**Europe for us**

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**Title: We want to vote**

**The Leadership Training in Brussels**

**“Fighting for your right to vote can be hard
but it’s worth it!”**

**Soufiane talks about easy-to-read**

**In Spain people under guardianship
will vote in the next elections**

**In Denmark more people under guardianship
will vote for the elections of the Parliament**

**The Leadership Training in Brussels**

Like every year, **Inclusion Europe** hosted
a leadership training in Brussels.

It is a training where people
can learn how to stand up
for their rights.

The Leadership Training is a 3-day meeting
where **self-advocates** and family members meet
from all over Europe.

This year they talked about
the **elections** for the **European Parliament**
and the right to vote
for people under **guardianship**.

Voting is very important.
When you vote, you can have your say
on how your community works
and on what changes should be made.

If the right to vote is taken away from you
it means you’re treated differently
from others.
This is not fair.

László Bercse is part of the board of Inclusion Europe.
He said that one of his friends
once told him he felt different from other people
because he wasn’t allowed to vote.

Right now,
the right to vote is a very important topic.

It is important because:

– There will be elections for the **European Parliament** next year.
Everyone should be allowed to vote.

– Different European countries have changed their national laws.
So now people under guardianship
are allowed to vote in these countries.
You can read more about this on pages xx-xx.

Because this topic is so important,
many participants
came to the Leadership Training
to talk about the right to vote.

They came from different European countries.
There were self-advocates,
family members, support people
and people who work on the right to vote.

In many European countries,
people under **guardianship**
are not allowed to vote.

This is wrong.

In many European countries
people can vote,
but voting is not **accessible**.

Why?
For many reasons:

* because there isn’t any **easy-to-read** information
on how to vote,

on who the candidates are,
on what the candidates want to do,

* because there are no support people
at the voting places.

These problems must be solved.

This is written in the **manifesto** of Inclusion Europe.

Self-advocates and family members
talked a lot about the manifesto
during the training.

They also talked about other things,
such as:

* how can the **European Parliament** include
people with intellectual disabilities
in their meetings for the elections?
* What can **politicians** do
for people with intellectual disabilities
in the European Parliament?

On the last day of the Leadership Training
the participants met politicians
and people who work at the **European Union**:

* Typhaine Morillon
from the European Parliament,
* Katja Vatter
from the European Parliament,
* Júlia Boada Danés and Vesna Jusup
from the European Green party,
* Andrew Burgess
from the European liberal party.

Self-advocates and family members
told them that
we still need many changes
to be sure that people with **intellectual disabilities**
can enjoy their right to vote.

Participants were happy
to share their experiences and concerns
during these talks.

In their countries,
they will continue to demand
that voting becomes accessible
and that people under guardianship
can vote.

You can read more about the right to vote
in this issue of Europe for Us.

On page xx, you can read about Maribel Cáceres.
Maribel is from Spain.

She fought hard to get her right to vote back.

On page xx, you can read about Denmark and Spain.
In these two countries, people under guardianship
will now be able to vote.

**“Fighting for your right to vote can be hard
but it’s worth it!”**

When Maribel was 18 years old
her **legal capacity** was taken away by a judge.
For this reason she was told
that she was not allowed to vote.

Then, she worked hard to get back her right to vote.

She reached her goal.

Maribel is also a **self-advocate**
who does many things.

Here you can read our interview with Maribel:

**A judge took your legal capacity away
when you were 18 years old.
For this reason, you were told you cannot vote.**

**What did you do
to get your right to vote back?**

It took a lot of time.
I had a lot of support from Plena Inclusión.

Plena Inclusión is a Spanish organisation
that represents people with intellectual disabilities.

I needed to convince a judge
to give me my right to vote back.

I needed to collect
a lot of documents for this meeting.

I had the meeting with the judge after some months.
He told me I was right
and I got my right to vote back.

**At what age did you stop going to school?**

I stopped going to school when I was 17.
I was not able to continue my studies
because I did not have enough support.

**Then you started to go to classes at Plena Inclusión.**

**What did you study there and
what kind of support did you get?**

My life has changed
when I started to go to classes at Plena Inclusión.

I took part in a class about basic rights.
Basic rights are rights that everybody should have.

I learned through this course
that I had the right to vote like everybody else.
Then I decided that I wanted my right back.

I also learned that people with disabilities
have to deal with **discrimination**.

I wanted to help people like me
fight against discrimination.

The classes happened at a university in Spain.
For me it was very important to be there
because not many people with intellectual disabilities
study at university.

**Now you are a trainer.**

**A trainer is someone who teaches new skills to other people.**

**You give many talks about this.
What do you talk about?**

In 2015, I gave my first talk in schools
for a campaign called “The value of difference”.
For this campaign I also went to talk
at universities.

And I gave talks to people
who work with people with disabilities.

I talked about **easy-to-read** and other ways
to make texts **accessible**.

In the last few months,
I have also learned about other things.
For example,

* **employment,**
* safety at work,
* becoming old.

**Last year you took part
in the European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities.**

**What did you do there?**

It was great!

I was part of a group of 5 people with intellectual disabilities.

We came from Spain to Brussels
to take part in the event.

We spoke up for the right to vote
for people with intellectual disabilities.

These were two busy days.
It was very important for us.

I was the first person from the place I come from
to go to Brussels to fight for my rights.

**You will vote for the first time next year.**

**What will you do to get ready?**

It will be a challenge
because I have never voted before.

I will look for information about each **political party**.

Then I will decide who to vote for.

**There are still lot of people
who have lost their right to vote.**

**What advice would you give them?**

I think they should fight
to have their right to vote back.

They can get help form organisations.

It may take a long time,
but they should never lose hope.

Even if it can be hard,
it’s worth to fight to get your right to vote back!

On page xx, you can read about Denmark and Spain.
In these two countries, people under guardianship
will now be able to vote.

You can read more interviews with self-advocates
and other people here:
<http://inclusion-europe.eu/?tag=inclusion-heroes> (in English)

**Soufiane talks about easy-to-read**

My name is Soufiane, I live in Belgium.

I am a self-advocate.

I work at **Inclusion Europe**
as the easy-to-read editor.

**What is easy-to-read?**

Easy-to-read is information that is written
in a clear and easy to understand way.

For example, this newsletter.

Many people with an **intellectual disability**
and other people find easy-to-read useful.

You can find out more on easy-to-read here:
[www.easy-to-read.eu](http://www.easy-to-read.eu)

### Why is easy-to-read important?

Easy-to-read information is very important
for people with intellectual disabilities,
because thanks to it we can:

* Learn new things.
* Take part in community life.
* Know our rights and stand up for ourselves.
* Make our own choices.

With my colleagues, I have worked on many different
easy-to-read documents.

For example:

* presentations;
* articles;
* booklets for meetings.

I have also travelled to a few places
and trained people on how to write in easy-to-read.

When I put an article in easy-to-read
I have to understand what the article is about.

I also check the layout and the format of the text.

Each time I look at a text,
I follow a checklist.

The checklist reminds me of all the things I need
to put into an easy-to-read document.

For example, the text must be
at least in Arial 14 as a font.

Easy-to-read text must use clear and short words.

Sometimes there are pictures too,
to help explain what is written.

For me, it is important to be able to read information
that is written in a way easy to understand.

I feel part of the community
because I get the same information as everybody else.

There have been many times
when easy-to-read was useful to me.

For example:

* When I was looking up train timetables;
* When I took part in a conference at the **European Commission**and they gave us an easy-to-read programme.

Part of my job is to help create this newsletter.

It is a fun challenge because I learn new things every time.

It is challenging to put texts into easy-to-read
because they are usually way too long and not easy-to-read.

But I love my job!

Short news:

There are good news from Spain and Denmark on the right to vote.

You can read about it on the next two pages.

**In Spain people under guardianship
will vote in the next elections**

In Spain there will be a change in the law
about **elections**.

The change will give back
to a lot of people under **guardianship**
the right to vote and to stand in elections.

Until now, they could not vote.

This is unfair,
because voting and standing for elections
is an important right for everybody.

This change came
thanks to the work of organisations
such as Plena Inclusión.

Plena Inclusión is
a member of **Inclusion Europe**.

Plena Inclusión spoke up many times
and also talked on social media
about the right to vote.

Congratulations to Plena Inclusión
and to the other organisations
who worked to change the law in Spain!

**In Denmark more people under guardianship
will vote for the elections of the Parliament**

The **government** in Denmark
wants to let more people under **guardianship**vote and stand for **elections**.

Some people in Denmark
who are under a special kind of guardianship
cannot vote.

Now there will be a new law.

When the new law will be in use,
people under this special kind of guardianship
will have their **legal capacity** back.

And they will be able to vote in national elections
and also take part in referendums.

A referendum is when you give your opinion
on an important topic for your country.
You do it by going to
the voting place,
like for the elections.

LEV is a member of **Inclusion Europe**
in Denmark.

Together with other organisations,
LEV worked hard
so people with **intellectual disabilities**
can vote in Denmark.

Congratulations to LEV for their great work!

Explanations

**Accessible**

**Something that is easy to use for people with disabilities,
such as:**

**• Ramps to get into a building.**

**• Information in easy-to-read.**

**• Information in sign language.**

### Discrimination

Discrimination means that you are treated unfairly or
that you do not get the chances you deserve.

It is discrimination when it happens because of your disability.

It can also happen to other people.
For example people who have a different skin colour.
Or older people.

**Easy-to-read**

**Easy-to-read is information that is written in a simple way
so that people with intellectual disabilities can understand.**

**Easy-to-read documents often have this logo,
so it is easier to find them.**

**There are rules on how easy-to-read should be done.**

**You can read the European standards of easy-to-read information here:** [www.easy-to-read.eu](http://www.easy-to-read.eu)

**Election**

**An election is when people go to vote.
Voting is when you choose someone
to be a leader and make big decisions for you.**

**Elections happen in different areas.
For example, when you elect a new mayor in your town,
or when you elect a new president in your country.**

**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.

**European Parliament**

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

For example, decisions about laws and budgets.

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

Every 5 years, the people who live in the European Union
vote for their country’s MEPs.

The next **elections** are in 2019.

**European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities**

The European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities
is a big gathering of people with disabilities from all over Europe.

At this event, they talk about what they want in life.

They talk about the problems they have as people with disabilities.

The European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities takes place in Brussels in Belgium.

It takes place every five years.

European Union

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

We call these countries “member states”.

They have joined together so that
people in Europe can live in peace,
have jobs and a good life.

**Government**

A government is a group of people
that make decisions on how to run a country.

For example,
• about where the money is spent,
• about public transports,
• about schools,
• about hospitals.

Every few years there are [**elections**](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844#Election)
to vote for a new government.

**Guardianship**

**Guardianship allows some people to make life choices for others.**

**The person who makes choices for you is your guardian.**

**Your guardian has legal capacity.**

**They can decide things for you, like where you live.**

**Sometimes, people under guardianship are not allowed to vote,**

**get married or take care of their kids.**

**Inclusion Europe**

Inclusion Europe is an organisation for people with **intellectual disabilities** and their families.

We fight for their equal rights and inclusion in Europe.
We also want to make a difference to policies in Europe.

We started in 1988.

We have 75 members in 39 European countries.

We are based in Brussels in Belgium.

Intellectual disabilities

If you have an intellectual disability,
that means it is more difficult for you to understand information
and learn new skills than it is for other people.
This makes some parts of life harder.

People with intellectual disabilities often need support
in learning or at work.

Intellectual disability often starts before you are an adult.
It affects you for your whole life.

Legal capacity

Capacity means being able to make a decision or choice
at one point in time.

There are laws about how to decide if someone has capacity.
Then it is called legal capacity.

Having legal capacity means that people with intellectual disabilities
can do things on their own.
For example, they can:

* Make choices about their lives.
* Get married, start a family and raise children.
* Sign contracts (including work contracts).
* Take part in politics and have the right to vote.

When there is a **guardianship**, the guardian has legal capacity.

Manifesto

A manifesto is a text that explains the goals
of a person or an organisation.
It is often made before an **election**
by a person or organisation that wants to be elected.
Everyone can read it.

Politician

Someone whose job is
to help run the country or part of the country.

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is when people with intellectual disabilities
speak up for themselves and for other people
with intellectual disabilities.