



DISABILITY - INTERVIEW WITH AN EXPERT

Video : Disability according to Sébastien Saint-Pasteur (French Member of Parliament)

Topic
Disability

Module
Understanding

Territory
France - Europe

Subject
Disability
Definition
Problem
Challenges

Text transcription of the video

Hello, I have been invited to speak about the issue of disability as part of this MOOC, and it is with great pleasure that I will share my experience as a Member of Parliament, perhaps to shed some light on certain challenges that are not sufficiently understood.

First, disability needs to be defined, and there is not just one single definition. There are international definitions, there are administrative definitions. And then there is also, in a way, what each of us has in mind when thinking about this issue. Disability can be present at birth, it can appear after a stroke or an accident in life. It can also be discovered at any time.

Unfortunately, autism, for example, has been diagnosed for some people very late, even in adulthood. So already, reflecting on and questioning this definition also means reflecting on the way we will approach the subject.

Disability, in fact, is not something that belongs to the person. That is not really the main issue. The real question is the environment. Is it normal that because a child has dys disorders such as dysorthography, dyslexia, or dyspraxia, school is hardly accessible to them? Perhaps the teaching methods are simply not adapted to their needs.



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When someone is in a wheelchair, a person with reduced mobility, is it normal that they cannot go to a theater because there are steps at the entrance? We need to think about adjustments that allow people to access culture, sports, and leisure. A right to normality for everyone.

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So the way we look at the subject also shapes the answers we will provide. In France, we may be a little behind compared to other countries. We have support systems in schools, in employment, in housing. But we do not think enough of society as a whole, as an inclusive society.

In any case, this is the work I try to do with other parliamentarians: to make sure the law is stronger, more impactful on citizenship and access to rights, but also more effective. Because the real difficulty with these issues is when a strong political promise comes up against the reality of the difficulties faced by too many families and too many people.

Of course, access to healthcare is a major issue, and professionals need to be trained. And for certain types of disabilities, for neurodevelopmental disorders for example, we need specific approaches. There are as many disabilities as there are people with disabilities, and that is very important.



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Thinking first of the environment as the obstacle to inclusion, and not of the disability carried by the person as the obstacle itself, that is the first point.

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Then we must try to develop an approach that is as adapted as possible to the specificities and needs. There may be issues of fatigue, or sensitivity to noise or light, which are experienced differently and are not understood by much of the population, but which are decisive in allowing these people to live as normally as possible.

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And I usually say, and I will say it in conclusion because it is, for me, something very important: thinking about the rights of people with disabilities means thinking about the right to normality. Not necessarily to have a better life than everyone else, but to have the same opportunities, and sometimes the same difficulties. This right to normality, for me, is essential.

And I hope that through this MOOC, through these videos, you will develop the curiosity to try to better understand — that is already the first step. To destigmatize — that is the second. And then to commit yourselves more strongly to these issues.

Thank you