

CHARTER of LUXEMBOURG November 1996

INTRODUCTION

The charter is a summary of the main results arising from the study visits, the working sessions and the seminars in the field of integration, within the framework of the Helios Community action programme (February 1993-December 1996).

The main ideas and practices have been completed and assessed through the use of key documents concerning education at European and international level.

The experience of the Helios programme furnishes examples of good practice on the values and philosophies of the integration process. This good practice identified the models of successful co-operation between mainstream and special education with a view to creating a SCHOOL for all.

The term "School" must be understood in its broader sense, meaning education at all levels.

School for all means inclusive education for all individuals into mainstream education.

The charter is presented under three headlines: principles, strategies and proposals.

Principles refer to those statements, which must be taken into account when talking about inclusive education. **Strategies** refer to the practical actions to be considered when implementing the general principles. The **proposals** refer to perspectives and changes for the future.

PRINCIPLES

Equality of opportunity and the disabled person's right to social participation presupposes a life long School for all regardless of the level of education and training.

Education in a mainstream environment is the fundamental principle of the School for all.

Inclusive education must guarantee quality and should offer lifelong equality of access for everyone.

Inclusive education adapts to the needs of the individual, and not vice versa. The individual is placed at the centre of each education plan. This is achieved through recognising the potential and the special educational needs for all.

Parents, as the prime educators of their children, are key partners in the educational process. They are entitled to choose the education, which is best suited to the individual needs of their child.

Early intervention supports re-education, autonomy, "well-being", social and school integration at a very early stage in the life of

the child with special educational needs. It is focused on the global needs of the family.

A precise and ongoing assessment of the individual and the educational process must be guaranteed.

The resources derived from information and communication technologies and scientific research must be accessible and used for everyone at all levels of education.

Inclusive education presupposes co-ordination of the educational process in consultation with all the parties concerned.

All partners involved in inclusive education should benefit from appropriate continuous training and should have all the materials and support necessary to realise their task.

Each training programme should work towards lifelong autonomous, independent living for the individual in the social and employment domain.

Member states should adopt legislation which guarantees all children of school-going age and all adults the right of access to mainstream education. Legislation should be accompanied by all the appropriate resources and relevant services.

STRATEGIES

The implementation of a School for all requires flexible education systems in order to meet the requirements of specific needs in their varying complexity.

Quality of education involves using a positive holistic approach to determine the potential of people with special educational needs, so that limitations are not established purely on a medical basis.

An individual education programme respects the needs, interests and wishes of the person and aims at providing future autonomy.

Good educational choice means that parents have access to all the information they need and support from professional and parent groups.

Precise and ongoing assessment is necessary at all levels, which addresses individual progress, class teamwork and global educational process.

Information and communication technologies can eliminate barriers, provide access to education and training and lead to motivation and individualised learning. They can expand the role of teaching by providing new learning strategies such as telematics, and long distance learning.

Co-operation among those who provide for the needs of the child will respect the role of the individual, the parents, the teachers and the other professionals. Clear definitions of the terminology are essential for successful co-operation.

The existing professional networks and/or multidisciplinary teams, are essential in order to keep and develop the specialised expertise required to achieve a high standard of quality for integration. The co-ordinated use of existing services is

indispensable. Resource centres and services serve as models for co-ordination and co-operation in the field of integration. Successful inclusive education requires enhanced initial and in-service teacher training which leads to recognised qualifications. The person with special needs in consultation with the parent(s)/guardian(s) is the main partner when making decisions. The national authorities should clearly define, improve, finance and implement the legislation which supports integration.

PROPOSALS

Even though a lot has been accomplished in the fields of integration, which recognises and takes into account the different principles mentioned above, resulting in the implementing of strategies aimed at good "practices", it is important to underline some proposals, which remain as goals:

Awareness raising about the special needs of individuals, must still be considered a priority.

A first priority must be changed of people's attitudes.

A professional should be identified to co-ordinate the provision for individuals with special needs, especially at times of transition.

Educational establishments should encourage the mobility of students with special needs in European and national programmes. For this purpose it is necessary to provide accurate information in the different educational centres.

International co-operation of professionals in the field of integration is an important factor in the move towards inclusive schools.

Any future legislation in member states concerning training and education should incorporate the principles, strategies and proposals outlined in this charter.