



Zentrum für Selbstbestimmtes Leben

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Charter of the Swiss Independent Living Movement

Goal

The “Independent Living” movement – briefly IL movement – advocates unconditional equal rights and participation for all persons with a disability. It fights against any form of discrimination, especially against the common practice of relating to human beings as mere objects of care institutions.

Structure

The Swiss IL movement is proud to be an active part of the international Independent Living Movement, keeping close contact to the latter and searching for opportunities of cooperation. The Swiss IL movement is the democratic parent organization of the Swiss Centers (ZSL) and groups (GSL) of Independent Living.

Principles

1. Disability

The SL-Movement regards disability as political phenomenon comparable to racism. Human beings who do not correspond to the norm in their physical or mental characteristics are being stigmatized and discriminated against. Often the structures of special treatment for these persons are aimed at maintaining their disadvantage. Finally the discriminated persons serve society as projection surface for tabooed fears and desires. Medical, cause oriented diagnoses cover up the act of discrimination by attributing the problem to the individuals characteristics rather than the social response to these. In this manner they promote the fragmentation within the big group of discriminated people and thwart their political influence.

2. Dignity

The SL-Movement stands up for the dignity of all human beings. It fights against any abuse of disabled people, their needs, their pictures and their conceptions. The SL-Movement fights against any form of individual or structural violence. Especially, it stands up against the storage of disabled people in ghetto or prison like structures, against the violation of their privacy by treating their bodies as objects and against the violation of their physical integrity by imposed therapies.

3. Right of self-determination

The “Independent Living”-Movement advocates the right of self-determination of all human beings, especially for those with disabilities, regardless of their gender, age, background, social group, religion, form of life, sexual orientation, political ideas as well as type, form and degree of disability.

4. Solidarity

The “Independent Living”-Movement advocates the true support of disadvantaged persons in order to empower them and reinforce their personal competence. It fights against the kind of “support” which strengthens the helper and at the same time promotes the discrimination of the person dependent on him. In particular it stands up against structures that cause persons with disabilities to remain dependent on charity, donations or help.

5. Integration

The “Independent Living”-Movement supports the integration of disabled people in all areas of life, especially schools, institutions offering training and further education, places of work on the free labor market, cultural institutions, the housing market, public traffic. It fights against special solutions, especially against those which reduce the affected persons to objects of charity and thereby encourage their discrimination in everyday life.

6. Self-representation

The “Independent Living” movement supports self representation of disabled persons on the level of decision making in all matters having an influence on their life in private, public as well as governmental organizations, offices, committees etc. It fights against the control over their lives by so called professionals in health care and administration.

7. Free, fair market

The “Independent Living”-Movement supports a free and fair market for health and social services. Sick or disabled persons, being responsible clients, must have an influence on quality and price of the supply, especially concerning personal assistance, aids and special services such as therapy etc. Monopolies, cartels and price fixing by the providers contradict the basic values of a liberal state and therefore have to be abolished at once.

8. Disability insurance

The “Independent Living”-Movement advocates an obligatory disability insurance. This insurance is to be “subject orientated” to cover the additional expenses arising to the individual because of his disability. Compensation has to be given to the disabled persons directly and not bound to a specific purpose. This puts the latter in a position to organize and plan his life according to his interests.

9. Income insurance

The “Independent Living”-Movement advocates the idea of merging and standardizing the different forms of income insurance in Switzerland (AHV, IV, ALV, SUVA, military insurance, health insurance, welfare). An obligatory pension guaranteeing the subsistence and adapted to the actual income and property situation shall protect all persons living in Switzerland against existential deprivation regardless of its cause.

10. Rating of discrimination

A lot of social and personal expenses today attributed to the disabilities are the result of the actual conditions of discrimination. – e.g. wrong or badly enforced building standards, badly planned public transportation, discriminating procedures for education, application and employment. The systems established especially for disabled persons and financed separately by the invalidity insurance (IV) and welfare – often arranged on locally varying standards – on the contrary encourage such discriminations by hiding the relationship between the cause (e.g. the building standard) and the effect, the additional expenses due to its failures. Communities and cantons which reduce discriminating circumstances continue to pay the same amount via the insurances as the communities which continue to discriminate. Communities allowing disabled persons to participate in the planning are “punished” by the influx of disabled but people mostly of low income attracted by better living conditions. Open or (e.g. in subsidy regulations) hidden measures to control the influx have a discriminating effect on disabled people and violate the constitutional right of free choice of place of residence. On the other hand people with disabilities receive the same financial aid, no matter whether they live in an outstanding or an extremely discriminating community. The IL movement supports a rating system comparing communities, suppliers of services for the public and big employers concerning their discrim-

inatory conduct and enlisting them to pay the resulting social or individual expenses according to the discriminator-pays-principle.

Working methods

1. Political level

Considering disability as a structural, political problem the IL movement works on the structural, political level. It is not a question of easing individual fate but to change the structures creating individual fate. Therefore the IL movement advocates the creation of the necessary legal basis in order to realize and enforce the above mentioned principles.

2. Civil rights

The rights of disabled people are the rights of all citizens. The IL movement considers it self as an emancipatory civil rights movement following the movements of the women, the black, the gay etc. It has the same goals and uses the same or similar methods.

3. Training

An effective and efficient say in decision making bodies requires not only the actual admittance to such bodies but also a high degree of knowledge of the subject and ability to act. Being a discriminated minority, disabled people have very little access to possibilities of education, training and further education. Particularly, many lack the practical experience of profession, army, administration, sports or other fields of activity open to people without disabilities. The IL movement tries to give every interested disabled person the opportunity to enlarge his competence – his knowledge of the subject and his ability to act - by participating as much as possible in the processes of decision making.

4. Peer Counseling

With the help of an emancipatory counseling method that has been developed especially for the needs of the IL movement – the counseling of disabled people by equal, similarly disabled colleagues – self confidence and competence are fostered. A team of specially trained counselors offers this service to all interested persons and ensures the quality of the offered counseling by means of group supervision.