

In March 2002 the European Congress on Disability produced and published the Madrid Declaration, 'Non-discrimination plus Positive Action results in Social Inclusion'. Employment is seen as a key for social inclusion:

**'Special efforts need to be made to promote the access of disabled people to employment, preferably in the mainstream labour market. This is one of the important ways to fight the social exclusion of disabled people and to promote their independent living and dignity. This requires not only the active mobilisation of the social partners but also of the public authorities which need to continue to strengthen the measures already in place'.**

In Malta, one must acknowledge that a lot has been done in the disability sector but there is still so much to be done for each and every person with disability to enjoy his equal rights to the full. Persons with disability should be helped and motivated to access the labour market.

Education is the foundation of every individual. Individual Educational Programmes and regular assessments are a must for students with disability to be able to reach their *full development of the whole personality including the ability to work* (Education Act). Unfortunately, not every student with disability

has an Individual Educational Program professionally formulated according to his needs and abilities. Monitoring and professional assessments are also lacking. In this situation quite a large number of students with disability are ending their scholastic years without taking the full benefit from the system. Due to these circumstances, persons with disability are encountering unnecessary problems to find the right work according to their abilities. A timeframe for learning cannot and must never be imposed on students with disability. Adult education has to be available also for persons with intellectual disability. When these adults are biologically sixteen years of age, their mental age will still be of twelve/thirteen years of age or, in some cases, may also be of much less. One cannot expect these persons to qualify for any job if they need and still have more to learn. Academic learning is not all a student with disability needs. These students need also to be taught basic and social skills. Transitional programmes to access the labour market should be made available at an adequate early stage during the students' educational years. This can be made possible if the Department of Education, the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology, the Employment Training Centre, the National Commission Persons with Disability together with us interested Non Governmental Organisations who work directly with persons with disability work hand in hand on this issue.

On the other hand, various schemes must be studied and developed to help these adults to exercise their right to work. The needs and abilities of persons with intellectual disabilities within the employment sector need to be seriously studied so as to identify different supported employment schemes. Perhaps we are at the right time to contribute to a new approach, a parallel principle of employment, a restricted term of employment, restricted not in the scope but rather in the line of duty. Such a principle can have the special support of all the present parties in their respective field and would therefore benefit from the concerted effort of all the parties.

As proposed by the Workability International – Europe ‘everyone has a part to play. At one end of the spectrum Governments must give the lead and set up agendas. At the other end, employers must accept their responsibilities and act accordingly. In between are disabled people themselves and their representatives, medical and rehabilitation services, education and social services, trade unions and service providers who will need to work in partnership’.

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*Movement in Favour of Rights for Persons with a Disability*