



MANIFESTO ON INCLUSIVE LEARNING: WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NOW?



Principles and values

The:

- ✦ UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 24, Education)
- ✦ Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education (1994)
- ✦ Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights), Article 2 Right to Education.
- ✦ European Social Charter (revised), Articles 15 and 17
- ✦ Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 (Action Line 4, Education, and cross-cutting aspects)
- ✦ European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (Area of Action 5, Education and training)

all clearly state that all persons with a disability (and their families) have the right to:

- ✦ equal opportunities and high quality appropriate education to maximize their potential, and to participate in and contribute fully to an inclusive society
- ✦ choose and receive education in an inclusive environment
- ✦ specific resources and expertise to meet their educational, therapeutic and citizenship needs
- ✦ services which at all times act in their best interest.

Inclusive learning:

- ✦ requires a shared vision and strong leadership.
- ✦ is a lifelong process where mainstream settings are transformed so that all learners are supported to reach their personal academic and social potential.
- ✦ removes barriers in assessment, teaching and curriculum, communication, and the environment.
- ✦ includes a holistic dynamic system with a continuum of options, where special educational settings and the competence developed by disability organisations will increasingly become a source of expertise available to the wider education and community services.
- ✦ requires an individualised approach, depending on the best interest of the person and may include specialized educational support in specific settings.
- ✦ is not only an issue for persons with disabilities. It is part of an 'inclusion for all' approach where every learner is valued. Particular attention should be given to ethnic, cultural and religious minorities.
- ✦ does not deny individual difference, but celebrates and accommodates it. It is part of an 'education for all' approach where all children and adults, can and should be educated together. It results in an enriching experience for all learners.

Any system, normal or special, putting people in categories, will discriminate them.

As long as we think in terms of 'we' and 'they', real inclusion is not possible.

(Inge Ranschaert, Teacher trainer on special needs, Belgium)

- ✦ means that pupils with special education needs should not only receive their education in a mainstream school, but also that they should fully join with their peers in the curriculum and life of the school rather than be isolated in special classes.
- ✦ requires a shift of policy focus, from special education to responding to the diversity within mainstream schooling for all students.
- ✦ must reflect deeply held values of respect for diversity, rights, equity and participation.
- ✦ is a responsibility for all.

The daily reality

There is an increased awareness both of the educational potential and the citizen's rights dimension of inclusive education. There have been changes in educational, youth welfare and social laws to support learners with special educational needs to be educated in inclusive settings.

However, there are still fundamental barriers to inclusive education. For example, in some countries the majority of mainstream school buildings do not comply with accessibility standards. In addition, assistive transport is often only provided to special schools and, although adaptive technology is available in most of the inclusive settings, very often the knowledge, competence and creativity to apply, adapt and use the technology is still lacking.

The education of teachers for learners with special educational needs is still dominated by the special school's perspective, especially in countries with a strong tradition of special education, and it is still a major challenge to find intelligent ways of categorization of learners that allows access to additional support in mainstream educational settings without producing segregation and stigma.

So, there is much to be done. Even what has been achieved is under threat because of the economic crisis across Europe. There are very worrying examples of arbitrary cost cutting and short termism. Some children do not get the right education and some, especially those with more severe disabilities, get no education at all.

Strategic investment is all the more important in times of financial crisis. Inclusive lifelong learning is not only a right, but also crucial to achieving growth and jobs, social inclusion and active citizenship. Lifelong learning allows people to acquire key competences and to update skills throughout their lives. The 'Pathways to Inclusion' partners, and EASPD as a whole want, in this Budapest Manifesto, to stress both the general importance of an inclusive lifelong learning approach and also to make specific recommendations to all key stakeholders.

Every person has different needs and it is only through constant consultation with people with disabilities that we can learn the best strategies for effective inclusion. Each service provider or institution that listens to my story will understand how vital education is for me and others like me. We must keep listening and talking together, and together we can change the world, one step at a time.

(Julie O' Leary, Student, Ireland)

Recommendations for all stakeholders

- ✦ Affirm their commitment to implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 24 in particular), the Europe 2020 strategy (the social cohesion objective in particular), the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015.
- ✦ Promote positive attitudes towards inclusion.
- ✦ Ensure persons with disability should not become the first victims of the economic crises, losing what has already been gained but, instead, have increased opportunities to participation education and society.

Specific commitment of EASPD

EASPD will:

- ✦ contribute to a European policy position on inclusive learning, consistent with the obligations of the UNCRPD.
- ✦ provide information, models of good practices and support to member organisations.
- ✦ promote positive attitudes towards inclusion, diversity, partnership and network opportunities.
- ✦ organise and promote professional networking and exchange events at a European level, and always involving disability organisations.
- ✦ regularly review these commitments as part of EASPD's Strategic plan.

Particular recommendations for politicians and policy makers

Authorities at regional, national and international levels should:

- ✦ develop frameworks and policies that create a culture within education that celebrates diversity. They should do this in co-operation with persons with special needs, parents, health professionals, social workers, special educators and other key stakeholders.
- ✦ develop, at the European level, a positive approach towards inclusive learning as a part of the EU and Council of Europe strategies, with particular reference to policies on lifelong learning, social inclusion, anti-discrimination, citizenship.
- ✦ facilitate sustainable European networks with EU funding, enabling educational professionals to share good practice in inclusive learning.
- ✦ develop European web based resource banks and knowledge centres, with funding from the EU, to support different aspects of inclusive learning.

- ✦ replace institutionalised structures that are focussed on special education by inclusion oriented systems.
- ✦ use instruments, such as the P2i barometer, to compare and monitor the evolution of inclusive education and training.
- ✦ keep reliable data on the incidence, effectiveness and comparative costs of inclusive and segregated education.
- ✦ develop an action plan to reform the existing educational system, including funding for transition costs. This should closely link to deinstitutionalisation policies.
- ✦ promote, at European level, international innovative projects across the range from early support and pre-school through to higher education and lifelong learning.
- ✦ provide multidisciplinary assessment and support services which are free of charge across a person's lifetime, with a particular focus on transition periods in schooling.
- ✦ provide the resources for high quality individualised inclusive learning.
- ✦ offer early intervention and family support, beginning before the birth of a child with disabilities.
- ✦ offer free education for all from the age of 3 years.
- ✦ provide properly funded professional development to help existing school staff become more aware of the principles of inclusive education and better able to make it happen.
- ✦ promote the use of organisational self-assessment tools, such as the 'Index for Inclusion', at national and local levels.
- ✦ help existing special settings and special schools to make the transition towards resource centres which support mainstream educational settings become more inclusive.

Everybody has the tendency to exclude. However, after good counselling and with sufficient supervision a lot is possible.

If we do not say YES to the child, inclusion will not work. (Of course, having doubts is normal!)

(Rita Schaffrinna, Head master, Germany)

Inclusion is not a simple "either/or" option. If it is not done properly then the child or young person with a disability can be isolated.

(Katherine O' Leary, mother, Ireland)

- ✦ provide specialised resources for children with highly complex educational needs within the inclusive school system.
- ✦ reform the teacher training system to enable future teachers/trainers and school staff to create an inclusive school system.
- ✦ organise and promote support and joint learning opportunities for all stakeholders especially in key areas such as assistive technology, communication methods and multi-disciplinary team work.

Particular recommendations for individual organisations

Each individual organisation (specialised and mainstream) should:

- ✦ work with persons with disabilities, their families, representative organisations, trade unions and the authorities to produce a strategy to create an inclusive learning system.
- ✦ promote positive attitudes towards inclusion.
- ✦ develop a 'supportive culture' ethos which celebrates and supports all diversity, replacing the traditional concept and potentially stigmatising system of 'additional support' often associated with students with special education needs.
- ✦ use self-evaluation instruments to develop reflective practice in schools and to support the process of change.
- ✦ provide learning opportunities to facilitate the process of transition for staff from segregated settings, which also ensures their expertise can be used in an inclusive environment.
- ✦ prepare future teachers and trainers to work in an inclusive environment.
- ✦ use a person- and family-centred approach for each learner.
- ✦ Encourage a team based and joint school learning approach.
- ✦ establish networks to exchange good practice.
- ✦ facilitate a problem free process of transition through each key stage.

Educational policies and strategies should clearly state that inclusion is both a process and a goal which requires the development of inclusive practices. Educational policies and systems should take into account the needs of all people in the planning, financing, monitoring and evaluation of all education strategies. The main goal of inclusive learning should be the achievement of full potential which enables every person to fully participate in society.

*Inclusive education and learning: Challenges and opportunities
Budapest, 13th-14th September 2012*

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



This publication is sponsored by the Progress programme of the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. It reflects the view only of the author and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.