

## **Opening Session input from Mr. Zoltán Gloviczki, Deputy Minister of State for Compulsory Education, Ministry of National Resources, Hungary**

I could be an expert of Mapping the Implementation of Policy for Inclusive Education. I am not.

I could be a deputy minister for compulsory education, who welcomes you with a couple of brave and nice words in Budapest, welcomes the conference, the Agency as the guests of the Ministry of Human Resources, as the guests of the Hungarian EU presidency. I have to be.

However let me welcome you with a few personal impressions as well. Twenty-two years ago we lived the last days of the communism in Hungary. To tell you the truth, there were a huge number of Hungarian people who enjoyed this kind of light late-communism. There are citizens of our country who live with this romantic memory until today. Because at that time at first sight everything seemed to be OK. Goods in shops – yes: not exactly the same goods as in western Europe, but goods. People had enough money to purchase these goods – yes: at the cost of our growing public debt, but they had. Everybody had a workplace, there was no unemployment – yes, the people, who would live without work, salary or home, were called dangerous criminals, their place was in the prisons. But really, so we didn't see homeless people in the streets or parks, we didn't see problems in our world.

I was student in this time. We were students at that time with the current Prime Minister of Hungary, with most of the current leaders of our country. We *could* see some problems in that world. But not all the problems.

It was in the summer of 1990, when I was invited in a summer camp together with a couple of colleagues of mine in the university. We were invited to a strange, partly secret summer camp, where at the same time a couple of children who lived with Down's syndrome, autism and with a series of mental and partly physical disabilities were invited as well. I dreaded this invitation. I had never seen persons like this before – apart from Dustin Hoffmann in the Rain Man, who was a hero from a Hollywood fairy tale. I had never seen such people – as I had never seen homeless people in the City. These persons lived in closed institutes, or in closed homes of their families. They had no place in front of people's eyes. Because everything had to seem to be OK. No problems, no illnesses, no disabilities, no differences.

Then I went to that camp. The first evening there, was one of the most important moments of my life. I became a member of a little company, and a member of a huge company of people with disabilities and of people who would include them in our life, our world, our society.

Our original experience in this camp and in this company was to create bonds of friendship between all members and to reveal to each person his/her unique gift and beauty. These bonds allowed us to grow in humanity, what's more, to find a new meaning for our lives, whether we were invited volunteers, relatives or persons with an intellectual disability. I learned immediately: people with a mental disability often possess qualities of welcome, wonderment, spontaneity, and directness. They are able to touch hearts and to call others to unity through their simplicity and vulnerability. In this way they are a living reminder to the wider world of the essential values, without which knowledge, power and action lose their meaning and purpose.

My own five children have grown up already holding this experience. The inclusive attitude toward special needs in the school, in the family, in the circle of friends – exists without saying for them. I am very glad to have this experience. I am very glad to have children like this. And I *would* be very glad to work in an educational system, which gives the same experience either to the inclusive or the included persons. We are waiting and we say thanks for ideas, for good practices leading us toward this goal.

This is exactly, why I welcome You really from my heart, why I wish you effective and successful work in these two days in Budapest. Thank you for accepting the invitation to our beloved capital, and thank you for your exceptional patience.