



Cap sur l'école inclusive  
en Europe



## Best practice

### Celebrations of Dignity Days of persons with intellectual disabilities as an example of activities aimed at changing the social attitudes to persons with disabilities.

#### Section of the module / R

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#### 1/Background

The best practice presented here is an activity aimed at raising the social awareness, understanding and acceptance of persons with intellectual disability. In Poland, the activities focus on organising Dignity Days for persons with intellectual disability each May. Dignity Days consist in organising public events which engage people locally and at the national level, including actor such as local authorities, persons with intellectual disability themselves, as well as their families, schoolchildren and students with their teachers.

Intellectual disability is the type of disability which raises most unjustified fears, bias and lack of acceptance. This results chiefly from insufficient education on disability and on how to behave in contacts with persons with intellectual disabilities (sometimes such contacts simply do not exist). In 1998, in France the National Union of Association of Parents and Friends of Persons with Intellectual Disability (Union nationale des associations de parents, de personnes handicapées mentales et de leurs amis, formerly: Union nationale des associations de parents d'enfants inadaptés – UNAPEI) organised a march of persons with intellectual disability and their friends in many French cities, under the motto "Rendez-vous de la Lignit" ("A Meeting With Dignity"). Following the French example, the Board of the Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability (PSONI) organised Poland's first Dignity Day for persons with intellectual disability. The event took place on 5 May 1999, as 5 May is the European Day of Protection of Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Currently, Dignity Days are a regular feature in the calendar of events organised by PSONI's local chapters in May and June across many Polish towns and cities.

In 2017, Dignity Days for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities were celebrated in 70 locations across the country.

## **2/ Objectives**

The objectives of Dignity Days for persons with intellectual disabilities are:

- Raising the social awareness of intellectual disability,
- Overcoming the existing stereotypes concerning this disability type,
- Creating a united front to fight for the dignity and opportunities for persons with intellectual disability – using PSONI's nationwide potential as well as professionals, volunteers, local authorities and other disability organisations,
- Involvement of persons with intellectual disability themselves to ensure they act as self-advocates and speak out for their own rights,
- Creation of favourable conditions to enable persons with disabilities to meet with other people from beyond their families and close environments,
- Endorsement of creative talents of persons with intellectual disability. Drawing the attention of the general public to the fact that persons with intellectual disability have the abilities and talents necessary to do many things - through a presentation of the items produced at local centres, performances of dancers, singers, theatre groups or sports teams composed of persons with intellectual disability.
- Ensuring the involvement of representatives of local authorities in the events and marches.

The group or groups which this best practice covers:

This best practice covers persons with intellectual disability, local communities and the society at large. The activity is directed predominantly to persons who normally do not contact persons with intellectual disability.

## **3/ Course of best practice application:**

The events are organised at a local (municipal) level, which facilitates accessing a larger number of the local residents.

Detailed steps of best practice application:

- Set up an organisation team – made up of 3 persons (Manager, Subject-matter expert, Accountant)
- Develop a work plan (march through the city with invited representatives of local authorities; musicians, dancers and theatre groups to perform on stage; a market of handicraft products made by persons with intellectual disability; sales of food products made by social enterprises associated with

intellectual disability);

- Define the venue/place and date of the event, register the event with the local authorities, specify stage location and market location, develop a performance script/schedule;
- Acquire funding;
- Find sponsors ready to become involved (both financially and logistically:

e.g. support in getting access to products which can be used to prepare refreshments for the participants, support in organising the stage set-up and performances.

#### **4/ Best practice evaluation.**

What criteria can verify the appropriateness and effectiveness of this best practice?

PSONI's regional chapters do not perform evaluations in the form of surveys or social attitude research. However, we have been able to observe positive effects of organisation of cyclical events of this kind. Such positive outcomes include, among others:

- Improved collaboration with local authorities, greater understanding of the specific needs of persons with intellectual disability;
- Improved self-esteem of the participants of Dignity Days: artists or craftsmen with intellectual disability.
- Establishment of new contacts (e.g. acquisition of new clients for social enterprises)
- Greater recognition of persons with intellectual disability and the activities of the Association by local communities;
- Consistently growing number of event participants over the recent years.

Optional part (use if necessary)

#### **5/ Constraints**

Financial capacity of the organisers is one of the main constraints: the size and attractiveness of the event often depends on the acquisition of external funding (from local authorities, sponsors, etc.). The event's success will also depend on the promotional and marketing capacity, the turnout and the number of people joining the march, the attendance of local VIPs, and the involvement of local governments with their publicly displayed support for the idea of Dignity Days.

It is also important to pick the right date, consider the weather and overall atmosphere.