

Stuttering Awareness – “A foot in the door”

Welcome to this third edition of the Joint ELSA/ISA newsletter. In the last newsletter I mentioned that ELSA had been given a small grant from the European Commission as co-ordination core funding. This period has now come to an end and the results are hopefully visible to all connected with the stuttering self-help movement.

A new web-site, www.elsa.info has been produced giving information on the work of ELSA, stuttering issues in Europe, European Union issues relating to disability and stuttering and lots of links to other stuttering and relevant disability web-sites. A survey amongst the National Stuttering Associations (NSA's) of Europe was carried out on stuttering, disability and discrimination.

Two special Voice of ELSA newsletters have been produced, one focusing on important anti-discrimination legislation and the second on the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Copies of these newsletters can be obtained from your NSA. A new ELSA leaflet has been produced which acts as an awareness tool. ELSA has also managed to secure two seats/votes on the General Council of the European Disability Forum (EDF). We were very pleased that Stefan Trömel, the Director of the EDF, agreed to give an opening address at the recent World Congress in Ghent. His speech describing the work EDF are carrying out and ELSA's role as a member of the EDF is in the September special edition of the Voice of ELSA mentioned above.

But what about the future. I believe the future is bright for stuttering being recognised as an important impairment/disability. The disability movement now has its “foot in the door”, disabled people are now visible in the European Union. This is because there is a new EU treaty that makes reference to disabled people. Article 13 aims to prevent discrimination in the field of employment. This is the first step, hopefully, leading to comprehensive discrimination legislation – an aim of the disability movement.

In December 2001 it is anticipated that the EU will declare 2003 as the European Year of People with Disabilities. I believe ELSA is now well placed to link into the awareness campaigns the EU will be mounting with the EDF and other European umbrella non-governmental organisations. I anticipate there will be increased funding available to make stuttering and its effects more visible. ELSA looks forward to working with the NSA's of Europe in the run up to, and during, this important year.

Future events – ELSA is looking to organise its 4th Youth Meeting in Poland and an ELSA seminar in France, more details will be available in 2002.

A New Year beckons and I wish all readers a very successful year.

Edwin J. Farr
Chair of the European League of Stuttering Associations
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