INCLUSION OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES: BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

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WHAT IS A DISABILITY?

"Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments…"

- The extent to which these impairments disable someone depends on the **barriers encountered in society** - *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

- Over a billion people - about 15% of the world's population, have some form of disability (WHO) – this means 1 in 7

SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

Problem lies with the **society**; many disabilities are created by the exclusive social systems and barriers

Badly Designed Buildings
Hypocrisy
No Parking Spaces
Segregated Education
Poverty and low Income
Lack of Enablers

Inaccessible Transport
Isolated Families
No Lifts
Prejudiced Attitudes
Poor Job Prospects

- Serious barriers to full enjoyment of rights are not a disability per se, but social, cultural, **attitudinal** and physical barriers

WHAT IS DISABLISM?

- Discriminatory, oppressive behaviour arising from the belief that disabled people are inferior to others

- Form of oppression in the same way as racism, sexism and homophobia

- Often on an unconscious level.
  - Example: people say they are fully accepting of people with disabilities, but then occupy the parking spaces designed for people with disabilities.

PRE-REQUISITES FOR PARTICIPATION

1. Access to structures

2. Competences
   (skills, attitudes and knowledge)

3. Access to information

4. Motivation

5. Resources
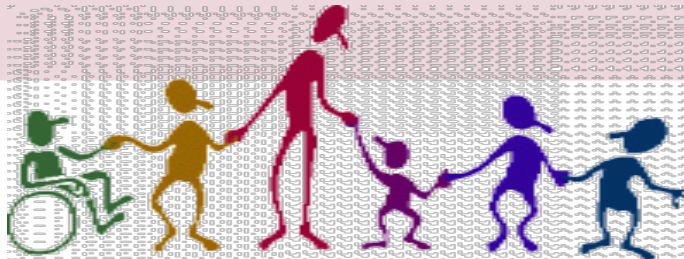
KEY CHALLENGES

PERCEPTION

- Not a homogeneous group -> a variety of approaches
- Sensitive issue - dealing with vulnerability, stigma and power relations
- Discussions on inclusion often miss out youth with disabilities
- Deciding for youth with disabilities and/or making **pre-assumptions** about their capacity
- Lack of representation by youth with disabilities

KEY CHALLENGES

YOUTH with disabilities:

- Low self-esteem
- Lack of competences and capacity
- Overprotective families
- Limited access to education, vocational training and employment
- Lack of visibility – to achieve rights, a certain level of visibility is needed
- Welfare benefits: more for children than for the period of transition (18-25/30)
- Lack of information about event/programme accessibility – or sometimes the fear of *in*accessibility – prevents from participation

KEY CHALLENGES

YOUTH organisations:

- Lack of facilities, access, relevant skills and knowledge related to working with youth with disabilities

- Seeing a disability and not a person

- Fear/ reluctance of working with disability

- Work with or for youth with disabilities is not considered "sexy"

- Lack of projects **by** youth with disabilities and **with** youth with disabilities - mostly for them

KEY CHALLENGES

YOUTH in policy context:

- There is a legal distinction between child and adult, but the transition phase is often forgotten
- Both disability and youth are not mainstreamed in policies
- There is limited information regarding the direct impact of (generic) EU policies on people with disabilities, young people with disabilities alone

SOLUTIONS?

- **Non-formal education**, skills-based training and voluntary work
  - NFE: Flexibility, variety of forms/methods, focus on individual needs **-> more inclusive** for young people with disabilities!

- Self-advocacy
- Putting youth with disabilities in leadership positions
- Giving young people with disabilities the roles of resource persons on disability or mainstream projects
- Involving youth with disabilities in program planning
- Supporting DPOs to do capacity training of youth organisations

IFHOHYP study session „*How to cope with discrimination & violence in education and employment*" by, with and for hard of hearing youth
European Youth Centre, 2006

ENIL study session
„*Countering multiple discrimination by youth with disabilities*"
European Youth Centre, 2014

SOLUTIONS?

- Informed, flexible universal accessibility solutions (example – text on screen)
- Make youth with disabilities **visible!** – this is the only way to change attitudes
- Promoting a dynamic image of young people with disabilities
- Exposing youth to disability issues e.g. in intercultural learning and human rights education programmes

SOLUTIONS?

- Dual approach:
  - disability-specific programmes
  - programmes inclusive of youth with disabilities

- Introducing disability as *a cross-cutting issue* in the programmes + disability as a target group
- Promoting participation of youth with disabilities in generic programmes
- Support research on youth with disabilities
- Evidence-based policy-making

SOLUTIONS?

- Work towards mainstreaming of disability in all youth issues, and mainstreaming of youth in all disability issues

- Youth with disabilities should be **directly** consulted in decision-making processes

"Nothing about us without us!"

THANK YOU!

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