

Supported Decision-Making is a series of relationships, practices, arrangements and agreements designed to assist an individual with a disability to make and communicate to others **decisions** about their life. Often, people with disabilities have partially or totally restricted their Right to Legal Capacity and, consequently, the Right to make decisions that affect some areas of their life since they do not have the appropriate support.

Supported Decision-Making mechanisms include formal and informal arrangements which may include support networks, support agreements, self-help groups, peer support, advanced support directives, and professional support services varying in intensity and temporality. These mechanisms can provide support on particular aspects of a person's life or on a global scale but should not restrict Legal Capacity of the supported individual and, ultimately, should be based on the will and preferences of the person.

SUPPORT advocates for the Right to enjoy Legal Capacity in several ways:

- Improving the practical side to bridge the gap between daily practices and the provisions of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Mainstreaming and spreading the idea of supported decision-making explaining what it is and how it works to society and to services and professionals depending on the health or social sector as well as the private sector (banking, regular commerce).
- Strengthening cross-sectorial cooperation, organizing informative and training sessions with the involvement of key actors (users, families and professionals) to pave the way to further implement the UNCRPD.
- Searching new pathways to identify and implement safeguards to avoid undue influence and conflict of interest while providing support to individuals.
- Empowering individuals to recognize situations where they might need support and offering them formal or informal support.

Our willingness to embrace supported decision-making procedures requires an adjustment of internal procedures and protocols to ensure the participation of people with disabilities in the process of making choices and gaining control over their lives. In that sense, our role is to provide continuous assistance and support to help people to identify their needs according to their own life plan while at the same time helping people to cope with the increasing complexity of modern societies.

## Strategic Lines of Work

Whilst providing global, dynamic and flexible support on a daily basis and promoting the Right to enjoy Legal Capacity and Independent Living, SUPPORT constantly works towards promoting and executing mechanisms respectful of the individual's inherent legal capacity even though national legal frameworks still apply restrictions to this principle. In practice these efforts translate into:

- Promote **assistance** (a legal mechanism based on the individual's volition) instead of substituted decision-making mechanisms.
- Increase **measures to protect financial and patrimonial assets** whereas the individual retains legal capacity.
- Increase the use **of advanced planning mechanisms** (powers of attorney, advance directives and **Future Support Planning Service\*** for general population to avoid court measures.

**\*Future Support Planning Service:** *This type of support allows an individual to foresee their support needs by ensuring —via a notarized disposition— that the Foundation will deliver the role of supporter when an unexpected or unforeseen illness occurs causing loss of capacity. The future support planning service includes an individualized assessment of the will, wishes and preferences of an individual to design a personalized support plan and to execute it professionally in the future.*