



PRESS RELEASE

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Europe in Action 2012: Citizens with intellectual disabilities want real pay for real work

Strategies to increase employment opportunities for workers with intellectual disabilities in the mainstream labour market were under the spotlight during Inclusion Europe's annual conference held in Brussels last week.

The conference gathered over 150 participants from more than twenty countries, comprising persons with intellectual disabilities, their supporters, family members, professionals, public authorities and service-providers.

People with intellectual disabilities have much to contribute to the economies of their country. However, lack of meaningful education and training, deprivation of legal capacity, negative preconceptions about their abilities or simply lack of understanding for their special needs are among the main factors behind the high unemployment rate for adults with special needs.

Placement in sheltered workshops or specialised enterprises has been for many years the principal option for job-seekers with intellectual disabilities in many European countries. *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* urges a shift towards **inclusion of workers with disabilities in the open labour market** as a key to their independence and social as well as economic inclusion.

With regard to the currently difficult economic situation, the transition towards inclusive work settings must be made gradually in order to ensure that appropriate job alternatives exist in the open market. To make this happen, Europe needs inclusive employment policies that build a strong **link between education, employment incentives and welfare system**.

Developing employability skills

Inclusion at workplace starts at school. **Inclusive and quality education and market-oriented on-job vocational training** is essential to increase the competitiveness of job-seekers with special needs in the open labour market. **Life-long learning** is especially relevant for workers with intellectual disabilities to keep their jobs, maintain their skills and abilities and develop their careers in the long-term.

Working with employers

Inclusion Europe and its members are well aware that working with employers is crucial to open new employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. This involves helping employers understand the unique talents and special needs of workers with intellectual disabilities and assisting them in the provision of necessary **reasonable accommodations**. Success stories from different countries presented at the conference prove that with little personalised adaptations, workers with intellectual disabilities are able to take on complex and important jobs, with the initial investment of additional support paying long-term dividends for the business.

Tackling the benefits trap

Advancing on inclusive employment requires well-thought policies for systemic change. Education, employment and welfare policies must be interlinked and encourage people with intellectual disabilities to enter the job market. Welfare systems should recognise the additional cost of disability and provide compensation regardless of person's working status.

New leaders for inclusion and self-advocacy movement

During the conference, Inclusion Europe's interim president **Maureen Piggot** from Mencap (United Kingdom) was confirmed in her position until 2014 and **Senada Halilcevic** from the Association for Self-Advocacy in Croatia was elected as a new leader of the European Platform of Self-Advocates.

Click to read the press release [online](#).

For more information, please, contact:

Petra Letavayova
Communications Officer
Inclusion Europe
E-mail: p.letavayova@inclusion-europe.org
Tel.: +32 2 502 28 15
Fax: +32 2 502 80 10

About the organisers:

Inclusion Europe (IE) is the European voice and representation of over 70 member organisations of people with intellectual disabilities and their families. Founded in 1988, Inclusion Europe has a 24-year track record of successful operation and defending the rights of its constituency. www.inclusion-europe.org

ANAHM / NVHVG is a watchdog organisation defending the rights and interests of people with intellectual disabilities and their families in Belgium. Founded in 1959, ANAHM works in close collaboration with AFRaHM (Association Francophone d'Aide aux Handicapés Mentaux) and Inclusie Vlaanderen which have developed many services to people with intellectual disabilities. www.anahm.be, www.nvhvg.be