

Press Release

Brussels, 23 October 2015

Salzburg Conference

Lack of political will and fear to change: the main barriers to inclusive education

Why do we not yet have inclusive education? Has inclusive education been theoretically defined? Which are the main barriers in society which make it difficult to have fully inclusive educational settings in Europe? All these questions were debated today during the EASPD annual conference “Inclusive teaching programmes: Let’s develop it together!”

Looking at the state of play with regard to the implementation of article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the EASPD conference aimed at showing practical examples on how to make education more inclusive and the required elements to succeed on fully including persons with disabilities in mainstream educational systems following the principles and values of the CRPD.

Wolfgang Plaute, Vice rector of Pädagogische Hochschule Salzburg, took the floor during the welcoming session by presenting key aspects of inclusive education that need to be addressed: the definition of school achievement needs to be broadened and not only be based on results, There is also a need to develop international and national standards for qualification and to link educational settings with the labour market, employment-related issues and the development of societal skills to facilitate integration in the community.

EASPD President, **Franz Wolfmayr**, highlighted the need to *“promote positive attitude towards inclusion and develop inclusive networks.”* In that sense, panelists agreed that if all children go to mainstream schools in their communities that can have a great impact among society’s level of tolerance, whilst also combating prejudices and discrimination.

Dimitris Nikolsky, Chair of the Committee of Experts on the Rights of people with disabilities of the Council of Europe, stressed that inclusive education needs to be a founding principle of any education system as it is recognised in several European policy frameworks. For that, we need to *“develop means that respond to individual needs, develop comprehensive integration policies and adapt the way we measure the quality of education by rethinking the concept of ‘achievements’”*. *“It is essential that decision makers work in partnership with civil society and professionals as they can bring their knowledge and experience. Inclusive education does not cost a lot. The cost of non-inclusive education is higher. Non inclusive education in Europe costs 36% of GDP”*, he added.

Peter Haug, Professor of Education at Volda University College in Norway pointed out that the main reasons deterring the realisation of inclusive education are *“the lack of political will and the human fear to change”*. *“Accountability, neoliberalism, competition between schools are some other barriers that make it difficult to fully*

implement the concept of inclusive education", he stressed.

The implementation of inclusive education entails political will. The willingness of decision makers to support the transition to an inclusive educational system is one of the key elements that could facilitate its realization. Political will must go hand in hand with a pedagogical will, by developing inclusive knowledge and skills among mainstream teachers.

Related EASPD documents

- [Budapest Manifesto on Inclusive Learning](#) (2012)
- [Dublin Declaration on Inclusive Education](#) (2009)
- [Brussels Declaration on Education](#) (2006)

Useful links

- [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [UNESCO Global Monitoring Report 2000-2015 "Education for all"](#)
- [INVESTT research on universal design in inclusive education](#)
- [Conference programme](#) (all presentations soon available on EASPD Website)
- Conference [Photo gallery](#)

Note to editors

The European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities is a non-profit European umbrella organization, established in 1996, and currently representing over 11.000 social and health services for persons with disabilities. EASPD advocates effective and high-quality disability-related services in the field of education, employment and individualised support, in line with the UN CRPD principles, which could bring benefits not only to persons with disabilities, but to society as a whole.

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