

Launch of project on Improving Assistance in Inclusive Educational Settings.

The way disabled pupils are supported can make or break their school experience and, ultimately, their life chances. A new project has been launched, exploring the range of support offered in different education systems. Learning and support assistants in Europe have different names and disparate roles: from “care managers” in Belgium with a well-defined qualification profile, “school assistants” with no qualification profile in Austria, “Teacher Assistant” and so on. With support from the European Union’s ERASMUS+ fund, the IMAS project aims to establish a common framework to analyze the work, career and conditions of these assistants in Europe. Furthermore, it will analyze the current state of the learning and support assistants’ job environment in the partner countries and work towards an ideal version to support disabled students rights foreseen the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with disabilities.

The Kick-off meeting of IMAS took place in Gleisdorf, Austria on the 10th and 11th November, in the premises of [Chance B](#), the project coordinator. The project is funded by the ERASMUS+ program and counts with 5 partners: [CSIE](#) (United Kingdom), [ARCIL](#) (Portugal), [EASPD](#) (Belgium), [Agency Vision](#) (Bulgaria) and [TENENET](#) (Slovakia).

During the kick-off meeting the partners exchanged practices of the various countries regarding inclusive education in schools and especially the role and conditions of learning and support assistants in each country’s educational system. They also agreed on the specific dimensions to study and compare the role of learning and support assistant.

The kick-off meeting included a study visit to St. Margarethen Primary school to observe *in loco* the work of learning and support assistants in Austria. The partners considered the kick-off meeting a success with **Michael Longino**, from Chance B (project coordinator), stating that *“learning and support assistants play a crucial role in flowering out the potentials of children in inclusive educational systems. Furthermore they help to ensure human rights in the light of UN-CRPD, like participation, autonomy and self-determination in classrooms. The highly motivated project start makes me believe, that this partnership will contribute to further develop and professionalize systems for learning support across Europe and therefore will bring benefit to assistants and children in inclusive educational settings.”*

Luk Zelderloo, EASPD’s secretary General affirmed that *“learning and support assistants are the centerpieces of an inclusive educational system. Creating conditions to empower these professionals in line with UN CRPD is essential.”*

Artemi Sakellariadis, CSIE director, said: *“We are delighted to be part of this project and look forward to making a positive contribution to the way pupil support is organised in schools.”*

Janeta Georgieva, President of the Agency for Social Development "Vision" stated: *“Chance B decided to lead this project as all children have the right to education, and therefore, the project will seek to further promote equality, accessibility of educational settings and provision of a common qualification profile in order to deliver quality services all over Europe. Furthermore, the organisation's partnership with EASPD - the largest European umbrella organisation representing more than 12 000 social service providers across Europe - is a prerequisite for fulfilling successfully the project aims and tasks.”*

Elena Kopcová, CEO of TENENET, pointed that *“TENENET (NGO) is aware of importance of the inclusive education not only for better socialization and inclusion of children with disabilities, but also for their future life - their chances for employment inclusion, independent living and better quality of their life.”*

João Canossa Dias, from ARCIL declared: *“ARCIL, with its 40 years of experience promoting Inclusion and believing in the potential of human diversity, expects that this project will help our organizations learning and improving in partnership.”*

The project will run until November 2017 and a follow-up project, with the aim to further develop this important tool and broaden its scope, is already in consideration.

Related documents

- Project Website
- Project agenda
- Press release : Launch of Improving Assistance in Inclusive Educational Settings project!

Note to editors

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The European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities is a non-profit European umbrella organization, established in 1996, and currently representing over 12,000 social and health services for persons with disabilities. EASPD advocates for effective and high-quality disability-related services in the field of education, employment and individualised support, in line with the UN CRPD principles, which could bring benefits not only to persons with disabilities, but to society as a whole.

For more information, please contact:

Michael Longhino

IMAS Project Coordinator

T. +43 3112 4911-2114

michael.longhino@chanceb.at

www.chanceb.at



André Félix

EASPD Events Officer

T. +32 2 233 77 20

andre.felix@easpd.eu

www.easpd.eu



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