



Under the high protection of Mr. Vladimír Špidla, member of the European Commission

PRESS RELEASE

European congress '*THE TIDE IS TURNING*' results in a Ten-Point Programme

People with intellectual disabilities make an appeal to society

Den Haag, October 28th 2008 – People with intellectual disabilities often experience social resistance and reserve. They are not taken seriously, are viewed with pity, and are often treated without respect. The growing (street)violence in society constitutes a special threat for them. It makes them fearful because ordinary citizens “do not stick up for us.”

With this conclusion ended the 4th European Intercultural Congress for people with intellectual disabilities '*The tide is turning*' in the series **Living in the encounter**, held this past weekend. About 600 people with intellectual disabilities and 100 companions, from 20 European countries, India, and the U.S.A., participated in the congress that was held under the title '*The tide is turning*'. It took place in the World Forum Convention Centre in The Hague (NL).

Participants did not merely express criticism. They also shared positive examples of how society integrates them and takes care of them. Furthermore, as expressed in one of their conclusions, they also view it as their own task to involve people more in the manner in which they live and function together.

Participants formulated their desired goals for the near future in a **ten-point programme**:

We want:

- to be respected and accepted as we are;
- to have freedom of choice as to how we want to live, whether alone or with friends, in a sheltered living unit or in an open community;
- to be able to live as much as possible independently, with guidance, and with a community in the background that will support us if necessary;
- to be approached and taken seriously as individuals, not as people with impairments.
- people to be interested in us;
- to be able to live and work at our own pace and not be put under pressure;
- to be able to receive training in order to develop the skills that are important for our independence and for our opportunities to be included in society;
- non-disabled children to come, at a very young age, in contact with people with intellectual disabilities so that they can learn to understand us better;

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- to demonstrate that people with intellectual disabilities also want to make a contribution to society;
- our position in society to be protected so that we are not pushed aside or excluded, and for society to look at our effort and commitment, not merely at the size of our contribution.

The congress was organized by the European project group '**Living in the Encounter**', in which volunteers, congress participants and their relatives work together, and by the **European Co-operation in Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy (ECCE)** a member of the **European Disability Forum**. The goal of the ECCE is to promote a positive image of people with intellectual disabilities and to improve their social opportunities as well as the guidance they receive in this process.

The next congress, expected to be held in 2011, will look at the extent to which these desired goals have been reached.

More Information:

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