Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1761 (2010)[1]
Final version

Guaranteeing the right to education for children with illnesses or disabilities

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly reaffirms that the right to education is universal and should include all children and young people with disabilities. This right is enforced in a number of conventions, as well as in several major, internationally approved declarations, such as the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). This right is also enforced in the relevant instruments of the Council of Europe, such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5), the revised European Social Charter (ETS No. 163), and the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015.

2. Each document clearly states that all children and adults with disabilities (and their families):

2.1. have the same right to high quality and appropriate education as everyone else in order to maximise their potential and to enable them to make their contribution to an inclusive society;

2.2. have the right to choose and receive education in an inclusive environment;

2.3. have the right to specific resources and expertise to meet their educational, therapeutic and citizenship needs;

2.4. have the right to services which at all times act in their best interest.

3. The Assembly is convinced that inclusive education guarantees the right to education for all childrenregardless of their physical, intellectual, psychological, cultural or other condition. Moreover, a diverse population of children and young people being educated in the same schools is bound to create an increased degree of tolerance and will contribute to a growing acceptance of " differences" in society. Inclusive education is the responsibility of all and must be seen as an important step towards the development of an inclusive society for all. It will only be achieved by partnerships, networking and joint learning by all stakeholders.

4. The Assembly therefore takes the view that, in future, mainstream services, including day-care centres, pre-school set-ups, schools, places of worship and leisure services, should be required to accept children with disabilities and to provide the necessary support to facilitate their inclusion and their participation.

5. Wherever possible, children with disabilities should receive education and vocational training − in all phases of their schooling − within the schools attended by other children and they should receive the support required to facilitate their adaptation to regular education or vocational training within the mainstream systems. Where special schools or units are deemed necessary or appropriate, these special schools or units should be linked to regular schools and should be operated as resource centres for their local communities.

1. *Assembly debate* on 7 October 2010 (35th Sitting) (see Doc. 12262, report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Ayva). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 7 October 2010 (35th Sitting). See also Recommendation 1938 (2010).

6. The movement towards inclusive education should encompass policy makers, teachers, children, family members, communities and society in general. Family members/guardians and teachers, in particular, should take active roles in the lives of children with disabilities both in and out of school.

7. To make inclusive education work, mainstream professionals in education, health and social care services should receive additional training and assistance from local centres of excellence to equip them to work with children with disabilities, and to support their work with the individual needs of these children.

8. These services should incorporate a range of personalised support measures to assist children with disabilities so that they can aim for the same kind of life and have the same aspirations as their peer group. They are entitled to growing independence, autonomy, age-appropriate possessions and assistive technology, especially with regard to mobility and communication, in accordance with their needs.

9. Aware of the fact that inclusive education is about improving learning environments and providing opportunities for all children, and bearing in mind that all children are unique and should have a chance to become successful in their learning experiences, the Assembly therefore calls on member states to:

9.1. accept that the right to education is universal and step up action in the field of education of children with disabilities so as to ensure that disability-related programmes are sufficiently resourced and that children with physical and/or mental disabilities are able to enjoy full citizenship on an equal basis with other children while being individually accompanied according to their specific needs;

9.2. develop a policy and legal framework to promote the development of inclusive education, emphasising the importance of a strong cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary co-operation which encompasses all key stakeholders including those belonging to the child' s direct environment;

9.3. give preference to inclusive practices in educational policy and establish or re-organise educational systems and infrastructures accordingly. In doing so, member states should bear in mind that transition to inclusive education requires not just a technical or organisational change based on a new approach to educational training, methodologies, programmes or evaluation systems, but also a move in a new philosophical direction, including improvements in public awareness, attitudes and values;

9.4. strive to eliminate existing physical, and attitudinal barriers to inclusive education, and avoid the creation of new obstacles within the context of school settings;

9.5. grant equal access to education at every level to children with disabilities, whatever the nature and severity of their disabilities, giving particular attention to the educational needs of children living in specialised institutions, especially those in hospital settings;

9.6. develop an action plan aimed at reforming the existing educational system, including funding for transition costs, and devise standards, methodologies and financing mechanisms for inclusive education;

9.7. ensure that all syllabuses and teaching materials within the general education system are accessible to children with disabilities;

9.8. reform the teacher training system in order to enable future teachers and school staff to meet the requirements of an inclusive school system, and create research-based opportunities and mobilise resources so as to implement inclusive education practices;

9.9. help existing special schools to make the transition towards resource centres and enable their staff to achieve the new task of supporting inclusive schools in realising special needs education programmes;

9.10. promote an exchange of good practices and effective strategies in inclusive education at European level, based on experience in pilot schools or classes, including clinical interventions such as music therapy;

9.11. collect and update statistical information on children with disabilities including gender, age and degree of disability (for those in mainstream school settings as well as for those elsewhere);

9.12. take initiatives to transform special schools, as well as residential institutions in which children with disabilities are segregated, into inclusive settings or resource centres where all individuals can receive information about disabilities;

9.13. make early identification and intervention services widely available for children with disabilities and ensure that parents, guardians and other stakeholders, as well as the children themselves, are better informed about the availability and importance of these services;

9.14. promote positive attitudes towards inclusion at all levels of education and take action – in collaboration with non-governmental organisations and universities – so as to change perceptions and expectations as regards the right to education for children with disabilities and raise public awareness of this problem in the different segments of society.

10. The Assembly welcomes the work done by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on the rights of people with illnesses or disabilities and invites him to give particular attention to how these rights should be secured in practice, especially with regard to children within the school environment.