

Their rights are our obligation

The Preamble of the Charter of Human Rights of the European Union states (extract):

Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice.

Article 1 states:

Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected.

Article 3 states (extract):

Everyone has the right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity.

Article 6 states:

Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person.

Article 7 states:

Everyone has the right to respect for his or her private and family life, home and communications.

Article 14 states:

- 1. Everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training.*
- 2. This right includes the possibility to receive free compulsory education.*
- 3. The freedom to found educational establishments with due respect for democratic principles and the right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions shall be respected, in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of such freedom and right.*

Article 15 states:

- 1. Everyone has the right to engage in work and to pursue a freely chosen or accepted occupation.*
- 2. Every citizen of the Union has the freedom to seek employment, to work, to exercise the right of establishment and to provide services in any Member State.*
- 3. Nationals of third countries who are authorised to work in the territories of the Member States are entitled to working conditions equivalent to those of citizens of the Union.*



Article 21 states (extract):

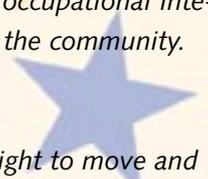
Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.

Article 26 states:

The Union recognises and respects the rights of persons with disabilities to benefit from measures designed to ensure their independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the community.

Article 45 states:

- 1. Every citizen of the Union has the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States.*
- 2. Freedom of movement and residence may be granted, in accordance with the Treaty establishing the European Community, to nationals of third countries legally resident in the territory of a Member State.*



What is ECCE

The European Co-operation in Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy (ECCE) was set up in 1992 in the Netherlands with the aim of representing people with special needs and looking after their interests on a European level, and doing this using the anthroposophical methodology.

ECCE represents about 400 parents' and professional organisations from almost all countries in Europe. ECCE works with other established organisations on projects that aim to integrate people with special needs into society. ECCE member organisations provide a wide range of facilities, including education, work, residential care, support of families, home help, and outpatient services. Therapies, such as medical care and treatment, physiotherapy, movement therapy and several forms of art therapy are used.

ECCE stands for the idea that people with special needs have:

- the right to live an individually chosen life-style in an assisted surrounding which enables and supports personal development and communication,
- the right to living conditions, education, work and therapy suited to their individual potential,
- the right to participate in a decent way of life in the society according to their individual potential.



Co-operation in Europe

ECCE is a Non-Governmental Organisation (N.G.O.). It is one of the founders of the European Disability Forum (E.D.F.), which was constituted in 1997. The mission of the E.D.F. is to promote the equal opportunities and human rights of disabled people (about 37 million!) in Europe. It stimulates emancipation and integration into society by setting up working groups in which disabled people or their representatives are directly involved, taking part in discussions on a European level and publishing documents. ECCE is actively involved in the E.D.F. Standing Committee on Disabled People with Complex Dependency Needs and Unable to Represent themselves.

To live with dignity and self-determination

In the case of children we talk about *curative education*, for adults we use the term *social therapy*. The aim of curative education, youth guidance and social therapy is to give children, young people and adults with special needs the opportunity for individual development, helping them to live with dignity and self-determination, to promote their integration into the community and society, and to ensure their contribution to society is visible.

How we relate to people with special needs depends on the basic convictions and perspectives on which our attitudes and actions are based. Disability has a specific social context which may help or hinder. Social integration is therefore one of the basic functions of curative education and social therapy.



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European Co-operation in
Anthroposophical Curative Education
and Social Therapy

Declaration

Let's learn to count on them

ECCE congress
living, learning and working
of people with complex dependency needs,
31st May - 2nd June 2002,
European Parliament,
Strasbourg, France.

Presidency:
Adrienne Thier, president ECCE
Bernard Heldt, secretary general ECCE

Under the patronage
of Mrs. Anna Diamantopoulou,
Member of the European Commission



About 220 participants concerned with disabled people assembled for a congress entitled '**Let's learn to count on them**', in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, 31st May - 2nd June 2002. After three days debating and working, they arrived at the main conclusions that:

- We have to change the way we see disabled people: they are citizens, who need special help from the community to fulfil their obligations towards society as well as to exercise their rights.
- We have to see every person (disabled or not) as a creator and not as a producer. Disabled people should be offered the choice of sheltered communities, besides the mainstream. That means that government has to create financial, legal and other conditions to allow such structures to be created and to function.
- A new concept of 'reversed integration' can be promoted:
when integration of certain persons in the mainstream is not available, sheltered communities can open their doors to include people from the mainstream (for artistic and cultural activities, for example).
- Work is not primarily a means of subsistence but rather a part of dignity for disabled people, as well as a therapy.
Society has to create proper conditions to allow disabled people to work in the mainstream or in sheltered conditions

Declaration of the ECCE congress on the living, learning and working of people with complex dependency needs.

1. Let's learn to count on them

A Congress was organised by the European Co-operation in Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy in the European Parliament at Strasbourg from 31st May to 2nd June 2002, entitled '*Let's learn to count on them*'. Some two hundred representatives of policy-making bodies, professionals, parents and disabled people from twenty European countries assembled to discuss the issues involved in integrating people with complex dependency needs



into society. The representatives were seeking to bring to the attention of politicians in the European Union the existence, needs and potential contribution to society of people with severe learning disabilities. The representatives urge the European Disability Forum, the Commissioner of Employment and Social Affairs and the Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament to examine the problems discussed and the conclusions reached by the Congress.

A fuller participation in society

Throughout Europe encouraging efforts are being made to improve the way disabled people live, learn, train and work. Society exerts itself to help them to participate in the mainstream of life, yet frequently to little avail insofar as those with more complex needs are concerned. Citizens with complex dependency needs find themselves in an unenviable and unique position in society. They are too often discriminated against. In many respects their outlook and approach to life is very different from the rest of the community. Because they are often highly sensitive or reactive to human and social circumstances and conduct, incautious unilateral integration into mainstream life is often undesirable, or sometimes impossible. The Congress sought to identify how people with complex depend-

ency needs may achieve a fuller participation in society without sacrificing an ever more comprehensive response to their personal needs.

Mutual adaptation of all citizens

If we are to integrate them in a meaningful way, we will have to do it on their terms. We will have to give primary consideration to fundamental human values, if their Article 26 rights (Charter of Human Rights of the European Union) are to be honoured. They ask us to come up with a sensible, meaningful view of the relationship between man and society: a view based on the equality of all human beings, in which the quality of each person's commitment finds full expression. Each individual bears a potential for development, which he is willing to make available to society. It is essential that people be given the opportunity to contribute to life, to be asked to commit themselves to what they are good at or able to do, even though someone else may do things better. Integration is not the unilateral fitting-in of the marginalised into existing structures, but the mutual adaptation of all human beings as citizens of a common society.

Multiplicity of approaches

To support those people in an emancipating process respectful of individual differences means a strong appeal to creativity and inventiveness. The Congress witnessed the multiplicity of approaches, from social networking to supported living, learning and working

settings practising reversed integration. In ECCE circles, open sheltered community forms are widely developed, integrated into the social fabric as well as complementing and drawing in other parts of society. The range of provisions is open-ended and allows each person to take an active role in society. Settings that are socially constructive can be fertile places for social interaction. The Congress heard examples of social networking and innovation, initiatives that ultimately benefit the whole of society.

The necessity to create adequate possibilities

It became clear, during the congress that disabled persons need to work, just as "normal" people. It is the first means of integration as well as therapy. Their work has to be valued and judged positively by others without caring only for economic criteria. The congress participants saw their beautiful handicraft products and heard accounts of how their lives gained meaningfulness. They watched a theatre play by persons with learning difficulties and listened to their music. They were impressed by their potential and are convinced of the necessity to create adequate possibilities for disabled people in today's Europe. The principle that **we should move away from man as a producer, towards man as a creator** applies not only to them, but first and foremost to ourselves. Reciprocity must include them: let's learn to count on them, so that persons with complex needs can exercise their rights and fulfil obligations.



2. Congress observations and conclusions

The Congress noted that:

- All citizens of the European Union have the right to be educated, to work, to move and to reside freely within the Member States of the Union. These rights have to be arranged in a convenient and simple way for disabled citizens, also for citizens with complex dependency needs, even if they are dependent on specific legislative or insurance frameworks.
- Correct learning and training conditions, as well as positively valued work, have a beneficial effect for any individual. Governmental legislation, with regard to flexible financial support, should be aimed at creating stimulating, supportive conditions for the lives and development of persons with complex dependency needs, enabling them to enjoy their fundamental rights as citizens of the European Union.
- **Not everyone can stand the pace and conditions of ordinary daily life, at all times in all situations.** Among a multiplicity of social settings, open sheltered communities with professional support providing a haven and a place catering for those with complex dependency needs should be accepted as a valid choice in every European country. These settings should be helped to become an integrated and complementary part of the social fabric.
- **These sheltered communities can be open** to their social environment. The participants want to promote a 'reversed integration' which is practised in many institutions in the circle of ECCE : concerts and theatre shows played by disabled people or others are offered to city inhabitants, open door days are organised so that the disabled people have the opportunity to integrate "normal people" – they don't have any difficulty to do that...
- Society must create the living, learning, training and working conditions (financial, social, legal) necessary for those with complex needs. Innovative initiatives can benefit society as a whole.
- The awareness of the right of everyone to make decisions on his own behalf (self-determination) has grown. But many persons with complex dependency needs are unable to stand up for themselves. In that case, their parents, family members, friends and carers should be allowed to do that with them or on their behalf.



Their point of view can differ from ours: an anecdote

Congress participants heard an anecdote from a project for sheltered living in the Netherlands.

'John is a teacher in an institution for young people with learning disabilities. He obtains two tickets to attend a very important football match in the next city. He decides to invite Paul who is a young disabled boy. With considerable difficulty, he arranges that Paul can shake hands with the national champion who played in the match, and a photo is taken.

Coming back home, John is very proud for Paul that he could have this honour. A colleague teacher asks Paul. "Hey, Paul, how was the match? Did you enjoy it?"

And Paul answers: "Yes, it was wonderful. You know what? I even saw Mark!" Mark is the son of the baker where Paul buys his bread.'

Through anecdotes like this, the congress participants realised that they have to change their point of view. For Paul, to meet the great champion and shake hands was not the main thing. The most important event was to meet Mark at the football match. It showed he could be like other people.

Congress presidency
Adrienne Thier Bernard Heldt