



**"It is time to de-categorize persons with intellectual disabilities"  
2d European IASSID congress (6 August 2006)**

'Bridging Research, Policy and Practice' is the theme of the second European congress of the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disabilities that was held at the Maastricht University from August 2 - 5, 2006. The congress was attended by 600 participants from 40 countries.

Persons with intellectual disabilities are as important citizens of society as anyone else. Decisions in policy and in practice of support for these persons and their families should be taken with equal consideration as any decisions affecting the quality of life of all citizens. Scientific knowledge nowadays is a corner stone of decisions making in professional as well as in social matters. Therefore, persons with intellectual disabilities deserve the same quality of arguments and evidence based underpinning, and deserve the same conditions for research as any other group in society.

This congress proved the determination and the competence of researchers in the field of intellectual disabilities to building the basis of good policies and practices to enhance the quality of life of persons with intellectual disabilities. The congress also proved that much needs to be researched and many questions still wait for answers. This demonstrates the need for more research and more funding to enable research. Much still needs to be done to improve the attitudes of the public, of societal institutions and of professionals as well.

The congress has offered clear evidence about significant inequalities between persons with and without intellectual disabilities. Persons with intellectual disabilities suffer from more health problems compared with the general population; yet they have more difficulty accessing health resources and supports. Persons with intellectual disabilities also need better opportunities with regard to housing, education, work, and leisure. Scientific models and instruments to enable this are already available. Much needs to be done to implement these opportunities in designing the appropriate policies and organizing effective practices. It is time to de-categorize persons with intellectual disabilities and to fully include them in the community.

A major progress was made at this congress by the participation of persons with intellectual disabilities themselves, both as participants and as presenters. Congress participants assisted persons with intellectual disabilities as 'buddies' and acted as interpreters to 'translate' scientific jargon into easy language. The comments and questions of these self-advocates revealed that their involvement in the process of designing and carrying out research as well as in the implementation of findings is of pivotal interest.

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