



# COMPARATIVE REPORT

on 'Europe 2020 Strategy and People with Disabilities'  
Informative sessions in Spain, Lithuania, and Greece:  
opinions and perceptions by people with disabilities,  
activists, and experts.

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2013



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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Established in 1971, Fondazione Brodolini is an independent centre of cultural development as well as a think tank that proposes and evaluates policies at all levels of governance: local, regional, national, European and international. FGB's Management Board consists of prominent figures from the main Italian Universities. By linking institutional needs to its network of experts, they are able to provide adequate tools and use them in various types of activities: among the most important, project development, training, peer reviews, evaluation, organisation of conferences and seminars. Its thematic areas of intervention are: growth and development, human capital and the labour market, transversal priorities and gender mainstreaming, welfare and social policies.



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Public Institution Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre (VRC) provides vocational, social and medical rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. A comprehensive rehabilitation model, standardized methods of assessment and development of vocational skills, vocational training programs in VRC contribute to the achievement of better health and inclusion to labour market of persons with disabilities. VRC is a member of the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR).

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In 2010, in the European Union, about **25%** of persons aged 16 and over declared an **activity limitation**. Elderly disabled people represent 46% of all people with disabilities (aged 16 and over). The percentage of persons with a severe disability is about 8%. About 4.8% of persons aged 16 to 64 receive a disability-related benefit<sup>1</sup>. If EU’s **Europe 2020 Strategy** is to be fully accomplished, integration of people with disability into all social, economic and political aspects of the society is essential.

In this regard, ABLE ‘20 targets a number of problem areas defined in the EU Disability Strategy for 2010-2020. The actions envisaged in the project are particularly designed to **promote young people’s commitment** towards a more inclusive growth, by tackling the issue of youth unemployment, stimulating unemployed young people’s mobility and active participation in the society.

ABLE ‘20 project supports introduction, implementation and promotion of innovative and qualitative elements in non-formal education and youth work bringing together the target groups of young people with disabilities with the field of employment and promotion in partner countries **Greece, Spain, Italy and Lithuania** that are severely struck by the highest young unemployment rate in EU 27.

With regards to the general objectives of the Youth in Action Programme, ABLE ‘20 initially targets to promote young people’s **active citizenship** in general and their European citizenship in particular by promoting the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities, namely youth with disabilities, activists and experts, in core of EU policy making and implementation.

The main idea of the project is to build upon main EU strategies on youth

1 ANED – Academic Network of European Disability Experts, 2012 Annual Activity Report, p.24

growth, employment and disability by opening EU 2020 Strategy, Youth on the Move and EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020 to the evaluation of young people with disabilities, activists, and experts, and build upon their feedback on these significant policy perceptions and utilise their feedback in core project activities. As such, the project aims to respect the most natural citizenship right of young people with disabilities- that is the **right to participation**; and introduce the perception of people with disabilities, activists and experts into policy making on employment, sustainable growth and youth policies in Europe.

**The report presents the results of the informative sessions run with the non-formal educational methodology of the Theatre of the Oppressed by August Boal on 'EU 2020 strategy and people with disabilities', 'Youth on the Move' and 'EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020' in Spain, Lithuania and Greece in autumn, 2013.**

## 1. THE MAIN REGULATIVE FRAMEWORKS IN SPAIN, LITHUANIA, AND GREECE

The regulative frameworks in the three countries present many convergent aspects due to the common ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, socio-economic contexts and national institutional milieu have brought about several limitations in the implementation of the Convention in Spain, Greece and Lithuania.

### 1.1. SPAIN

The national regulative framework in **Spain** is characterised by two main elements: firstly, the national regulative framework was recently updated in 2013, and this had a strong negative affect on the lives of people with disabilities. Secondly, the 17 Spanish Autonomous Communities (CCAA) have their own legislative power in different areas, therefore each and every general state regulation is modified afterwards by specific regional regulations in which the details are established (such as: amount of fines, selection criteria, etc.)

The main national regulative act is the **General Law of the Rights of Persons with Disability and their Social Inclusion**<sup>3</sup> (LGD) passed in November, 2013. The aim of the LGD is to guarantee the right of equal opportunities and the treatment of people with disabilities in equal conditions with other citizens, through promoting personal autonomy, universal accessibility, access to employment, inclusion into the community and independent life, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination, according to the Spanish Constitution (art.: 9.2, 10, 14 y 49) and the ratified UN Convention (in force since 3/05/2008). The law is aimed to harmonise previous normative acts;

<sup>2</sup> The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013, of 29th of November. The LGD is the consolidated wording of three earlier laws: the Law 13/1982, of 7th of April, on social integration of people with disabilities (LISMI); the Law 51/2003, of 2nd of December, of equal opportunities, non-discrimination and universal accessibility of people with disabilities (LIONDAU) and the Law 49/2007, of 26th of December, by which are laid out the rules on infringements and penalties in the field of equal opportunities, non-discrimination and universal accessibility of people with disabilities.

nevertheless, LGD does not take the advantage of the opportunity to introduce improvements or safeguard rights.

At the national level, the modifications through decree-law of Law 39/2006, of 14th of December, on **Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Attention of Persons in a Position of Dependency** (LAPAD) has also to be considered. The Law 39/2006 legislated to give attention and care, and to promote personal autonomy of the dependent persons. A model of social protection, which acknowledged the subjective rights of affected persons, the care given in the family environment and a series of infrastructures, benefits and services, which facilitated the task of attending, caring for and promoting an independent life were launched. Nevertheless, the budgetary cuts implemented in the system have diminished or even eliminated part of these rights.

## 1.2. GREECE

The **Greek** regulative framework is characterised by a formal attention to equal treatment and gender equality of people with disability as stressed in the Constitution. Moreover, education and training for people with disabilities are supposed to be guaranteed by the State. The main work-related legislation for people with disability in Greece rules the accessibility, training, and basic working rights of people with disability<sup>4</sup>. The most important Greek law in the field of employment of people with disability is the Law 2643/98 **“Provision for the Employment of Special Social Groups and other**

4 New Greek Employee Code ruled by the Law 3528/2007 (Official Journal of the Hellenic Republic 26/A, published on 09/02/2007). Law 3488/2006 (Official Journal of the Hellenic Republic 191/A, published on 11/09/2006)

5 Law 2643/1998 (Official Journal of the Hellenic Republic 220/A, published on 28/09/1998)

6 According to this law, in the Greek private sector, enterprises with more than 50 employees are obliged to cover 8% of their staff with employees with disabilities and other socially sensitive groups. In the public sector, the corresponding percentage is 5%. Individuals with minimum disability percentage 50%, provided that they are registered in OAED unemployment records, are included in the categories of persons that are protected under the Law 2643/1998, for which is forecasted special hiring process. Moreover the law covers people who have relatives (children, sibling, or partner) with a percentage of disability of at least 67% proved by a special medical jury. In special occasions, when the ill relative suffers of mental disability or autism, the percentage of disability needed for accessing the law protection is 50%. The same law states that, once hired, employees with disabilities are given the choice of a flexible working timetable, as well as special facilitations when weather conditions do not allow them to come to work, arrive on time, or stay till the end of their shift.

**Clauses”<sup>5</sup>**, which defines the quota scheme<sup>6</sup> of employees with disability for the private and public sector. This law forecasts the obligatory placement of individuals from protected social groups in private companies, enterprises, and organizations, but also in public services and local government bodies, via objective criteria of placement based on age, family and economic conditions, formal qualifications, and percentage of disability<sup>7</sup>.

According to the circular **“Data regarding the number of employees with disabilities that work within the Greek public sector. Problems in exercising their duties. Guidelines for dealing with the problems”<sup>8</sup>**, public bodies and services are obliged to create suitable working conditions for the employees with disabilities. Notably, special technological equipment has to be available when needed (e.g. computers with special software and hardware, voice dictation systems, screen readers, special telephone operators for employees with visual impairment), offices need to be bright enough for facilitating employees with vision difficulties or deaf people, who communicate by sign language or are “lip-readers”, and workplaces have to be accessible for wheelchair users (e.g. workstations with adjustable dimensions and accessible toilets).

Legislation also rules the so-called **sheltered workshops** foreseen by the law 2646/1998<sup>9</sup>, which run in most municipalities of Greece under the framework of the National System for Social Care. Those workshops are alternative, but viable forms of employment, oriented in the majority of the cases in making and selling small craft, such as gifts, jewellery, hand-made rugs, candles, and party favours.

Legislation about people with disability in relation to the job market also **covers social enterprises** and Centres of Vocational Training. Social enterprises, which run like productive and commercial units being at the same time mental health units for the support, therapy and inclusion of people

7 The “disability percentage” is an official tool intended to represent the extent of disability which also corresponds to different disability entitlements. The percentage is decided by statutory commissions within social security bodies on the basis of medical information for each individual case.

8 Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, 05 September 2006

9 Law 2646/1998 (Official Journal of the Hellenic Republic 220/A, published on 20/10/1998)

with mental health problems, are established by the law 2716/99. These enterprises run with national and EU funds and donations, as well as income from sales, and can be active in any industrial sector, while members retain limited legal responsibility<sup>10</sup>.

Finally, law 2648/98 established more than 50 Centres of Vocational Training and more than 20 Specialized Centres of Vocational Training for people with disability across Greece. The Centres are services under the jurisdiction of the Institute of Social Protection and Solidarity, established by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity as agencies for research, evaluation, and specialized implementations in the field of social policy. The Centres aim to promote employment through vocational training that corresponds to particular needs of the current labour market. They include social support and counselling to encourage the entrance or re-entrance of long-term unemployed and vulnerable groups into the labour market. Furthermore, the Centres implement programmes co-funded by the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity and the EU, with regards to employment and vocational training<sup>11</sup>.

### 1.3 LITHUANIA

In Lithuania, the **Law on Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities**<sup>12</sup> is the main regulative framework<sup>13</sup> in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Since 2005, this Law introduced new definitions of the ‘persons with disabilities’ and ‘disability’, substituting the old terms of ‘invalid’ and ‘invalidity’. All discriminative provisions highlighting the exclusiveness of an individual with disabilities were removed. The model

10 There is no official record of the number of social enterprises running in Greece; however, the National Centre for Vocational Orientation mentions nine examples of such social enterprises across Greece, most of which are orientated in selling small craft, gardening, bakery, and catering.

11 Vocational Training programs last between 150 and 400 hours and are oriented towards professions in health and welfare, finance and administration, informatics, tourism, farming sector, and technical professions. People with disability receive 4.99€/hour for participating in the programs.

12 Republic of Lithuania Law on Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities (Official Gazette, 1991, No. 36-969; 2004, No. 83-2983)

13 See also Initial Report of the Republic of Lithuania on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities.

of social integration of persons with disabilities was set closer to models of the EU Member States, thus legally enforcing equal rights and opportunities of the disabled in the society. This Law envisaged the introduction of the new assessment system of disability and working capacity level. The assessment of working capacity instead of previously used invalidity assessment test creates more possibilities to assess an individual capacity to work in a more objective way, receive medical and vocational rehabilitation services and benefits. Differentiation of disability level for individuals under 18 sets more favourable conditions for families that are bringing up and nursing children with severe and moderate disabilities.

The Law regulates an important link of the system of social integration of persons with disabilities – **vocational rehabilitation**. The vocational rehabilitation is defined as restoration of a person’s capacity to work, professional competence, and capacity to participate in the labour market or increase thereof by educational, social, psychological, rehabilitation, and other means. The following vocational rehabilitation services are available for persons with the assessed 0-50 % capacity of work: assessment of vocational skills; vocational guidance and consulting; restoration or training to acquire new vocational skills; assistance in finding a job. The purpose of vocational rehabilitation is to develop or restore working capacity of the disabled and increase their employability.

One of the main laws establishing principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination is the **Law on Equal Opportunities**<sup>14</sup>, which prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, instruction to discriminate on the basis of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, religion, faith, convictions or opinions, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, on the grounds of religion at work, civil service, education establishments, science and research institutions, and consumer protection.

The **National Programme for Social Integration of People with Disabilities for 2002-2012**<sup>15</sup> and the **National Programme for Social Integration of**

14 Republic of Lithuania Law on Equal Opportunities (Official Gazette, 2003, No. 114- 5115; Official Gazette., 2008, No. 76-2998);

15 The National Programme for Social Integration of People with Disabilities for 2002-2012 (Official Gazette, 2002, No 57-2335, 2002; No 29-1345, 2010)

**People with Disabilities for 2013-2019**<sup>16</sup> are the main documents implementing provisions of the Convention in the last two decades. The National Programme aims at creating a harmonious environment and conditions for the development of effective social integration processes in Lithuania. The National Programme covers many areas of public life: social security, public education, health care, access to physical environment, transport and information, employment, culture, sport, recreation, etc.. The implementation of the Programme is coordinated by the Department of the Affairs of People with Disabilities under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour; a tender for financial support of social integration programmes by associations of the disabled is organised every year.

In Lithuania, two main laws have been implemented in order to integrate the most vulnerable groups (persons with disabilities as well) into the labour market: the **Law on Support to Employment**<sup>17</sup> and the **Law on Social Enterprises**<sup>18</sup>. Active labour market policy measures are defined by the Law on Support for Employment and consists of vocational training, support for job creation (subsidies for job creation, implementation of local employment initiatives, support for self-employment), territorial mobility of the unemployed, and supported employment (which includes subsidized employment, support for the acquisition of vocational skills, public works, and job rotation). The Law on Support for Employment also stresses that the disabled people, long-term unemployed, youth, older workers, as well as some other groups are considered to be additionally supported in the labour market.

Social enterprises together with the active labour market policies are the main mechanisms of integration of the most vulnerable groups into the labour market. The Law on Social Enterprises provides the definition of social enterprise for the disabled, where the share of the disabled target group consists of at least 50% of the annual average number of employees with special attention on support for severely disabled people.

16 The National Programme for Social Integration of People with Disabilities for 2013-2019 (Official Gazette, 2012, Nr. 137-7021)

17 Republic of Lithuania Law on Support for Employment (Official Gazette, 2006, No. 73-2762; 2007, No. 59-2278);

18 Law on Social Enterprises. Official Gazette, 2004, No. 96-3519.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### Theatre of the oppressed and data on participants in the info sessions

The info sessions on Europe 2020 strategy have been implemented using forum theatre techniques and other non-formal education based activities. Forum Theatre is a part of the Theatre of the Oppressed by Augusto Boal with the purpose of stimulating participants to improve oppressive conditions through performances. During the play, the audience and all the participants are invited to stop the performance to suggest a different action for changing the outcome. Actors are supported by a kernel of background knowledge and character definitions. They know very well the issues they are going to represent due to previous contacts with the target group or because they are part of the target group themselves. Everyone contributes to the play, but someone directs the overall process, i. e. the Joker. Once the play has been performed, it belongs to the audience that can intervene and modify it.

In **Greece**, between 15 and 25 participants per session took part in the activities. Mostly boys participated in the meeting. Gender balance was not pursued as a main issue, because ANTIGONE preferred to work with very interested people belonging to already formed groups. The main group involved in the info sessions was from Kalamaria, a suburb of Thessaloniki. It is a group that works on a daily basis under the frame of the program "Autonomy and Communication". The group is made of 20 people of different ages accompanied by 4 psychologists and social workers. They accepted to collaborate with ANTIGONE for the project Able '20 as a part of their daily activities. ANTIGONE invited all the interested people to participate in the info sessions, putting the age limit of 18 to 30 as a single condition, according to Youth in Action requirements. Other participants with disability, not belonging to the aforementioned group, joined this group for the info sessions without any problem of inclusion. Persons without disabilities participated in the info sessions as well, and they all collaborated under the guidance of the trainer. Participants' disabilities varied a lot. Among them, 7 participants had a mere motor disability; 13 participants had a light mental handicap; 6 participants were autistic, and 3 participants were affected by

Down syndrome. All the sessions have been implemented in Oikopolis - A Parallel Town for Ecology and Social Solidarity (Οικόπολις - μια παράλληλη πόλη για την οικολογία και την κοινωνική αλληλεγγύη), a social space accessible for people with mobility impairment with a cozy and welcoming environment. During the first session on August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013, participants introduced themselves and started knowing each other through theatrical and other non-formal education based games. In the following sessions, from August to November 2013, the trainer introduced forum theatre, so that the participants were able to discuss the Europe 2020 strategy parts on disability using theatrical techniques. During the second session, the trainer shortly presented the Europe 2020 strategy using the translated and simplified version of the guidelines provided by Fondazione Brodolini. The following sessions were entirely dedicated to exploring the strategy and its impact on participants' daily lives using forum theatre techniques. Many short plays were created and played. All the fictional characters were representing real life problems and situations, as the participants unconsciously reflected their feelings and experiences on the theatrical pieces.

In **Spain**, using the referred technique as a methodological base, the project was carried out in the city of Vigo (Pontevedra), where 15 participants met during 10 sessions (from September to December, 2013) to work on the Strategy through the TO lead by a social worker and a psychologist. The profile of the participants in the project was 15 young people (8 male and 7 female) between 18 and 30 years of age with disability, principally physical or mixed, and most (9/15) with a degree of affectation equal or superior to 65%. As for their education, the majority (11) had secondary education, three primary, and one Higher education, all being unemployed. During 10 sessions, the objectives of the Strategy relating to people with disabilities were gradually addressed in the following manner: the 6 first sessions were carried out in the Centro Vontade and were aimed at: a) on one hand, to facilitate the climate of participation and the necessary group cohesion (through the use of activities particular to the TO such as: dynamics of knowledge, relaxation, movement, etc.) to later on be able to b) work directly on the analysis, which the participants made of the set of priorities of the Strategy (from the fourth session). As for the timing, two sessions

were enacted each day (one in the morning and one in the afternoon) with a duration of 2 hours each: on the 20-th of September (sessions 1 and 2), the 27-th of September (sessions 3 and 4), and the 4-th of October 2013 (sessions 5 and 6). The sessions 7, 8 and 9 were three sessions focused on rehearsing the TO piece chosen by the participants, which permitted to work in more depth with three specific objectives: Participation, Equality and Education. Place: Mos Local Development Centre. Days: 18/10/2013, 22/11/2013, 02/12/2013. The 10-th session was dedicated to a representation of the work in a local high school as an awareness heightening action in conjunction with the International Disability Day (03/12/2013). The piece was presented for a public of 25 pupils (21 males and 4 females) of the first grade of Obligatory Secondary Education (ESO) in the charter high school CPR Mercantil (Vigo). In this piece two technicians (jokers) and six beneficiaries of the project acted (three male and three female) with various disabilities. The content of the piece was a school mobbing scene. The aim was to stir up debate among the pupils on inclusion of people with disabilities in common educational centres, as well as on the phenomenon of bullying. In the piece, through the TO technique, the following priorities were directly addressed: participation, equality and education, and, indirectly, accessibility. The facts that one of the participants was a wheelchair user resulted in the incorporation of this theme into the debate and the theme of obstacles in the surroundings. The degree of participation and group cohesion that was reached by the youngsters during the project ought to be highlighted.

In **Lithuania**, 18 people with disabilities took part in the 6 info sessions that were organised between the 10-th and the 18-th of October, 2013 in Vilnius. The age of participants was between 19 and 30. The group was characterised by gender balance, 8 women and 8 men, and by different typologies of disabilities (severe movement, hearing, mental and mixed disabilities). The theatre methodology for young people was considered very interesting, interactive, inclusive, and attractive. The atmosphere was very positive, the more active participants were helping more shy participants or participants with hearing or mental disabilities. Nevertheless, it was a big challenge to explain what the Forum theatre activities for very heterogeneous group was about in such a short period in Lithuania, too. There were young people

with different kind of disabilities, e.g. severe movement, hearing, mental, and mixed disabilities. People with more severe disabilities need more assistance to understand the methodology, the tasks, etc., therefore it could be suggested that group of 15 persons should be moderated by two or more moderators. Moreover, it could also be suggested to increase the number of info sessions, since 6 were not enough to understand and get used to the methodology and the topic of discussion.

In the end of the info sessions the participants were asked with the help of the anonymous questionnaire, if Forum Theatre Methodology helped them understand the strategy. Out of 13 respondents who filled in the questionnaire 8 respondents answered that it helped them very much, 2 respondents – good, 2 - satisfactory, and 1 – bad.

General participation was very active and all the attendees were actively involved in the theatrical games and in other activities. Due to their personality, some participants were much more active than others, continuously intervening, commenting, and proposing themselves for the games. Other participants were active only if asked to do something, starting intervening only upon request, but then always gave very interesting and relevant contributions.

From a general perspective, the methodology based on forum theatre proved to be successful because it allowed the discussion of complex topics without tiring the participants. Moreover, it let the participants free to choose and talk about the aspect that were more interesting and useful for them. As it is possible to understand from the short stories reported afterwards, participants actually reflected their real daily life in the theatrical play. They showed, sometimes without realizing it, their struggles and the problems they faced every day in all aspects of their lives.

On the other hand, the theatre methodology was not always successful for an in-depth discussion of the Europe 2020 strategy on its aspect about disability. It was sometimes difficult for them staying concentrated on the same topic, in the same room, for many hours. Moreover, often the atmosphere was very chaotic because of the mix of various kinds of disabilities. As said

above, people with both light and severe mental disabilities attended the meetings along with the people with merely motor disability. In Greece, this was due to the fact that the group ANTIGONE collaborated using the methodology that mixes a group of people with very different kinds of disabilities.

### 3. RESULTS

#### A. Language of the strategy: what do you think about it?

The info session presented the ‘review of the Europe 2020 strategy and people with disabilities’. Partners of the project deeply discussed among them the need to simplify the terminology used in the 2020 strategy even if they agreed on avoiding oversimplification. Each of the partners implementing the info session simplified the vocabulary further limiting technical and “bureaucratic” jargon as much as possible and preferring daily words and expressions. This made it easier for the trainer to work on the strategy and on the comprehension by the participants. This process was appreciated by participants in the info session as stressed by one of them in Lithuania:

‘It’s good when you [*moderators of Info sessions*] can explain to us the things written here [*strategy*], because the language is not accessible for an average person with disability (and a normal [*meaning person without disability*] person also). I am the one with higher education, and I also have difficulties to understand all those complicated words, but when I think of people with basic education or people with weak mental capacities, how can they understand? [*speaks about easy-to-read text*]’

#### B. Is the Strategy 2020 relevant for everyday life of people with disability?

From a theoretical point of view, Europe 2020 strategy aims at 8 main areas for action (accessibility, participation, equality, employment, education and training, social protection, health, and external action), which are very relevant for everyday life of the people with disability. They all touch upon problems and issues that people with disability face daily in their activities, which are normal routine for people without disability. On the other hand, these wise, but still too optimistic and idealized goals are very difficult to be put into practice due to bureaucratic obstacles, economical complications, and, last but not least, cultural challenges.

A taste of this contradiction between theory and practice is given by a joke that the trainer made as an answer to some participants’ comments on

the strategy. Speaking about equality, a participant commented that some changes in favour of people with disability are necessary. An example that can look like a minor issue at the first glance is putting the buttons of the elevator at accessible height for people in a wheelchair. This small change, almost invisible for the majority of the population, would actually make the difference of people that could be much more autonomous in their daily movements. Continuing her speech, the participant compared this situation with the invention of glasses. Till few centuries ago, before glasses were invented, people with sight problems had been actually people with disability, who could not work and achieve anything in their lives, and had been substantially excluded from the society. Nowadays, glasses are a very common accessory, and people who wear them are not considered, nor they consider themselves, as having a disability. As a comment, the trainer made a joke and said that for reaching these kind of changes we would need a Europe 2100 strategy!

Nevertheless, the strategy was considered relevant for everyday life of people with disability, since: ‘I think that the strategy will make impact on the education system, so that it will make good preconditions for successful integration of young people with disabilities into labour market’ (Lithuania).

#### C. What are the main challenges and the main suggestions to make education and training more relevant for the needs of young people with disabilities?

In Lithuanian, during the info session a high awareness of the limits generated by the environment emerged. The main challenges to make education and training more relevant to the needs of young people with disabilities have been considered the obstacles that the environment presents: ‘in many cases it’s not the person who has disability, but the environment creates a lot of obstacles, there are no adjustments of the buildings, etc., that makes a person not able to act the way he\she would like to. The obstacles make a person the one with disability, and incapacity itself grows’.

The main issue is the lack of physical accessibility to education, therefore the main suggestion is related to the promotion of an accessible educational environment; in doing so, ‘people with disability will be more independent. We can, when the environment is friendly’.

Participants in Lithuania info session stress that accessibility to education buildings is usually considered as a limited area of accessibility for people on wheelchairs, however, it has to be considered in a broader understanding, since disabilities might concern people with hearing or visual limitations, or complex disabilities, or people, who cannot move, but who have excellent intelligence.

Accessibility is considered the main obstacle to education also due to the lack of adequate public transportation and inadequate housing.

#### D. What are the main challenges for people with disabilities in taking advantage of EU grants to study or to be trained in another country?

During the info session in Lithuania, participants discussed that travelling was the main challenge for people with disabilities in taking advantage of EU grants to study or to be trained in another country: ‘People with disability are afraid of and not used to traveling. They cannot travel independently, because still there are a lot of obstacles (physical) related to travelling on busses, planes, and searching for accessible accommodation’. Moreover, it has been stressed that there is a lack of common regulation, services, and benefits in different European countries; therefore, ‘Disability certificate is in force only in the country where it was issued. When travelling abroad you cannot expect that you receive all benefits you would get in your home country’.

#### E. What are the main challenges in the transition from education to work for people with disabilities?

In Spain, with respect to the principal challenges, which the participants find during the transition from the world of education to that of labour, they, principally, express the fear of how to cope with employment interviews, the difficulty and disorientation in the search for employment (failure of INEM, the National Employment Service, when it comes to carrying out this service).

As for most of young people, the transition from education to work is difficult for people with disabilities, because ‘Many young people are confused,

they don’t know what they really want, what to study, in what fields she/he has a talent; a young person with disabilities is in the same situation. That is why she/he needs to face different challenges, so that she/he would have possibilities to know herself/himself better’ (Lit).

“I don’t know when to tell them that I have a disability”; “I get so nervous because I don’t know how they’ll see me”; “We were never taught how to do this”; “I’m afraid that they will cheat me concluding the contract” (SP).

Adequate support in facing interview as well as job orientation should be offered. An important element facilitating this transition would be to systematise the access to consultations with experienced educational and labour counsellors.

Architectural barriers in the workplace are mentioned in all the countries. Moreover, the presence of negative prejudice in the society and among employers towards the people with disabilities is widespread in all three countries.

High unemployment rate in Spain, Greece and Lithuania has also to be considered as challenge in the transition from education to work for people with disabilities. The labour market competitiveness increased in the last years because of the high unemployment and ‘Disabled loose the “battle” in many cases, because they are additional troublemakers for employers’. The tasks requested for a job are now more flexible and multifunctional, therefore ‘For example, the secretary should be an accountant and an international relations manager, and the one who has her own car and drives it to be mobile in the city. For many people with disabilities the multifunctionality is not a chance’ (Lit).

The labour market asks for people with experience, and in most of the case this is not feasible for people with disabilities: ‘The practical experience is usually a problem. The one who was a lorry driver and got a trauma, so can’t drive a lorry anymore, he went to get new education. But then he had of course no experience in that new field of his knowledge. And then, it’s most new graduates’ problem that they have no experience in the field and are

not so attractive for employers. And then, additionally, they have disability – too much challenges for companies’ (Lit).

Moreover, in this context it has been stressed that ‘Sometimes financially it does not really pay off to go to work. To receive social security allowance is much better financially than to go to work, why should I work then?’. In the case of Lithuania, a rather high level of unemployment encourages people to seek their acknowledgment as disabled, while a state social insurance pension for incapacity to work ensures a minimal, but stable means of existence.

In Greece, the main challenges for people with disability in the transition from education to work have been very much discussed. Here again, discussions among participants show that there is a huge gap between the European Union goals and the reality of Greek youngsters with disability. A wide majority of the participants study or have accomplished some studies. Still, the majority of them are unemployed or have jobs for which they are over-qualified. This is probably the result of the severe economic crisis Greece has been facing in the last years, but this was an aspect present in Greece before the crisis, as statistics clearly show. The problem came out several times during the meetings.

As Salim K. noticed: “Generally, people think that as people with disability receive a pension by the State, they do not need to work. People do not think that even I have a disability and some money because of my pension, I want to work to fulfil my life, to collaborate with and for the society.” This feeling of refusal by the mainstream society is very often accompanied by low self-esteem and low perception of the inner value. For example, when asked about the job she would like to do Maria K. said she would really like to become a beautician, but she added: “I’m afraid I cannot do it.” It is interesting to notice that Maria K. only has a motor impairment and she already has experience as a beautician. Still her perception of herself does not reflect what she can actually do.

Another proof of the gap between the European Union goals and the reality of Greek youngsters with disability on the issue of transition from education

to work is given by the short theatrical plays created and discussed during the activities. Among the numerous fictional characters that were living in the participants’ stories, only Emma, a deaf girl, was looking for a qualified job. Katerina, affected by Down syndrome, was a licensed beautician, but she was working as a shop assistant in a big perfume shop. Dimitris was a psychology student, but he was working as a coffee maker in a café. Christos was an actor, but he worked as a waiter in a pizzeria. The general feeling is that it does not matter if a person with disability studies, if she/he has skills, if she/he is qualified for a specific job. She/he cannot strive for a more qualified job than a waitress/waiter or a shop assistant. This perception was so deep in the participants’ minds that it was unconsciously reproduced in the fictional characters that were created.

#### F. What are the main obstacles to acquire and develop the mix of knowledge, skills and aptitudes people with disabilities need to succeed in the labour market?

In Spain, when it comes to the principal obstacles they have in obtaining and developing the set of knowledge, capacities and skills that they would need to be successful in the labour market, we find that the first obstacle is getting to school (lack of adapted school transport, etc.). The second is to be able to enter and participate in all subjects (architectural barriers, etc.). The third is lack of support (teachers, classroom assistants, adapted material, and support products): “I don’t like to study, I’m no good”. The 4th, and as a result of the above, is loss of motivation, and the 5th is early school drop-out, which occurs when, in the face of the facts presented, the capacity of the counselling team fails when it comes to motivating the student with special educational necessities. When this occurs, we have to interpret it as a failure of the educational community (all of its components need to be strengthened).

Participants to the info session highlight the gap between educational programmes and required jobs that characterise the supply and demand in the labour market and have a strong impact on the most vulnerable people with disabilities.

Moreover, the participants in Lithuania stress the request to combine the need and effective possibility with wishes and dreams: ‘We need to combine the needs and the dreams. Not everything what the disabled wishes should be realised. IT is highly important to assess his/her needs. Then, it is a clear line between reality and dreams. It happens sometimes that you wish to become someone, whom you will never be, because you have disability’ (Lit).

On the other hand, in Greece, the participants had very simple and achievable dreams and working aspiration: carpenter, tailor, barman, secretary are jobs that can actually be done with good results by people with disability. Speaking with the participants about the job, and what they would really like to do, the people with disability revealed that they not only stayed grounded in reality, but also worked for achieving their goals, as the majority of the interviewed participants actually studied for it.

The issue brings to light the need of supporting the identification of capacity and competence of people with disabilities: ‘Lots of young people with disabilities are lost, they don’t know what they want, what are their abilities, talents, where to study, what kind and what level of abilities they have. They need a chance to try, to experience and learn from experience.... Yes, people with disabilities must know themselves better’.

### G. What are the main limits and potentiality in the national social security system?

In Spain, with regard to the principal limits and potentials of the National Social Security System, majority reported lack of attention and monitoring of the chronic illness, as well as lack of treatment such as physiotherapy, speech therapy, and psychological support. These limits already existed, although to a lesser extent, with the earlier law, but now, with the new decree-law (LGD) they become more acute. The budgetary cuts and the healthcare reform limited access criteria to health services, therefore most of the treatment that before the reform were included in the health care services are now out of pocket services, and the people with disabilities

have to pay for it, which generates inequalities, as stressed by a participant to the info session: “I’m lucky. My parents can pay for private physiotherapy. I go once a week because it really helps, but it’s expensive.”

Another added limit with the new decree is co-payments for pharmaceuticals, food, orthotics and prosthetics, in-hospital pharmacies and non-urgent healthcare transport service. Moreover, family has also to cover the cost of adapting the dwelling:

“My parents had to fix (adapt) the bathroom themselves” (there was no public subsidy to deal with this elevated cost).

In Lithuania, participants to the info session highlight the presence of strong negative stereotypes in employing people with disabilities that are also deeply rooted in state positions and services: ‘Disability sets the conditions for work. Sometimes they (Disability and Working Capacity Assessment Office) set maximum amount of hours per day a person can work. It’s not always the disability, which causes the amount of hours one can work. Ability and disability depend on the kind of work. A person in a wheelchair is fully able if he/she is an accountant. So, this condition stops sometimes from earning money’.

Moreover, the stigmatisation of the condition was stressed: ‘Disability is like a “stamp” in life’ and the difficulties that people with disabilities face concern their economic condition, i. e. their social allowances as well as salary, and if people with disabilities access labour market, both are too low: ‘The salaries are lower than social allowances’ and ‘For the moment I can’t work, so I get only social allowances, but they are so low that it is difficult to survive on that’ (Lit).

Moreover the relationship between salary and social allowance is problematic in Lithuania, where people still have access to the disability allowances if they work. However, people with disabilities are afraid that the percentage of ability to work will grow after employment, and this will cause the reduction in the disability allowances. In Lithuania, Disability and Working Capacity Assessment Office is responsible for assessment of the percentage

of working capacities for adults. DCWO provides the service of assessment of vocational rehabilitation needs for individuals with disabilities according to the following criteria: working hours that a person can work, education, qualification, work experience and work skills, age, and motivation. The need for a person with disabilities is assessed when there are 5 and more favourable or medium-favoured circumstances from the list of criteria listed above. After a person participates and finishes vocational rehabilitation programme, the percentage of working capacity is reassessed.

#### H. Disabilities and life cycle: what are the main challenges and potentialities to reduce the risk of poverty?

In Spain, the participants highlight that for reducing their risk of poverty, the main challenge is a good inclusive education with the necessary support, which would lead to a good training and a good employment, and this would provide for leading a life in dignity eliminating the risk of poverty.

To reduce the risk of poverty, employment would be crucial thanks to more educational programmes specifically targeted to people with disabilities and strongly related to the needs of the labour market: 'Every person with disabilities or health problems may work and reduce the risk of being in poverty' (Lit).

The main potentiality to reduce the risk of poverty would be to foster employment of people with disabilities through financial support for employers and services, support to adapt to a working place: 'The employer wouldn't be afraid to employ people with disability if they get awarded'.

Moreover, simplification of procedure to access vocational rehabilitation programme is discussed in Lithuania since vocational rehabilitation programme consists of 4 sequentially running services: assessment of vocational skills, vocational guidance and counselling, restoration of current vocational skills or vocational training to acquire new vocational skills, and assistance in a job search. The duration of vocational rehabilitation services may exceed one year, but average duration is about 7 months. To receive vocational rehabilitation services, the person must go to Disability and Working Capacity

Assessment Office, to the National employment office, and only then the person is referred to vocational rehabilitation centre.

#### I. Hidden - private cost of disabilities and the poverty indicators: what are the additional cost that people with disabilities have to face in their everyday lives?

This topic was discussed in the info session in Spain. Concerning the additional costs that people with disabilities have to deal with in their day-to-day life, participants mention basically adapted transportation, special foodstuffs, certain medicaments, orthotics and prosthetic services. Already a few years ago, a study by the Social Foundation of La Caixa, calculated the living costs of a person with disability at € 18,000 annually higher than that of a person without disability, and € 30,000 annually higher when a person also was dependent. Given the budgetary cuts and co-payments in health-care, education and social benefits, wages and pension freeze, the earlier mentioned figures could multiply: private physiotherapy, speech therapy and psychological treatments, dwelling and vehicle adaptation, acquisition of technical aids, help of a person employed in the household, etc. These are not hidden costs, but they are indeed additional costs, which the state does not consider.

In Spain, cost for specific equipment is not adequately supported by the state: "my family had to pay € 800 more to get the electric wheelchair because the Social Security only subsidises part of it". Transportation is a relevant cost affecting family budget of people with disabilities: "the public transport Company doesn't pass by where I live, and if my parents can't transport me, I have to call for an adapted taxi, it's outrageously expensive".

#### J. What are the main challenges regarding the elimination of barriers for people with disabilities?

This topic was discussed in the info session in Spain. When it comes to the challenges of elimination of barriers, the majority of the participants focus on characteristics of the geographic environment (steep slopes) as an added difficulty, and still others speak about the will and lack of it among administrations and architects:

“If they install a zebra crossing and don’t lower the curb, it is because they don’t want to, it’s a question of will in the City Halls, they’re doing it now around here but that’s not the case everywhere”.

An interesting contribution would be, if the staff of the municipalities worked in favour of the inclusion of the Occupational Therapist as a guarantor of accessibility.

#### K. What are the main potentiality and limits in the EU area of actions?

**Accessibility: Ensure accessibility to goods, services including public services, and assistive devices for people with disabilities.**

In Lithuania, participants in the info session highlight the important role ICT Assistive technologies stressing that they are very expensive and not funded by the Government. Moreover, accessibility is a challenge since each EU country has different regulation and ‘disability passport is not unified in Europe’. Different procedures and systems to recognise disability are different, therefore they generate difficulties: ‘If I go to work or to study in a foreign country, I am highly unsure what kind of support I will get there’.

In relation to the principal potentialities and limits within the topics of accessibility, the participants in Spain mention particularly the architectural barriers, which they find in their environment, and also the misuse that many non-disabled citizens make of the reserved parking spaces (which demonstrates the lack of public awareness, the same being valid for the waste disposal service, which inadequately places the containers on these parking spaces): “often I can’t park in the reserved parking space because the litter guys have left the waste container out of place and it takes up part of the parking lot”, “there are lots of people who park where they shouldn’t and take our reserved parking spaces”.

Accessibility is a crucial every-day challenge: “You go for a drink with your mates just to discover that the bathroom of the bar is in the basement” (Sp)

It would be recommendable to systematise universal access to buildings (public or private), liberating funds for this improvement. When possible,

facilitate the accessibility of dwellings. Give a 100% support to those specifically interested in a swap of housing or for finding other solutions. Deepen the concept of universal accessibility when constructing new buildings, and facilitate to 100% the interior adaptation of the dwelling according to necessities. Do not permit any construction or reform of privately-owned premises for use of the public without respecting the minimum norms of accessibility. Support awareness heightening campaigns in favour of universal accessibility, and envisage the year 2017 as deadline for the attaining universal accessibility.

#### L. What are the main potentiality and limits in the EU area of actions?

**Participation: Achieve full participation of people with disabilities in society by:**

- enabling them to enjoy all the benefits of the EU citizenship;
- removing administrative and attitudinal barriers to full and equal participation;
- providing quality community-based services, including access to personal assistance.

The main limits in achieving full participation of people with disabilities in society are due to negative prejudice and attitudes of society towards people with disabilities, that also affect the low empowerment level of people with disabilities: ‘Our self-esteem because of the prejudice is very low, and it’s hard to make us fully participate in all decision levels’ (Lit).

Moreover, in Lithuania participants stress that ‘The success key to better life is to make people with disability talk. Nothing about the disabled without the disabled. The participation is key success factor’.

In Spain, with regards to the principal potentials and limits in participation, they express the difficulties of access to leisure activities (crafts, sports, etc.) on grounds of discrimination. Negative stereotypes generate discrimination: “I wanted to go to a sewing class and the teacher, when she saw my hands, said that I couldn’t. My mother went to talk to her (the teacher) and they let me participate. I was the first person to finish my tapestry, and I showed the

teacher that I could do things just as well as other people. If we want to and really try, we can!”, “People, if they really try, can do great things.”

They criticise the fraudulent use of parking cards (expired, copied, etc.), that is why it would be recommendable to accelerate the implementation of the European Card model in the whole of the territory. A certain digital gap for economic reasons (difficulty to maintain extra expenditures like internet) is also detected. Taking into account that one of the objectives pursued to support intelligent growth is promoting a single digital market, it would be important to secure real access to internet for all citizens (Wi-Fi spots, libraries, etc.). Every person with disability has to act on his or her own initiative to participate, but the institutions, on their side, have to encourage participation. It is the only road to citizenship, if they truly want to integrate people.

#### M. What are the main potentiality and limits in the EU area of actions?

**Equality: eradicate discrimination on grounds of disability in the EU.**

This topic wasn't discussed during the info sessions in Lithuania.

In Spain, when it comes to the principal potentials and limits in equality, they cite basically the subject of discriminatory treatment between peers (bullying, etc.): “in classes I noted how they talked about me behind my back”; “I tried to talk, but they never listened or just laughed at me”; “often I'm not taking into account”. Moreover, they stress the unequal opportunities of accessing to the sites or events, where they would like to assist: “The fact that the infrastructures aren't adequate ones causes you a lot of problems in your way”.

Equality is the result of the decision to ignore the disability and to accompany this decision with adequate means of compensation; therefore, the latter limitation has an easy solution. It would also be important to strengthen, through economics, personnel or technical aids in the education of females with disability. All figures show a great many examples of great discrimination they suffer (fewer in schooling, fewer working, and when they work they are paid less).

In Greece, in the info sessions, participants claim that the state's main responsibility is education. If schools do not present disability issues to children, they will never become aware citizens, who know how to deal with people with disability. Moreover, people are not sensitized to the difficulties that people with disability encounter, highlighting that the state lacks a policy for disability awareness and sensitization; besides, future teachers are not trained at university on how to deal with pupils with disability.

#### N. What are the main potentiality and limits in the EU area of actions?

**Employment: Enable many more people with disabilities to earn their living on the open labour market.**

In Spain, with regards to employment, they all stress as a first point that they are unemployed. Their greatest worries focus on discrimination in employment interviews (prejudices, underestimation, etc.), and on the unequal power relationship between the employer and his employees (possible labour frauds, etc.). Although presently the unemployment rate is high, employing is a matter of good organisation and will to redistribute. It ought to be considered indirect discrimination that a company with more than 50 employees can dodge employing their 2% quota of workers with disability by accepting other alternatives offered by the law (for example, contracting other related services or sign agreements with Special Employment Centres). In addition, integration in the ordinary labour market (covering the 2% quota in private enterprise or 7% in public enterprise) ought to be pursued to avoid ghettos in the workplace.

In Greece, participants in the info session discuss about discrimination on ground of disability. In one short theatrical play, both Nikos, a guy without disability, and Pavlos, a guy in a wheelchair, applied for a job. The employer chose Nikos because of his lack of physical problems, but he justified the choice telling to Pavlos that Nikos needed the job more, because he had a family and some loans. The employer did not take into any consideration the eventual economic problems that Pavlos could have.

In another play, the fictional character Dimitris is a student in psychology with a motor impairment that does not allow him to move and speak normally. He found a job as a coffee maker in a bar, but as he couldn't communicate very

well, he received a smaller salary than his colleagues. One of the participants, Marios P., explained that this happened very often, and as a confirmation we had the real story Salim K. told us, in a previous meeting. Salim had an interview for a job as a flyer distributor for 4 hours per day for a salary of 4 euros per hour. As he can only walk using crutches, the employer told him that he was not suitable for the job. Salim tried to convince him that he would have accomplished the job probably in more hours, but without asking for extra money. Still the employer did not accept and Salim did not get the job.

A young woman with severe hearing impairments, in spite of her impressive curriculum, full of experience and studies abroad, did not mention her disability in her resume, nor in her motivation letter, while applying for a job as a secretary. Explaining this choice, expert pointed out that “this person was scared that the interviewers would have excluded her from the list of potential candidates from the beginning. The girl decided to make an attempt anyway, so that she could show and demonstrate them that she was able to accomplish the tasks requested in the job description.”

When the trainer asked if, being in the employer’s shoes, the participants would have hired an unskilled or incapable person just to make her a favour, all of them agreed that they only would have chosen a person who could accomplish the job. Still, even if, in theory, participants know they can work and implement due tasks, in practice they perceive it as totally normal to ask for less money and renounce their rights, or try to hide their disability in order to get a job.

In Lithuania, participants discuss that due to the different kinds of disability employment might not be the ‘solution for all’. Nevertheless, to have access to open labour market it would be necessary to develop specific competences of each person: ‘Some of the disabled have lost their competences. But they can restore them. For example, by vocational rehabilitation. That is the way to train work and also all other abilities to enhance the possibility of finding a job’; therefore, adequate services and support would be necessary. Moreover, the access to education is crucial for entering the labour market. ‘The labour market is dependent of education. If education isn’t accessible, there is no way to labour market. Some studies are not available or accessible’.

Entrance to the labour market presents many obstacles both for people with disabilities from childhood and for those who have become disabled, since the educational system is very weak for a child with disabilities as well as the re-qualification system for adults.

Moreover, job opportunities are very limited as well as the educational and training programmes.

Services that match the demand and supply in the labour market are not considered adequate because of the need to confront discrimination and support empowerment of people with disabilities: ‘the national employment office isn’t good mediator for the disabled and employer. Besides, people with disability need strong support in finding a job. So, there has to be more employment agencies and employment managers helping people to find a job and negotiate with an employer’.

The presence of socially deeply rooted stereotypes brings about discrimination that strongly limits the entrance into the open labour market: ‘Open labour market is not ready to accept people with disability’. ‘Many employers see my disability, but not my personality’.

To facilitate employment of people with disabilities, state benefits to employer are positively considered since the financial support covers the cost of making a working place accessible and buying equipment: ‘I really believe that the benefits are needed, because the employer would be happy to see the motivated employee. And also people with disabilities should be more included into society life’.

**O. What are the main potentiality and limits in the EU area of actions?**  
**Education and training: Promote inclusive education and lifelong learning for pupils and students with disabilities.**

In Spain, the participants focus specifically on the accessibility of their educational centre and the difficulties of interaction with their peers (Bullying). It is recommended that the dedicated counselling teams of the Provincial Educational Delegation, which evaluate the children with specific necessities, should incorporate educational therapists (to study and counsel on architectural barriers, personal technical aids, including follow-up and evolution of the pathology to insure a continued adaptation).

It is also considered to be important that in schools and high schools the physical rehabilitation of the pupils is programmed like the treatment during the physical education classes (with physiotherapists, like in home treatment), so as to avoid schedule overload and trips to hospital centres.

#### P. What are the main potentiality and limits in the EU area of actions?

**Social protection: Promote decent living conditions for people with disabilities.**

In Spain, participants point out the extra costs they have to deal with when acquiring orthotic and prosthetic services and/or when preparing parts of their dwelling (like adapted bathrooms). The position of dependency has to be compensated to cope with it. The close environment (family, friends and municipalities) are best located due to their proximity to care for and develop the social protection, with the convenient global institutional support (autonomous regions, state). It would be essential to resume the enforcement of the Law on Dependence in its full scope. Further, the public administration should finance directly the acquisition of orthotic and prosthetic products, wheelchairs, etc. It is recommendable to promote adapted housing (social or not,) but with the necessary economic support offering a realistic percentage of subsidies for dwelling adaptation, without considering this subsidy as a taxable income. Flexibility: in the case of having a dwelling and when the necessity to move to another one arises from the occurrence of disability, administrative mechanisms are necessary to facilitate the change for social housing, permit a swap, or for the state to give the necessary bridge loans that a person might need while he or she still has not sold or abandoned the original dwelling.

#### Q. What are the main potentiality and limits in the EU area of actions?

**Health: Foster equal access to health services and related facilities for people with disabilities.**

In Lithuania, the participants discuss the communication problem that people with disabilities have dealing with general practitioners for people with hearing limitation and for people with mental health problems: 'I know that people with mental health problems experience a lot of problems in accessing

the health services. They are treated not well by general practitioners, they don't receive needed help because doctors stop believing them'.

In Spain, the participants confirm the importance of communication with physician with regard to the emphatic treatment or lack of it: "You're not comfortable when the physician doesn't even look at you, just looking at this computer it seems like if you're not there'. Nevertheless, the main issue concerns the pharmaceutical spending. We have to take into consideration that disabling pathologies (being progressive and/or chronic) call for palliative treatments without time limits, this is why it would be important to develop in-home medical and functional rehabilitation treatments and to develop, regulate and establish a norm for a programme of psychological attention, treatment and orientation within multidisciplinary treatment, from early care, as a support for the personal autonomy of the individual concerned and his or her close family environment. To guarantee equality right to healthcare for people with disabilities, the autonomous regions ought to advance the payment of orthotics to the orthopaedic establishments. It is not admissible that those concerned who depend on these aids have to advance the money, ask for a loan or renounce these aids for lack of financial resources. It would also be recommendable that the number of orthotics financed by the Social Security increases. To program that every hospital ward has adapted bathrooms, and in the whole of the health network, public and private, all establishments have at least an ergonomic stretcher (especially in gynaecology and obstetrics). With regards to the sanitary co-payment imposed by the new law, it should be eliminated since it penalises economically, yet even more, people with disabilities and their families.

#### R. What are the main potentiality and limits in the EU area of actions?

**External Action: Promote the rights of people with disabilities within the EU external action.**

This topic wasn't discussed during the info sessions.

#### S. Other topic discussed "What is your opinion about the strategy?"

In Lithuania, the participants discuss their opinions about the strategy and stress its positive aspect: 'The strategy gives more confidence and belief in a

better future'; 'I believe in this strategy'; 'The strategy declares equal rights and more opportunities for young people, I like it'.

During the discussion, employment emerged as a crucial aspect to contrast social exclusion of people with disabilities: 'I suggest that every person with disability would work, and that is the way to diminish the risk of isolation'.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

From the approach of the International Convention on the rights of people with disabilities, ratified by Spain, Greece and Lithuania, there is a clear legal recognition of the fact that persons with disability are **titleholders of rights**, and the public authorities are bound to guarantee their unfettered exercise. Thus, the concept of assistance of past decades is overcome: the persons with disability have been transformed from being the objects of treatment and social protection to free citizens, titleholders of rights. Nevertheless, the results of the info session show that in spite of the protective regulation, when it comes to the rights of people with disability, not only are these rights not guaranteed, but also new measures are taken, which are reducing them with dramatic consequences for the group, submerging them gradually in a spiral of exclusion, inequality and poverty, precisely the contrary of what is pursued by the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The **economic crisis**<sup>19</sup> favours the enforcement of a series of fiscal austerity measures, which are having a great negative impact on people with disability in Greece, Spain and Lithuania.

In **Spain**, the Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe includes in his report of October 2013 on Spain his worries caused by the extremely disadvantageous repercussions the budgetary cuts have had on the living conditions and social inclusion of these persons. According to what he confirms, the financial restrictions have undermined the majority of the policies and programmes directed towards promoting the inclusion of persons with disability in equal conditions. This also affects the measures directed towards improving accessibility to general services, the training and education programmes and employment. The latter is of special importance taking into account the elevated rate of unemployment existing among persons with disability (estimated at more than 30%). He also indicates that the budget cuts in education can have adverse effects on the inclusion of children with disability in the general education system, considering the present

<sup>19</sup> Biel Portero I. 'Are there rights in a time of crisis?' *Disability & Society*, Vol. 27, No. 4, June 2012, 581–585

high dropout rate among these children in Spain. It is also noted, among other elements, a lack of attention towards the needs of persons with psychosocial and intellectual disability, since, presently, 10,000 of them lack housing, and the budgetary cuts threaten the model of community mental health introduced in 1986. The facts exposed, related to the recently approved regulations in diverse areas, indicate a rise in lack of protection in the social, sanitary and labour areas, as well as others, which clearly demonstrates the present weakening of the rights of this group.

In Spain, the CERMI (Comity of Entities Representing People with Disabilities), in the face of the troubling situation through which the persons with disability and their families are passing, aggravated by the crisis and political decisions in all areas and levels, of deterioration of rights and weakening of the precarious level of social cohesion and protection reached in Spain, presented a strategy of active response called SOS Disability in December 2012, which will be maintained while the worst of this crisis lasts. With it, the CERMI pursues to grant more presence in the political agenda to everything referred to inclusion of people with disabilities and counter, with awareness heightening measures and direct actions, the drift towards deterioration, which they are facing (especially with regards to the collapse of the systems and measures of promotion and protection of this community).

The international crisis that is currently hitting Europe, especially **Greece**, is disproportionately affecting the life of people with disability and their families. If social protection systems were already inadequate before crisis, they are now almost non-existent, in spite of the fact that it is even more necessary for the people with disability to cope with everyday problems. In Greece nowadays, people with disabilities have more than a 25% chance of risk being in poverty. In fact, beside normal cuts in salary packages and pensions, which affected the population independent of disability, Greek austerity measures provoke partial or complete closure of social services<sup>20</sup>,

20 Including day care centres, home care services, vocational training, rehabilitation, specialised nurseries and schools, some of which were established with support from the European Social Fund (ESF).

cuts in grants for assistive equipment and medical supplies, and delays in the payments of disability benefits exceeding 6 months<sup>21</sup>.

During last two decades, in **Lithuania** there were many positive changes in social integration of people with disabilities in the areas of public education, health care, access to physical environment, transport and information, employment and culture. However, when general reductions in public expenditure were introduced due to the economic crisis, it resulted in negative consequences for people with disabilities in Lithuania. Not only state social insurance pensions for incapacity for work, target compensations of nursing and care were cut, but also the budget of the National Programmes for Social Integration of the Disabled 2003–2012, 2013-2019 was considerable decreased, resulting in smaller scale of services available for persons with disabilities. This especially affected the people with disabilities, who often have low income and are in greater risk of poverty. For example, in 2013 in Lithuania there were 170,000 people with disabilities of working age and only 28 percent of them worked (Employment Programme 2014-2020<sup>22</sup>). This shows a very low level of employment of people with disabilities in comparison with the rest of population, because the unemployment of general population is about 12 per cent, which means 6 times less. Especially worrying is the lack of special measures for young people with disabilities, having in mind not only education, training, and employment possibilities, but also cultural, leisure, etc. It is essential that temporary reduction in public expenditures and social benefits would be restored to previous level as soon as possible, as even the sufficiency of public assistance to people with disabilities is far from adequate.

21 EFC European Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disability, Assessing the impact of European Governments' austerity plans on the rights of people with disability, 2012, [http://www.efc.be/programmes\\_services/resources/Documents/Austerity2012.PDF](http://www.efc.be/programmes_services/resources/Documents/Austerity2012.PDF) available on line on 14th February 2014

Bernard Brunhes International BPI group, Assessing the impact of European governments' austerity plans on the rights of people with disabilities, 2012, [http://www.enil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Austerity-European-Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.enil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Austerity-European-Report_FINAL.pdf) available on line on 14th February 2014; Eleni Strati, Trends in Disability Policy in Greece 2008-2011: Welfare-Employment-Education, 2012, [http://www.disability-europe.net/content/aned/media/Powerpoint%20Strati\\_Eleni\\_Presentation.pdf](http://www.disability-europe.net/content/aned/media/Powerpoint%20Strati_Eleni_Presentation.pdf) available on line on 14th February 2014

22 Employment Programme 2014-2020 (Užimtumo didinimo 2014–2020 metų programa) (Official Gazette, 2013, no. 105-5154).

The situation of severe **deterioration of the rights** of the people with disabilities and their families is being enforced in Spain, Greece and Lithuania, and it will be difficult to reverse it in a short term should it follow this path. It is for this reason that we consider that, if the EU really intends to respect and promote the rights of the people with disabilities and to reduce their unemployment rate, their early school dropout and poverty, it would be essential to establish the **shielding of these rights from the aggressive fiscal measures**. The assurance of these rights should be provided by trying to avoid, lessen and/or counter the adjustment measures and the budgetary cuts, which are being applied by different public authorities during the last years and months, which are dismantling the welfare structures of the people with disabilities and their families, conditioning their future to a scenario, which is, at least, worrying.

**It looks like a contradiction, reading the data about the unemployment level and the cuts in benefits and services for people with disability together with the goals set by the Europe 2020 strategy.** It makes them look even more remote and unreachable, and it only creates more frustration and disappointment among people.

The persons with disability could grievously reach the level of personal and social development desired within a modern society, such as the EU, and contribute equally to its growth, if their safeguards are eliminated and only impositions are established, since this would augment their level of dependence on the system and their exclusion. Thus, if their promotion within the **educational system** is not facilitated, and without a reasonable probability of access to a worthy **labour market**, and without adequate **social protection**, without the **economic benefits** to support their additional costs of living (in Spain they were estimated at an extra €18,000 annually), without the necessary technical aids, without a sanitary coverage, which guarantees their maximum possible health and well-being, etc., and incrementing, on the other hand, the economic burdens (co-payment in dependency care, healthcare co-payment, increased taxes, etc.), while wages and pensions are frozen, it seems obvious to anticipate that the immediate future, which persons with disability are facing, is not precisely one of inclusion in the society. Thus, this does not seem to be the formula to reach the objective

of inclusive growth in Greece, Spain and Lithuania. As a consequence, **there is no advancement of a sustainable growth, since there is no promotion of the dynamic participation and contribution in society of the disabled and their dependence on the system is increased.** Not facilitating these persons in the attainment of their independence is to make them more dependent than they already are, bringing about, on one hand, a detriment of their rights and an increase of their vulnerability, and on the other, an unnecessary added cost for the system given that it is auto-induced by the state (promoting arbitrarily the unsustainability). The aggravating factor is that if it does have resources, it will guarantee at least a minimally dignified life, but will go back again to a nursing approach when it comes to disability. However, **if the state lacks these resources (path marked by the current momentum), they are bound for social exclusion, invisibility and absolute poverty (contrary to the 2020 Objectives).**

Facing such a reality, it would also be important to take into account the level of anguish, stress and insecurity, which is created among the people in this group, when addressing, in a long-term perspective, the attainment of a dignified life.

Considering that on December 23, 2013, the **UN General Assembly, for the first time, summoned a High-level meeting on 'disability and development'** through which it adopted a transcendental document oriented towards promoting a development, which takes into account disability, thus guiding the efforts towards the creation of a completely inclusive economy towards 2015 and, after this date, **it seems evident, given the decisions taken lately, that Spain, Greece and Lithuania are not precisely on the road towards this noble purpose (rather the contrary).** It is fundamental to draw the attention, mobilize support and to modify the chosen subject, which carries the burden of these measures of economic adjustment, in relation to the key aspects concerning inclusion of persons with disability in the society and in development. Facing the prevailing reality of continued and aggressive measures of fiscal adjustment imposed, the goals of the EU 2020 Strategy related to this group can only be reached, if it is decided unilaterally to safeguard and guarantee the rights of this already vulnerable group.

**Without implication and real action from the public authorities and without their collaboration with social partners (“nothing for us without us”), it will be difficult to reach the rights, which facilitate the achievement of a sustainable and just development.** It is praiseworthy to adopt regulations which promote rights, but without a strong will and the necessary means, material and human, it will be very complicated to execute them.

On the other hand, the people with disability should work more on their **self-esteem and on their standing for their rights**. During the representation of one of the theatrical short plays in Greece, the trainer acting as the employer insulted the fictional character Marios. When Marios, a waiter, broke some glasses the employer shouted at him telling him: “I hired you just because I felt pity for you when I saw you this way.” Marios did not answer, nor did the other participants who were attending as the audience. Speaking this way, the trainer wanted the participants to strongly react, but they did not do it. They perceived there was something wrong, they understood the insult, but neither Marios, nor the audience stood up to say: “You should not speak to me this way!” The trainer made them notice they did not demand equal treatment and fought for their rights, and that nobody would do it for them.

The most important suggestion that came out from the info session was working more on **education**. Especially in a country like Greece, where children with disability almost exclusively attend special schools, it is very important that children meet and learn to deal with disability: “Citizens need to be used to thinking: as the state doesn’t do it, I’ll do it!” The assumption for getting to this result is making children without disability stay with children with disability. This is the only way for them to understand they are people with good aspects, limits, and rights.

If we want to pursue an intelligent European growth, it would be primordial that the states and the superior norms imposed truly back collective intelligence. On the contrary, when the citizens are not listened to, when exclusion from decisions that affect them is boosted and those who demonstrate against this law are repressed (Law of Citizen Security), when services and rights are cut, the exclusion of certain groups is intensified, when social in-

equality and the unsustainability of a system is promoted (hampering the guarantee of dignified living conditions: employment, access to the health-care system, etc.), then, on top of not respecting human rights, **the wrong path towards promoting and achieving intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth is being chosen (consequently, losing a large part of the enormous potential of societal growth offered by the collective intelligence)**. In Spain, Greece and Lithuania, presently, this potential (aspired to in the 2020 Objectives) is being lost, without doubt, and at a swindling pace, when it comes to the group object of this report, i. e. the persons with disability. We hope that their contributions to the Europe 2020 Strategy recorded in this project can contribute to enhance their expectations for a dignified life, which will permit them, in a near future, to be able to contribute equally to the development and growth of our society, favouring the attainment of an intelligent, sustainable and inclusive European growth.

After the info sessions about Europe 2020 strategy on its parts on disability, conclusions are not very positive and hopeful. It is clear that the goals set by the European Union for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth are too high and far from being reached in 6 years. The general feeling is that they do not take into account the reality people with disability experience every day, and many structural problems intensified nowadays by the economic crisis. Nevertheless, **the full economic and social participation of persons with disability is essential to the EU Europe 2020 Strategy to achieve success in the creation of an intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth**<sup>23</sup>.

23 Choi A., Calero J. ‘The contribution of the population of disabled people to the attainment of Europe 2020 Strategy headline targets’ *Disability & Society*, 2013, Vol. 28, No. 6, 853–873.

## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1

#### Theatre of the Oppressed: basic principles

Forum Theatre is a theatre technique developed in Brazil by the practitioner Augusto Boal in the early 70's as a part of his more famous Theater of the Oppressed (TO). Drawing on the pedagogical theories of Paulo Freire, the social aesthetics of Bertolt Brecht, and commonplace theatre exercises and games, Boal developed TO as a flexible system of interactive exercises, games, improvisations and more structured theatrical techniques. Due to the practicality and adaptability of TO, it has been applied by practitioners across the world in different contexts and to serve various social functions.

#### Theoretical and Philosophical Background

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) was a Brazilian educator and philosopher who was a leading advocate of critical pedagogy. Critical Pedagogy, starting from the theoretical basis of neo-Marxian literature on Critical Theory<sup>24</sup>, represents the reaction of progressive educators against the institutionalized functions. It is an effort to work within educational institutions and other media to raise questions about inequalities of power, about the false myths of opportunity and merit for many students, and about the way belief systems become internalized to the point where individuals and groups abandon the very aspiration to question or change their lot in life<sup>25</sup>. Freire proposed a new meaning of *theory*, far away from his more traditional sense. He shaped it to take into account the human being in relation to its context and to

24 Critical theory was first defined by Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) of the Frankfurt School of sociology in his 1937 essay *Traditional and Critical Theory*: Critical theory is a social theory oriented toward critiquing and changing society as a whole, in contrast to traditional theory oriented only to understanding or explaining it. Horkheimer wanted to distinguish critical theory as a radical, emancipatory form of Marxian theory, critiquing both the model of science put forward by logical positivism and what he and his colleagues saw as the covert positivism and authoritarianism of orthodox Marxism and Communism.

[http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Critical\\_theory.html](http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Critical_theory.html)

25 N.C.Burbules and R.Berk, *Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy: Relations, Differences, and Limits*, Critical Theories in Education, Thomas S. Popkewitz and Lynn Fendler eds., Routledge, 1999, p.1

the reality in which he is living. The theory, thus conceived, is characterized by an important transformational element: it is proposed as a new methodology for inquiry reality, switching from a passive to a dynamic approach, able to relate theory to practice. This new relationship that he had developed between theory and practice has opened up large fields of theoretical research in new areas, new pedagogical practices survey on attitudes and on the way the individual is relating with himself, others and the world. The author does not intend to propose an educational approach that places theory to practice and vice versa: the action, observation and the reaction are moving simultaneously and in relation of inter-dependence. On the basis of these new assumes he built his new theory explained in the book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970)<sup>26</sup>. Within the first chapter of the book he describes the phenomena or rather the processes that are taking place within a system of oppressor/ oppressed, based on a balance of power that actually fosters the oppressor. Then he identifies the processes of *dehumanization* and *prescription*, where *dehumanization* means the violation of human and political rights, social injustice, hunger and denial of access to knowledge<sup>27</sup>. Instead, *prescription* means the process of introjection of the particular values of the oppressors, where the perception of change is understood by the oppressed in turn oppressor. In order to counter these two processes, Freire introduces the concept of *conscientization*. It involves two sub-processes: *consciousness raising* and *critical education*. The *consciousness raising* is defined as the awareness of the condition of the man not considered as a thing or instrument, while *critical education* is distinct from the *custodian education*. *Custodian education*, sought and encouraged by the oppressor, intends the students as if they were "container" in which educators pour their knowledge. On the contrary, *Critical education*, that could be the desirable end of the condition of the oppressed, is intended as a dialogue characterizing learning and social life. The application of his philosophical approach to pedagogy, enhanced by sociological and linguistic cues, results into an organization of time of the education practice divided into three key moments:

- The *thematic investigation* during which the student and the professor seeking the individual and social language used (linked to the context of life in which

26 P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum, New York – London, 2000

27 P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.43-70

they are located) and the words that best define the core issues of their own biographical history;

- The *theming* of the central issues that emerged from student and teacher in the first point and the decoding of these issues: the deepening of the social significance of the issues analysed in their precise context and environment;
- The *problematization* which involves the transition from a magical view to a critical view of the emerging social issues. This moment is critical for the transformation of those nodes from an individual to social dimension as discussed in the previous two steps<sup>28</sup>.

In the same period, Augusto Boal (1931-2009) started his path of dismantlement of the theatrical tradition and of fight against the inequalities. In the 1950, after he reached the major in Engineering, chose to follow his passion for theater and flew to United States for learning new acting methodologies. During his stay in New York he was influenced by a new method invented by the Russian actor and playwright Konstantin Stanislavskij (1863-1938). The most relevant feature introduced by Stanislavskij's method was the notion of *subtext*, which allows to change the perspective from the classical acting methods, focusing solely on the script, to one more focused on the psychological traits of the characters. The *subtext* becomes the set of creative strategies (thoughts, motives, feelings, qualities, events of the past) that help the actor to live and make credible the words of the script and the character's actions<sup>29</sup>. In 1956, Boal became the director of Teatro Arena in Sao Paolo and also started to devote special attention to the training of the actors creating drama courses with the aim of redefining the social role of theater and actors. We could define this moment as the beginning of a trajectory that later led the author to the first forms of introspection and brought him to declare that «*the human being does not do theater because they are theater. Some, in addition to be theater, do theater*»<sup>30</sup>. The physical and mental mechanization that are acquired in everyday life, however, can be drowsy creative qualities inherent in the individual dimension, decreasing the possibility of exploration of your body and biographical memory

28 Compare with T. Barauna, T. Motos Terue, *De Freire a Boal*, Ciudad Real, NAQUE, 2009.

29 G. Sofia, *Lo spettatore in gioco. Sottotesto, sottopartitura e meccanismo specchio* in Il Lettore in Gioco, Edizioni CàFoscari, Venezia 2013, p.69-71

<http://edizioniconf.unive.it/index.php/Inn/article/viewFile/346/250#page=68>

30 A. Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*, Routledge, 1995

31 Ibid. Tania Barauna, Tomas Motos Terue, *De Freire a Boal*

that it constitutes for every human being. Thus, as Freire theorized, «*through the theater the person develops self-esteem, the oppressed body frees himself from everyday life, from society*»<sup>31</sup>. Both Freire and Boal developed methodologies that strongly share the same hope, the same commitment to construction of knowledge and an educational act, capable of thinking transformation, freedom and the creation of a new individual. For the two Brazilian authors without dialogue there is no communication and autonomy can not be created if not as the result of action in society: there can be no education without social intervention<sup>32</sup>. In this regard Boal identifies three levels of mechanization and de-awareness: bodily, psychological and psycho-social, which are interconnected. In any case, the path is to be carried out in a group, considered to be the ideal context for the dynamics of change<sup>33</sup>.

Individuals, through discussion and questioning of their perspectives, come in contact and together change the way they perceive, interpret, and therefore, the world. The dialogue for Freire (and Boal) is not a simple technique aimed for achieving certain results but it is an integral part of human nature itself. Indeed, the starting point of a TO's intervention is the theoretical analysis of the situation, the initial examination of the oppression of a community. The operational hub of the TO is to question the people who live there, because they can express theatrically the oppressions that they feel<sup>34</sup>. For thus, TO does not pretend to provide any truth, but leads instead to practice a *maieutic approach*<sup>35</sup> that drives individuals towards dialogue and confrontation, to the search for new and non-stereotypical answers<sup>36</sup>. It proposes a set of techniques with the explicit purpose to enable knowledge processes and the transformation of oppressive reality.

32 A. Tomelli, *Dalla pedagogia degli oppressi al teatro dell'oppresso*, Educazione Democratica – Rivista di Pedagogia Democratica, March 2012, p.23

[http://www.educazionedemocratica.org/pdf/ED\\_3\\_2012.pdf#page=23](http://www.educazionedemocratica.org/pdf/ED_3_2012.pdf#page=23)

33 A. Tomelli, *Dalla pedagogia degli oppressi al teatro dell'oppresso*,

34 Compare with R. Mazzini, *Teatro dell'oppresso e Educazione alla pace*, in: "Mosaico di Pace", n.1, sett. 1990

35 The *maieutic process*, is one of the process of Socratic method. It's the process of "bringing to birth" the ideas and judgments of the mind. He usually put a question and than institute comparison of example with example, noting similarities and differences. Socrates' objective seems to have been to help ordinary people clarify their own conceptions of morally good behavior, so that they might lead a better moral life, building their selves (*psyches*) to the fullest. See I.L. Götz, *On the Socratic method*, in Philosophy of Education, 1999 – ojs.ed.uiuc.edu, p.84-93

<http://ojs.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/pes/article/viewArticle/2031>

36 That is strongly connected to the vision of Freire. Compare with P. Freire, *Educazione come pratica della libertà*, Milano, Mondadori, 1977, pp. 180

## Forum Theater

Forum theater was accidentally born in Peru, from the dissatisfaction of a spectator during a theater play, who could not see the actors made his suggestions. It is a play that represents a negative, oppressive situation. The public is called upon to intervene and seek solutions and to eventually replacing the protagonist. The Forum can be considered a kind of brainstorm on social issues, during which you try to dissolve the *mechanization* that guide our answers to the problems. For thus, it's characterized by two main features:

- the stage disappears and the audience becomes active, such as *spectactors* they explore, show, analyse and transform the reality in which they are living. Boal emphasizes the critical need to prevent the isolation of the audience. The term *spectator* brands the participants as less than human; hence, is necessary to humanize them, to restore to them their capacity for action in all its fullness. They must also be a subject, an actor on equal plane with those accepted as actors, who in turn must also be spectators. This will eliminate any notions of the ruling class and the theatre solely portraying their ideals while the audience being the passive victims of those images. This way the spectators no longer delegates power to the characters either to think or act in their place. They free themselves; they think and act for themselves<sup>37</sup>.
- this exploration of reality is guided by a sort of facilitator/trainer: the Jolly. In most cases, but not all, this would be a drama workshop leader. This person takes responsibility for the logistics of the process and ensures a fair proceeding, but must never comment upon or intervene in the content of the performance, as that is the province of the *spectactors*.

<sup>37</sup> Boal supports the idea that theatre is not revolutionary in itself but is rehearsal of revolution. Compare with Wardrip-Fruin, Noah, N.Montfort, *From Theatre of the Oppressed*,The NewMediaReader. Cambridge, Mass., MIT, 2003, p.339-352

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## ANNEX 2

### Forum Theater Guidelines

- Anyone can act in a Forum Theatre play, no previous experience is necessary and **actors don't need great acting skills**, but need to assimilate and comprehend the situation you portray;
- The **play is created by the actors** in a series of preparatory workshops, where the tutor starts to involve them with game-exercises, warming up exercises and discussions on the situation to be portrayed;
- No certain script. Actors are supported by a kernel of background knowledge and character definitions implemented during the preparatory workshops;

### How to create the play

- The group had to choose the issue (oppression) that they want to show up and what are the general idea that audience could have on the subject. Real background information need to be provided, discussed and absorbed by the actors, because Forum Theater tries to make questioning about the issue both actors and audience. It is important to remember that **Forum Theater main goal is not finding solutions to an issue, but to set the "oppressed" free from the "oppressor"**. In this perspective, several solutions can be found, not only a single one, because it all depends on the different point of view the members of the audience have about the issue.
- It's fundamental the close cooperation among the members of the group and to develop a pleasant environment and supportive spirit within the group. That is the main task of game-exercises and warming up exercises during the preparatory workshop that help to bypass physical and mental barriers within the group;
- Imagine some characters that might participate in the story and choose a **leading character** which will incarnate the oppressed/issue the play is about. The audience should identify itself with this character;
- Choose other characters (the **antagonists/oppressors**) for impersonating the forces of oppression or difficulties faced by the main character;

- During the preparatory workshops (and after the warming-up exercises) improvise situations in which the main character is thwarted by the antagonists. It is important to appoint the behavior of actors and to discuss in the group how to shape it in the better way;
- Write down the first draft of the play as it is at this stage and start to try to imagine the possible responses by the audience and practice on how to respond to them. This is very important phase because the preparation to the question of the audience could burst or freeze the discussion during the play;
- Analyze the dialogue and identify **goals, sub-goals and obstacles**. At every moment, each character has goals and sub-goals that he or she is attempting to achieve. Tension is generated when these goals are resisted by obstacles. Obstacles are either the actions of other characters, events, or internal emotional obstacles within the character;
- Dialogue can also **transfer important background information** to the audience and deepen their understanding of the relevant inner world of the character (the *subtext*);
- When the script is ready it's necessary to rehearse many times as the actors feel their roles deeply in their inner self.

### The Joker

- The Joker needs to feel at home and relaxed on stage. He has to act like a sort of announcer or minstrel that is narrating a story;
- At the beginning of the show the Joker comes on stage and warms the audience up with questions, discussion, and interaction;
- When the play has started the Joker stands aside and observes the audience, appointing reaction, questions and everything could light up the dialogue (ex. Someone is leaving his seat in a disappointed way);
- After the play is performed the first time, the joker asks for questions and give tips on the basis of the notes and the reactions he has seen, so as to make the audience think on what they have just seen. At this stage, **the Joker only asks for questions, but does not wait for answers**. Doing so s/he makes the participants think it was their idea to start the changes.

- Afterward the joker makes the performance start again. The joker can ask the actors to play how many times s/he thinks are needed for the audience to full understand the issue presented by the performance.

### During and after the performance

- The final goal is setting the “oppressed” free by getting **new ideas into the room**. It is important to stress that there are no right nor wrong ideas and there is no need to reach a consensus.
- The Joker facilitates the **discussion in 3 phases**:
  - 1. What happened? Who was involved?**
  - 2. Who do we sympathize with?**
  - 3. Was the outcome inevitable or may things have turned out differently?**
- At a certain moment, during the discussion, the Jokers stops the people by telling their ideas and ask them to directly “implement” them on stage;
- **Everybody wishes doing so takes the part of the main character, s/he takes one of his/her objects in order to better feel in his/her shoes and act according to his/her idea of solution of the problem;**
- The other actors are trained and ready to react to this “improvisation”;
- Once the audience has tried out the most obvious solutions, the Joker can decide to further deepen the discussion;
- When to stop depends on the sensibility of the Joker to understand how much the participants are taking part in the discussion and contributing with new ideas.



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