries. Accession countries are countries that want to become members of the European Union.

### **For equal chances in all European countries**

The living conditions of and the support for disabled people should be appropriate for the needs of the specific person and should respect their human rights. Inclusion Europe maintains that the enormous differences between EU countries, enlargement countries and other Central and Eastern European countries are not acceptable and sustainable in the future. Therefore, Inclusion Europe supports all initiatives to improve the conditions for disabled people in all European countries.

### **The disgrace of institutions for disabled people must be stopped**

Research carried out by Inclusion Europe in many Central and Eastern European countries show clearly that the situation, such as the one known to a broad public about Romanian orphanages and institutions, is not unique. We found similar situations in countries such as Bulgaria or Byelorussia. Also large residential institutions in other countries do not provide the quality of life and service that supports the dignity and human rights of disabled people.

Therefore Inclusion Europe calls on all relevant actors to provide support for the closing of existing institutions since they are not an adequate place for people with intellectual disability to live.

Inclusion Europe recognises that the transformation to community-based care systems takes time. In the meantime, the inhuman and degrading conditions in many existing institutions must be improved and programmes with clear objectives and appropriate deadlines must be adopted to close these facilities. Organisations of persons with intellectual disability and their parents have a vital role in monitoring and controlling this transition process.

All disabled persons have to receive the help that they need.

There is a big difference in how disabled people are helped in the European Union and in those countries that want to join. Inclusion Europe thinks that life should improve for disabled people in all European Countries.

There are Central and Eastern European countries where the services for disabled persons are not good.

There are for instance big institutions where disabled persons do not have a good life. Inclusion Europe wants such institutions to close.

It will take some time to make the changes. Meanwhile help is needed to improve the life in these places.

At the same time it must be decided when the institutions will be closed down.

Organisations of persons with intellectual disability and their parents are very much needed to help with these changes.

### **Disabled People should not be forgotten in the enlargement of the European Union**

The enlargement process presents a unique opportunity to substantially improve the situation of disabled people in the enlargement countries. In 1993, at the Copenhagen European Council, the Members States agreed on criteria (Copenhagen criteria) under which candidate countries could join the European Union. Among other things, the Copenhagen Criteria require that candidate countries must have achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. This guarantee clearly includes citizens with a disability. As long as their human rights are not guaranteed, a candidate country does not fully meet the Copenhagen Criteria.

### **Support for other CEE countries necessary**

It is crucial not to forget the countries, which are presently not candidates for joining the European Union. The conditions of disabled people in those countries are generally even worse than in the candidate countries. Inclusion Europe demands a concentrated effort of both the European Union and the national governments in Europe to improve the situation of disabled people in those countries. Crucial for this process is the active involvement of disabled people, their families and their organisations in the implementation and monitoring of all measures.

Countries that want to become members of the European Union have to first respect some rules.

These rules were made in 1993 in Copenhagen Denmark.

Countries that want to join the European Union must for instance respect Human Rights.

They must also protect persons with disability.

We should not only pay attention to the Accession countries.

But also look into the situation in the other Central and Eastern European countries. Life can be bad for persons with intellectual disability in these countries.

The European Union and the European governments have to make actions with the help of disabled persons and their family. These actions will help disabled persons to have a better life in these countries.

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### **People with intellectual disability and their families require special attention**

People with intellectual disability and people with mental health problems generally are the most excluded and most discriminated against of all disability groups. Therefore special attention must be paid to their situation.

Research of Inclusion Europe in eight Central and Eastern European countries demonstrated that conditions for people with intellectual disability and their families are still far from acceptable. Insufficient implementation of existing legislation, lack of cooperation with disability NGOs, financial constraints and lack of trained personnel lead to social exclusion of people with intellectual disability. Lack of awareness, prejudices and misconceptions about the needs and abilities people with intellectual disability lead to discrimination.

### **People with severe and profound intellectual and multiple disability must be included**

People with severe and profound intellectual and multiple disability and their families also require special attention. There are far too few quality support systems in place for this very vulnerable group of people and often families have no other choice than institutional care for their disabled family members.

### **Inclusion Europe – an inclusive organisation**

While promoting the inclusion of people with intellectual disability in society, Inclusion Europe also aims to be an inclusive organisation internally. It aims for the inclusion of people with intellectual disability in its structures as well as for the inclusion of member organisations from all European countries. Organisations of people with intellectual disability and their parents should be members of Inclusion Europe with equal rights and equal responsibilities regardless from which European country they are.

Persons with intellectual disability are most discriminated and more excluded than other disabled persons.

They need extra help.

Too many persons with intellectual disability and their family do not have a good life.

Some laws are not respected in Central and Eastern European countries.

There is also not enough money and trained professionals to help persons with intellectual disability.

People do not have the right idea about the needs and talents of persons with intellectual disability.

Some persons with intellectual disability need more help than others.

They end up living in institutions because their family cannot find good help for them.

Inclusion Europe fights for disabled persons to be inside their society.

Organisations of persons with intellectual disability that are members of Inclusion Europe help with this fight.

These member organisations follow the same rights and rules within Inclusion Europe no matter from what European country they come.

## DEMANDS FOR ACTION

To bring about positive changes for disabled people in Central and Eastern Europe, Inclusion Europe challenges

- The **Enlargement Commissioner Günther Verheugen** to present a report on the situation of people with disabilities in large residential institutions of the enlargement countries on 3 December 2002. The report should provide an overview of the situation and include proposals on how to speed up the reform process to stop the inhuman conditions and constant human rights violations.
- The **Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament** to set up an ad-hoc Interest Group on Disabled People in Enlargement Countries to concentrate on the improvement of the human rights of disabled people in the enlargement process and bring about real changes for the Millions of disabled people in enlargement countries.  
An Interest Group of dedicated and active MEPs has the potential to greatly contribute to the improvement of the situation. It can follow all meetings of the Joint Parliamentary Committees and make sure that disability is on their agenda. The Interest Group can provide comments and reactions to the enlargement reports of the European Commission and use the instrument of parliamentary questions to make sure that policy decisions are implemented.
- The **Council of Europe** and its Commissioner on Human Rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles, to focus on disability as a human rights issue that concerns directly at least 10% of the population of Central and Eastern European Countries. The Council of Europe should develop appropriate means to increase the awareness of its member states on disability issues.
- The **European Commission** to ensure that a special budget is available to improve the human rights situation of disabled people in the accession countries. The fact that a country has entered the accession negotiation process does not guarantee that the basic human rights of all the citizens in such a country are respected.

Inclusion Europe wants the following to happen

Günther Verheugen should explain about the life of disabled persons in big institutions on 3 December 2002.  
He is the European Commissioner dealing with the Countries that join the European Union.

The Disability Intergroup is a group of members of the Parliament interested in disability. They will form smaller group. This group will work on the rights of disabled persons in the Accession countries. This group will make sure that the European Parliament will not forget disabled persons in these countries.

The Council of Europe will inform the members about the life of disabled persons. This Council will point out the Human Rights of the citizens of the Central and Eastern European countries.

The European Commission must give money to the Accession countries to make the situation better for disabled people in these countries.

- The **European Commission** should also accelerate the process under which the candidate countries will be able to participate fully in Community Programmes.
- The **governments of the EU member states** to insist in the accession negotiations that basic human rights for all citizens of a candidate country must be guaranteed, including citizens with a disability.
- The **governments of the Enlargement countries** to increase their cooperation with organisations of disabled people and their parents in the planning, implementation and evaluation of support measures for this group of citizens.
- The **member associations of Inclusion Europe from the European Union** to continue with their long standing involvement and partnership with organisations of persons with intellectual disability and their families in Central and Eastern European countries. They should also approach their governments to raise awareness on how the situation of disabled people can be improved.
- The **European Disability Forum** and the **Platform of European Social NGOs** to endorse the demands of Inclusion Europe and thus to contribute to the improvement of the human rights situation of persons with intellectual disability and their families in Central and Eastern European countries.

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The European Commission should also speed up the process for countries to take part in programmes in their community.

The Governments in Accession countries have to show respect of Human Rights of persons with intellectual disability before the countries may join the European Union.

Governments from Central and Eastern European countries have to work together with organisations of disabled persons.

The members of Inclusion Europe will keep defending the Human Rights of disabled persons.  
They will work in the Central and Eastern European countries.

The European Disability Forum and the European Platform of Social Organisations could agree with these demands of Inclusion Europe.  
In this way we can all help to improve the Human Rights of persons with intellectual disability in Central and Eastern Europe.