



INVALIDITY - NOBODY'S PERFECT



Invalidity is a term which cannot be easily defined and explained because for someone it is just a term, for others it is a condition and for some people it is the real life.

The manner in which this term is understood mainly depends on the consciousness of each individual.

The people born with a handicap and those who have become handicapped during their life, have own needs depending on the type of handicap. That doesn't mean they should be treated differently than the rest of the population, because they have the same rights and responsibilities as well as all the others. In order to function effectively, these people should have the basic conditions for unrestricted movement and their integration in each segment of the social living. The fulfillment of their own needs, obligations and responsibilities, will decrease the discrimination and marginalization filing.

Their involvement in the community is not a success for each individual disabled person, but it is a success for the entire community. How much the person with special needs feels useful, for him and the environment in which he lives, depends on many factors, mainly on the factors that the community offers and provides. Starting from the education, which is a pre-condition for their future self-actualization, through the employment needed for their existence, are only part of the benefits that the community is obliged to provide for these people.

In the last few decades, huge changes happened in the world of invalidity. Through direct actions, the disabled people are gaining political power and social recognition. They are fighting for the same rights, benefits and responsibilities as the other citizens in the community, because they are entitled to them as is anyone else. Through the rise of the political activities, the disabled people created their own personal, local model – manner in which they interpret, analyze and present the issues vital for their lives. That model, which is evidence for the beliefs, attitudes, philosophy and practice of the movement against the handicap is called social handicap model.

The social handicap model is not treating the problem handicap as a problem of the individual. It analyzes the problem as part of the overall environment in which we live. In the social model, the disabled person is not looked at as a patient, but as a beneficiary - citizen. The core contents of this model are the representation, support, self assistance and control of the beneficiary. The results can be noticed in the numerous changes in the field of architecture, living environment, the



relationship between the community and the social/political attitudes. The social model promotes the disabled person as an active subject that has rights and benefits and not as a passive subject that is pitiful, as is the case with the medical model.

The social model promotes the belief that the disabled people can evaluate their personal interests most effectively and that they should be able to influence the identification of services and the development of policy that deals with the disabled people. The social model promotes the idea that whatever caused the handicap, it should not carry the medical implication. Instead it should promote the active citizen right and inclusion of the handicap in the community in a way most convenient for each individual person.



The *Law on local self-government* (art.22 p.7) from 2002 strengthens the role of the local government in the field of social protection. The municipalities are responsible for the social welfare of the disabled people and the children with special needs. There is a big number of municipalities that undertake activities such as provision of free public transport for the disabled people, benefits in the payment for communal services, providing support and assistance by different companies on events of special interest for the disabled people. In many municipalities there are social welfare services that implement an active social policy.

