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1. Vivified by the fire of Saint John

The ECCE's Board met in late June, a few days after St. John, break point since the days, until then stretched, will begin to shorten. The opportunity for each of us to remember an incident that changed our being, our life. Of course, we all remembered the one which personally plunged us into the world of disability, as a parent, a brother or sister, a friend, a professional...

But the invitation to reflection led us well beyond: from the fire of Saint John which, when all nature has grown to explode, purifies it by driving to the sky up to the water, by which the same John, purified those who wanted to be reborn to another life on earth.

Water and fire, valid and disabled, professionals and parents: we should not see that duality as an opposition but as a complementarity that moves us forward if we make a bridge between the two. Building bridges is the title of a project on which we want to propose you to work on, as you will see from reading this Link.

The holidays are a break, a time for reflection. We wish you that they will bring you all the good that you expect and that they will illuminate the return with a new light, suitable to strengthen the ties that unite us.

Béatrice Cussac de Verteuil

Michael Dackweiler

2. International Congresses for People with Special Needs



People living with any kind of disability are often still excluded from the society. They have the same needs and desires as anyone. They want to learn, meet people, visit cities and travel abroad. Due to a variety of obstacles this is not always possible. The society is supposed to integrate them and to provide them with all what is needed, also in cultural life. Congresses where not others are talking about people with special needs and talents, but they themselves are active in the center, are still rare.

Since 1998 six social-cultural events with up to 700 participants each have been organized every 3 years in different European cities: **Berlin, Dornach, Prague, The Hague, Vienna and Brussels.**

6th European Congress "Living in the encounter" a masterpiece of social art

Finally the dream at the Congress in Vienna has become reality! After three years of preparation the 6th Congress **Living in the Encounter** took place in Brussels. Housed in a beautiful hall in 'Art Nouveau' style right in the Center of the Belgian capital. The BOZAR is an international cultural center where famous international artists perform. Therefore the right place and time to receive about 600 "social artists" from different parts of the world! The aim of this congress was to create together a work of social art. Traditional art was presented everywhere in the schedule:

Painting (Hannes Weigert/Norway), Music (Musaik/Austria), different concerts, a very contemporary theater performance (Ceder/Belgium) and a folkdance evening supported by the "Lautenbacher Blaskapelle", well-known in Germany. Approximately 30 different workshops and various excursions to the most famous sights of the city were offered:

such as the European Parliament, various museums and to the Atomium. Exploration games, as well as flashmobs were organized in the city center.

The Congress was embedded in the cultural program of the BOZAR. Its director warmly welcomed the participants by finding a new description: "the otherwise healthies" ("die Andersgesunden").

This Congress happened at that date when many European cities celebrated the 70th anniversary day of the end of World War II. Therefore it was a very special moment when delegates from Russia were presenting their hometown Ekaterinburg, by singing and inviting to the first World Congress in 2017.

More information you will find on the website <www.ontmoetenisleven.be>.



Since 2009 these congresses also happened in the **Balkans, Caucasus, Southamerica, Thailand and Russia.** Since the very beginning, when this movement started in Berlin it proved its importance for all involved activists. The global spreading out indicates its significance. The next festivals will happen in the Armenien capital **Erivan** October 1-3, 2015, **Cali/Colombia** in March 2016 and in Thailand in summer 2016. The biggest event is already in preparation for September 2017, the first World Congress in **Ekaterinburg/Russia.**

Congresses are organized on a voluntary level of some individuals with the active support of people with disabilities. During four days each congress offers lectures, workshops, excursions and cultural activities in a way that the target group itself is as much active as possible. Those encounters empower a group of people who are still often kept behind walls or regulations. By exchanging, networking and helping each other a common social atmosphere is created.

This also affects the accompanying professionals or family members. Congresses for people with disabilities are needed worldwide to unite their power of togetherness and brotherhood for the whole humanity.

ECCE is trying to support this international movement and therefore invited its members to take part at the Brussels Congress during their General Annual Meeting. Those who have done didn't regret!

All organizers of the upcoming congresses worldwide are kindly inviting members of ECCE. Let's join to experience how the "otherwise healthies" are changing the social sphere.

Thomas Kraus (initiator of worldwide congresses) www.in-der-begegnung-leben.eu



INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES YEREVAN, OCTOBER 1-3, 2015

"Mayri" social therapy center, Civil Society Institute (CSI), French-Armenian Development Organization (FADF), Kharberd Children's Home, Pyunik NGO for disabled people, UNISON NGO are initiating Congress for people with developmental problems. The Congress is the first in the history of Armenia and is held in the frames of European Congresses "In der Begegnung Leben", which are now organized worldwide (www.in-der-begegnung-leben.eu). The Congress will be entitled "The art to live".

Congress will give an opportunity for meetings and common activities for people from different cultures of East and West, countries of the world, each of which having their own story of attitude towards "special" people. We would really like the scope of the Congress to be expanded so that guests from different parts of the world were able to come. Thus, we hope to host our friends from European countries as well as visitors from neighborhood region such as Georgia, Iran and Turkey and what is most important, guests from the former Soviet Union, with whom we have lived for many years in the atmosphere which were once real in Soviet society, where people having developmental problems were kept in poor conditions, in remote areas, away from the society.

Our goal is to do everything for the event to attract the attention of society, as well as law enforcement agencies that affect the change in the situation on a large scale in those countries, where mentally disabled people still deprived of basic human rights.

Attitude towards "special" people in Europe also had a complicated history of development, full of obstacles and overcoming. This is the reason that communication with European colleagues is our motivating factor. Integration is one of the greatest values, which is readily transmitted to us by our European colleagues. The existence of such example is infinitely important to maintain fighting spirit in us, confidence in each next step and hope that the result will not belong in coming.

In this regard, as our main objective we put the creation of an atmosphere of creativity, health, joy and deep communication and understanding, which is only possible by methods of genuine art. For this purpose different art and other workshops will be organized where participants will be involved in common activity and results of which will be shown on the last day of the Congress, including preparing of Armenian food for all participants. Besides round table discussions on «Independent, full and resonant life» topic will be organized. At that, it will be good for the workshops and round table discussions to be held not only by our participants but also by the guests of the Congress.

We plan the overall number of the participants to be 100-110 people and are ready to host at least 40 people from different countries. People of the age over 14 are welcome to participate.

The Congress for people with disabilities will be held in Yerevan, on October 1-3, 2015 and we invite all interested parties to join this initiative.



For more information please contact Thomas Kraus www.in-der-begegnung-leben.eu

The ECCE Committee wishes an enjoyable summer to all our members and friends of ECCE.