

2025 – 2028

ENIL YOUTH NETWORK

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

PLAIN LANGUAGE VERSION



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1. About ENIL Youth

The ENIL Youth Network is a movement of young disabled people and non-disabled people who support them. We are committed to the principles of Independent Living.

ENIL Youth was created in 2012. Its purpose is to give young disabled people a space to take part in youth rights and disability rights work at European level.

ENIL Youth gives young people opportunities to:

- learn new things and build skills
- take action for their rights
- speak to decision-makers
- represent ENIL at meetings and events.

ENIL Youth is also represented in important European youth and disability rights spaces. These include the Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth and the European Disability Forum (EDF) Youth Committee.

- People aged 18 to 35 can join ENIL Youth.
- A disabled person can become a full individual member if they live in a Council of Europe member state.
- A non-disabled supporter, or any young person who lives in a country that is not part of the Council of Europe, can become an associated member.

Young people are important for the future of the disability rights movement. A movement also needs to be visible so that people can find it, understand it and join it. This is why ENIL Youth wants to be visible in public and online.

Good communication helps us:

- Build trust with our members;
- Help members take part in ENIL Youth activities and democratic processes;
- Invite more people to join the disability rights movement;
- Promote Independent Living;
- Connect with other youth and disability organisations;
- Help young people participate and be listened

2. What do we want our communication to do?

This Communications Strategy supports the ENIL Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2025–2028. All ENIL Youth communication should support four main goals:

1. Help young disabled people gain knowledge, confidence and advocacy skills.
2. Make ENIL Youth easier to find and help us build stronger connections.
3. Make sure young people's voices are heard in European, national and international policy spaces and inside ENIL.
4. Speak about the policy issues that ENIL Youth members say are important to them.

This strategy helps us turn these goals into a plan to communicate online and offline:

Goal 1: Build skills

- Give disabled young people the knowledge and communication skills they need to become future leaders.
- Give members opportunities to learn new things and grow as people.
- Show the work and achievements of ENIL Youth. This can encourage people to take part and help new members find us.

Goal 2: Be easier to find and build stronger connections

- Set yearly goals for reach and engagement of each profile.
- Build trust with members and encourage them to take part in ENIL Youth activities and decision-making.
- Build stronger partnerships with youth and disability organisations.

Goal 3: Make sure young people's voices are heard

- Make sure ENIL Youth has a voice in relevant policy spaces. This includes the Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth, the EDF Youth Committee, and other opportunities.
- Regularly tell our audience about ENIL Youth representation and activities.
- Create opportunities for the Youth Board, members and disabled people in general to share views and have dialogue.
- Share information about meaningful youth participation and ways to do it, such as the Council of Europe Youth Perspective. This helps members build the skills they need to take part.

Goal 4: Speak about issues that ENIL Youth members say are important

- Use surveys and needs analysis to find out what matters most to members.
- Help people understand the Independent Living movement, its history and its philosophy, as it is described in Independent Living Pillar 14.

- Use the same advocacy messages across our communication channels. This means speaking with 'one voice' about agreed priorities and helping members advocate for ENIL and ENIL Youth positions.

3. How should we communicate?

These standards explain how ENIL Youth should communicate, no matter what the communication is about. They are also informed by ENIL Youth's [Guidelines on Media Representation of Persons with Disabilities](#), developed through the Independent (Living) Media project.

1. Accessible communication

ENIL Youth communication should be as accessible as possible for young disabled people.

- Use different accessible formats when possible. These can include good colour contrast, easy-to-read versions, alt text, image descriptions and captions.
- Offer meetings and events in different formats when appropriate, including in person, hybrid and online. Send materials that are accessible too. Provide speech-to-text and sign language whenever we can.
- Regularly check the ENIL Youth website and other digital content for accessibility.

2. Effective communication

Use communication tools and channels that work well for the specific message and audience, while also being accessible.

- Use the right combination of channels and formats to help people understand the content and to increase reach and engagement.
- Regularly review whether communication platforms and tools are accessible, relevant and effective.
- Change tools or platforms when reviews show that it is needed.

3. Timely communication

Share information at the right time and plan communication in advance.

- Plan communication around important dates and events, such as Disability Pride Month, European Independent Living Day, Freedom Drive, Youth Cafés and ENIL Youth projects.
- Respond to new issues that may affect disabled young people or the wider disability rights movement.
- Use a yearly communications plan to plan content and keep communication regular throughout the year.

4. Creative and adaptable communication

Use different and engaging ways to inform, educate and entertain people, while reflecting the voices of members.

- Encourage people creating content to try new ideas and methods.
- Use creative storytelling to make messages engaging and meaningful.
- Use diverse, clear and easy-to-understand visuals when appropriate.

5. Authentic representation

Communication should be authentic and support self-representation.

- Support members to contribute ideas and content based on their own interests and experiences.
- Avoid stereotypes and sensationalism. Show the whole person, not only their disability.
- Take steps to prevent discrimination and online harassment against people who appear in ENIL Youth content.

4. Who are we communicating with?

Different audiences need different messages, language and types of content.

Our main audience: young people

This includes young disabled people and non-disabled supporters. It includes ENIL Youth members, people who have taken part in ENIL Youth events, and young people who do not know about ENIL Youth yet.

Our communication for young people should explain that:

- ENIL Youth is a community of passionate young people active across Europe and beyond.
- Taking part in ENIL Youth can help young people build friendships across borders and develop useful skills for life.
- It is easy to stay involved because we share our impact, upcoming events and open calls.
- Young disabled people can take part in projects, decision-making and other initiatives. They can represent their peers inside ENIL and in wider European youth and policy spaces.
- ENIL Youth is run by young disabled people, for young disabled people and their allies. It welcomes people with any impairment and different identities. It uses an intersectional, non-discriminatory and human rights-based approach.
- Activism and political engagement helped people before us achieve disability rights. ENIL Youth wants to create an environment where young disabled people can continue this work.

Our secondary audience: partner organisations and institutions

This includes disability rights organisations, youth organisations and international bodies. Examples include the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

Our communication for these audiences should explain that:

- ENIL Youth is an active youth initiative that helps develop future leaders in the disability and human rights movement.
- ENIL Youth creates opportunities for disabled young people through capacity-building, education, advocacy and other activities.
- Members are treated as experts. They can represent ENIL Youth at meetings and events across Europe. This strengthens youth participation and access to rights at different levels.
- ENIL Youth has a wide network across Europe and beyond and is shaped by the needs of its members and by current events.

The wider public

The public is a broader audience. We mainly reach this audience through social media. This is not our main audience, but our public communication should also help people understand Independent Living and the disability rights movement. This work is informed by ENIL's [18 Pillars of Independent Living](#).

5. Our communication channels

ENIL Youth has limited, volunteer-based capacity. The channels below have been chosen to reach people while keeping the workload manageable.

Instagram: Our main and most important social media channel for reaching young people. Its visual format is useful for the content ENIL Youth wants to create. It can help us reach new audiences and turn people who follow our content into members and supporters.

LinkedIn: Our professional channel. It is mainly used to reach policymakers, institutions and organisations. It is for event announcements, representation updates, policy work, statements, position papers and reports.

Facebook: Mainly used to cross-post content from Instagram. The ENIL Youth Facebook page also helps us stay connected with former and current members from the ENIL Youth Facebook group that is not active anymore.

YouTube: Used occasionally, to publish recordings of some of our online events.

ENIL Newsletter: Sent monthly. It provides our articles (texts) directly to people who have chosen to receive it. The newsletter covers the whole organisation, not only ENIL Youth. It can share activities and opinion pieces and help members stay connected to ENIL's work.

ENIL website and Youth Corner of the Members Mailing: These are permanent places for important information, publications, member resources and archives. The website must stay accurate and accessible because it affects how the public sees ENIL. The Youth Corner gives space for short updates about important work by ENIL Youth and the Youth Board.

6. Who is responsible for communication?

Communication, especially social media, takes time. It needs to be updated regularly so that people have a reason to follow ENIL Youth.

Irregular communication can make the profile less visible. At the same time, ENIL Youth is volunteer-based and has limited capacity. We must not expect volunteers to do more than is realistic.

Most social media and communication responsibilities are therefore given to staff:

- the ENIL Youth Coordinator
- with support from the ENIL Communications Trainee or Officer

The nine Youth Board members also support communication as volunteers.

They do this by:

- sending updates to the Coordinator for the Members Mailing
- suggesting social media content
- writing articles for the newsletter

The ENIL Youth Coordinator and Youth Board should publish at least one piece of content each week. The content should support the objectives in this strategy. The Coordinator should also talk with the Youth Board before monthly deadlines for the Members Mailing and Newsletter, and more often when needed.

7. How will we know if communication is working?

The media and how we use it changes over time. For example, platforms that were once popular with young people may become more used by older ones. We need to pay attention to new trends and changes in how audiences behave.

At the start of each year, the ENIL Youth Board will adopt a yearly Communications Plan. The yearly plan will:

- match the ENIL Youth Workplan for that year
- include specific targets for each communication channel
- identify topics, times and events that need more attention
- Think of possible new developments we should talk about

The ENIL Youth Board will review the performance of each communication platform and tool every three months. When available, we will use numbers to understand whether communication is effective. This can include:

- activity data — what we publish and how often
- reach data — how many people see our content
- engagement data — how people interact with our content

Key words:

Advocacy: Actions that support a position, cause or change in policy and practice.

Accessibility: Making information, communication, spaces and activities usable by as many people as possible, including disabled people.

Independent Living: The approach and movement that supports disabled people to have choice and control over their own lives and to participate fully in society.

Meaningful youth participation: Young people having real opportunities to influence decisions that affect them, rather than being included only symbolically.

Self-representation: People speaking about themselves and their experiences, rather than having others speak for them.

Reach: How many people see or receive information about something we publish.

Engagement: How people interact with something we post, for example by commenting, sharing or responding.



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