

SHARING SDMNY'S LEARNINGS WITH OUR INTERNATIONAL COLLEAGUES

Last week was the Conference of State Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), a fancy name for an annual meeting, at the United Nations here in New York, of countries that have ratified the CRPD. You may remember that the human right to make one's own decisions, and to have them legally recognized comes from Article 12 of the CRPD, so the conference included advocates for that right, and for supported decision-making, from around the world. Unfortunately, the US is one of the very few countries in the world that has not ratified the CRPD (others include North Korea and Sudan) so we do not participate in the Conference, but it gives us a chance to meet with international colleagues who have come here to be part of it.



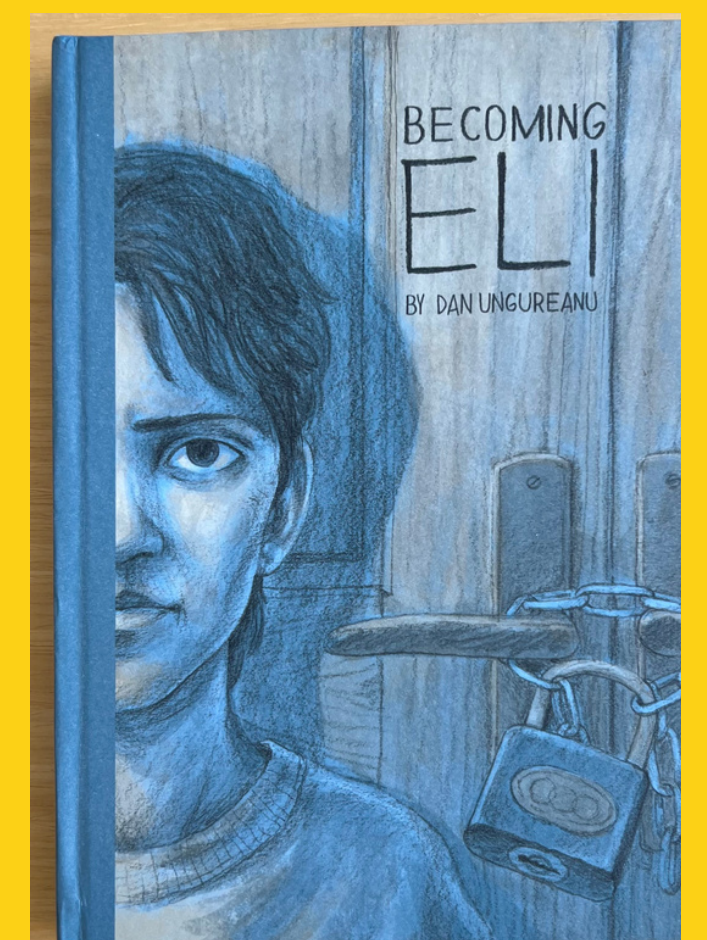
We were especially pleased to meet with colleagues from Romania from the Centre for Legal Resources (CLR) and Ceva de Spus (the Romanian self-advocacy organization). In 2020 the Romanian Constitutional Court struck down their guardianship law, and now CLR and Ceva are working on a pilot project to see how SDM can provide a better alternative. They were anxious to learn from us, and we were thrilled to be able to share our learnings and successes. We were moved to hear how long and creatively they had been working to secure the right of legal capacity for people with disabilities, and how even more difficult that work has become since the invasion of Ukraine. If you're not up on your geography you may not realize that Romania is a "frontline" country; it borders directly on Ukraine so it is in continuous danger from potential Russian invasion, and it has also absorbed hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees.

Here they are, in a selfie in front of the UN



Zoltán (Zoli) Szövérdfi-Szép, Elisabeta (Eli) Moldovan, Georgiana Pascu

Georgiana is the Director of the Advocate for Dignity programme at CLR, who has been doing Human rights work for more than 2 decades. Eli is the president of Ceva de Spus. Zoli works with Eli there and is her supporter and translator (although Eli spoke better English than we spoke Romanian!). We heard how, at the beginning of the Russian invasion, he drove into Ukraine to bring refugees to Romania. Eli is also the author of a remarkable book about her life—she spent 25 years in an institution before becoming the remarkable advocate she is today—which, fortunately for us, is translated into English.



We always note how thrilled our Decision-Makers are to be part of a world-wide movement, and a meeting like the one we had last week, with the promise to follow up and help in any way we can, reminds us how important these connections are.

THANKS, DEAR ROMANIAN COLLEAGUES, FOR ALL YOU ARE DOING AND FOR THE INSPIRATION YOU HAVE GIVEN US!