

# ASSOCIATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



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## **Why does the Association of students with disabilities (ASD) exist?**

According to the estimation of the European Strategy for Persons with Disabilities, every sixth person in Europe faces one of the barriers in their everyday life. Based on that fact about 17% of the population are people with disabilities. This percentage is probably even greater than 17% in Serbia due to the impact of the consequences of the wars and the rising number of cancer cases in Europe. The biggest problems people with disabilities deal with are: different forms of incompatibility, multiple forms of discrimination on daily basis, prejudices and underdeveloped support system.

**The vision of the Association of students with disabilities is: “Society with equalized conditions”.**

**The mission of the Association of Students with Disabilities is: “Fighting for the implementation and respect of human rights “.**

## What does the concept of disability include?

The concept of disability acknowledges unequal conditions in the society and the lack of support for a person to overcome barriers which this person encounters in their everyday life and social interaction. People have created everything in society or have adjusted the natural resources according to their needs. However, in that creation and adjustment of the environment, people as the creators of society did not create equal conditions. Society is full of diversities and the concept of disability recognizes these differences through the creation of support that would allow equal conditions for the functioning of all individuals in society. The disability does not label on the basis of different personal features of the individuals in a society, on the contrary, it foresees an intervention in the society so that each person has the equal opportunities to participate actively in social activities and by this mean to get support in functioning. Such views create equal opportunities and they encourage each individual to participate in all social activities equally. Disability is a situation in which different barriers are to be overcome with some kind of support, which means that the disability includes:

- Overcoming architectural barriers
- Adaptation of the work materials
- Use of assistive technologies and the application of universal design
- The support of personal assistants and sign translators

- Application of the affirmative measures (measures of affirmative action) on people with reduced opportunities in society.

The concept of disability actively contributes to the development of an inclusive society and ensures the practical application of the “social” model. The concept of the disability is opposite of the “medical (expert)” model, as well as “merciful”, “integrative” and other models that do not recognize people with disability as active agents in the society.

## **Why don't we use word invalidity (invaliditet)?**

According to “The Lexicon of Foreign Words and Expressions” (Milan Vujaklija, Prosveta, Belgrade, 2002), the word invalid means “the one who is incapacitated or incapable of working and earning money to support himself and his family, especially the one who was disabled in the war, a war invalid. “ The word ‘invalid’ comes from the Latin word *invalidus*, which means weak, helpless, worthless, useless, even harmful. Besides the meaning of being weak, helpless, faulty, incapable of service, unusable, incapacitated, waste, scrap (Vujaklija), word ‘invalid’ is often used in the legal context where it signifies something not based in law, or that is, something invalid. Applying the word invalid has led to the

creation of an atmosphere that challenges the ability of people with disabilities to actively participate in society and caused pity, charity and similar feelings.

## **The History of the Students' Association with Disabilities**

The ASD was founded on July 6th 2000, with the aim of equalizing the possibilities of young people in the field of education. The aim of the Association of students with disabilities is to create an inclusive and sensible society in which each person will have equal opportunities and that will be included in all segments of life, according to one's own desires without discrimination.

Up till now, ASD has provided support for over 800 students and students with disabilities. Moreover, through the its advocacy among the decision-makers, the Association managed to obtain support in studying for students with disabilities which refers to the application of affirmative measures, the Association provided a scholarship program for students with disabilities and initiated the establishment of support services for students with disabilities at the University in Belgrade and Nis. In addition to the advocacy, the ASD conducted over 130 projects and over 20 campaigns

## How does the Association of Students with Disabilities work?

ASD fulfills its mission through different program activities. The basic activities are:

- Support service for students with disabilities
- Empowering young people with disability through programs of non-formal education
- Organizing peer support
- Advocating better laws and policies
- Empowering other youth organizations, students bodies, Youth Offices and other entities in the community to equally involve people with disability in their work , especially the young ones
- Raising awareness and forming positive attitudes towards the people with disabilities by using media campaigns.

## What are the principles the ASD apply in its work?

1. Individual approach to each person.
2. Cross-disability approach - Providing support without considering the situation (type) of the disability. Our activities are adapted for participants, regardless of the existence or type of the disability.
3. Self-advocacy - “Nothing about us without us”.

4. Self-advocacy and activism - we encourage young people with disabilities to advocate the ideas of human rights and non-discrimination, to highlight their competencies and to fight for equal position in their surroundings.
5. Inclusion in the work of both persons with disabilities and persons with disabilities in all activities.
6. Anti-discrimination and respect for the rights of every person, especially the basic human rights in which we recognize and the right to higher education.
7. The responsibility of each person in a society in accordance with the rights which are provided by the society.

## **What is a support service for students with disabilities?**

The support service for students with disabilities provides realization of different rights and concrete forms of support such as customized literature, providing the necessary information or organizing peer support. Over 800 students were supported by ASD in their education until present days.

## **Activist Center of the ASD**

It is an idea which provides any person, who shows

interest, with the opportunity to contribute to ASD with their engagement, competences and motivation. There are various possible ways of engagement in the Activist Center, from peer support for the students with disabilities, through logistical and technical support, to expert engagement in various fields. The activist center is also a kind of practice and recruitment for the ASD Work Team. So far a significant number of activists, who are currently the members of ASD Work team, started their engagement in the Activist Center.

## **Current programs**

In addition to the support service for students with disabilities, ASD is actively committed to youth activism and inclusion of the youth with disabilities in youth activities, strengthening personal capacities and motivating students with disabilities to take part in society, advocating good practices and the fighting against discrimination.

## **Our achievements in the past year**

Over the past year, we have continuously provided support to 160 young persons with disabilities education process through the Support service.



Being in charge of the projects “Regional Inclusive Youth Initiative of Serbia - RIOIS2016 “ and “Human Rights Promoters - Message of Equality”, ASD has actively provided support for strengthening the capacity of youth organizations in around 30 local communities in Serbia with the aim of the equal involvement of youth with disabilities in youth activities.

Partnership in Erasmus plus “Trans2work” project, which aims to support students with disabilities in the process of transition from higher education to finding an employment.

Project ‘InkluzijaDA’ contributes to connectivity and exchange of experiences between young people without disabilities and young people with disabilities.

ASD is one of the founding organizations of Youth Council for Equality and Inclusive Society.

A number of partnerships with youth organizations, different institutions and expert and professional organizations were realized.

## **What next?**

The Association of Students with Disabilities has a plan to actively contribute to the establishment of inclusiveness into every social field through the development of concrete forms of support for persons with disabilities. ASD wants to achieve this goal through concrete system

solutions, project results, establishing cooperation with all agents who are socially responsible and want to contribute to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society, as well as the inclusion of as many young people as possible in the work team of the ASD.

The ultimate goal of What next?

The Association of Students with Disabilities thrives to make our own society just and inclusive to that extent that the Association ceases to exist at some point.

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