

My Opinion My Vote

Tina Mou Jakobsen og Camilla Jydebjerg,
Center for Ligebehandling af Handicappede

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Center for Ligebehandling
af Handicappede

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- Two-year project about democracy for people with learning disabilities.
- Funded by EU.
- Initiative taken by Associazione Italiana Persone Down (AIPD).
- Participating countries: Ireland, Italy, Hungary, Malta, Spain & Denmark.



Background

- A large part of people with Id does not exercise their right to vote.
- Reasons:
 - Lack of awareness among people with Id, relatives, carers and society in general
 - Lack of facilitating measures by public authorities.



Aims of the project

- Empowerment through active citizenship.
- Participation in political elections.



Components

- Educational programme.
- European pilot group of people with ld.
- Awareness raising campaign.
- Newsletter.
- Website.
- Interviews with people with ld.
- Interview survey with 15 special education facilities.

Survey findings

- No specific approaches to teaching democracy.
- Lack of age appropriate materials, targeted people with ld.
- Emphasize practical activities.
- Starting point should be something concrete with relevance for everyday life.



Survey findings

- Self-determination is the main priority.
- It's a necessary foundation for understanding democracy and voting.
- Democracy is about more than voting, e.g. how to seek influence in everyday life matters.



Interviews

- Three rounds of interviews
- Voting experience
- Voting experience in EU elections – after having tried the teaching modules
- Voting experience – project evaluation



Respondents

- 20 people with learning disabilities in each participating country
- 4 in small pilot group, 16 in large pilot group
- Thoughts about interviewing people with learning disabilities



1. Round of interviews

Themes:

- Participation in last national elections
- Deciding whom to vote for
- Political interest

Information about elections

- Equal opportunities to participate in elections are not only a question of accessible polling stations, but also a question of accessible information about the election.
- Funded by Nordiska Samarbetsorganet for Handicappfrågor, The Equal Opportunities Centre for Disabled Persons has examined how knowledge of democracy, elections and democratic rights can be passed on to people with learning disabilities in an accessible way.
- The project has resulted in a survey including information on democracy, elections and polling for people with learning disabilities



The examples

- Variation in form, contents and extent
- Easy-read
- General elections and democracy accessible to people with learning disabilities.
- The texts are supplemented by some kind of instruction, e.g. courses, conferences or project days on democracy and elections.
- Interactive teaching methods are used, such as mock elections, games and role-plays, visits to politicians and debates.
- People with learning disabilities have been involved in the process, e.g. designing a project, developing material, planning courses as instructors or evaluating projects and materials.
- national differences: if the author is a public or a private actor, and if public authorities have been involved in funding the project.

Recommendations

- that The Ministry of Social Welfare produce or ensure the production of easily accessible material on democracy and elections focusing on people with learning disabilities and others needing easily accessible information.
- that the political parties publish campaigning material accessible to people with learning disabilities

- www.clh.dk
- www.myopinionmyvote.eu
- tmj@clh.dk
- cj@clh.dk

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