



Context

In October 2015, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, together with the Luxembourg Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, held a European Hearing entitled 'Inclusive Education – Take Action!'. It took place under the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Seventy-two young people from 28 countries across Europe, both with and without special educational needs and/or disabilities, had the opportunity to discuss inclusive education in their schools and communities. The young delegates expressed their overall satisfaction with their education, but also highlighted existing weaknesses. The situation reported by

the young people, as well as their proposals, were summarised to form the *Luxembourg Recommendations*.

On 23 November 2015, the *Luxembourg Recommendations* were presented to European Ministers of Education for their consideration and as a basis for further action. The recommendations support the implementation of inclusive education as the best option where the necessary conditions exist. They are grouped around five key messages that the young people expressed during their discussions.

Recommendations

1. *Everything about us, with us*

This refers to learners' direct involvement in all decision-making concerning them:

- The voices of young people, as well as their families, should be heard and taken into account in any decision-making that directly or indirectly concerns them.
- Young people should be asked what their needs are.

- Youth organisations should be involved systematically.

2. *Barrier-free schools*

This relates to the elimination of all physical and technical barriers:

- Many barriers have already been overcome in schools, but all barriers should be removed in order to be physically able to reach local educational centres, easily access them and move around inside them.
- Educational buildings undergoing reconstruction or modernisation must respect accessibility principles, such as creating multi-functional and/or quiet spaces in schools, as well as increasing the availability of flexible educational equipment.
- Suitable technical aids and educational materials should be made available in accordance with individual needs.

3. Breaking down stereotypes

This is about the concept of ‘normality’ – if we accept that everybody is different, then who is ‘normal’?

- Providing teachers, school staff, young people, families and support services with reliable information on learners’ different needs is key for fostering mutual respect and tolerance.

- Diversity must be perceived as a positive fact; a shared value must be ‘to see disability as normal’.

- Everybody is different and everybody must be accepted. Tolerance is based on understanding one another.

- The educational community needs to be more aware of, and more tolerant towards, people with disabilities.

4. Diversity is the mix, inclusion is what makes the mix work

The fourth message comes from a slogan used by some young people:

- Everyone should focus on what *can* be done, not on what cannot be done.

- Education must be fully accessible, respecting the needs of all learners as the basis for quality education for all.

- Co-operation among teachers and other professionals, as well as the provision of good training opportunities, are fundamental.

- Provision of the necessary human and/or technical support by teachers and classmates is crucial.

5. Becoming full citizens

This relates to the impact of inclusive education in being fully included in society:

- It is essential to be included in mainstream schools, in order to be included in society.

- The aim is that all are able to find their place in society.

Conclusion

The *Luxembourg Recommendations* are in line with and complementary to relevant official European and international documents in the field of special needs and inclusive education. The young people highlighted inclusive education as a human rights issue and placed key concepts, such as normality, tolerance, respect and citizenship, at the centre of their discussions.

The full *Luxembourg Recommendations* are available from the Inclusive Education – Take Action! web area:

<http://www.european-agency.org/luxembourg-recommendations>

