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Introduction

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The Readers are provided with another issue of the journal "Problems of Education, Rehabilitation and Socialization of the Disabled" (1/2015, Volume 20). Transformed from the publishing series under the same title, the journal has not changed its interdisciplinary character. The current issue is a collection of texts which undertake and explore in detail the subject of *The disabled in a local environment.*

The issue of the disabled's life space is still topical and cognitively intriguing. Mainly due to the dynamic nature of this space, political changes (including legal and organizational ones) determine other changes – in the institutional space and local government. Some questions are raised concerning the rightness of social policy, health care and services, as well as the questions about the standpoints of the disabled and the representatives of various institutions. The practical dimension of the disabled people's situation in their own environment constitutes both a research field and a space for change – a chance for the future.

The local environment is a natural area where the disabled and their families function. What takes place here are the most meaningful interactions among the important actors of family life, neighbourhood and social life – the actors at school, at work or in institutions.

Over the years, the social perception of people with disabilities has changed – the awareness has been raised that disability can affect everyone as both the human body and the mentality are destroyable, fragile and prone to unfavourable influences. However, not all types of disability are faced with positive attitudes towards the people experiencing them. What still seems to face unwanted reactions are: intellectual disability, mental disorders, substantial visible disability.

The normalization of disabled people's life is a slow paced process, determined by many barriers. Therefore, it is of crucial significance for scientific,

institutional and social environments to examine these mechanisms and to implement appropriate solutions.

The institutional dimension of education, support, professional or social activation and social security provides the opportunity to standardize services. This is done out of concern for clients – disabled people and their families. The institutional network is not free from gaps and – frequently – the aims and tasks for which they have been established hinder a flexible and individual approach to this diversified target group. Thus, the activities of the third sector constitute an important element in the local landscape, they confirm grass roots citizen movements towards establishing associations for the disabled. The lack of such associations may seem intriguing for the researchers and the involved people themselves. Various relations, networks and dependencies can be noticed between the representatives of these aiding institutions and non-government organizations. This is a space which might generate the threat of social exclusion, stigmatization, marginalization of needs (both at the individual level and in reference to the whole family). On the other hand, it is a space of chances for change – a change in understanding the construction of reality, the chances to fulfil individual needs and chances for self-fulfilment of the disabled.

The current issue submitted to the Readers comprises a few articles of researchers, practitioners, the disabled's spokespeople, who present their own concepts, the results of their studies in local, institutional and family environments as well as some examples of good practices.

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