



ECCE Link

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1. ECCE General Meeting 2021, review

Due to the actual situation of Covid-19 the ECCE General Meeting 2021 again had to be held in form of a „Zoom“ Video Conference on **Saturday, June 26th**.

ECCE was happy to welcome 19 participants; the participation of 4 guests from Portugal and Tenerife was particularly gratifying.

After a short welcome and a spiritual introduction by Michael Dackweiler the organisational, administrative part started with the annual report and the financial report 2020, followed by the re-election of the boardmembers **Thomas Kraus (secretary) and Michael Dackweiler**. Both boardmembers were elected unanimously.



The topic of this General Meeting was **“Contribution on the role of the family in Curative Education and Social Therapy in these days.”**

With the lecture “Relationship of parents to the institutions; how can parents deal with the paradigm shift, f.e. self-determination?” **Michael Mullan** introduced the topic.

Michael approaches the theme by referring to what is expressed in the CRPD-Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and enumerates the principles of the present Convention.

Michael points out that 2 general obligations are closely connected to our field.

1. To promote the training of professionals and staff working with persons with disabilities in the rights recognized in the present Convention so as to better provide the assistance and services guaranteed by those rights.

2. In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations.

These are governing laws that guide our work from the periphery.

The contracting states agree to immediately take effective and appropriate measures to raise awareness of the CRPD.

a) Initiating and maintaining effective public awareness campaigns designed:

1. To nurture receptiveness to the rights of persons with disabilities;

2. To promote positive perceptions and greater social awareness towards persons with disabilities;

3. To promote recognition of the skills, merits and abilities of persons with disabilities, and of their contributions to the workplace and the labour market;

b) Fostering at all levels of the education system, including in all children from an early age, an attitude of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities;

c) Encouraging all organs of the media to portray persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with the purpose of the present Convention;

d) Promoting awareness-training programmes regarding persons with disabilities and the rights of persons with disabilities.

Michael thinks that one of the many errors in which guardians may be entangled is being of the opinion that they know best what is best for their child versus a professional perspective which can see the issue at hand in a different light.

Parents and co-workers should engage themselves in a dialogue about the person in need of care by establishing common ground in that they ask each other "Which ideal do we want to realise"?

Michael communicates that Rudolf Steiner helps us to find such an ideal, when he writes "Live in love for action and let live in the understanding of another person's free will."

☪ ★ ☪

Béatrice Cussac-de Verteuil managed the demanding translation into French very courageously.

Report: Renate Chwatal

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2. ECCE General Meeting 2022, June 18th, Zurich

The General Meeting 2022 is planned to be held after the Congress "Shifting boundaries" June 15-18, 2022 in the center of Zurich, Switzerland.

Please save the date, more information about the ECCE General Meeting 2022 will follow in due time.



3. Congresses are in the air again

Due to the restrictions all congress projects for 2021 had to be postponed. Now its time again to be ready for the next events. The planning is in full swing.

Rudolf Steiner on 18.6.1922 in Dornach from the report on the Congress of Vienna: „Congress was called West East Congress. This is the result of the conviction that today we are simply at that point in time in the civilization of the West in which an understanding of the entire cultural world of the earth must also come, especially from a spiritual background".

100 years later we would like to organize a 2nd Congress in Vienna again to see whether this quote is still relevant or even more important than a century back? At Pentecoste **June 4 – 6, 2022** everybody who intends to take on the impulse of the glorious West East Congress in 1922 is invited to take part in Vienna. Preparations have been going on for 6 years to make this event happen. Soon you will find more details on <https://www.ost-west.wien/>

June 15 – 18, 2022 an inclusive Congress will be organized in Switzerland. Around 500 participants from all around Europe are invited to the Zurich lake. The theme will be „Shifting boundaries“ and will appear in working groups, art performances, keynote speeches and during excursions and in between by socialart.


In fall invitations will be sent around and on the website <https://k21.vahs.ch/en/> you will get further information.

Report: Thomas Kraus



4. Answers of members of ECCE on the following questions in ECCE Link nr 36, April 2021

1. • To what extent do you have the impression that society in your country is already structured in such a way that persons with special needs, f.e. your son, daughter, brother or sister can lead as full a life as possible?
2. • To which aspects should society pay attention to enable their inclusion?

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3. • Does your society today offer sufficient support to persons with special needs?
 4. • Do you experience that persons with special needs have the same opportunities in your society as other people, f.e. concerning living conditions and freedom of choice?
 5. • Are persons with special needs in your society treated with respect and not discriminated against?
 6. • How can we improve society's attitude towards persons with special needs?
 7. • Do children receive education regarding the rights of persons with special needs?
 8. • Do persons with special needs receive accessible information about their rights and things that can be helpful to them?
 9. • Are there enough suitable places where persons with special needs can do meaningful work?

In summary, the responses are as follows:

In general

Societies are structured different compared with the situation f.e. 50 years ago. For handicapped children it is in some countries possible to visit school together with all other children or in special schools for individual help. Adult people with special needs are in general recognised as self-competent members of society and societies strive for realising self-determination of people with special needs.

Despite the fact, that these forward-looking goals are a general agreement nowadays there remains a lot of work if societies really want to enable each person with special needs to lead as full a life as possible. The financial support should really be self-evident and unquestioned - as a minimum base to realise a small piece of inclusion in society.

Maybe two striking aspects are important for assessing life quality: On the one hand the opportunity to live in an encouraging community. And on the other hand especially for handicapped people the possibility to have helpful assistance whenever needed, for a full radius of action without discrimination.

There exist many encouraging communities and they should be developed in a good way to preserve this treasure for the future or to be able to found new communities. But concerning personal assistance there is still missing a lot and if we want no more discrimination of people with special needs in society there will be enormous work and financial efforts to realise personal assistance in community life. Today so many things are unreachable for handicapped people because of missing personal assistance.

Dealing with people with disabilities in a dignified way requires adjustments to the culture of society, to the inner attitude of people towards each other and that requires perseverance from those who pursue this and will certainly take some time! Environment and independent living (in residential or only-daytime context): personal care and environment's care is a fundamental theme. It's necessary to learn new social skills, to perceive one's "own boundary", to know how to respect the needs and expectations of other people and to be available to build a relationship of trust. There may be a desire to collaborate in running the house, taking on large and small responsibilities that allow to establish a sense of autonomy. It's necessary that social and emotional environment can welcome the disabled person and his life path, taking care of him or her first of all by recognizing his or her uniqueness and value, and abandoning the welfare perspective which is still predominant today. It is also necessary to create favorable conditions for the person requesting help and to build a welcoming, inclusive and meaningful environment in which the personal contribution of the person with disabilities can be recognized, valued and welcomed.

France - Bernadette Bernier

It is difficult to give a general answer to these questions. For most people with disabilities, society tries to meet their needs as best it can, taking into account their wishes. Carers have a role to play in making specific needs visible and informing about opportunities. As for discrimination, it is difficult to give a general answer. In most situations people with disabilities are respected and supported and you don't notice discriminatory attitudes or words.

The improvement of society's attitude is linked to the links created from person to person, this attitude starts in the family circle, neighbourhood, village.

People with special needs receive information about their rights and what can be useful to them, but it depends on the accompanying persons, families who are in the first line to support them in this process.

The number of jobs for people with special needs has increased. These workplaces are related to the care of nature, garden, factory, in short useful work for society. In the social therapy homes, the importance is given to the meaning of work (this concerns people in great difficulty who need to be in a protected environment). The number of places does not seem to be sufficient if we consider the increase of people with specific needs (with psychic disorders); the waiting lists are growing every year, but the number of agencies is insufficient.

Italy - *Roberta Tazzioli and Luisa Valeria Sapia, Katia Delpiano*

in Anthroposophical institutions a lot is done in order to support the possibility to express needs and choices, and this represents a pillar of the work that is done there.

In Anthroposophical institutions, inclusion is performed primarily by creating situations where people with special needs can put into practice their own qualities, skills and talents, as well as be creative in their social environment. Art, work, care for others, care for the environment, abilities in specific tasks are the key to build a bridge towards inclusion.

Much is done in all school institutions, since education is always performed inclusively throughout school age, therefore all children directly experience having classmates with special needs sharing everyday activities.

The law requires that a certain percentage of people with special needs is employed in firms and workplaces. However, it often happens that people with physical disabilities have the chance to find a suitable workplace more easily than those with intellectual disabilities. In anthroposophical institutions, different workshops are set up to provide a variety of work experiences, however the number of such institutions is still limited.

In Italy there are several services dedicated to the insertion of the disabled person into the labour market:

(1) specific job placement service with the obligation to hire workers with low mobility in companies and public administration;

(2) "type B cooperatives", or social integration cooperatives, deal with the reintegration of disadvantaged people through any business activity (agricultural, industrial, commercial or services), allocating part of the jobs, thus created, to people which would be otherwise excluded from labour market. These cooperatives mainly deal with green maintenance or company cleaning, but lately this sector has suffered due to a general decrease in resources/funds by public administrations.

Unfortunately, workers with disabilities are often seen as an additional cost, rather than as an opportunity or a resource, and the use of these people is limited only to a specific target of disabilities (deaf and blind) especially in public administrations, while in the private sector the possibilities are still very limited.

Switzerland - *Mattias Spalinger, Christian Gaegauf and Barbara Schmitz*

To be able to lead a self-determined life with assistance outside of the institutions, the financing system must still be greatly changed and simplified. As long as persons with a disability want to live in institutions, a lot of support is possible. To be able to lead a self-determined life with assistance outside of the institutions, the financing system must still be greatly changed and simplified. But as well the training of the assistants and the social acceptance must still be strongly developed. There are still many prejudices and a great lack of knowledge. There are only a few possibilities for people with support needs to find meaningful work that is tailored to their possibilities and needs; there is still a lot of room for improvement in the areas of living, work and leisure. For example, it is often not easy to find a suitable form of living, especially if a person with a disability is relatively independent. Many adults with disabilities still live with their parents because there is no other place to live that would really suit them. This prevents independence living.

There are lacks of living in neighborhoods where people with and without disabilities live together. When it comes to leisure activities, the offer is also very limited. "Insieme", a Swiss organization for people with special needs, offers a few courses, but in the countryside, it is difficult and if you want inclusive offers, there is actually nothing to be found.

Austria - *Renate Chwatal, 2 Austrian parents, 1 self-advocate and Patrik Berger*

Society should always remind itself that people with special needs are full-fledged people and that it is not performance that determines a person's worth but their humanity. More mindfulness towards the individual, more solidarity, greater awareness and more responsibility towards those who provide services that cannot be measured in figures or money.

Our society offers a lot of support, but it takes a lot more resources, like money and time. However, it would also be desirable: more media presence, more sheltered workshops, more financial support for art therapy and for artistic activities, because through this activity people, who are often disabled in their verbal expression, express themselves. A greater financial incentive for firms hiring people with special needs. Funding for the construction of simple Personal Computers, more information, awareness and support for the possibilities of "supported communication". Sports clubs should do more to help these people. Persons with physical handicaps can be integrated easier than mentally disabled persons.

When these people need help there is willingness, it depends very much on their environment.

There is respect where persons with special needs are familiar. The cause of disrespectful behavior can also be found in great uncertainty and a lack of knowledge. We should pay attention to spiritual development of society combined with social work and solidarity - this means to develop empathy to be open for the needs of others. Maybe arts, religion and science can be a key for that. We should also learn to really listen to all people with special needs.

We should enable persons with disabilities to go out and participate everywhere in social life. There is still much to be done to improve information! And to know about rights and helpful things is one thing but to implement the right is a question of missing resources.

There are many places where they can do meaningful work. In these places there may often be some struggle because of scarce personal resources but there are also very dedicated employees. So the situation can be improved anyway.

The responses are summarized by Bernard Heldt

5. The ELIANT Alliance

The co-workers and supporters of the *European Alliance of Initiatives for Applied Anthroposophy/ELIANT* seek to make a civic contribution towards improving the quality of life and cultural diversity in Europe. The motto for our work comes from Goethe's Fairy Tale: "The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily."

"One alone does not help, but rather he who unites with others at the right time."

Human dignity and individual development are core values of the European culture. In order to realize these values politically, the European civil society not only needs the democratically guaranteed freedom of choice. Rather, it needs the availability to choose from a variety of choices - especially in the areas of parenting, education, healthcare, different forms of medical substances as well as the support of children and adults with special needs in inclusive education, work and living.

Our options in these areas are still quite limited. What is accepted in one country is often not recognised elsewhere in the EU. This also applies to some of the cultural initiatives that have grown out of Rudolf Steiner's applied anthroposophy during the course of the 20th century.

In order to maintain the variety of choices in each country and make this effective throughout Europe, the umbrella organisations representing the initiatives of applied anthroposophy have come together to form the ELIANT Alliance. Together with partners who share similar objectives they seek to strengthen value focused and ecologically minded projects and cultural initiatives in Europe.

ECCE is also a founding member of ELIANT since June 2006 and colleagues and parents in the curative education and social therapy movement have participated in actions of ELIANT, like the action to collect more than 1 million signatures in support of the Alliance Charter in 2010-2011, and the petition for digital free conditions to grow up healthy in early childhood. For it is important for children to first experience and learn to know the world with all their senses, in order to provide the right neurological and social conditions to learn to use the digital tools in the best possible way when the time is right according to the development of the child.

For future collaboration it is important to bring questions and concerns that we have about the freedom of choice and the rights of people with special needs to the awareness of politicians and civil rights activists in Europe. ELIANT is there to support us, so we need to inform the ELIANT team. Please send your questions and concerns to Bart Vanmechelen: b.vanmechelen@ecce.eu.

All further information about ELIANT can be found on the website: <https://eliant.eu/en/home/>

Report: Bart Vanmechelen



6. Acceptance – Resonance – Communities of Choice

Autumn conference of the Curative Education and Social Therapy movement
inspired by the 9th lecture of the Curative Education Course from Rudolf Steiner
7-9 October 2021 in Dornach, Switzerland

We warmly invite you to the upcoming **inclusive autumn conference** at the Goetheanum!

In the conference, we will be working freely with themes that appear in the 9th lecture. We want to understand and learn how we can live and work together, as people who are different from each other. Rudolf Steiner calls this capacity “spirit self”.

After the good experiences of the last few months with digital formats, we want to get everyone involved. We would like to meet - and preferably in person - for three days in the **Carpentry Building at the Goetheanum**.

But we also offer opportunities to participate **digitally**. This is for all those people who can't travel that far.

The conference planning has been developed in collaboration with a new group of younger co-workers. We hope that this will inspire younger people in particular to take an interest in our topics. Come and join us!

All further information as well as details about the program can be found on our website: <https://inclusivesocial.org/en/event/autumn-conference-2021/>

We look forward to seeing you – both near and far away.

Bart Vanmechelen



ECCE wishes a lovely and relaxing summertime to all of you!

