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Inclusion Europe
The European Association of Societies of
People with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families

Brussels, 19 March 2015

Five questions to improve the lives of Europeans with intellectual disabilities

Caged, abused, forcibly sterilised, ignored. These are not situations one would ever believe citizens of the European Union would live through in 2015. Still, it is the daily reality for some people with intellectual disabilities in one of the most economically developed parts of the world. Many more experience discrimination, segregation and the denial of fundamental rights throughout the European Union (EU).

When the EU acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) in 2010, disability activists rejoiced. This landmark Convention became the first human rights treaty to be ratified by the EU. Disabled people and their families believed this to signal the deep commitment of the European Union to fight for equal rights and opportunities for people with disabilities. Five years on, however, people with disabilities are still discriminated against, are hindered from fully participating in society and cannot even enjoy the fundamental rights guaranteed to all other Union citizens.

In a coordinated action, the whole European disability movement has identified the areas where the UN CRPD has not been properly implemented today. [Inclusion Europe](#) has contributed by highlighting the perspective and experiences of people with intellectual disabilities and their families. The report was now published by the [European Disability Forum](#) as the [Alternative Report on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). The Alternative Report was prepared to help the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities review the progress of the European Union in implementing the UN CRPD.

While Inclusion Europe recognises that the EU has limited legal competences in several policy areas, we are convinced that the European institutions could do a lot more to ensure the fulfillment of the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities, particularly in the areas of legal capacity, education, participation, accessibility, community living and right to family life. It is evident that fundamental changes are necessary across EU policies, programmes and the internal operational structures of the European Institutions.

On 2 April 2015, the UN Committee will examine the the measures taken by the European institutions to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are considered in all relevant legislative proposals, as well as in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of EU policy. Later in the month, the Committee will adopt a *List of Issues*, a set of questions and requests for clarification for the European Union.

Inclusion Europe will be in Geneva to voice its main concerns on the implementation of the Convention by the European Union. We believe Committee members have a duty to the 7 million EU citizens with intellectual disabilities, as well as to their families and carers, to make sure the European Union gives thoughtful answers to these five main questions:

- 1. How does the EU plan to support the further development of organisations and groups of people with intellectual disabilities who defend their own rights in Europe?**
- 2. How does the European Union guarantee that persons under guardianship can enjoy their rights as EU citizens on an equal basis with others, particularly in regard to**

- participating in European elections?
- 3. How does the EU ensure the involvement of persons with intellectual disabilities and their representative organisations in the planning, implementation and monitoring of living facilities financed through EU the structural funds?**
- 4. How does the EU promote and protect the right of persons with intellectual disabilities to family life, and recognize the work of parents of children with disabilities as primary caretakers?**
- 5. Are there any specific provisions in the draft European Accessibility Act on making all goods and services accessible for persons with intellectual disabilities in the EU?**

The European Union should pave the way in promoting a human rights-based approach to disability, as it has vowed to do so by ratifying the Convention. The CRPD Committee must now make sure the EU is indeed fulfilling its legal and moral obligations towards people with disabilities. If the EU leads by example, its Member States will follow. Otherwise, the whole implementation process will be jeopardized, and millions of people with disabilities once again forgotten.

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