

REPORT ON EUROPEAN WORKSHOP “PLANNING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES” – UNIVERSITY OF SIEGEN, 8 - 9 OCTOBER 2013

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1 INTRODUCTION

On October 8th and 9th, Center for Planning Evaluation of Social Services (ZPE) at university of Siegen, Germany hosted two days workshop entitled “Planning Inclusive Communities”. The workshop was held to present and discuss summary of results and conclusions on an European study on the local implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The project was commissioned by Ministry of Social Affairs in North Rhine - Westphalia (NRW), Germany. The aim of the project was to find out how various municipalities in some European countries perceive the importance of the UN CRPD and its implementation in service delivery for persons with disabilities. Therefore the two days workshop was held to discuss issues of disabilities with reference to the UN CRPD. The two days activities were structured with various topics, the first part looked broadly at the overview of the research and statements from participants. The second part discussed the practical manual developed for local implementation of the UN-CRDP for NRW and the way forward to the European Conference to be held in March 2014. The workshop targeted national experts involved in the study on the implementation of the UN-CRDP to participate. These respondents who participated in the workshop came from the following countries: United Kingdom, Portugal, France, Sweden, Spain, Czech Republic and Germany. Participants were University staff, professionals working in the local government in their municipalities and participants from non governmental organisations involved in disabilities issues. Attached to this report is the list of participants and presentations.

2. OBJECTIVE

The main objective of the workshop was to present and discuss the results of study on the implementation of the UNCPRD at the local level in selected European countries. Specifically, the workshop aimed to get further explanation and understanding from the participants with regards to:

- a. The relevance of the UNCPRD at the local level in the various municipalities
- b. The forms of participation in the various municipalities
- c. The accessibility situation for persons with disabilities in their various municipalities

- d. The local planning for persons with disabilities in their municipalities.
- e. The way forward to improve the situation in their various municipalities.

3. WORKSHOP – WORKING PROCESS AND RESULTS

The two days workshop was held in Siegen, Germany on the 8th and 9th October, 2013. The workshop was opened with a welcome address from Dr. Johannes Schaedler, the Manager of the Center for Planning Evaluation of Social Services (ZPE), University of Siegen. He was also the moderator of the workshop. In his welcome address he highlighted on the objectives of the workshop as well as drew the attention of participants to the expectations from them. In his remarks he recounted the researches pursued by the center and its implications for future improvement in service provision for persons with disabilities. He pointed out the importance of the workshop and gave all the participants the opportunity to introduce themselves and their expectations of the workshop. The common theme that emerged from participants' expectation was to learn from each other new ways of implementing the UN CRPD at the local level, and to provide the best practices of service delivery to improve the situation of persons with disabilities. A catchy expectation that drew the attention of all participants was the suggestion on disability policy monitoring on European concepts by the representative from the Czech Republic. He noted the development of policies on disabilities in the various European countries should be checked and systematically reviewed based on European concepts.

3.1 Day one: Process and Results of Discussion

The workshop paper presentations started with an overview on the objectives and methods used for the research (planning inclusive communities) study under discussion. This was done by Prof. Dr. Albrecht Rohrmann and Matthias Kempf of the University of Siegen. Professor Rohrmann broadly gave insight into community planning and noted that planning has become necessary at the local level to share ideas on the current situation of persons with disabilities. Planning he believed will help effect change in the system to realise the paradigm shift from residential care to independent living by persons with disabilities. For instance he noted that for schools in the communities to change to adapt to all-inclusiveness there is the need to plan to regulate the school system and to effect change. One imperative barrier he stated in

planning for persons with disabilities and developing disability policy was the idea of the public which viewed persons with disabilities as consumers. This idea he believes affects planning for persons with disabilities and limits services provided for them. Also it reduces their preferences for services provided, thus it leads to a situation that they are not given the opportunity to choose the kind of services they needed. Therefore he concluded by suggesting that planning for inclusive community must be seen as necessary to meet the needs of persons with disabilities at the local level. Secondly interaction should be encouraged to help identify the barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from participating. Lastly persons with disabilities should be allowed to make choices in their request for services based on their needs to fully participate in their local communities.

The second presentation was done by Matthias Kempf. He discussed two ‘theories of change’ which could help to understand the process of change necessary for planning inclusive communities. These theories are the Models of Change (promoter-model) (Kristof 2011) and Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers 2004). From his presentation he stressed more on the theory of diffusion in planning an inclusive community. He related the theory to planning and implementation of the UNCPRD in the local communities. His suggestion led to various discussions from all the participants. One very important issue which came up during these discussions was that: almost all participants believed that, if this theory is used to plan change at the local level, the idea of reinvention in relation to implementing the UNCPRD is to change some of the concepts of the convention. In addition participants raised concerns on the understanding of concepts of the UNCPRD, how it could be defined to be adopted and implemented at the local planning level in the various countries. Participants believe that each of the countries have their own way of defining and understanding the concepts of the UNCPRD. For instance presentation from France indicated that the significance of the main terms of UN-CRPD is not clear for their administration: for example accessibility in France means physical accessibility in which under the 2005 law prescribes total access to all public facilities by 2015. Implicitly the concepts have to be re-invented by the various countries and to be adopted in the process of implementation at the local level planning. This may account for one of the reasons why most of the countries involved in the survey were not too enthused about implementing and using the UN-CPRD in the daily responsibilities as service providers for persons with disabilities in their municipalities. Apart from the fact that municipalities do

not have the legal mandate and official policy document related to the implementation of the UN-CPRD.

The third presentation was done by Johannes Schaedler. He presented the guiding theoretical assumptions and the preliminary results of the study. He reported the theoretical challenges with regards to comparative policy transfer. Comparative policy transfer he noted that, various European countries could use policies from one country to the other in implementing the UN-CPRD. He stated that countries can compare and reflect on the experiences of other European countries and may try to fit their policies in their local planning for persons with disabilities. However he clearly expressed that to be able to transfer policies, various European countries must first find out if those policies they want to transfer are comparable to their local situation. This is because there are challenges in transferring policies from one country to the other. These challenges, he said may be due to clarification and understanding of local planning, diverse community structures, the models of change in local environment and many more. Further he stated the difficulty in doing research at the European level concerning the selection of the countries. The assumption is that all European countries could not be part of these researches and criteria have to be used in selecting countries for research. He proposed the adoption of Scruggs and Allan (2007) country classification for all countries embarking on European research. Participants stated it was a laudable idea but they asked for further explanation to have better understanding of the classification.

3.2 Day Two process and Results of Discussion

The second day of the workshop continued with the unfinished business of the previous day. The main activity of the day was the presentation of the manual that was developed as a result of the study. The importance of the manual was briefly presented by Johannes Schaedler. He proposed the adoption of the manual in promoting good practices in the provision of services to persons with disabilities in the various European communities. He welcomed inputs from participants to be added so as to have the manual as a guiding concept that could be adopted by the various European communities. Secondly the upcoming European Conference on Planning Inclusive Communities together with EASPD in March was discussed to solicit for ideas and to help make inputs to develop the final program. Participants commented on key note speakers and suggested some few well-known names in Europe. These names included: John O' Brien, Mary Robinson, and Jan Jarab, these people were considered tentatively.

Participants were made aware they will be updated on developments on the conference and a final invitation will be sent to them to participate in the conference.

Finally all participants were given the opportunity to give their opinion on the workshop by way of evaluation. Most participants appreciated their invitation to be at the workshop and indicated they have learnt a lot from the exchange of ideas from the other European countries. Others also believed all participants have a common goal which is to help develop good practices with reference to the UNCPRD. Again other participants felt there was the need for members of the group to keep relationships with each other so as to be able to correspond, exchange ideas and to extend assistance to other members of the group in need of help in their municipalities.

4. Statement from the various countries

All participants gave brief statements. It was revealed that almost all participated countries have ratified the convention and its optional protocol. However UK has various disability policies which enable them to help persons with disabilities before ratifying the UN convention. Also almost all UK key policy issues refer to the UNCPRD and every policy developed in UK try to include disability component. There are disability ambassadors who advocates for persons with disabilities and funds are available for disability projects. There are challenges with regards to hostility on the part of the government on the rights of the convention as well as a public uproar of making the persons with disability responsible. The other European countries also have national laws with disability components but do not have the legal mandate and official policy document related to the implementation of the UNCPRD. For example in France and Spain issues of disability is governed by the national law and the UN Convention is not well known and rather not important at the local level.

Countries such as Spain and Britain capture in their disability policies other category of persons who needs help like the Aged in the communities. All participants from the various countries complained of economic crisis affecting their provision of service because there are reductions in the funds allocation. For instance Portugal remarked that all budgets for implementation stopped in 2012 due to the state financial crisis which made a lot of children stayed at home. Individual participants statements made, portrayed solidarity in working together based on their common values and in the framework of research with regards to the UN CPRD.

Reacting to the preliminary assumptions that is a thirteen points statement raised, all participants after discussing these points accepted the ideas raised in the points were laudable. Summarizing from point one to thirteen, ideas raised indicates that even though member countries accepts the UN-CPRD, implementation needs political will and formal decisions by the local municipalities. Also the UN-CPRD implementation in the local communities will depend on each country's local context and development of their disability politics. Thus the current political context in the various countries has a role to play to make the UN-CRPD implementation feasible at the local level.

Participants commented that, confronted with uncertainty on and missing know-how on-local implementation of UN-CPRD, countries needs to coordinate with each other to exchange ideas on implementation. Other participants also suggested that member country should develop a guiding model to help service provision. Again participant stated that availability and provision of services with reference to the UN-CPRD needs all acting stakeholders to get involved. In addition they noted that the implementation of the UNCPRD in the European communities must be supported by central governments' frameworks for the various municipalities to implement the convention in their local planning approaches.

5. Conclusion

Overall the entire workshop was found to be very relevant by participants and expressed their gratitude to ZPE for their initiative in organising the workshop on planning inclusive communities. Secondly almost all the countries participated in the workshop had national laws to help improve on the standard of living for persons with disabilities. However they are limited with the implementation of the UN-CPRD and noted the role of the government to establish supportive frameworks for municipalities to implement the convention in their local planning approaches. Finally they commented ZPE for bringing them together to work as a team for the common goal of European disability issues.