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Newsletter No. 2

2nd November 2001

Dear Partners,

Returning from the opening “Conference of the Community Action Programme to combat discrimination” from 18th to 19th October 2001 in Brussels Michael Langhanky was full of impressions and ideas for the project – you will read about it in this newsletter.

But one change is already put into practice: We have changed our outfit. The new title “steps – structures towards emancipation, participation and solidarity” and the logo might show our structural approach and our aim of Inclusion and Human Rights for all. We hope very much that you like it!

Best wishes

Dorothee Bittscheidt, Anne Ernst, Michael Langhanky

Be different - be equal

Michael Langhanky

Impressions are always selective and particular subjective views: the exposition in the hotel hall in Brussels, showing immigrants, transsexuals and lesbian couples, an old grandfather and a Roma mother; the very competent staff of the Commission; the international mixture of participants - not only in language or colour but also in the access to the topic of diversity and non-discrimination. All these pictures and glimpses are in my mind and are combined with one word: diversity. Diversity of a society, understood as enriching, not as a threat which has to be handled but as a chance which has to be enforced was the topic due to my impressions.

The Commissioner Mrs. Diamantopoulous opening speech was recurring on the changes since the 11th of September, facing the danger of increasing racism, narrow-minded

prejudices and less tolerance to ambivalence. There was the warning of a clash between these resentments and fears and the need to establish human rights in a diverse transnational society in her speech. Concerning to our issue of restructuring social services, the Commissioner argued, that societies have to learn a change and will benefit from one fight against discrimination for other aspects of social life: "To take a concrete example: we are currently seeing in disability movements across Europe, a shift away from a traditional welfare-based approach to disabled people towards one which emphasises the rights of the individual to be treated as an individual. This is because the arguments which were developed by the pioneers of the American civil rights movement have now been adapted by the disability movements. We in Europe may be more familiar, for example, with the concept of reasonable accommodation as the principle by which employers make changes to their working arrangements to meet the needs of people with disabilities."

(Anna Diamantopoulou; Opening speech 18.10.2001)

The information given by officials during the conference ruled out the principles of the programme and experiences, dangers and ideas of partnership building. Concerning the partnership three ideas will be useful for us:

- ?? There must be a clear and expressed outcome for all the partners involved and the estimated outcome which every partner wants to gain during the project has to be expressed from the very beginning. It might change in the process of working but have to be transparent.
- ?? There should be an explicit working plan with clear aims.
- ?? There should be a very clear expression and decision on the leadership in organisations and communication for the project.

Concerning the steps towards part II of the programme, the project itself, the Commission officials told:

- ?? Next weeks we will get the confirmation of our participation and one week later the outlines for part II will be published.
- ?? A network of E-information between all the involved partners will be established.
- ?? The decision for finally 25 participants will be held in the Commission itself according to the outlines, which gained for me a clearer shape.

The Commission will ask for:

- ?? a clear definition of the problem we are working on
- ?? a clear definition of the aims

- ?? the very concrete outcome which should focus on regional action and include administration and be one the same hand compatible to other regions and countries
- ?? a horizontal approach on discrimination, which means not specialised on one separate group as victim of discrimination.
- ?? participation
- ?? bottom-up-development
- ?? include a “Culture of compensation” for the victims
- ?? gender and age-mainstreaming

There were a lot more speeches which I only can summarise in some sentences:

Peter Moore (Sheffield) claimed “not to forget the local authorities in the fight against discrimination”. Mr. Alhadeff expressed an idea for a monitoring discrimination in the provider- institutions. Stefan Trömel from the European Disability Forum asked not to forget the special handicaps (locking up in homes, access to buildings etc.) for the disabled and claimed for a partly vertical approach. Providers and People with disabilities seemed to be on the agenda but the “carceration” of elderly, disabled and clients of psychiatry are not so much in the focus. The panel was dominated by ethnic discrimination.

In a short questioning, Stefan Trömel showed interest in our project and we will get in contact with the Forum. Mr. Alhadeff, who is in charge for the NGO`s in the Commission opened the connection to the project “solidar” – managed by Roshan di Puppo – which exists since 2000 in Brussels. The project works together with AWO, Volkshilfe and other institutions on the one side, the different Forums of disabled, gay and lesbians and the elderly in order to organise an equal access to the institutions on the other side. We had an interesting discussion and decided to take part vice verse in the main conference of each project.

What were my impressions of our own project in the conference? I think, that our project is well prepared, has a very effective approach to a crucial point and structure of discrimination. I think also that we have a problem “on the hook” which is crucial for the sick, handicapped and elderly and which means a discrimination for 3%-5% of the average population. The year 2003 is declared as the “Year of the Disabled”.

But I also think, that we have to make our approach clearer concerning to the structural main idea to build systems for social services which will be able to fulfil the basic human rights also for the most severely handicapped in our society. We will have to explain our project not as a specialised vertical approach but as a horizontal idea of inclusion to all. In a talk with Barbar Nolan, Head of the programme-commission, she made very clear, that the problem is not very well known and that we surely will have to change the name of our proposal and

programme. The title should express our systematic idea of diversity, inclusion, de-institutionalisation and human rights.

Back from Brussels three ideas will lead to changes:

- ?? Our project gets a new name and logo.
- ?? We will open a web-side with information.
- ?? Parts of the Newsletter will be published on the web-side.
- ?? We will organise the possibility of a vice-verse communication by Email of all partners in the project.

These changes will be organised during next weeks. We are also looking for someone who can translate these information into Spanish.

Trailer for Newsletter No. 3: End of October Bart Branderhorst, Ino Cornell and Jolanda visited Hamburg. We made the first steps toward a cooperation with the partners in Rotterdam.