

Education and Disability/Special Needs

the barriers to training, education and employment

MADO auditorium, 06 July, 10.00-13.00

A seminar for Commission staff

There are some 50 million EU citizens with disabilities; they are one of the largest groups of disadvantaged citizens in the EU. Disabled people are around five times as likely as non-disabled people to be out of work and are twice as likely to have no qualifications.

- *How do we define capability and disability in education and training and what are the implications for policy?*
- *What is "inclusive education" and to what extent is "integration" or "inclusion" actually occurring in Member States?*
- *What are the barriers faced by people with disabilities and special needs to participation in education, training and employment? What are the policies and practices that can overcome these barriers?*
- *How can such practices be encouraged and sustained within and around schools?*

With

Dr. Cor Meijer Director, European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education

Prof. Sheila Riddell Director, Centre for Research in Education, Inclusion and Diversity, Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh

Margaret Davies Equinex Research and Development Unit, University of Wales, Newport



Cor Meijer will speak about:

- key concepts and terminology
- classification and categorization of learners with special educational needs
- statistics on SEN provision in the various EU Member States
- current developments and challenges in inclusive education
- what works - effective classroom practices and main conditions
- inclusion versus segregation

Social deprivation and special educational needs: lessons from the Scottish experience, Sheila Riddell

There is a strong association between the identification of additional support needs and social deprivation. But statutory educational plans, which provide greater rights to additional resources and formal dispute resolution mechanisms, are disproportionately distributed to children in more advantaged neighbourhoods. Parents from middle class backgrounds appear to be able to use their social and cultural capital more effectively to challenge local authority decisions and achieve the type of placement they consider most suitable for their children's needs. This presentation uses Scottish Government statistics and family case studies to examine the links between social deprivation, the identification of additional support needs and parents' ability to use the new dispute resolution mechanisms. The presentation concludes by placing the Scottish experience within a broader European context, raising questions about social deprivation, parents' and children's rights and the funding of special education.

Exploring improved access to education, training and employment for people from disadvantaged groups

Margaret Davies will present key findings from the EQUINEX project (supported under EQUAL) which examined ways to improve equality of opportunity for people from disadvantaged groups when attempting to engage in education, training and employment. The project piloted innovative support mechanisms to help people with disabilities and disadvantages access education, training and employment opportunities. Particular target groups included people from the Deaf community, those with visual impairments, people with learning disabilities (including autistic spectrum disorders) and older people. Employers and training establishments were also examined to ascertain their support needs when working with disadvantaged individuals. Key findings will be presented relating to the support needs for individuals, support needs for organisations and the benefits of partnership working.



Margaret Davies coordinates the work of the Equinex Research & Development Unit at the University of Wales, Newport. She had responsibility for running the large ESF Equal programme *Equinex* looking at ways to encourage and support people from disadvantaged groups towards education, training and employment. Before working at the University, Margaret developed and directed a charitable company providing innovative, researched advocacy solutions to issues for vulnerable adults. Previous to this she worked as an adult

educator and counsellor and also worked extensively in further education teaching psychology, social policy and social care practice. Margaret has a particular interest in equal opportunity issues in education, lifelong learning and employment and how educational and other establishments can constructively address these issues in order to improve access to provision for people from disadvantaged groups.



Sheila Riddell is Director of the Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity at the Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh. She was previously Director of the Strathclyde Centre for Disability Research at the University of Glasgow. Her research interests are in the broad field of equality and social inclusion, with particular reference to gender, social class and disability in the fields of education, training, employment and social care. Sheila is currently working on projects investigating the experiences and outcomes of disabled students in higher education, lifelong learning policy across Europe and the development of literacies in SMEs.



Cor Meijer is Director of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE). He was previously responsible for major European-wide projects such as on special provision and inclusion in Europe, on financing of special needs education in Europe and on classroom practice studies. He has served as consultant on special needs issues to the OECD and to other national and international bodies. He is the co-editor of *New Perspectives on Special Education* (Routledge, 1994) and of *Inclusive Education: a Global Agenda* (Routledge, 1997).