

Panel 3: Independent Living and Work Inclusion

Dear Minister Locatelli, dear all,

thank you for the invitation. My name is Sigrid Arnade and I am one of the speakers of the German Disability Council. I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak to you on the topics of independent living, education and work inclusion.

Most of the G7 states have ratified the CRPD. So the states have obliged themselves to protect, promote and implement the human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities. This is a good message. The G7 states should be role models for other countries. At least for Germany there is still a very long way to go.

With regard to independent living a human rights perspective means to respect the right of persons with disabilities to choose where and with whom to live. The necessary assistance including personal assistance has to follow their choice and not the other way around.

But far too many persons with disabilities still have to live in large institutions. This is the case even in a rich country like Germany. Yet systematic coordinated strategies and efforts towards deinstitutionalization are not visible. I assume that the situation in the other G7 states is quite similar. According to the guidelines on deinstitutionalization of the CRPD-Committee it is indispensable to develop a comprehensive **deinstitutionalization strategy** in all countries concerned. This is especially important in face of the increasing number of armed conflicts, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. Furthermore it is important to remove all barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from living independently. This is why the supply of affordable and **accessible housing** has to be increased. **Personal assistance** must be available and financed because it is the basis for living independently. **So I urgently ask you to add appropriate sentences to the draft of the Solfagnano Declaration.**

Regarding the topic of work inclusion I very much appreciate your sensitivity to the particular disadvantages faced by women with disabilities.

But first we have to look at the **education system**. Work inclusion requires inclusive and quality education. Most G7 states including Germany have to develop a comprehensive plan to accelerate the transition from special schooling to inclusive education. Special schooling can never be part of an inclusive education system. According to the General Comment Nr. 4 of the CRPD-Committee all special schools must be closed and prohibited. All resources have to be invested in an inclusive

education system of high quality. I assume, Italy and Canada are role models regarding inclusive education.

With respect to the **labour market** the right to inclusion must be ensured for all persons with disabilities, regardless of the type and severity of the disabilities.

At least in Germany we have the problem of a separated system of **sheltered workshops**. The General Comment Nr. 8 of the CRPD-Committee refers to sheltered workshops as a form of discrimination. To implement the CRPD properly an action plan to promote the transition of persons with disabilities in sheltered workshops to the open labour market must be developed in close consultation with and with the active involvement of organizations of persons with disabilities.

Furthermore the accessibility of and reasonable accommodation in **workplaces** have to be ensured. The G7 states must adopt clear legal regulations on this, if they have not already done so.

I would like you to add two sentences to the draft of the Solfagnano Declaration: One sentence should focus on sheltered workshops. The other should underline the importance of accessible workplaces.

In summary: It is incredible important that the 7 states commit to concrete enforceable sustainable measures to implement the CRPD.

Thank you for your attention!

Prof. Dr. Sigrid Arnade (Speaker for Gender & Diversity)