

International Conference – Inclusive Education Lisbon, 4-5 September 2009

Young People's Views: Lisbon Statement on Inclusive Education

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Lisbon, September 2007.

- European Hearing of Young People with Special Educational Needs at the National Parliament.
- Organised by the Portuguese Ministry of Education in co-operation with the European Agency, within the framework of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union.



- The European hearing of Young People with Special Educational Needs was the second European Hearing organised by the Agency
- The first European Hearing was held in 2003 in Brussels at the European Parliament within the framework of the 'European Year of People with Disabilities'.



Main objective for both events:

- to invite young people with special educational needs from the different European countries to reflect upon and discuss their education and their future.
- In 2007, special emphasis was placed upon the young people's experiences, ideas and proposals regarding inclusive education.



Participants in Lisbon:

- young people from 28 countries,
- one official delegation from Bulgaria,
- all Agency representatives,
- representatives from UNESCO, the European Parliament and the European Commission.

The Hearing was opened by the Portuguese Minister of Education, Ms. Maria de Lurdes Rodrigues, together with the President of the National Parliament, the Secretary of State of Education and the Deputy Secretary of State of Education.



The Hearing illustrated an important principle:

when we discuss special needs education we need to base our ideas and views on the input of the people who have the needs.

- Policy-makers, practitioners, researchers, support professionals, all have their view on what is best,
 - but the views, experiences and beliefs of people with special educational needs are the most important ones.



Preparation:

During 2006, the Agency representatives were requested to nominate two to three schools/classes to take part in the Hearing –preferably:

- one secondary school
- one vocational school
- one higher education institution

Each participating educational setting was requested to appoint one young delegate to participate in the event.



The nominated schools/classes were invited to reflect:

- with their colleagues upon the results presented by the participants during the first European Hearing in Brussels
- as well as to reflect and discuss with their classmates upon the following three questions:



1. Can you describe the main improvements and the main challenges concerning your education that you wish to discuss and share with your European colleagues?

- Suggestions
- Recommendations for improvement



2. What are your views/opinions regarding inclusive education? Are there any benefits, challenges and/or barriers you want to highlight?

- Suggestions and/or recommendations



3. You might have clear expectations regarding your future education, work and life. Can you describe the main barriers that in your opinion will need to be removed in order for you to achieve your expectations?



Main Results of the Hearing

- Results of the young people's discussions were presented at the Portuguese Parliament and constitute the basis of the Lisbon Declaration 'Young People's Views on Inclusive Education'.
- The Lisbon Declaration was sent by the Portuguese Minister of Education to all her European colleagues.



- The Lisbon Declaration includes the main common issues expressed by all young delegates.
- The Declaration clearly highlights their right to be respected, to have the same opportunities, to be involved in any decision concerning them.

‘We have the right to be respected and not to be discriminated against’;

‘We have the right to make our own decisions and choices. Our voices need to be heard’.



Inclusive education:

- it is mutually beneficial to all pupils/students with or without special educational needs,
- It permits the acquirement of more social skills,
- it is the best option as long as the required conditions are available.
- ‘Inclusive education with individualised, specialised support is the best preparation for higher education’;
- ‘Inclusive education is mutually beneficial to us and to everyone’



Improvements to be achieved regarding mobility and full access to education.

- This is only possible if the different needs for different people are taken into consideration.
- ‘Generally we have received satisfactory support in our education, but more progress needs to be made’;
- ‘Accessibility needs are different for different people’;
- ‘Free choice of study topics is sometimes limited by accessibility of buildings, insufficient technology and accessibility of materials’ they said.

