

»»» **Concept for Division for Working with the Disabled**



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Concept for Division for Working with the Disabled

The Deutsche Pfadfinderschaft Sankt Georg (DPSG) bases its commitment on two fundamental principles: the Scout movement following the idea of its founder, Lord Robert Baden-Powell, and the glad message of Jesus Christ.

These are the grassroots from which we derive our understanding of the Scout idea: its aim is to make it possible for young people “to discover their own life and take it into their own hands. People both with and without disabilities get to know each other in their own independency and as a mutual enrichment. The abilities of each individual are addressed and developed through practical activity and reflected experiences.”
(DPSG rules).

As Catholic Scouts, our actions are on the basis of a Christian view of humanity which focusses on the worth and uniqueness of each individual. We embrace the diversity of the people within our groups and strive towards contributing to the development of all young people in accordance with the fundamental principles of the Scout movement.

This results in a demand for equality which prohibits us from discriminating against people or from excluding them from our organisation because of their social or individual circumstances.



The DPSG believes in recognising children, adolescents and adults with disabilities, and those who are threatened with disability, as a self-evident part of the community. Just like all children and adolescents, they too need to be supported, challenged and encouraged if our independent educational mission as a children's and youth organisation is to be fulfilled.

The first DPSG event including children with disabilities took place in Westernohe back in 1958. The division for working with the disabled was introduced 1964 within the organisation together with the introduction of the political structure in the rules and statutes. Social and organisational changes at that time meant that the concept had to be repeatedly revised. This document should be viewed as being part of this process. It demonstrates the complexity of this topic in the DPSG.

Definition

The division for working with the disabled recognizes types of disability such as mental, physical and psychological disability, and limitations to the senses “not as something absolute, but as an attribute, a category. Not the deficiency is decisive but rather the consequences for the individual.” (*Soziologie der Behinderten, Günther Cloerkes, 2007*).

The DPSG recognizes that disability is defined by social dimensions:

Each disability is experienced differently by each individual (e.g. in its gravity and personal implications). Disabilities are only defined through *subjective analysis*.

Disabilities affect *different areas of life*. Whereas some people, for example, cannot practise a profession, others can do so easily. The implications of disabilities are very different, both on an objective and subjective level.

People can only be perceived as being disabled within a *limited space of time*.

The *social reaction* determines whether a person is considered disabled or not.

Self-understanding

When the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came into force in 2009, this was a milestone under international law as regards disability policy in Deutschland. Its implementation requires a great deal of effort from the federal government. The convention strengthens the rights of people with disabilities. Whereas people with disabilities used to be assumed as being incapable and thus viewed as having a deficiency, nowadays it is the person, the subject, who takes centre stage and it is towards this that political and social activities must be geared.



The result is, for example, legal claims from children and adolescents to be educated in regular schools instead of schools for children with special needs. The DPSG wants to play a role in this social change. All members are called upon to also take part in the realisation of the convention in order to change the view of the whole of society with regard to disabilities. It also requires the support of children, adolescents and adults with disabilities, and those who are threatened with disability, with increasing self-determination.

In science, the driving objective still remains the integration of people with disabilities. For years now, the DPSG has viewed such efforts as being out of date. With the signing of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the perspective for inclusion formulated in it¹, the DPSG views itself as being on the right track. For we recognize that working with people with disabilities is a shared live with one another. The “DPSG is a part of a global education movement which is aimed all young people.” (DPSG rules, 2005).

In the same way as children and adolescents with disabilities are being increasingly educated in regular schools, the DPSG is now faced with a requirement to fulfil the wish of children and adolescents with disabilities and make it possible for them to take part in DPSG activities.

¹ Whereas integration means the conscious acceptance of people (e.g. with a disability/with disabilities) in existing groups, inclusion means that each person is unique and something special. By signing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the society and education system are called to appreciate individuality and let everyone participate in society.

For the DPSG, this means the observance of the Scout principle “look at the boy/girl” (Lord Robert Baden-Powell). Children and adolescents must be accepted the way they are; with all of their strengths and weaknesses. The persons responsible in the DPSG have acted in accordance with this self-understanding and always perceived and supported young people with their different needs and challenges.

However, participating in the DPSG should not solely be a collaboration. Young adults are members of the DPSG until the age of 21. Afterwards, adults should increasingly have the opportunity, within the framework of the DPSG statute and requirements, to take responsibility for the members in the four age sections.

The Aims of the Division

Scouting, whether it be with or without disability is “nothing special”. This is how the division for working with disabled people describes itself in its internal and external representation. For this to continue, the division for working with disabled people has the following aims at local, district, diocesan and federal level:



- Children, adolescents and adults with and without disabilities can be a part of the DPSG. As part of their inclusion, they learn that there are framework conditions in place, or that such conditions are created for them, which make it possible for them to take part independently. The highest aim that “all material, social and cultural opportunities and processes of a society” be accessible to them, thus allowing them to be viewed as members of society who are on equal terms with other parts of society. (Franz Fink, Thorsten Hinz, *Inklusion in Behindertenhilfe und Psychiatrie*, Lambertus, 2011)
- Leaders of both genders with disabilities should have an increasing opportunity to practise leadership and responsibility. To achieve this, leader training concepts must be provided with the corresponding supplements and continuations.
- Leaders of both genders must view themselves as advocates for children, adolescents and young adults, both with and without disabilities. This will then result in the division goal of also having an effect on society, the church and state.
- The division for working with the disabled encourages and facilitates mutual encounters between persons with and without disabilities. For encounters can lead to relationships, often long-term ones. A good place for such meetings is at local level or in the federal centre in Westerlo with its long tradition as being a place of Scout experience.

- The DPSG makes it possible for people with disabilities to take part in DPSG activities. Due to past political developments in Germany with regard to the disabled, persons with one or more disabilities are still living today in separate structures of the disabled care system. Even though they are a part of the community, the hurdles to be overcome to leave these structures and enter structures for child and youth aid care are very high. From a participation and empowerment viewpoint, this is not a successful scenario for people with disabilities. The DPSG wants to change this situation.
- It must be possible to arrange for all members to take part in all DPSG events and activities in accordance with their personal abilities. Important steps here are, for example, simple texts, providing downloadable information in the internet and accessible entrances to buildings.

The subject of disability alludes to one's own empathy, how one approaches the unknown and the aspiration to do good work in the DPSG. However, leaders are not professionals with specialist training in this field. Working with the disabled in the DPSG also does not need to claim to be so. Thus, it is obvious that the DPSG cannot be viewed as a disabled persons' organisation. The leaders have training in the educational theory pertaining to the environment of children and adolescents. This forms the framework of activities for the DPSG's work with the disabled.

Fields of action

The division for working with the disabled is active in various areas. It allows members to participate in topic-related issues, both inside and outside the organisation.

Inside the organisation

The division for working with the disabled understands its topic as being a comprehensive task. The topic is picked up in all four age sections, at all levels of the organisation and also in the two other divisions, ecology and international justice.

Inside the organisation, in addition to meetings in group sessions and at Scout camps, the division is also active in publications, annual campaigns, training courses and DPSG facilities.

Outside the organisation

With its active members, the DPSG wants to influence society. Its members are also committed to working with the disabled outside the organisation.

The target group for involvement outside of the organisation includes, in particular, local authorities, political decision makers and the society in the terms of taking a stand to strengthen the rights of children, adolescents and adults with disabilities. The DPSG has also set its sights on working with the disabled at national and international level.

Responsibilities

All of the levels of the organisation with the committees and persons active within them are requested to act to implement the targets of the faculty for working with the disabled. When doing so, they place emphasis on their own areas of interest. Some of the tasks run through all of these areas, others on the other hand may only refer to individual areas during concrete work.

All levels

- convey an age-appropriate sensitivity to the subject of working with disabled people,
- create framework conditions for increasing the opportunities for people with disability to take part,
- create fields of experience (e.g. meetings),
- take part in subject-related annual campaigns,
- help develop disabled policies outside of the organisation on equal footing with local/communal, diocesan, state and federal partners,
- coordinate the activities in the field of working with the disabled and
- take a public stand on the subject of working with the disabled.

New and established local groups form the basis of the DPSG. They

- create fields of experience for the leaders of both genders, for the children and adolescents,
- make it possible for children and adolescents with disabilities to be included in packs, troops or other units,
- allow people with disabilities to take on leadership activities,
- initiate meetings with people with disabilities in order to give them a better understanding of the DPSG as a place for organisational involvement and
- encourage leaders to commit themselves locally as advocates for children and adolescents with disabilities.

The districts gather together the experiences from the new and established local groups. They

- create fields of experience for leaders, for example in the framework of holding block 1c of modular training,
- develop their own local networks and
- include interested leaders in these networks.

The diocesan organisations provide specialist and structural support. They

- develop their own concepts and areas of focus, e.g. through workgroups,
- carry out training events, e.g. by holding block 1c of modular training (social commitment),
- see working with the disabled as comprehensive task with a view to event management (e.g. accessibility) and
- take part in networking.

The national association has an eye on the entire division. It

- develops work aids,
- performs annual campaigns on the subject of working with the disabled,
- continues developing the understanding of working with the disabled within the DPSG,
- checks the training concept with a view to the division,
- holds education events,
- initiates exemplary activities for the organisation,
- increases accessibility,
- coordinates networking activities both inside and outside the organisation and
- gives suggestions regarding disability policies to the politically active, the society and the church.



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