

Tenerife Declaration

Promote Independent Living - End Discrimination against Disabled People

We, four hundred participants from many European countries gathered at the 1st European Congress on Independent Living, held in Tenerife in the framework of the 2003 European Year for Disabled People, urge that the Canary Island and Spanish Governments take the lead in advocating for the implementation of this Declaration in European Union policy, specifically in the work for the upcoming Non Discrimination Directive on Disability, and the European Action Plan on Disability.

Principles of Independent Living

We, disabled people, must have the means to take responsibility for our lives and actions in common with non-disabled people. Most of the problems that disabled people encounter are not medical but social, economic and political.

After a history of marginalisation and exclusion, disabled people are NOW demanding the right to choose how we live our lives in the community. We demand the same opportunities and choices and the same degree of control and self-direction over our everyday lives that non disabled people take for granted.

Our full and equal participation in society will enable us to reach our maximum potential as human beings, and in so doing contribute to the economic and social life of community. This has historically been denied us.

Disabled people must be viewed as the experts on their lives. As experts, we have the right and responsibility to speak on our own behalf. Furthermore, disabled people need to control our own organizations.

Independent Living is a fundamental Human Right for all disabled people regardless of the nature and extent of their impairment. These include people with learning difficulties, mental health system users and survivors, disabled children and older people. All life and diversity should be valued. Every human being should have the right to make choices about issues affecting their lives.

We Affirm

In all activities of the public sector such as infrastructure planning, education, transportation, employment measures and other services, the needs of disabled people must be fully taken into account through Universal and Inclusive Design. Service design and implementation must follow independent living principles and center on a person's individual needs.

Personal Assistance enables persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and other impairments to live a self directed life in the community, enabling fuller participation in all human activities. Examples include, parenting, sexual activities, education, employment, enviromental development, leisure, cultural and politics.

Disabled people should have maximum control over disability and independent living related services. These should include public financing, advocacy, training, and peer support for people who may not be able, or wish, to take full control of their lives.

It is unacceptable that European disabled citizens are still kept in residential institutions, because of the lack of appropriate living alternatives in the community.

We stress that indepdent living support services are essential in order for disabled people to enjoy basic freedoms and must be funded by all Governments. We, disabled people from all over Europe, do not accept any funding limitations in regards to our basic freedom. If necessary we are ready to challenge these assumptions about the lack of resources.

European Union

We urge the European Union (EU) to continue to expand its human rights policies to improve the quality of life of disabled people through freedom of choice and higher quality of services.

We condemn any type of segregation and institutionalisation that are a direct violation of our Human Rights. Governments must implement and enforce legislation that protects the Human Rights and equal opportunities of disabled people.

We urge the EU to adopt measures that will guarantee and prioritise community based, over institution typed solutions in the area of disability support services.

Disabled people must be given the choice to convert disability related support services, that are currently received in kind, into the equivalent amount of direct payments.

In compliance with the Treaty of Rome we demand the EU governments to adopt a minimum level of direct payment for personal assistance services in all EU countries in order to promote freedom of movement. Furthermore, in promoting standards for inter-operability of goods and services the needs of disabled people must be fully taken into consideration.

We demand the EU require governments to fund the development and support of organisations controlled and run by disabled people to promote independent living.

We demand EU to adopt the necessary measures to prevent discrimination against disabled people in future advances of genetics, science and technology.

**Arona, Tenerife
April 26th, 2003**