



Concept Paper

European Conference
Planning Inclusive Communities:
Challenges and Strategies of Local Implementation of the UN Convention on Rights
of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

27-28 March 2014

Siegen, Germany

1. Introduction

This paper will present the political and professional context of the 'Planning Inclusive Communities' conference which will take place on 27th and 28th March 2014 in Siegen, Germany. It will outline the main topics the conference is going to address, and end with an overview and description of the programme.

2. Political and professional context

In order to contribute to the process of diffusion of local implementation processes of the UNCRPD the 'Planning Inclusive Communities' conference will focus on the concepts and practices for its application in municipalities, communities and local entities.

Today nearly all European countries and the European Union itself have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and thus have committed themselves to its implementation 'with all available resources'. The UN CPRD formulates no additional human rights for people with disabilities, but rather specifies the general standards of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of earlier conventions for the perspective of persons with disabilities and introduces 'inclusion' as of its key principles. In order to make the abstract principle of inclusion usable for implementation ZPE, University of Siegen (Rohrmann /Schädler et al. 2013), developed the concept of the 'inclusive community'.

This is a community planning concept, in which under the political leadership of local governments relevant actors start to work towards 'inclusive community' on the basis of the specific conditions of their local situation and culture. The concept suggests the use of participative forms of social planning initiate local development strategies. It structures the planning processes in five dimensions:

- The development of participation and self-representation of people with disabilities. This includes in particular the cultural self-representation in public spaces.
- Sensitivity and awareness regarding the development of an inclusive culture which refers not only to people with disabilities, but to all people who are at risk of exclusion.
- Improving accessibility and usability of spaces through the overcoming of barriers.
- The inclusive design of educational facilities and other services of public life (mainstreaming).
- The planning and development of flexible and inclusive oriented support services for people with disabilities.

The planning concept 'Inclusive community' refers to politically defined local entities such as municipalities or districts. The concept also recognises that local communities are often socially fragmented. People with very different lifestyles, political interest, positions, and cultural orientations use local spaces and services. Regardless the differences however, all share some common needs and interests such as a good public service infrastructure, for instance.

To satisfy the various needs of the citizens, the implementation of UN CRPD needs a multi-level approach, in which European, national and regional actors have clear responsibilities, e.g. for inclusive legal frameworks and strong entitlements for socially vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities. The experience so far has showed that the implementation of UN CRPD in practice depends heavily on the work of municipalities. This is due to their connections with the day-to-day life of citizens and their responsibility for services of general public interest. The roles and responsibilities of the municipalities' range from energy and water supply, to hospitals, social housing, public transport to educational, cultural, sporting and social services. In these areas key challenges of implementing inclusive principle become real.

From the intensive discussions in many European countries it becomes obvious that there is a level of uncertainty on how to approach and solve issues rising in local governments as well as in the local civil society and service provider organisations. So far the ratification of the UN CRPD by the national governments has not led to legal obligations for lower state levels to have formal responsibility and accountability to implement the Convention. However, pressure is growing on policy-makers because in many regions initiatives from the local Civil Societies are lobbying with good arguments and widespread public backing for local action to implement the UN CRPD. By research and development activities, academic and institutes are working to develop first concepts and tools for local implementation of the UN CPRD. Such example is the commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs in Northrhine-Westfalia, Germany, Manual for Planning Local Communities that was composed by ZPE, University of Siegen, which will be presented at this conference. Still, in many local communities actors are unsure about questions on how local implementation efforts could look like in their context of local self-administration. How can participation of vulnerable groups be realised in planning processes? And what would a mainstreaming concept mean for specialised services and services providers that often are conceptually and institutionally rooted in developmental paths that have no definite inclusive orientation?

To address these questions we need to understand the implementation of UN CRPD as a political innovation for local governments and local civil society. In this sense, local communities face the challenge to integrate the new ideas and new practices coming from the UN CPRD in their structures. Some local communities have already developed strategies for local implementation of the UN CPRD trying to apply social planning concepts and e.g. work out 'local inclusion plans'. Successful diffusion of such activities would mean that more and more local governments make the decision to adopt the UN CPRD and implement it in a way most suitable for their specific conditions.

A study by ZPE, University of Siegen (2013) indicates that the way the CRPD is received on a local level in the different countries depends to a high degree on the general cultural and political frameworks. They are determining the overall development path of disability political topics in a country. For instance, communities in Nordic countries which have a stronger tradition of response to international legal frameworks are more likely to respond to the detailed implementation of the CRPD than communities in countries where there the tradition is not as strong. At the same time, despite negative experiences with planning in the past, in some of the Central and Eastern European transformation countries it is obligatory that there are planning structures in the local communities with participation structures that recognise disability organisations.

The UN CRPD can be seen as a social innovation which can be "re-invented" in the process of adoption in

every implementing community. The major differences in the way of reception of the UN CRPD indicate that there is 'room to manoeuvre' for the adopting community and that the path determination is not limiting special developments in an intense way. This observation of varieties in adopting the Convention is important because it underlines the potential of exchange of experiences and knowledge between local governments on national and European level.

To the same degree in which the UN CRPD in the political and social discourse is perceived as important in a country or a political level, it can be used for the interests of stakeholders in the different contexts. Successful inclusion is more likely to happen when stakeholders who are active in disability politics, political decision makers, and other community activists collaborate to use the Convention to achieve specific political actions.

Therefore with this conference we would like to enable a discussion between relevant stakeholders on the development of effective pathways to inclusive communities based on political responsibility, active citizenship, and stakeholder participation. A special attention will be given to the role of service providers in the building of inclusive environment for all and the challenges they face in this process. The conference will provide opportunities for the different stakeholders to exchange experiences, as well as to present innovative local planning instruments and a wide range of examples of inclusive practices in rural and urban regions. Conference elements like 'market of possibilities' and 'open forums' will offer participants possibilities to bring in their own experiences and give options for regional, national and European networking.

3. Programme overview

After the opening session that involves the conference partners and European level stakeholders which will present their views in an open discussion, two key-note presentations will provide an introduction in the conference topics, underlining the challenges of multi-level implementation of the UN CPRD and the possibilities of planning approaches. The plenary session will continue with presentation and debate on the dilemmas that service providers face with inclusive prescriptions in unstable economic and political environments. After lunch we will learn about three approaches on how local communities can be supported in their implementation activities for UN CPRD.

The day will continue with the 'Market of possibilities' which showcase selected municipal planning activities and facilitate networking between the conference delegates.

Then participants are invited to join a one of the organised workshops:

Workshop 1 Planning inclusive communities and economic crisis

Basic idea: Present and discuss strategic options for service provision under economic threats and consequences for local infrastructure with reference to Art 4 from UN CPRD:

Workshop 2 Community planning in a multi-level perspective

Basic idea: Panel Discussion with representatives of different government levels referring especially to Art. 4 and 5 from UN CRPD

Workshop 3 Ombudspersons, co-ordinators, disability councils - experiences with institutionalized participation in community structures

Basic idea: Presentation of experiences at local or regional level referring to UN CRPD Art. 4 and Article 29

Workshop 4 Participation of people with disabilities in community planning processes

Basic idea: Presentation of experiences on local or regional level referring to UN CRPD Art. 4, Article 29

Workshop 5 Awareness raising and planning inclusive communities

Basic idea: Presentation of experiences on local or regional level referring to UN CRPD Art. 8

Workshop 6 Accessible infrastructure and planning inclusive communities

Basic idea: Presentation of experiences on local or regional level referring to UN CRPD Article 9

Workshop 7 Inclusive education and community planning

Basic idea: Presentation of experiences on local or regional level referring to Article 24

Workshop 8 Developing inclusive arrangements in services for the general population /participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

Basic idea: Presentation of experiences on local or regional level referring to UN CRPD Article 19, Article 30

Workshop 9 Community services and planning inclusive communities

Basic idea: Presentation of experiences on local or regional level referring to Article 19

Workshop 10 Employment services and inclusive community planning

Basic idea: Presentation of experiences on local or regional level referring to Article 27: Work and employment:

Workshop 11 Mental Health Services and Community Planning

Basic idea: Presentation of experiences on local or regional level referring to UN CRPD Article 17 and Article 19

Workshop 12 Inclusive Internet and Community Planning

Basic idea: Explore the role of accessibility of information and information technologies

The day will end with a reception of the District of Siegen and the conference dinner in the 'Siegerlandhalle' in the city centre. The second conference day, the 28th March, will start with European perspectives presented by key European actors. This part will be followed by the 'Open Forum' with supported discussion at prepared tables in small groups. The topics for these discussion tables will be determined from the result of the keynote presentations and the suggestions of the conference delegates. The final keynote presentation will address the challenges of implementation of UN CPRD in European communities. The closing session moderated by the EASPD Secretary General, Mr Luk Zelderloo, will focus on a conference outcomes and recommendations to policy-makers and practitioners. In the afternoon, there will be an Open Meeting dedicated to the establishment of a European Research Knowledge Network on Planning Inclusive Communities, following the principles of UN CRPD.

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