



SALAMANCA, 15 YEARS ON - A SCHOOL FOR ALL CONFERENCE REPORT



Report of the Conference held on the 12th and 13th November 2009 in the scenic surroundings of the Grand Hotel, Malahide in Dublin, Ireland.



National Federation of Voluntary Bodies

Providing Services to People with Intellectual Disability





Introduction

We have come a long way over the last decades, regarding the right to inclusive and high quality education for all. Since the Salamanca Statement of 1994, there is a political will within the 27 EU countries to carry out the necessary changes in the field of legislation and school organisation. Both on European and National levels, authorities worked on the realisation of legal frameworks facilitating inclusive education for all within the frame of their competence. With the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the important challenges which authorities and services are facing, are again high on the agenda. One of the main aims of the conference ‘Salamanca, 15 years on – Inclusion, a School for All’ was to identify these challenges in the field of education.

Despite the efforts done so far, inclusive education is not a reality for all children with disabilities. There is still much uncertainty with regard to inclusive education in both special and mainstream education. In addition to this, a huge gap can be seen between regions and countries in the quality of specific support for these children. Therefore it is imperative that we embrace the concept and face the challenges that will enable schools to make the transformation to inclusive education as a change in the current situation is urgently needed.

If we would like to reach a society where equal opportunities are guaranteed for all, a strong focus on high quality education is needed. Education is a crucial step towards social inclusion. It provides access to the labour market and facilitates full citizenship in society. Therefore, this conference is more about the society we wish to live in together, than about education only.

Teamwork and dialogue are crucial in this regard. The specific knowledge and expertise of specialised settings, should be available in mainstream settings as well. Also sufficient (staff) resources are needed in order to provide adequate support for persons with special educational needs and their families, and flexibility as well as a strong focus on the needs of children should be basic assumptions of all school systems.

Without any doubt, still much needs to be done to move the reality in a more inclusive direction and to give persons with disabilities and their families an equal choice when choosing a school. By organising a conference on this topic, however, we hope to have raised the attention and to have motivated at least part of the audience to move forward.

Luk Zelderloo,
Secretary-General
EASPD

Goedele Avau,
Research & Development Officer
EASPD

Organisation

The Conference was organised by the Education Sub Committee of the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, in partnership with EASPD (The European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities).



Purpose

The Conference was opened by Brian O'Donnell, Chief Executive of the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies - which hosted and organised the event. He said it was a great pleasure to see so many people, with a wide range of expertise, and from so many countries both in Europe and from elsewhere.

Mr. O' Donnell emphasised that the Conference itself, the study visits (which took place on Tuesday November 11th) plus the chance to meet and network during the Conference, offered a great opportunity to move inclusive education agenda forward. He stressed that inclusive education is an issue of major importance in all countries - politically, strategically, financially and in practice. All countries needed to share ideas and work together to:

- Review progress since the Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education, particularly, but not exclusively, in the light of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,
- Find new and up to date ways to promote and achieve real and sustained inclusive education for all - in "Schools for All", and
- Produce a new Manifesto for Change.



Mr. Luk Zelderloo, Mr Franz Wolfmayr, Minister Batt O' Keefe, Ms Maura Nash, Mr Peter Baldwin and Mr. Brian O Donnell



Pathways to Inclusion Project

The Conference also marked the launch of the “Pathways to Inclusion” Project. This project, funded under Comenius, will be led by EASPD. It will, over three years, establish new tools for measuring and implementing inclusion and create a new network of ideas and support to make inclusion happen. More information on this project can be obtained at www.pathwaystoinclude.eu

Sponsorship

The conference was funded by the European Commission-via DG Education and Culture under its Life Long Learning and Europe for Citizens Programmes, the Council of Europe, Department of Education & Science in Ireland, Failte Ireland, Independent Newspapers, New Ireland Assurance and the Irish Microsoft School Technology Innovation Centre in Brussels, DG Employment and Social Affairs from the European Commission.

The Conference Delegates

Almost 300 people attended the Conference, from over 20 of the member states of the Council of Europe. Interest in the event was so huge that bookings closed one month in advance of the conference.

Participants also included people with disabilities, families, Government officials, policy makers, professionals and researchers from the education, social care and the medical sectors.

Dance and Music

The Conference was preceded, interspersed and concluded with music and dance performances by young people with disabilities from all over Ireland. There was a great diversity in the performances from groups which gave variety and fun! Many thanks to everyone involved for thoroughly enjoyable and really excellent performances.



Some of the Delegates attending the conference



St. Augustine's School Bodhran Players who provided a cultural performance for our guests at the end of Plenary Session 3

The BEO Dance Troupe from the Daughters of Charity Services in Limerick, co-ordinated by the Daghda Dance Company, who gave a very entertaining performance before the conference dinner.



The Black Light Samba Group from COPE Foundation in Cork provided us with a magical close to our conference with a spectacular blaze of light and colour.



Ms. Aimee Richardson, a multi-talented young lady from Dublin, who provided beautiful music by playing the harp and tin-whistle for the conference delegates during dinner.



The delegates showing their appreciation during one of the performances



The Conference Programme

The Programme itself was a flexible blend of plenary sessions and workshops, with plenty of time for people to share ideas and make new connections.

Day I

The two opening plenary sessions of the Conference were chaired by Brian O' Donnell, Chief Executive of the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies.

Mr. Brian O Donnell, Chief Executive, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies



Plenary Session I

The first presentation was by **Ms. Julie O' Leary** entitled “**My Experience of Inclusive Education**”, who is a post graduate student at the National University of Ireland in Galway and is studying for her masters in Journalism. Julie is a journalist and an activist and was very open about the challenges she faces as a person with a disability. She spoke about education being her greatest weapon and overcoming barriers and prospects for the future in relation to education.

Neither she nor her parents had ever seen her disability as a barrier. She described her many achievements and made it very clear that there is a lot more to come!

This does not mean it has always been easy - she gave examples of bureaucratic confusion and lack of imagination, and how she spends much more time than she should on managing the system.

Messages from Ms. Julie O' Leary:

Two of her main messages were:

- each person can achieve great things - the role of services is to inspire and support them to do so. Services need to have the right attitude.
- services need to listen to the person; only then will they find the right solutions. Sometimes also such solutions can be simpler and cheaper for example in providing assistive technology.



Ms. Julie O' Leary and speakers at opening of the conference

The second presentation was made by **Mr. Batt O' Keeffe**, T.D., Minister for Education and Science, Ireland.

He outlined the impressive commitment by the Irish Government to Inclusive Education, whilst acknowledging that more still needed to be done, especially in the light of new research and rising expectations.

Messages from Mr. Batt O' Keeffe

His main messages were

- that the Irish Government remains committed to furthering inclusion

but

- that it has to do so in difficult economic times and with many other demands. Therefore, it is crucially important for those who want to further inclusion to have a clear political message about its importance - backed up with good data and examples of why it is essential, and indeed can be cost effective.



Mr. Batt O' Keeffe, T.D., Minister for Education & Science, Ireland, speaking with Mr. Thorsten Afflerbach, Council of Europe

The third presentation was made by **Franz Wolfmayer, President of EASPD.**

He outlined the vitally important role service providers have to play in supporting children, young people and adults with disabilities and their families, in leading fulfilling lives where they are included in, and contribute to, society. This is true whether they provide direct education services, social or health care. Franz stressed EASPD's commitment to Inclusive Education.



Messages from Mr. Franz Wolfmayer

His main messages were that services must listen to those they support and adapt accordingly and that services must be quality services and properly funded.

Plenary Session 2: The Perspectives of Key International Organisations on Inclusion

The first presentation was by **Professor Pat Dolan**, UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement, National University of Ireland, Galway.

In his presentation "**Education as a Social Tool – Lessons from Salamanca**" he outlined what had been achieved since Salamanca. A significantly higher number of children with disabilities were now receiving good quality inclusive education across the world. Nevertheless much more needs to be done in all countries so that more children are included, and included in a way which meets their needs. This is especially true in less developed countries.

The approach to inclusive education now needs to be reframed in the light of the UN Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities. Article 24 in particular concentrates on education, and confirms the right of all children with disabilities to good quality inclusive education. In addition, the Convention as a whole emphasises the need to approach and respond to disability from a holistic perspective.

Messages from Professor Pat Dolan

His main messages were

- the overarching framework of opportunities and obligations provided by the UN Convention;
- the need to take a global and not narrow perspective, to learn from each other internationally;
- the need to form alliances, to share ideas and ensure inclusion has a high political profile;

and

- the need to keep and compare reliable data.

The second presentation was by **Ms. Andreia Marques**, from the European Co-ordination Forum for the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan (CAHPAH) 2006-2015 and the presentation was entitled “**The Council of Europe and its view on Inclusive Education**” She emphasised the commitment of the Council of Europe, and all its member states to achieving inclusive education for all children with disabilities. This is particularly referred to in Action Line 4 of the Disability Action Plan. The European Co-ordination Forum for endorsing a tailored and appropriate mainstream approach by mainstream and specialist provision working together.

Messages from Ms. Andreia Marques

Her main messages were:

- mainstream education is not only important for people with disabilities, but also contributes to a general understanding and celebration of diversity;
- education is life long;

and

- that the Council of Europe will continue to promote opportunities for sharing ideas about inclusive education.

The final presentation in this session was made by **Mr. Lokman Ayva**, who is a member of the Turkish Parliament, and of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly.

Mr. Ayva is a senior member of the Turkish Parliament and he is also blind, but he, like Julie O’Leary, clearly showed how much can be achieved by an indomitable approach to life.



Prof Pat Dolan, UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement, NUIG.



Ms Andrea Marques – Council of Europe

Messages from Mr. Lokman Ayva

His main messages were

- how much can be achieved by personal determination and the right support

and

- to reaffirm the commitment of the Council of Europe, together with the Turkish Government, to promote inclusion.



Mr. Lokman Ayva, Member of Turkish Parliament.

Plenary Session 3: The Perspectives of Persons with Disabilities, their Family and Professionals on Inclusive Education.

The theme of the third plenary session was the perspectives of people with a disability, their family and professionals on Inclusive education and their views on the opportunities, challenges and needs.

This session was chaired by **Ms. Phil Gray**, St. John of God Community Services, Ireland.



The first presentation in this session was by **Ms. Katherine O' Leary** and her presentation was called **"A Family's view on Inclusive Education"**. Katherine is Julie's mother, and also a mother of three sons, one of whom, Diarmuid, has Down's Syndrome.



Ms Katherine O Leary

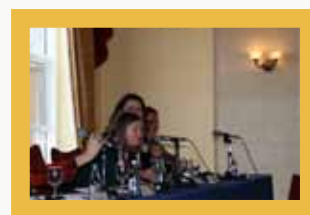
Messages from Ms. Katherine O' Leary:

- She stressed that, just as people with disabilities need to be seen as people first, so too do families of a person with a disability need to be seen and supported as families first;
- Families need support which helps all members of the family to be valued;
- Families have unique insights and commitment - and professionals must listen to and value this;
- 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.

The second presentation was given by **Ms. Sheera Delany** entitled **"My Life in School"**. Sheera who is fifteen years old, has a disability and goes to a mainstream school in Dublin. She vividly showed how she was fully engaged and included, both educationally and socially.



At the same time she needs the skill, unobtrusive and creative support of her Special Needs Assistant. Unfortunately, this still has to be fought for each year - this is partly financial and partly because her successful inclusion in school can be wrongly seen as meaning she no longer needs support, instead of realising that it is dependent on such support continuing.



Sheera Delany actively engaging with the delegates during a “Questions & Answers” session.

Messages from Ms. Sheera Delany

- Again, real inclusion can happen;
- It depends on attitude and approach;
- It needs to be a continuous, but flexible, support;

The third presentation was by **Ms. Rita Schaffrinna and Ms. Gerlind Crusius** from the Flaming-school, Berlin and was entitled “**A Model of Good Practice: An Inclusive School**” The presentation showed, via words and film, how they have taken a whole school approach, based on personal plans but with a shared curriculum, both for specific subjects and for social activities. This is helped by them taking a creative approach to learning.

Messages from Ms. Rita Schaffrinna and Ms. Gerlind Crusius:

Inclusion depends on a “School for All” approach.

- This approach applies to ALL students - it is not something specifically applicable to students with a disability.
- Inclusion is better achieved where schools are part of the local community.



Ms. Rita Schaffrinna, Flaming-School, Berlin

The fourth presentation was by **Ms. Inge Ranschaert** entitled “**From a Student with a Disability to a Professional**”, from the Department of Teacher Training, Katholieke Hogeschool, Leuven, Belgium.

Ms. Ranschaert is a teacher with the Department of Teacher Training and in her presentation she outlined her work in teaching the teachers, stressing how important it is for ALL teachers to learn together, and to learn from concrete examples about what is possible.



Ms. Inge Ranschaert, from the Department of Teacher Training, Katholieke Hogeschool, Leuven, Belgium.

Inge has a physical disability and in her reflections of her personal experience as a person with a disability she demonstrated to us how non-disabled people jump to conclusions; for example she has a disability so her husband must also have one; she is disabled, so how can she be in employment?

Messages from Ms. Inge Ranschaert:

- The need to challenge limiting and labelling assumptions.
- The importance of real life and inspiring examples;
- The importance of teachers learning together.

There was also a presentation given by **Ms. Maureen Piggott**, who is the Vice President of Inclusion Europe. She outlined the key messages from the recent Inclusion Europe organised International Conference on Inclusive Education in Salamanca. These have been condensed into the Initiative 24 - a programme of action signed by the participants from 58 countries.

Messages from Ms. Maureen Piggott

The key messages and actions from Initiative 24 are:

- the promotion of networks to share good practice and policy;
- the creation of a legal resource team to advise on legislative reform;
- the development of a global public education strategy;
- a new policy agenda to ensure that an Education For All approach respects the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The National Federation, EASPD and conference delegates affirmed their willingness to join this Initiative.



There was energetic participation from the conference delegates during the Discussion Session

Ms. Maureen Piggott,
Vice President, Inclusion
Europe



Plenary Session 4: The Authorities' Perspective of Inclusive Education

The fourth session was chaired by Thorsten Afflerbach, from the Council of Europe. The session concentrated on the perspective of Authorities on Inclusive Education.

The session began with a presentation entitled “**The view of the Authorities on Inclusive Education**” by **Mr. Peter Baldwin**, on behalf of the Minister for Education and Science in Ireland.

He repeated the commitment of the Irish Government to building on its achievements in providing inclusive education. He outlined that the role of all governments in relation to inclusion was to provide a clear and positive legal and policy framework, to set clear standards, to provide resources and to facilitate research and pilot initiatives. This was reaffirmed during the subsequent discussion.

Messages from Mr. Peter Baldwin:

- Governments and authorities have a vital role to play
- in setting laws and policies which encourage inclusion;
 - in providing resources;
 - in encouraging initiatives;
 - in engaging in civil dialogue with the key stakeholders;
 - Conversely, National Governmental Organisations and other stakeholders must also play their part in informing governments about the key issues.



Mr Thorsten Afflerbach,
Council of Europe and
Mr Peter Baldwin, De-
partment of Education &
Science.

Workshops

The day ended with two consecutive sessions of parallel workshops consisting of 8 different workshops dealing with the many issues of inclusive education. This gave delegates an opportunity to interact and give their views on important issues with regards to Inclusive Education.

Workshop I: Early intervention: inclusion in pre-school

There were presentations from Ms. Birgit Papke from Siegen University, Germany, and from Ms. Mariana Nikolova, from Karin Dom Centre in Bulgaria and chaired by Mr. Phil Madden, EASPD.

Messages from Workshop I

- early intervention should start from birth;
- “early support” is a better term than “intervention”;
- the family role is central;
- support should be family centred, with a holistic approach from trans-disciplinary professionals;
- the role and conditions of service for staff providing early intervention/support needs to become equal with that of teachers;



Delegates taking part in Workshop I
chaired by Mr. Phil Madden EASPD

- careful transitional planning is necessary when the child enters a school setting;
- government commitment is necessary for early education for ALL children.

Workshop 2: Developing Teacher Competencies in Inclusive Settings.

Presentations were made by Ms.Inge Ranschaert from Katholieke Hogeschool in Belgium and Dr. Paula Lebre from the University of Lisbon and was chaired by Mr. Luk Zelderloo, EASPD

Messages from Workshop 2

- clear guidance from governments that they are committed to inclusion will increase the priority given to developing teacher competence in inclusive settings;
- inclusive training is not only about disability, it is part of a wider commitment to celebrating and understanding diversity. The priority should be to empower teachers to work with and value classroom diversity rather than specialised competencies;
- teachers need lifelong learning opportunities, since knowledge and expectations are constantly changing;
- teachers may need new forms of learning and new skills as their role changes;
- more joint learning and mutual support is needed, including with people with disabilities and their families and with other professionals;
- networking and knowledge finding skills will become more important.



Participants at workshop 2 chaired by Mr. Luk Zelderloo with Dr. Paula Lebre presenting

Workshop 3: Developing Whole Schools to meet the needs of those with high dependencies/special communication needs.

This workshop was chaired by Ms. Helen Guinan COPE Foundation, Ireland. Presentations were by Dr.Marianne den Otter,Fontys OSO, the Netherlands, and Mr.Yannick Lucas, Mutualite Indre-et-Loire, France

Messages from Workshop 3

- a whole school approach needs a clear vision;
- it is also crucially dependent on the leadership of the School Principal;
- inclusive education must be properly resourced. It must not be seen as a cost saving exercise;
- inclusion must be based on informed choice;
- the option of specialised education may still be wanted by some pupils and/or families.



Participants in workshop 3 which was chaired by Ms. Helen Guinan COPE Foundation, with presenters Mr.Yannick Lucas and Dr. Marianne den Otter on left of photo.

Workshop 4: New Approaches to Multi Disciplinary Working: A strategy to empower your school team towards inclusive education.

This workshop was chaired by Mr. Karel Casaer, WKBUO, Belgium and presentations were made by Dr. Sean Carey, St. Michael's House, Dublin and Ms. Rita Schaffrina and Ms. Gerlind Crusius from the Flaming School, Germany

Messages from Workshop 4

- Multi disciplinary working requires a holistic approach, based on an Individual Education and Personal Plan;
- It involves sharing knowledge and expertise, in an atmosphere of equal respect;
- It requires a joint learning approach;
- “Multi disciplinary“ also includes partnerships between special and mainstreaming schools;
- a Multi disciplinary approach is also needed at strategic planning level.

Workshop 5. Special schools as Resource Centres for Mainstreaming: Developing Networks & cooperation and exchange strategies

Presentations were made by Mr. Jan van den Eeden, Centrum Ganspoel, Belgium, Dr. Vasilka Dimoska, PORAKA, Macedonia and Mr. George Borg, Directorate for Educational Services, Student Services Department, Malta and chaired by Mr. Franz Wolfmayr, EASPD

Messages from Workshop 5

- the future of special schools as resource centres needs to be clearly supported by the authorities;
- support from special schools should be widened to take in the pupils' families and friends;
- resource centres need to develop a distinct profile;
- knowledge of special education needs should be part of all teacher training;
- the role and job description of special school teachers will need to widen and change.



Delegates from workshop 4 and presenter Ms. Gerlind Crusius, Flaming School, Berlin.



Participants from Workshop 5 which was chaired by Mr. Franz Wolfmayr, EASPD

Workshop 6: Pupil and Family Participation in Education. Settings.

Presentations were by Mr. James Crowe from Learning Disability Wales (on behalf of Philippa Russell from the Standing Commission on Carers, UK) and Ms. Kirsi Konola from KYPS, Finland and chaired by Mr. Noel Dillon, St. Michael's House.



Delegates attending Workshop 6 with Mr Noel Dillion, St Michael's House as Chairperson and Ms. Kirisi Konola, KYPS Finland, presenting.

Messages from Workshop 6

- the right attitudinal approach by schools is essential - there must be a clear belief in the importance of participation and sharing of knowledge;
- this needs to be holistic and not solely education focussed;
- pupils must be formally encouraged and supported to contribute to their education plans;
- family involvement is important throughout the school life of the child, though it will change as the child matures;
- involvement by pupils and families is important for ALL children;
- inclusive schools must not become the local "mainstream special school", allowing other schools to remain unchanged;
- inclusion is a greater challenge at secondary level; inclusion must not be second class, and must be sustained.

Workshop 7: Getting the Right Communication Systems and Technologies to meet Individual Needs

A presentation was made by Jacques Denies, Microsoft School Technology Innovation Centre, Europe and chaired by Mr. Bryan Boyle, Central Remedial Clinic.

Messages from Workshop 7

- assistive technology should be person centred; the technology should be customised and flexible;
- a Universal Design approach is essential;
- people with disabilities, and those who support them and help them learn, need more opportunities to be aware of the benefits of technology. Conversely, those who create technology need similar opportunities to understand disability;
- clear links are needed between users and back up specialists.



Delegates in workshop 7 which was chaired by Mr. Bryan Boyle, Central Remedial Clinic, Dublin.

Workshop 8: Supporting Positive Attitudes of Pupils in relation to their peers with Special Education Needs (SEN)

Presentations were by Mr. Ragnar Tvinnereim and Ms. Anita Maeland, Statped vest, Norway, and Mr. Kay Redmond and Mr. Padraig Kelly from COPE Foundation, Ireland. This session was chaired by Mr. Padraig Aherne from COPE Foundation.

Messages for Workshop 8

- having positive leadership promotes positive attitudes;
- the vital importance of the curricula and preparation;
- the value of regular, joint learning by teachers and pupils and all school staff in understanding and celebrating diversity.



Participants from Workshop 8 with Mr. Ragnar Tvinnereim presenting, which was chaired by Mr. Padraig Aherne, COPE Foundation.

Plenary Session 5: The Researcher's Perspective on Inclusive Education. Settings.

This session concentrated on the vital role of research in promoting and disseminating best practice in how to deliver inclusive educational models. This session was chaired by Mr. John O' Dea, Chairperson of the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies.

The first speaker was **Dr. Michael Shevlin**, from the School of Education, Trinity College, Dublin with a presentation entitled "**Inclusive Education in Ireland; Challenges and Opportunities**". Michael emphasised the important role of inclusive schools, in providing quality education to all children and in helping to create "welcoming communities and in developing an inclusive society". Michael talked about the Project IRIS (Inclusive Research in Irish Schools) which is a three year longitudinal research project which will carry out the most in-depth study of special and inclusive education ever conducted in Ireland.

The second speaker was **Ms. Joyce Mortimer**, Ph.D. Student, from the Centre for Disability Law and Policy, National University of Ireland, Galway, with a presentation entitled "**The Conceptual Shift from Adaptable Children to Adaptable Education**". Joyce concentrated on the need to refine and redefine the conceptual approach to inclusive education; so that there was much more of an emphasis on adapting the systems to meet the needs of the child, rather than supporting the child to adapt to an unchanging structure.

Study Visits

Study visits were organised and delegates from outside of Ireland were given the option of visiting local schools which gave them an opportunity to experience how the Irish school system works. Following very successful visits to schools those involved in the study visits returned to take part in Roundtable Discussions. This gave participants the opportunity to meet and reflect on what they saw during their visit to the schools. Unsurprisingly, they came up with very similar recommendations to those of the conference itself, namely:

- politicians and policy makers must make a clear commitment to inclusion;
- successful inclusion requires a whole school approach, and must apply to all children;
- inclusion must be properly resourced - including continuous training, a multi disciplinary approach, manageable class sizes and good classroom support;
- the role of the classroom or teaching assistant should be valued more highly and strengthened;
- education must be person not category focussed;

and, last but not least,

- depends on clear and open communication between EVERYONE.



Mr. John O' Dea, Chairperson, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, Dr. Michael Shevlin, Trinity College, Dublin and Ms. Joyce Mortimer, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland.

Feedback from Evaluation Forms

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive both about content and organisation. Some important suggestions were made relating to any future conference or initiative:

- more direct involvement by mainstream teaching staff;
- more concrete examples of specific good practice; and
- greater engagement with employers regarding their expectations and attitudes.

The Marketplace

As part of the overall conference a market place was organised for the benefit of the delegates which presented an opportunity for various organisations and companies, both profit making and not-for-profit, to showcase their products or service. This was a very successful element of the conference and feedback from all of the delegates was universally positive. It also gave the delegates an opportunity to network.



Ms. Patricia Murray and Ms Anna Laudy, EASPD, hosting the EASPD stand at the Market place.



Ms Jillian Sexton at the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies Stand at the Marketplace

THE WAY FORWARD

1. The Conference was very successful .

There were many reasons for this; the number of people who attended, the variety of roles, the range of countries they represented, the programme content and mix, and the quality of debate.

It was a really important opportunity to examine the major issues concerning inclusion, to share ideas, to strengthen and create new networks, and to agree ways to move forward. The clear fundamental message from the Conference is that **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IS THE WAY FORWARD.**

This is because:

1.1 Inclusion is a fundamental human right;

1.2 The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities provides a new and clear legal and moral framework for Inclusion, and makes specific reference to inclusive education in article 24. It sets the overall agenda for change;

1.3 Inclusion is not a partial right - it is lifelong and all encompassing;

1.4 It must begin from birth and be embraced and practised during school years;

1.5 Inclusive education sets the scene for adult inclusion. Better transitional planning is needed.

2. It is also clear that **INCLUSION WORKS**.

2.1 The statistical information presented at the conference shows the steady, if also irregular increase in the number of children with special educational needs who are now in mainstream schooling since Salamanca.

2.2 Much more importantly, the inspiring personal stories during the Conference gave a “human reality” to the information.

3. It is equally clear **THERE IS A LONG WAY STILL TO GO**.

3.1 There are still many children who are not included in the mainstream. This may be because of lack of will or awareness. It may also reflect that more knowledge and imagination is needed on how to integrate some children with highly specialised needs.

3.2 **Inclusion** must not be seen as a cheap option, or be tokenistic. It must be properly thought through and resourced.

4. **INCLUSION IS A POLITICAL ISSUE**

4.1 Governments and authorities must give a clear commitment to inclusion.

4.2 This commitment must be backed by finance and the encouragement of innovation.

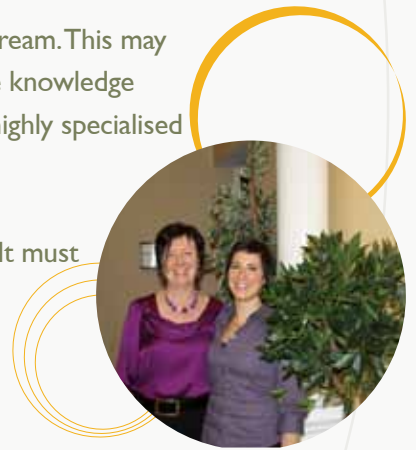
4.3 Those who champion inclusive education must engage with authorities, who have many conflicting demands in difficult economic times.

4.4 They need to be persuaded of the moral and financial cost benefit of inclusion.

5. Inclusive education is the **RIGHT WAY FOR EVERYONE**.

5.1 A “schools for all” approach means for **ALL**. It is about **UNDERSTANDING, RESPECTING AND CELEBRATING DIVERSITY**.

The particular issues relating to the needs of children with disabilities must be seen within this wider context.



Ms Mary Barrett, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies and Ms Goedele Avau, EASPD

5.2 The overall attitude and approach of schools to diversity, and the leadership given by the head of the education establishment, is fundamental to successful inclusion.

6. Inclusive education is **NOT A ONE SIZE FITS ALL, NARROW FORMULA.**

6.1 It must be **PERSON CENTRED.**The right education is a matter of negotiation and flexibility.

6.2 It must also be **FAMILY CENTRED.**The role, insights and commitment of families is a vitally important part of successful inclusion.

6.3 It must also be **COMMUNITY FOCUSED.**Inclusive education does not only happen in schools-the “educational landscape” includes informal learning within the communities in which schools are situated. Schools need to reach out to and actively engage with the communities of which they are part.

7. Inclusive education means **CHANGING ROLES AND APPROACHES.**

7.1 Special schools should become, increasingly, resource centres, working in partnership with and supporting mainstream schools.

7.2 The roles of teachers and other professionals should change. More emphasis is needed on working together and sharing expertise.

8. Inclusive education **WILL BE ACHIEVED ORGANICALLY.**

8.1 It needs progress to be made simultaneously at

- the micro level, of the individual person;
- the mezzo level, of the whole school and surrounding community; and
- the macro level of municipal and national authorities.



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

What happens next depends on everyone!

1. Following the conference EASPD and the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies have produced a **Manifesto on Inclusive Education**. You can **download** this document in three languages (ENG/FR/DE) from the website of the project ‘Pathways to Inclusion’ at: www.pathwaystoinclude.eu



Or from the website of the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies at:
<http://www.fedvol.ie/fileupload/Education/Manifesto%20on%20inclusive%20education%20-%20final%20-%20ENG.pdf>

2. This will be extensively disseminated to key partners, stakeholders and authorities with whom they engage.
3. EASPD will provide information on good practices, and develop new networking opportunities and partnerships, particularly via the Pathways to Inclusion Project. For more information on the Pathways to Inclusion Project please contact Goedele Avau in EASPD at www.pathwaystoinclude.eu or Goedele.avau@easpd.eu.
4. The report will also be sent to all those who attended the Conference, so that they too can disseminate it and use it as a basis for future action.

All conference documents and presentations, including copy of the manifesto, are available on the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies website at

http://www.fedvol.ie/International_Conference_on_Inclusive_Education/Default.1216.html

and on the website of the Pathways to Inclusion project at

www.pathwaystoinclude.eu



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