



Annual Report 2006

EPSA's Meetings

In May 2006, the members of EPSA met for their Annual General Meeting. This was a very important meeting.



Firstly because the EPSA Steering Group proposed a work-plan for 2006-2008. This new work-plan has 4 objectives:

1. Tell to other people about the abilities of people with intellectual disabilities
2. Help groups of self-advocates at local level
3. Get more accessible information and websites
4. Promote EPSA and raise membership

But this General Meeting was also important because we had elections. Ulla Topi, president of EPSA since the year 2000, had to step back. She was warmly thanked by the EPSA members and by the president of Inclusion Europe. Then a new president was elected.



His name is Andrew Doyle.

He comes from the Advisory Committee of Enable in Scotland.

Finally, 4 new members of the Steering Group were also elected:

- Zdenka Petrovic, from Association for Self-Advocacy in Croatia,
- Paul Alford, from The Union of the hill self-advocacy group in Ireland,
- Cédric Mametz, from Nous aussi in France,
- and Liisi Paananen, from Me Itse Ry in Finland

So this new Steering Group has been in place only for 6 months in 2006. One meeting was possible at the beginning of October. During this meeting, the Steering Group members decided what concrete actions they would take to implement the work plan.



1. Tell people about the abilities of people with intellectual disabilities



Concrete actions:

- Organise a training for self-advocates to speak up
- Make a video to be used during our conferences and showed widely

2. Help groups of self-advocates at local level

To achieve this objective, the Steering Group decided first to make a questionnaire.

This questionnaire will help to find out what kind of problems the groups have at local level.



3. Get more accessible information and website

The Steering Group decided to developed more brochures in easy-to-read.

Among 8 possible themes, 2 were chosen:

“How to speak with decision makers”

and “Information about the rights of people with disabilities”.



4. Promote EPSA and raise membership

The following proposals were made:

- To tell other self-advocacy groups about EPSA and how they can join
- To speak about EPSA at conferences
- To put more information in media and magazines about EPSA.
- Steering group members should advertise EPSA
- To promote EPSA website



EPSA’s membership in other groups and committees

An important event for self-advocates in 2006 was the World Congress of Inclusion International.

This Congress took place in November in Mexico.

Zdenka Petrovic, member of the Steering Group, represented EPSA.

Then during the General Assembly of Inclusion International,

Zdenka was officially elected as a board member of Inclusion International.

She will represent the European self-advocates.



The European Disability Forum has a committee on “disabled women”. The past-president of EPSA still takes part in the meetings of this committee. They speak about rights of women and girls with disabilities and mothers of disabled children. She brings the point of view of people with intellectual disabilities.



European Projects in which EPSA played a role

The project Innovation and Cooperation Beyond Borders

EPSA was a full partner of this project lead by an Austrian association.

The aim of this project was to help the 15 best European projects promoting employment for people with intellectual disabilities.

One member of the EPSA Steering Group was part of the management group. He helped

- in the definition of the criteria for selection
- in the selection of the 15 best European project
- and in the organisation of the fair presenting those projects in April.



The project on Mainstreaming Mental Disability Policies

In 2005, the steering group members helped in the creation of the tool-kit.

In October 2006, 4 EPSA Steering Group Members attended the Final Conference of the project on Mainstreaming.

It has been a great project for the self-advocates of the 8 partners countries.

They set up new groups of self-advocates.

They organised national conferences and invited policy makers.

Those training of self-advocates

and meetings with policy makers led to some great results.

For example, in Hungary, the Minister of social affairs

has asked self-advocates to be part of a consultancy group.

This means that self-advocates

will have to say what they think about the new laws.

They will also have to make sure that

people with intellectual disabilities are not forgotten anymore.

A manual for trainers has been published for further information.

You can order it at self-advocacy@inclusion-europe.org



The project Fighting For Our Rights

One EPSA member (also member of the Steering Group) was fully involved as a partner in this project.

In 2005, he contributed to the publication of an easy-to-read brochure

on the new Directive for employment.

In 2006, this Steering Group Member led some national seminars in May.

He attended the Final Conference of the project in October.

He presented some cases and took the opportunity to speak about self-advocacy during the working groups.

Finally, he participated in an important meeting in November to present to results of the project to the National Equality Bodies.



Other meetings or conferences attended by EPSA representatives

It is written above: a Steering Group member took part of the World Congress of Inclusion International.

She made 3 presentations: on education, employment and self-advocacy.

100 self-advocates from all over the world attended this congress.

At the end, self-advocates from the different regions of the world made conclusions about the following issues:

- The Right to Self-determination and full citizenship
- Access to inclusive services
- Life and participation in the Community
- Adequate income and employment
- Support for Families



The Steering Group member said:

“Self-advocates played a key role at the Congress.

We discussed about all important issues.

We discussed a lot about the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities.

We concluded that the Congress addressed many issues that are important for people with intellectual disabilities.”



Another EPSA Steering Group member and the self-advocacy officer of Inclusion Europe attended a conference in Paris in December.

They spoke about 3 different topics:

- Integration of children with disabilities
- People with disabilities can be elected and have the right to vote
- People with disabilities have the right to holidays and interesting free time activities.



Finally, each year, the European Commission organises a conference for the European Day of Disabled People.

For the first time, in 2005, this conference was accessible for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Again in 2006, we made sure that this conference was accessible.



The theme of the 2006 conference was “Youth = Future”. Several persons with intellectual disabilities attended this conference, including some members of the Youth Group of ENABLE representing EPSA.

A self-advocacy officer working at Inclusion Europe supports EPSA. He also attended several meetings in 2006 where he spoke about EPSA and self-advocacy.

- February 2006: a conference in Germany on “Barrier Free world” where we talked about accessibility and easy-to-read.
- April 2006: a fair in Austria on “Innovation and Cooperation beyond borders”.
- May 2006: a lecture in a Belgian University about the importance of self-advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities.
- July 2006: a one day seminar on easy-to-read.
- July 2006: a congress on e-accessibility for disabled people.



Finally, he also organised a meeting in March 2006 at Inclusion Europe. 8 easy-to-read experts were invited at this meeting. They discussed about standards and common work for easy-to-read texts.

Brochures, publications and websites in easy-to-read

The most important thing published by EPSA in 2006 is the leaflet “People with intellectual disabilities can decide more by themselves”. This leaflet explains how family members and professionals can promote self-advocacy. It has been published in 5 languages and widely distributed.



EPSA contributed also to several brochures and publications in 2006.

- EPSA contributed to the “Manual for trainers” published in the Mainstreaming project in 11 languages.
- EPSA contributed to the easy-to-read part of the annual report of the European Disability Forum, in English and French.
- EPSA contributed to the publication of 2 easy-to-read brochures on “Your rights as citizens” in 7 languages.



And then of course, to help self-advocacy organisations exchange information, the newsletter “Europe for us” was published every two months in 4 languages.

The easy-to-read brochure on the work of the United Nations developed in 2005 was widely distributed in 2006.

An easy-to-read brochure on the new Directive for Employment was developed in 2005 with the project “Fighting for our rights”. It has been widely distributed in 2006.

