

# Europe for Us!

The Newsletter of the European Platform of Self-Advocates

July-Sept 2016



## Editorial



Hello to all Self-Advocates.

We are always busy at the office of Inclusion Europe.



This edition of Europe for Us includes useful and interesting articles.



Inclusion Europe has a new director! We will introduce you to him in this issue. His name is Milan Šveřepa and he is from the Czech Republic.



I will explain to you all about the European Union, including what it is and how it works to help people with intellectual disabilities.



Next I will tell you about Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities which talks about Inclusive Education.



Finally I will interview a self-advocate about his trip to America for the Inclusion International conference.

His name is Harry Roche and he is a member of the European Platform of Self-Advocates. He raised the money by himself so that he could go!



If you have any video or stories you want to share with us please e-mail them to

[s.el-amrani@inclusion-europe.org](mailto:s.el-amrani@inclusion-europe.org)

Best regards,  
Soufiane El Amrani  
**Easy-to-read editor**

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With support of  
the European  
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Inclusion Europe

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# Interview with New Director

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## What did you do before you came here?

“I worked to promote the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and their families in the Czech Republic. Most recently, I was involved in activities supporting deinstitutionalization in the Czech Republic.”

The word deinstitutionalization means moving people out of institutions so they can live in the community.

“My role was advocating for these changes, training staff in the institutions to provide proper support as well as developing a new community based service.

10 institutions were closed in the Czech Republic in recent years and more than 15000 people with intellectual disabilities moved from there to community based settings.”

## What changes would you like to happen for people with intellectual disabilities in Europe?

“I very much like the calls to arms by the European Platform of Self-Advocates (EPSA for short): Let’s make this the last generation of people with intellectual disabilities to suffer from discrimination and segregation.”

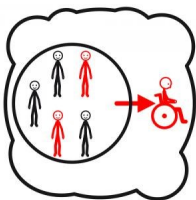
The word segregation means keeping people with intellectual disabilities away from others. This is unfair!

## What is your favorite part of this job at Inclusion Europe?

“I see my job as representing people with intellectual disabilities and their families in the debates in EU institutions.

I very much enjoy that: listening to people share their experiences and concerns and including them in the policy-making process.

I also like to bring people with different perspectives and backgrounds together and help them work towards a common goal.”



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# What is the European Union?

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The European Union (in short, EU) is a group of 28 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.

I will focus on two important parts of how the EU works by explaining:

- **The European Parliament**
- **The European Commission**



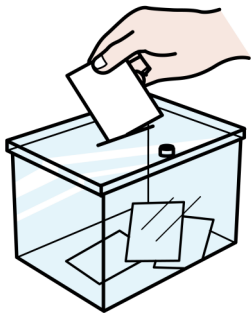
## European Parliament

The European Parliament is a place where important EU decisions are made.

For example: laws and budgets.

The Members of European Parliament (in short, MEP's) make these decisions and represent all the people who live in the European Union.

Every five years, the people who live in the EU vote for their country's MEP's.



## European Commission

The European Commission works with the European Parliament.

The European Commission suggests laws for the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union to discuss.

It also makes sure that the laws that have been decided upon are being followed by the member states.



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# What is the European Union?

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## How the EU helps persons with intellectual disabilities



### The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

There is a very important document called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (in short, UN CRPD).



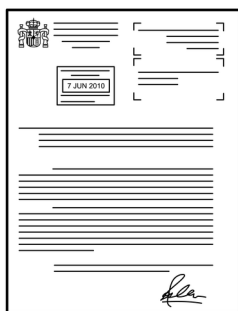
This is an agreement between lots of countries on the rights that persons with disabilities have.

The EU and most of its Member States have ratified this Convention.

This means that the EU has signed an agreement to say they will try to make the lives of persons with disabilities better.

This includes persons with intellectual disabilities!

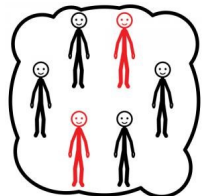
The EU creates laws and spends money to make sure all the countries in the EU are following the UN CRPD.



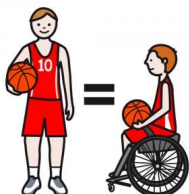
## The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020

The European Disability Strategy is the European Commission's 10 year plan to make sure the EU is protecting the rights of persons with disabilities as described in the UN CRPD.

It focuses the work on several areas. Some of them are:



**Participation:** Everyone has the right to take part in society.



**Equality:** Everyone should be treated fairly and with respect.

**Employment:** Everyone has the right to have a job.



**Health:** Everyone has the right to see a doctor when needed.

**Education and Training:** Everyone has the right to go to school.

**Accessibility:** Everyone has the right to be able to use goods and services.

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# What is the European Union?

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For example, as part of the Disability Strategy the European Union is making the European Accessibility Act (EAA).



The European Accessibility Act (EAA) aims to improve the accessibility of products and services by removing the barriers persons with disabilities face when trying to use them.

For Example: making online shopping much clearer and easier to use for persons with intellectual disabilities.



## Organisations

The European Commission pays organisations to work on specific projects as part of their Disability Strategy.



Many non-governmental organisations work for the rights of persons with disabilities in Europe.

For example: European Disability Forum (in short, EDF), Social Platform and Inclusion Europe.



They do this by raising awareness of persons with disabilities' rights and defending and protecting them.

For example: Inclusion Europe is an organisation that defends the rights and interests of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.



At Inclusion Europe, our members share knowledge across Europe so we can promote our ideas on how to improve the lives of persons with intellectual disabilities.



We go to the European Parliament and remind MEP's what would help persons with intellectual disabilities.

For example: making information Easy-to-Read so that everyone can understand.



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# What is the European Union?

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An important part of Inclusion Europe is the European Platform of Self-Advocates (in short, EPSA).



Self-advocacy means that persons with intellectual disabilities speak up for themselves and their own rights.



EPSA is open to self-advocacy organisations in Europe and has a steering group elected by its members.

There is still a long way to go before we live in a fair and equal society.



The European Union helps to make sure people with intellectual disabilities are getting the support they need and their rights are being protected in every member state.



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# Inclusive Education

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All people with intellectual disabilities have the right to go to school like everyone else does.



The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in short the UN CRPD is a document that explains all the rights a person with intellectual disabilities has.



The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities checks to see if children across Europe are getting a good education.



They make sure countries are respecting what is written in the UN CRPD document.

The Committee then writes a document on how countries can do better at following the UN CRPD document. This is called a General Comment.



Inclusion Europe

[Inclusion Europe](#) went to Geneva, Switzerland to make members of the committee understand that Inclusive Education is important.

The committee voted to include an extra bit in the UN CRPD that says students with intellectual disabilities have the right to go to the same schools as students without disabilities.



OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

This is good news!

Inclusion Europe has been working with [Open Society Foundations](#) to make national governments understand how important this is too.



EUROPEAN DISABILITY FORUM

[European Disability Forum](#) (called EDF for short) organised a meeting at the European Parliament called [Time for a New Disability Rights Agenda for Europe](#).

Many organisations including Inclusion Europe gathered to discuss how the EU is getting on following the UN's recommendations.



You can read the results of this meeting [here](#).

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# Interview with a self-advocate: Harry Roche

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Harry is a [Mencap Charity](#) Ambassador and [EPSA](#) Steering Group member. He recently raised the money to go to America for Inclusion International's Conference [Shaping the Future: Self-Advocacy Leadership Summit](#).

## What is your role at Mencap?

"My role is to support the CEO Jan Tregelles to make sure the CEO'S Office runs smoothly. I am also an ambassador."

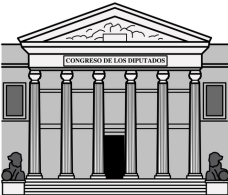


CEO is short for Chief Executive Officer which means she is the charity's boss.

The word ambassador means representative so he is a role model for the charity.



"I meet and greet guests and take them to meet with Jan."



I represent Mencap and campaign on issues people with a learning disability face. I have been to Parliament to represent the Hear my Voice campaign in 2015, to raise awareness of learning disability."

"I am hoping to lobby my local MP soon to talk about the result of BREXIT and what it could mean for people with learning disability."



In June 2016 the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. We call this decision "BREXIT".



MP is short for Member of Parliament.



The word lobby means to influence or affect someone. So Harry hopes to change the MP's mind.



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# Interview with Harry Roche

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## What is your role in EPSA?

“I am the UK steering group member and my job is to represent and speak up for Self-Advocacy and to do presentations at events such as the general assembly or Hear Our Voices.



Last year I talked about how to set up self-advocacy groups at local and international levels.



I've also presented my own experience as a self-advocate on how I have overcome many barriers.”

## Please tell us how you raised the money to go to Inclusion International's Conference “Shaping the Future: Self-Advocacy Leadership Summit”.



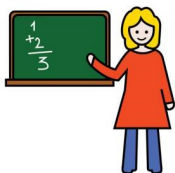
“I raised money through Go Fund Me (a website). It took me 4 weeks to raise the money and to make sure the campaign was a success.”

## Why did you want to go?



“I wanted to go because I want to make a huge difference to the self-advocacy movement and I have come up with fresh ideas on how to get more self-advocates to speak up for themselves.

I also I wanted to talk about many different topics such as:



- Education
- Employment
- Transports
- Friendship
- Hate



Everyone has a right to use their voices in society. We have to get our government to agree.”



You can follow Harry on Twitter, @HarryRoche11Ha

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For more information or to share stories with us, contact: [s.el-amrani@inclusion-europe.org](mailto:s.el-amrani@inclusion-europe.org)

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