

The Board also recommends that social services should work more systematically in the assessment to ensure that issues regarding identity and culture are not overlooked.

The Board has experienced that co-operation with the representatives of the Roma group is productive. But it is obvious that the group seldom participates in the Swedish society although many of them lived in Sweden for many generations. The Roma group in Sweden has a long history of exclusion from the society and has not had satisfactory access to and attendance of school. The Board wishes to stress that it is important that the group becomes and is treated as a full member in the society without giving up their culture, language, etc. The society has to make sure that the Roma group is participating in an equal way on all the arenas of the society.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN AUSTRIA

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With an amendment of the Austrian Constitution in 1997, Discrimination on grounds of Disability was prohibited.

In the year 2003 a fresh impetus was given to the disability policy in Austria from the European level:

- the European Year of Persons with Disabilities 2003 created a rising awareness of the situation and the problems of disabled persons,
- the EU Framework Directive on Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation had to be transposed into the national law.

On 6 July 2005, the Austrian Parliament adopted a Disability Equality Package including the Federal Disability Equality Act, as well as amendments to the Disability Employment Act, the Federal Disability Act, and the Constitution. This package is a milestone in the Austrian disability policy. For the first time it offers an enforceable protection against discrimination for persons with disabilities and enshrines legal consequences if the prohibition of discrimination is violated.

The key elements of the Federal Disability Equality Act are as follows:

- discrimination on grounds of disability is prohibited in many areas of life (that goes far beyond the EU-directive);
- application: the act covers the federal administration, including self-governing bodies, private contracts, as well as public goods and services;
- some family members are also protected by the law;
- prohibited is direct and indirect discrimination and harassment;
- barriers: can be a discrimination unless their removal would be a disproportionate burden;
- a solution of the conflict is tried in a compulsory conciliation procedure in the Federal Social Office, mediation is possible;
- sanction: a claim on financial compensation can be brought to the court;
- burden of proof: is regulated in favour of the persons with disabilities;
- the Umbrella Organisation of the Austrian Disability Organisations can apply in cases of general interest;
- buildings and Public Transport: for existing barriers in buildings and in the public transport the law enters into force step by step in a transition period of 10 years.

Amendment to the Disability Employment Act:

- the Act covers private and federal public employment;
- the Act protects against discrimination with regard to establishing work relations, pay, training and retraining, career advancement, terminating work relations, membership in work organizations, and access to self-employment.

Most of the rules are similar to the Disability Equality Act:

- Reasonable accommodation or removal of barriers is required from the employer unless this would be a disproportionate burden.

Amendment to the Federal Disability Act:

- A Disability Ombudsman is established within the Federal Ministry for Social Affairs to support persons with disabilities who feel discriminated.

Amendment to the Constitution:

- The Austrian Sign Language is recognized as an own language.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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Gender mainstreaming is still quite a new issue within Lithuanian society as well as amongst the responsible institutions. Some key issues in the theory and practice of gender mainstreaming are discussed in the paper. The paper suggests that gender mainstreaming is underdeveloped as a concept, and identifies a need to elaborate further on some fundamentals. In particular, the conceptualization of mainstreaming needs to be re-thought with special attention devoted to the understanding of problems of gender inequality that underlies it, and the articulation of the relationship between gender mainstreaming and societal change.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES VIA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

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Equal opportunities for a person, community or nation can not be ensured without involvement, participation and empowerment. These terms are also closely related to social work and imply basic competences of a social worker. In 2007, a European Leonardo da Vinci project “Community Care Approach: A Strategy for Social Inclusion” lead by Debreccen university (Hungary) has been started. It incorporates 8 countries (Sweden, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Lithuania, Belgium, Romania, and Bulgaria) and is aimed at curriculum development in the field of Community social work for educating field practice teachers of social higher education programs. Community-oriented social work recently has become more popular in many EU countries. Communities in all the countries, while implementing one of their main functions, i.e. rallying and empowering local people, at the same time ensure equal possibilities in all areas of social life: by solving the problems of excluded groups, providing services and activities, which respond to the needs of all diverse groups. These functions correspond to the policy of the European Union: to motivate incorporation of equal opportunities into the Community policies.