



Recognising that people with learning disabilities have the same inherent dignity, equality and inalienable rights as all people makes us create a new concept of human relationships. This new concept – sustainable inclusion - starts with expanding and improving the quality of comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Sustainable Inclusion means an approach that will guarantee a successful and durable setting of education and life for children with learning disabilities. The decisive factor will be a change in the attitude of all citizens towards the respectful recognition and association with individuals with disabilities in a multiform and multicultural society. Real inclusion means participation. This is only

possible if everyone in society is willing to do his bit. Children with disabilities can become adults with a happy life, if they are surrounded by people who are happy that they are there!

1. In order to bring about sustainable inclusion, legal measures and rights are a necessary condition, yet this is not enough. The decisive factor will be the social quality of human relations in a society where the fundamental human values as freedom, dignity and justice are respected. Rights can open doors, but not hearts!

2. Appropriate learning and life-skills programs have to be equally accessible for children with learning disabilities. Correct learning and training conditions, as well as positively valued work, have a beneficial effect on every individual. National legislation should aim at creating stimulating and supportive conditions for the lives and development of children and adults with learning disabilities, enabling them to enjoy their fundamental rights as citizens of the European Union.

3. All citizens of the European Union have the right to be educated, to work, to move and to reside freely within the Member States. These rights have to be expressed in a convenient and simple way for disabled citizens, even if specific legislative or insurance frameworks are needed.

4. However many good ideas and ideals we may have about civic friendship and sustainable inclusion, children and adolescents with learning disabilities still need professional - sometimes very comprehensive - support. Don't abandon them in the urban jungle!

5. Not everyone can keep up with the pace and conditions of ordinary daily life, at all times and in all situations. A large variety of schools and social settings providing proper facilities should be offered as valid multiform choices in every European country and should become an integrated and complementary part of the social fabric. Workshops where disabled and non-disabled adolescents can be trained, should be set up.

6. People with learning disabilities are free to live their lives according to their own ideals and choices and should not become included in an ideological way.

To be like anyone else

John, a teacher, obtains two tickets to attend a very important football match. He invites 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. 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 situations like this, we see that we have to change our point of view. For Paul, to meet the great champion and shake hands was not the main thing. The most important event for him was to meet Mark at the football match. It showed he is just like other boys.

Ecce: Postbox 560 NL-3700 AN Zeist

tel: + 31 30 694 55 40 fax: + 31 30 694 55 90 e-mail: ecce@ecce.eu website: www.ecce.eu

Ecce represents both 450 organisations for anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy and the family associations around them