

## **Introduction**

Developed in recent years model of participation of mentally retarded in social life is based on such concepts as: integration , normalization, decentralization, availability, compensation, preventing social exclusion and so forth. A fundamental assumption is that retarded people should have access and should use the same system of education, work, administration, social services, culture and free time activities as other citizens. These people, however, should find a support, which would allow them to participate in social life with dignity, despite their special needs. This assumption is a form of a new attitude toward disability. This new attitude has caused a lot of changes in relations between disability and “normality”. One of the main cause of these changes are retarded people themselves. By active participation in social life they proved that disability is something natural and disabled people can also launch many values into social life. New attitude also influenced many activities within the field of creating new socio-political strategy toward retardation. It's aim is to create society, which is open and available for everyone. It should be based on respecting the rights and respecting individual differences. It concerns many fields and it's main problems are; fighting with discrimination, developing open society, creating rights for access to environment and preventing marginalization. In regards to assumptions of this new strategy, much effort is put in order to eliminate discriminating signs and practices of mentally retarded and preventing their marginalization. Very meaningful are these activities which prevent discrimination in education, in the access to goods, services, to information and labor market. Much attention is paid to eliminate social and physical barriers in the environment. Many activities are undertook in order to boost the accessibility for retarded people to the environment. They concern the elimination of architectonic barriers, accessibility to many means of transport and accessibility to information and technology. Within this new strategy there are also many attempts made in order to prevent exclusion phenomena of mentally retarded from society. Examples of such activities are; promoting education on each level, including professional trainings. Providing social support, financial security and participation in cultural life. Much attention is also paid on realization of the concept of independent living and participation in every aspects of social life. Disabled people are part of the society and they have equal rights for living actively in their own local community.

We hope that this book would encourage readers to reflect more on issues concerning participation of disabled people, in our society. Presented materials are the attempt of multidimensional

grasp of issues concerning disabled people. One of the book's virtue is the fact that both experiences and theoretical concepts are jointed and that Authors seek new solutions using many, diverse perspectives. We would like to thank all the Authors for effort put in the preparation of articles and for the collaboration – we hope it will be still continued. We would like to thank dearly Prof. Aniela Korzon and Prof. Helena Łaś for review of the articles, what would make our book more valuable and more substantial.

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