



BRUSSELS DECLARATION

- Whereas almost one-quarter of Europeans (more than 100 million) live with some form of rheumatism or arthritis
- Whereas rheumatic/musculoskeletal conditions represent 40% of all chronic conditions and more than 50% of all cases leading to long-term disability thus making them the greatest single cause of physical disability
- Whereas rheumatic disorders are the most common cause of physical health problems limiting work capacity
- Whereas up to 60 per cent of persons on early-retirement or long-term sick leave claim a rheumatic condition as the reason and whereas rheumatic diseases lead to unemployment in more than 50% of all cases
- Whereas people with rheumatic diseases face very often severe limitations of their independence and autonomy as individuals and discriminatory policies and attitudes that exclude their full participation

THEREFORE, WE, THE PEOPLE DISABLED BY LIVING WITH RHEUMATIC DISEASES

1. *Declare* that there is an urgent need for recognition of the needs of people with rheumatic diseases in order to abolish the misperceptions that rheumatic diseases affect only older people or have little consequences to the individual and society.
2. *Declare* that people with disabilities related to rheumatic diseases should enjoy the same rights as any citizens of the European Union and have the same individual choices to ensure full inclusion in society.
3. *Declare that* people with disabilities related to rheumatic diseases should be guaranteed effective support including the safest and most effective treatments and rehabilitation services.
4. *Declare that* people with disabilities related to rheumatic diseases should be provided with the appropriate conditions for self-development and independent living to make use of their potential as citizens.
5. *Declare that* people with disabilities related to rheumatic diseases should have the right to work, with the necessary adaptations and improvements to accessibility made to accommodate our needs.
6. *Declare* that people with disabilities related to rheumatic diseases should have the right to obtain goods and receive services accessible to any other citizen of the Community
7. *Declare that* people with disabilities related to rheumatic diseases should be provided with a fully accessible public environment.
8. *Declare* that persons with reduced mobility should be ensured accessible transport systems and, where necessary, assistance in all modes of transport.
9. ***Call on the European Union and the EU Member States to recognise and enforce the above rights by progressive and determined political and legislative measures.***