

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

LEISURE TIME

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1. ABOUT THE HANDBOOKS

This handbook is one in a series of handbooks entitled *Students with Disabilities* created as part of the TEMPUS project Education for Equal Opportunities at Croatian Universities – EduQuality (Nr: 158757-TEMPUS-1-2009-1-HR-TEMPUS-JPGR) led by the University of Zagreb.

The series aims at equalizing the opportunities of students with disabilities to access higher education by informing, training and raising awareness of the academic and non-academic staff at Croatian universities and their constituents with regard to the specific needs of such students within Croatia's higher education system.

We consider students with disabilities to include students with vision and hearing impairments, motor impairment, chronic disease and learning difficulties such as dyslexia and ADHD, as well as students with mental disturbances and disorders. By categorizing these students as students with disabilities our intention is by no means to stigmatize or brand them, but rather to emphasize the need for accommodation of academic content to such students, as well as to present some examples of good practice.

The handbooks were written by members of all partner institutions in the project: the academic and non-academic staff of the University of Zagreb, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek and the Universities of Rijeka, Zadar, Split and Dubrovnik; students with and without disabilities; and a representative of Croatia's Institute for the Development of Education. Particularly invaluable was the help we received from our colleagues from partner institutions abroad (the University of Århus, Masaryk University, the University of Strathclyde and the University of Gothenburg), who offered concrete advice and guidelines based on their vast experience in supporting students with disabilities.

Each handbook covers an important aspect of students' academic life, defining it and explaining its importance with regard to the acquisition of necessary professional competences. At the same time, the handbooks point to some obstacles that can exist with regard to accessibility, in an attempt to identify the preconditions for overcoming such obstacles without compromising the defined academic standards. By emphasizing the rights of all students to equal access to higher education and by proposing measures that can equalize opportunities, often in a simple way and at no additional cost, these handbooks aim

at contributing to the definition of clear accessibility standards for students with disabilities at the national level.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank all the contributors who took part, either directly or indirectly, in the creation of these handbooks. I am particularly grateful to former, current and future students with disabilities who have used and will continue to use their perseverance, courage, patience and great motivation to build the much-needed support system for students with disabilities in Croatia's higher education by pointing out their specific needs and simple ways in which these needs can be met. However, their efforts would continue to be in vain if it had not been for a large number of academic and non-academic staff members who have provided support to students with disabilities in practice, often without the existence of clear guidelines and relying only on their empathy and wish to improve the situation. I believe that these handbooks will provide them with clear and systematic guidelines that will facilitate their future work.

Dr. Lelia Kiš-Glavaš, Project Leader

2. PREFACE

This handbook deals with the subject of leisure, which is an important part of every person's life, including students with disabilities. Academic obligations form a large part of students' daily lives, but they constitute only one part of their personalities, related to their education, their future professions and active participation in the labor market. Another part of their personalities is related to emotional and social aspects of life, which are especially important for persons with disabilities in terms of their integration and active participation in the life of the community. Of course, there is no clearly set boundary between the professional and private (emotional, social) areas of life; there is no doubt that these areas overlap and interact, becoming more or less dominant at different times, but always contributing to the overall harmony of one's life.

The introductory part of the handbook analyzes the concept of leisure from the perspective of several sociological theories, and considers its role in a person's life. It also presents the results of a pilot study conducted for the purposes of this handbook on a sample consisting of 10% of the total number of students with disabilities attending the University of Zagreb, with the aim of gathering information about the ways in which students spend their free time.

Art and culture are the topic of the next few chapters, which deal with specific artistic media (such as visual arts, music, dance, and theater). The text describes some anthropological characteristics of these media and their historical background, as well as the effect that they have on a person in biopsychosocial terms, that is, on the physical, psycho-emotional and social aspects of one's character. The handbook emphasizes the importance of art as a leisure activity for students with disabilities, whether they participate in it as spectators/recipients, or as active participants (artists or authors).

The handbook further describes several projects in which persons with disabilities use an artistic medium to express their identity and seek equality, equity and coexistence with abled persons. Some examples are presented of artists with disabilities, and recommendations are given that can be implemented at the level of higher education, artistic and other institutions in order to provide support to students with disabilities and their initiatives aimed at organizing leisure time.

The chapter on sports considers the role of sports and its importance for preserving one's mental and physical health, as well as some additional aspects (in rehabilitation and socialization) that sports offer to persons with disabilities. Examples are listed of students with disabilities who use sports for self-realization, and of projects that promote the participation of students with disabilities in sports and recreational activities.

Separate chapters are devoted to volunteering and participation in the activities of student and other organizations/associations as a way of spending one's leisure time. Examples are given of experiences students with disabilities had as volunteers, and recommendations are provided for institutions and organizations with a view of providing support to students with disabilities in volunteering or becoming active members of an organization or association.

For all the leisure activities discussed, the handbook highly emphasizes the need to ensure the prerequisites for their implementation. On the one hand, these prerequisites include an initiative launched by the students, and on the other, physical accessibility and the accessibility of information. What is also of crucial importance is a deep understanding of issues related to one's life with a disability and the striving of persons with disabilities to achieve equal opportunities in all areas of life. To that end, this handbook aims to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life for students with disabilities.

Damir Miholić,
The Editor

3. INTRODUCTION

Leisure time is mainly discussed in the context of work, and, as a research area, it is also the focus of various recent sociological theories. The terms used as synonyms for leisure time are “spare time” and “free time”. Stanley Parker, one of the first theoreticians in this area of research (according to Haralambos & Holborn, 2002), defines leisure as time left over after other obligations have been attended to, which include work and work obligations (this refers to employment but also includes extra activities related to it, for example travel to and from work), non-work obligations (housework and taking care of family members) and satisfying physiological needs such as food, sleeping, etc. According to the same author, people use one of the three patterns to organize their spare time: extension pattern (the development of character and knowledge, e.g. reading literature), neutrality pattern (family life, recreation), or opposition pattern (socializing with friends).

Leisure theories are also connected to the notion of “freedom”. Ken Roberts, for example, says that the concept of spare time includes only the time that people spend in activities which they chose on their own; there is no element of obligation. These modernist theories, which study leisure time in the context of developed capitalist societies, associate the freedom of choice with various factors, including personal world-view, lifestyle, sex and social group, as well as the organization and content of leisure time (Haralambos & Holborn, 2002). Postmodernist theories, such as the one proposed by Sheila Scraton and Peter Bramham, claim that free time involves less mass leisure and more individual leisure, or leisure organized in smaller groups. Spare time is also increasingly commercialized and directed towards enjoyment and the expression of one’s personal identity. Leisure is more and more related to a “...desirable body shape”, and virtual reality (video games), with a strong media influence (Haralambos & Holborn, 2002).

Sociological theories also observe spare time in the global context, in its relation to political and economic factors that shape a specific society. These theories also consider spare time as a phenomenon which involves the everyday, concrete life of an individual. According to Driver (cited in Wehmeyer et al., 1992), leisure time is particularly important for an individual in at least six aspects. These are: a) physiological aspects (lower incidence of diseases and a sense of improved health), b) psychophysiological aspects (a reduction in

tension and anxiety, an increased sense of well-being), c) psychological aspects (increased self-confidence, a higher degree of freedom and independence, an improved perception of quality of life), d) socio-cultural aspects (participation in cultural events in the community), e) environmental aspects (awareness of the need to protect the environment as well as cultural and historical heritage) and f) economic aspects (increase of employment opportunities).

Leisure time is also mentioned in Article 24 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), according to which “[e]veryone has the right to rest and leisure”. In the context of policies regarding persons with disabilities and strategies contained in various legislative documents, leisure is also listed as an important aspect of life for people with disabilities. The issue of leisure is an integral part of the guidelines and recommendations put forward in the national strategies for rehabilitation and integration of persons with disabilities (the Croatian Government’s Commission for Persons with Disabilities, and the Ministry of Family, Veterans and Intergenerational Solidarity, 2008 (today the Ministry of Social Affairs and Youth)). These guidelines refer to the equalization of rights of persons with disabilities with regard to their opportunities for spending leisure time, the encouragement of integration and participation of persons with disabilities in sports and cultural events, as well as physical and technical accessibility of content.

In the context in which leisure time is considered a part of life of students with disabilities, work obligations may be viewed as the time associated with the obligations required by the study program, that is, the time that is spent attending lectures, seminars, tutorials and practical sessions, as well as studying the content required by the study program.

The rest of the time can be considered leisure. It can include, among other things, activities that have some characteristics of work (volunteering and paid casual jobs), but take place outside the academic, university activities.

4. RESEARCH ON LEISURE TIME OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB

In order to obtain some information about the ways students at the University of Zagreb spend their leisure time, research has been conducted on a sample of 10% of the students with disabilities registered at the University of Zagreb. The sample was made up of 8 female and 11 male students between the ages of 21 and 35. Table 1 shows the number of students in the sample with regard to their impairment type and rate:

<i>Impairment type and rate</i>	<i>Number of students</i>
Blindness, 100%	1
Hearing impairment, 70%	2
Paraplegia, 100%	3
Tetraplegia, 100%	1
Paraparesis, 80%	1
Cerebral palsy, 80%	1
Spastic tetraparesis, 90-100%	3
Muscular dystrophy, 100%	1
Dyslexia and dysgraphia	2
Physical disability 90-100%	3
Tumor, epilepsy, physical disabilities 60%	1

Table 1 – The table shows the number of students with regard to their impairment type and rate

A questionnaire was designed containing 19 questions regarding: a) how and when leisure time is spent; b) whether time is spent in the company of others or alone; c) the level of satisfaction with leisure time; d) the use of services of a personal assistant; e) the use of Student Center services; f) participation in student events and trips; g) additional training; h) estimate of the difference between the leisure time of students with and without disabilities; i) information on the respondents (sex, year of birth, year of first admission, impairment/disability rate). The questionnaire was anonymous.

The survey results show that the greatest number of students with disabilities spend their leisure time in their dormitory rooms (30.4%), in coffee bars and clubs (15.2%), at the university (13%), at concerts and in nature (10.9%), or in the library (6.5%), while fewer than 5% of students with disabilities spend their time in dormitories (outside their rooms), art galleries, and sports halls (Figure 1).

The choice of leisure time activities (Figure 2) and the place to spend leisure time are complementary, as indicated by the data which show that most students spend their leisure time at the computer (29.31%), going out with friends (18.97%) and watching television (17.24%).

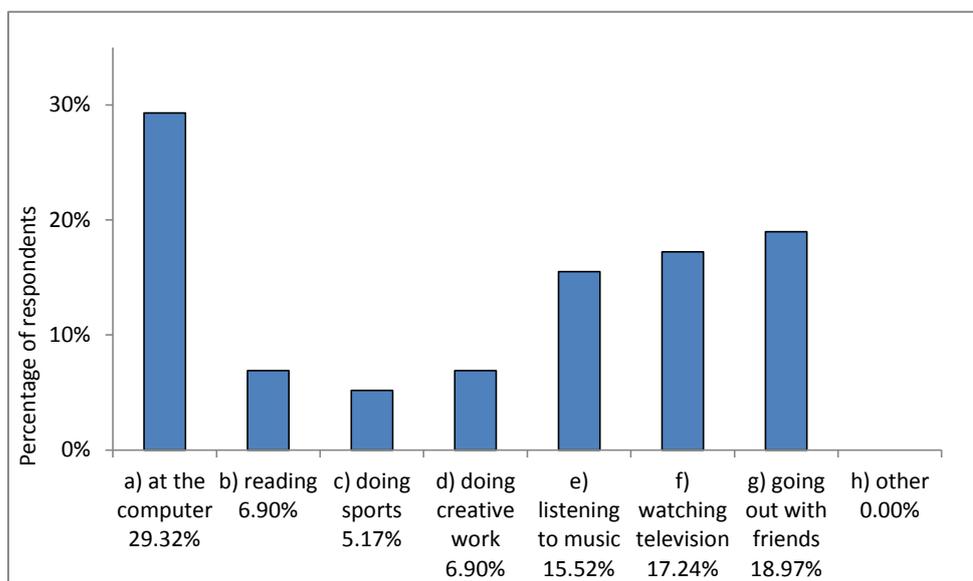


Figure 2 – Results of the survey question “How do you spend your leisure time?”

When asked “Do you spend leisure time more often alone or in other people's company?” an extremely large number of disabled students (47.37%) responded that they spent it alone, which, together with the data showing that most of them spend their leisure time in their room at the computer or in front of the television, indicates the need for encouraging extracurricular activities among the disabled student population. Participation in such activities may affect the degree of socialization, improvement of communication, the

establishment of certain forms of behavior, etc. Most students with disabilities (Figure 3) spend their leisure time with close friends (57.89%) or with other students (21.05%), while an equal number of students stated that they spent their free time with other students with disabilities and family members (10.53%). Not a single student stated that they spend their leisure time with other persons with disabilities, which can open new topics of research, such as the availability and accessibility of facilities for persons with disabilities within organizations, associations, etc. that are not oriented only to persons with disabilities.

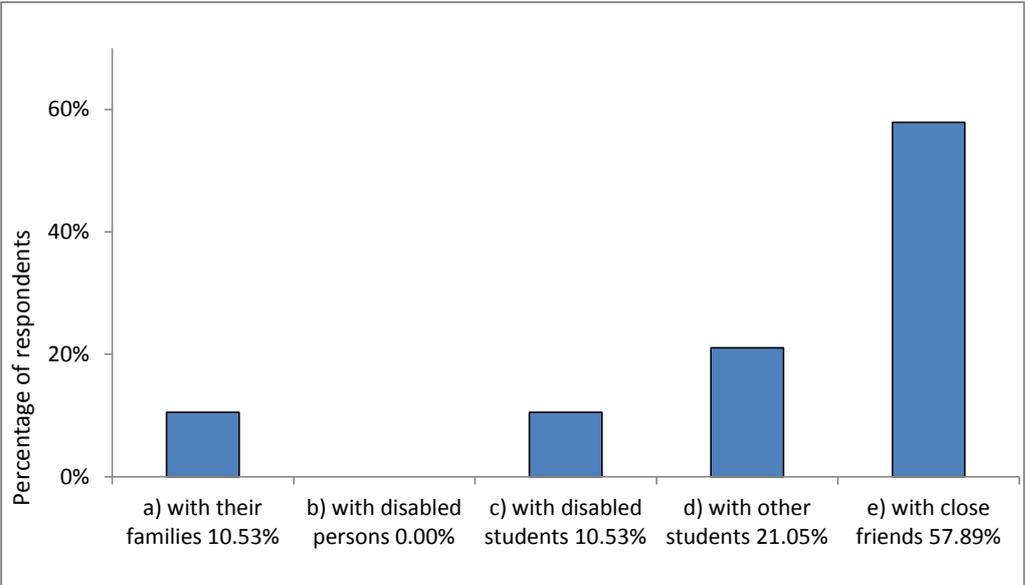


Figure 3 – Results of the survey question “With whom do you mostly spend your leisure time?”

To the survey question “Do you face obstacles or difficulties when organizing leisure time activities?” 63.6% of the respondents said that they faced no obstacles or difficulties. The remaining 38.64% state that the main obstacles are the organization of transport, the distance to the place where they wish to spend their leisure time, physical inaccessibility (too many stairs, sanitary areas are too far, there is no parking space for disabled persons), the need for physical help (personal assistant) and a general lack of leisure time due to academic obligations.

When it comes to their satisfaction with the way in which they spend their leisure time, 57.9% of the respondents rated it as very good, 26.32% as good and 10.53% as

excellent. Fewer students (5.26%) are relatively dissatisfied with how they spend their free time (Figure 4).

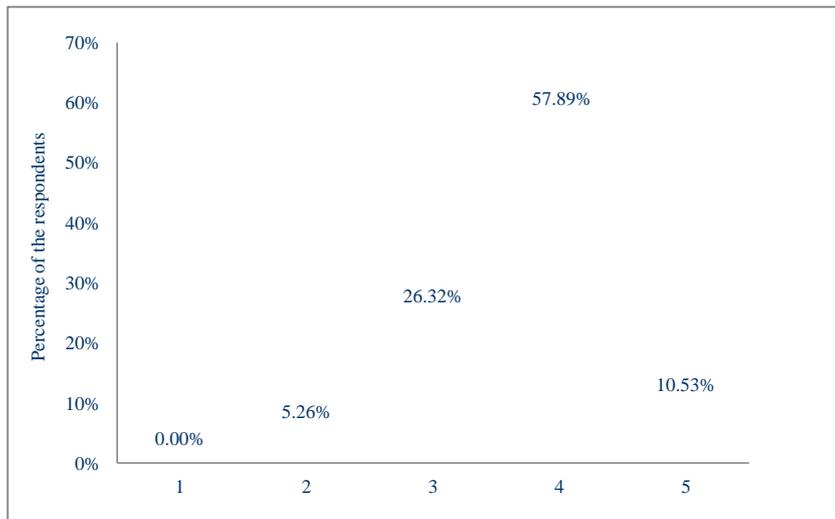


Figure 4 – Results of the survey question
“How satisfied are you with the way you spend your leisure time?”

The services of a personal assistant or another person are used by 36.16% of the respondents. Regarding the types of assistance they use, the respondents listed medical assistance, assistance with personal hygiene, assistance in the use of public transport, assistance with household chores (tidying up, shopping), assistance at the university (keeping notes) and with student obligations which are done at home (e.g. drawing).

Results of the survey questions which referred to some specific leisure activities of students were as follows: 52.63 percent of the respondents attended the freshman party, 42.11 percent planned to go on the final-year trip, and 63.16 percent used the services of the Student Service Center. The respondents who did not attend the freshman party listed as the main reasons their lack of interest, lack of company, illness, bad atmosphere and fear for their own safety (broken glasses), another activity taking place at the same time and physical inaccessibility. As the reason for not going on the final-year trip, the respondents mostly listed the lack of money, followed by the lack of interest, illness, possible complications due to disability and other commitments taking place at the same time. Through the mediation of the Student Service Center, students mostly worked at jobs unrelated to their future professions. When asked about their satisfaction and suggestions

for improving the work of the Student Service Center, most students who used its services expressed their satisfaction, but also the need to expand the list of job offers for students with disabilities, the need to inform students about the jobs via the internet and the need for better physical accessibility of the Center.

As a form of additional training, 42.11 percent of the respondents recently attended a training course. These were mostly foreign language and IT courses, i.e. the courses for obtaining the ECDL (European Computer Driving License) qualification. One respondent took a driving school course.

With regard to their peers without disabilities, 47.37 percent of the respondents believe that there are some differences in the way they and their abled peers spend their leisure time. The main differences they listed were caused by accessibility and transport problems, lack of leisure time, balancing between their leisure time, academic obligations and rehabilitation treatments, and difficulties caused by their impairment (lack of energy, strength and endurance).

The results of this survey provide a rough idea of the ways in which students with disabilities spend their leisure time. They also outline certain problems these students encounter, and may become the basis for future discussions and studies about the activities that enable students with disabilities to improve the quality of their spare time. It is necessary to include students with disabilities in such studies because they are the main source of information in defining the needs on the basis of which various free time activities can be created. Such programs should be included in the general curriculum of educational institutions and universities.

5. CULTURE AND ART

Culture (Latin *colere*; to inhabit, to cultivate, to protect, to honor) refers to the entire social heritage of a group of people, which includes learned patterns of thought, symbols, feelings and actions of a group, community or society, along with the manifestations of these patterns in material objects. It represents a transcendence of human physical/biological nature, as well as the connection of an individual's basic nature with society and spirituality in the broadest sense. In that sense, people are free beings who, in circumstances determined by their biological nature, by belonging to a specific time, space

and group, that is, to a particular culture, have the ability to shape their individuality and life. The basic purpose of culture has always been "... to maintain and humanize one's natural givens, to enrich and advance human survival" (Skledar, 2001). Historically, this tendency has been an integral part of all cultural periods, from "primitive" to contemporary, and it has determined the activity of people seeking to satisfy their basic life needs, as well as to shape their relationship with the world they live in, according to their interpretation. It is important to understand the historical and social determination of culture and to avoid classifications such as "good" and "bad" cultures, "elite" and "non-elite", "primitive" and "sophisticated", because each of these cultures is cultural in its own way. It is precisely in this diversity that the colorfulness of human development lies, that is, according to Skledar (2001), "...although the human world and life have always been complicated, doubtful and uncertain, and human movements in history comprised not only of advances... but also stagnation, stumbling, even setbacks, people have still, persevered in this world, often in dramatic ways, repeatedly finding their own way, discovering the world through culture, creation, conquering it." The existence of creative spirit connected to purposeful activities produces cultural goods and values (material, as well as non-material), and also enables the transcendence of the given conditions of life through, for example, philosophy or art.

Art is a human activity of aesthetic creation, by means of a spoken and written word, sound, voice, color, shape, or movement. It also includes knowledge about art, its history, its language and current trends, and all this not only with the help of various cultural and art institutions, but also scholarly institutions (museums, galleries, libraries, publishing houses, art criticism, concert halls, universities, institutes, etc.). Traditionally, art is considered to comprise literature (prose, lyric poetry and drama), music (singing and playing an instrument; traditional, classical, jazz, rock music), visual arts (painting, sculpture, photography, architecture), and performing arts (theatre, dancing, cinema, video).

Artistic creation is mediated by inspiration, creative fervor, and the creative process "... which only the artist himself can observe [...] fully, but he is so absorbed by it that he has great difficulty explaining it to us" (Janson, 1989). What makes the created work a work of art is its originality. Having been created by the imagination, emotions and hands of the artist, it influences the thoughts, emotions and imagination of the observer or the audience. The insights about the influence of artistic media on psychological, physiological,

imaginative, cognitive and social mechanisms of human beings, as well as the importance of those media in stimulating the quality of life, are based on scientific discoveries. Although abstract, art also offers the possibility of scientific thought because it is, along with science, situated “on the same road to discovery of the developmental potential of life [...] it just uses a different language as well as different methods of research and expression” (Prstačić, 1999). When discussing the relationship between art and human beings, the issue of aesthetics is frequently raised as a dimension of human experience and its existential role in experiencing the beautiful vs. the ugly, pleasure vs. pain, love vs. hate, etc. (Prstačić, 2002).

The survey presented in the first chapter of this handbook shows that 21.74% of students with disabilities usually spend their free time by going to cultural events, half of which are concerts. When asked the question “How do you spend your free time?”, 29.31% answered that they spend their free time by going to some kind of cultural event. In the context of the role that culture and art generally have (or could have) in people’s lives – as a way of spending free time, but also as a profession – cultural and artistic activities which are currently available offer opportunities for involvement. However, there are also a large number of potential opportunities that could help students with disabilities spend their free time. On the one hand, they could take part in artistic events from the position of spectators/audience. On the other hand, they could actively participate in the process of artistic creation by getting personally involved or by attending organized courses and workshops.

5.1. Visual arts

Feelings and thoughts can be expressed symbolically through the creative process – without being explored verbally – by employing a visual arts technique. It is also possible to identify those feelings and thoughts which are symbolically expressed in a work of art that has already been created. Such symbolic representation dates back to cave paintings, which revealed the deep need of prehistoric people to capture motifs of their everyday life (such as hunting or fighting) or to “increase the effect” of a ritual dance by painting their bodies or wearing masks. Visual artistic creation (of a painting, drawing, print, sculpture...) represents a form of interplay between the author’s inner vision and the materials used for the creation of a work of art. All of its elements (the colors, textures, materials and shapes used), as well

as their arrangement (composition), gradually create a symbolic whole imbued with meaning, without disregarding the process which takes place during the act of creation. Authors have the opportunity to observe the materialization of their inner vision from different perspectives – to reflect on, expand and change it.

When it comes to the basic intention behind artistic creation, disabled persons create art for the same reason as persons without disabilities. Here is an example of what a disabled student said about artistic creation and what it meant to him:

Art – the sensibility of life

I believe that I will make no mistake if I say that we as human beings are a creation and a part of a remarkable kind of art called life. We choose our own path and time steers us in different directions, writing our own, personal stories. My life is also a remarkable kind of art. Since my childhood, all my thoughts and feelings, created in the sensitive part of us as human beings, have belonged to all kinds of art.

I'm primarily involved in visual arts, and they have enriched my life in so many ways.

They've formed my character and helped me create solid foundations for a successful life, filled with beauty, meaning, understanding and ambition. A life without meaning, without creation of the mind would be truly difficult, not only for me, but also for others.

For instance, as I was experiencing health difficulties and my motor skills were poor, music made me happy. It helped me by taking my mind off problems and I believe it does the same for many people. It's wrong to see creation only as a profession, a habit that enables financial independence, or as a matter of circumstance. Rather, we need to realize that all the beauty of forms and ideas comes from within us. We are the ones who create the art that fulfils our lives, if we keep our minds sufficiently open so we can understand what our ambitions are and lead a happy and ultimately healthy, complete lives.

Ivan Fodor,

a student of Animated Film and New Media
at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Zagreb

5.1.1. Examples of good practice and recommendations

Many institutions, such as cultural centers, institutes of adult learning, libraries, museums, organizations, as well as professional artists, offer art courses and workshops. Information desks at universities can provide information about student involvement in such activities. However, the involvement of students with disabilities may require ensuring physical accessibility (for more information, see the handbook entitled **Physical Accessibility**). It may also be necessary to implement assistive technology (Figure 5). Students with visual impairment can participate in various activities connected to visual artistic expression. It is usual and advisable to use words like *look* and *see*, to talk about colors, etc., when communicating with these students. In addition, it is desirable to describe works of art and to accommodate visually impaired students by enabling a direct experience by means of tactile diagrams. Visual impairment is no reason to exclude anyone from activities connected to visual arts.



Figure 5 – The photograph shows a person with cerebral palsy, who is painting with the help of a paintbrush attached to her helmet (http://articles.sfgate.com/2005-12-07/bay-area/17405531_1_art-center-quilt-paintings)

Universities can organize art workshops, activities and projects, bringing artistic creation closer to all students, including students with disabilities. Large hallways and walls inside universities and academies can be used as galleries for exhibiting works of artists and students alike. For example, at the gallery in the University of Zagreb's Academy of Fine Arts, exhibitions are held showing works by students of the Academy, inter-university and international exchange students, as well as their teachers. Exhibitions showing collections from the holdings and archives of the Academy are also hosted. Moreover, cooperation

among universities can be organized; a good example are guest exhibitions held by students of the Academy of Fine Arts at the Faculty of Economics and Business. These exhibitions are open for the general public, which offers opportunities for cooperation with the entire community, for building a positive public opinion, providing mutual support and encouraging integration. In addition, the opportunity to exhibit their work can provide an additional incentive for students with disabilities to get involved in visual artistic creation as a way of spending their leisure time, but also as a way of exploring and expressing their thoughts and feelings.

The **Association for Culture of Deaf and Hard of Hearing People in Croatia** *World of Silence* has the goal to promote the art of the deaf, as well as encourage the integration of persons with disabilities through art. In the autumn of 2011, the association organized the International Exhibition of Deaf Artists entitled *Silence Embraced by the Adriatic Wave*. For a number of years members of the association have achieved notable results and have won prizes at international art competitions for artists with hearing impairments (www.svijet-tisine.hr).

It should be emphasized that the existing activities in public galleries, for instance in the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Modern Gallery and the Typhological Museum in Zagreb, also provide students with disabilities with opportunities to spend their leisure time.

The **Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb** runs a training program called *Pristup (Access)*, intended for people with hearing and visual impairments and other types of disabilities. This program allows visitors to learn more about works of art through expert guidance and interpreting into the Croatian sign language (www.msu.hr).

In its Tactile Gallery, with the help of audio guides, tactile diagrams and legends in Braille, **the Modern Gallery in Zagreb** presents some important works of Croatian visual arts of the 19th and 20th centuries to the blind and partially sighted visitors. The Tactile Gallery, the first of its kind in Croatia and the region, opened in 2009 with the exhibition of works by Branimir Dešković, Miroslav Kraljević and Antun Dominik Fernkorn (Figure 6). The exhibition is constantly supplemented with new exhibits (www.moderna-galerija.hr).

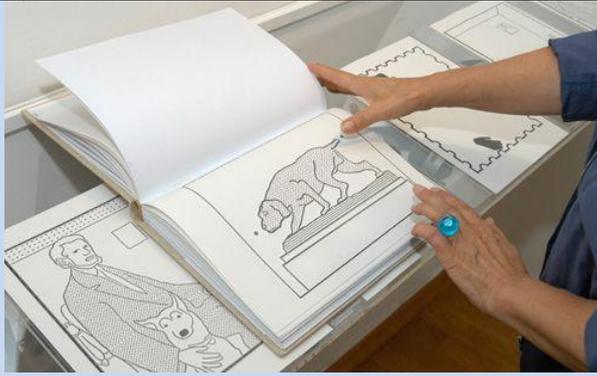


Figure 6 – The photograph shows the tactile diagrams of the sculpture *Pas (Dog on the Trail)* by Branimir Dešković and the painting *Autoportret sa psom (Self-Portrait with Dog)* by Miroslav Kraljević (<http://www.moderna-galerija.hr/Izlo%C5%BEbe/Detaili/tabid/2041/ItemID/325/View/Details/Default.aspx>)

The Typhlological Museum in Zagreb is one of the few specialized museums in Europe that deal with the issue of persons with visual impairments and inform the public about their way of life and creative endeavor. The presented works of art, which meet all artistic criteria, combat prejudice towards the blind and partially sighted persons and their abilities of artistic expression. On the other hand, "... the ability of [these] authors to master, in sculpture, the totality that arises on the journey from an idea to a work of art encourages both the sighted and the blind to try their hand at that kind of creative endeavor" (www.tifloloskimuzej.hr). The Typhlological Museum also features the Tactile Gallery, where blind amateur artists are given the opportunity to present their works of art. Moreover, through the idea of making exhibits accessible to blind and partially sighted persons, this gallery emphasizes the importance of *a tactile sculpture* as a work of art in the form of small plastic arts, a relief or an art medal which, with its proportions, mass, volume and material matches the hand, palm and fingers as a means of perceiving a work of art (Mršić, 1995). An example of an artist who gives form to tactile sculptures is Želimir Janeš, a sculptor and medal maker. With his small tactile sculptures, such as *Forma ribljeg pokreta (Form of a Fish Movement, Figure 7)* and *Jedro - cvijet - ptica slijepom dječaku Draženu (Sail - Flower - Bird to the Blind Boy Dražen)*, Janeš has enabled the discovery of the unattainable life of a fish's movement in water and a bird's flight to the "inner eye" of persons with visual impairments. By doing so, he has affirmed the validity of tactile endeavor (Bratulić, 1992).



Figure 7 – The photograph shows the tactile sculpture *Forma ribljeg pokreta* (*Form of a Fish Movement*) by Želimir Janeš (http://www.savez-slijepih.hr/fw3k/util_scripts/get_slika_varijacija.php?slika_id=359&var_suff=600x600)

5.2 Music

The psychological effect of music on a person is a function of that person's ability to communicate and identify with the music and its individual features. This communication and identification enable association, imagination, self-expression and self-knowledge. Numerous studies have also verified the influence of music on the body's physiological mechanisms, such as blood pressure, pulse rate, blood flow, perspiration and respiration. Changes in these parameters occur depending on the type of music and its significance for the person.

For example, listening to soothing music may bring about a slowing down of the heart rate, deep breathing, or a decrease in blood pressure (Rojko, 2002). The reaction to musical rhythms is very important for relaxation and for the establishment of rhythmic physiological movements within the body. The human body and its physiological processes have a natural predisposition to respond to stimuli and synchronize the inner with the outer environment. With musical stimuli, the nervous system enables the interaction of the auditory environment and cortical centers with autonomic neural pathways (Bertirotti & Cobianchi, 2007). Music can thus reduce the body's stress reaction by acting through the central nervous system to reduce the secretion of "stress hormones" (cortisol, adrenaline etc.) and, at the same time, to induce the secretion of natural opioids (endorphin, enkephalin etc.), which play an important role in creating a feeling of contentment, in the overall reduction of the stress reaction and in reducing pain. Also induced is the secretion of immunoglobulin A (IgA), which helps stimulate a stronger immunological reaction (Krout, 2007). Figure 8 shows an example of how resonance may be established between

music/sound and the body's physiological responses (cardiac frequency and integrated muscular contraction) during various auditory stimuli.

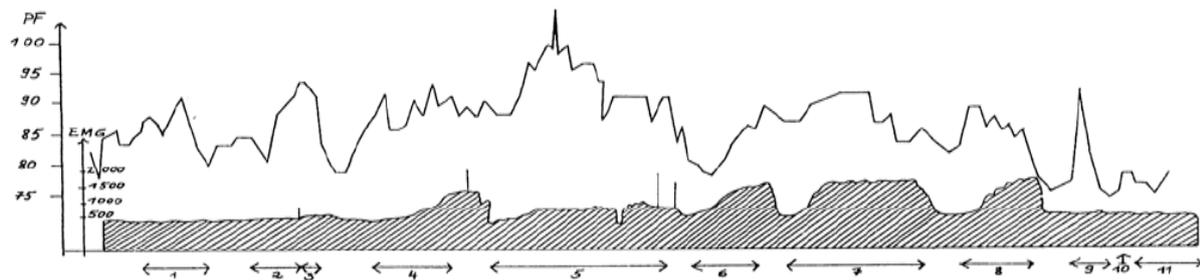


Figure 8 – Cardiac frequency (PF) and integrated muscular contraction (EMG) while the person is hearing (1) the *Wiegenlied* by Johannes Brahms, (2) a fire brigade siren, (3) a creaking saw, (4) the *Concertino in A flat major* by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, (5) *Kalinka*, (6) *Telemusic* by Karlheinz Stockhausen, (7) the *Toccata in D Minor* by Johann Sebastian Bach, (8) Dixieland music; (9) while the person is spelling out arithmetical performance, (10) combined with a cough, (11) while the person is relaxed (Bertirotti & Cobianchi, 2007)¹.

By mastering the skill of playing an instrument or singing (whether individually or in a choir), the feeling of personal competence can be boosted. Studying the phenomenon of music (history, music theory etc.), as well as understanding the meaning of song lyrics, can inspire reflection, empathy and self-confidence (Magill et al., 2008).

In addition to what has already been mentioned, being actively involved in music can also facilitate social integration and relieve the feeling of isolation of persons with disabilities. Depending on the type of disability, being involved in music might require certain accommodations. In case of persons with physical disabilities, using alternative body parts (for example the Chinese pianist Liu Wei, Figure 9) or using an adapted computer and assistive technology can enable them to make music.

A common myth related to persons with visual impairments, particularly the blind, is that they are endowed with a sharper sense of hearing, better auditory abilities and that they have greater musical talent. In fact, the musical abilities of persons with visual impairments do not differ from those of other people. Rather, a more efficient use of hearing is the consequence of a greater need to rely on one's sense of hearing in order to

¹ The translation is taken from the original text by Bertirotti and Cobianchi, with minor corrections.

receive and interpret information gathered from listening. This advantage can be an incentive for the affirmation in this area of persons, including students, with visual impairments.

Some examples of famous musicians with disabilities are the Egyptian Blind Girls Chamber Orchestra – Al Nour Wal Amal (Figure 10) and the Scottish percussionist with a hearing impairment Evelyn Glennie (Figure 11).



Figure 9 – The photograph shows the Chinese pianist Lui Wei, who plays the piano with his toes due to the congenital malformation of his upper extremities (<http://lifeisreallybeautiful.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/liu-wei.jpg>)



Figure 10 – The photograph shows a concert performed by the Egyptian Blind Girls Chamber Orchestra, Al Nour Wal Amal (<http://www.agefotostock.com/en/Stock-Images/Rights-Managed/XU2-852172>)



Figure 11 – The photograph shows the famous percussionist with a hearing impairment Evelyn Glennie during performance (<http://www.evelyn.co.uk/musician.aspx>)

5.2.1. Recommendations

The university can initiate the setting up of a student university choir and/or a pop group and thus ensure, with minimal expenses (by providing a room for rehearsals and buying the instruments), that students with and without disabilities spend some quality time together. University information desks and bulletin boards can provide information about concerts, courses and music workshops open to the public, as well as information about auditions held by amateur choirs. There are many university and other types of choirs in Croatia, some of which have achieved exceptional accomplishments for many years, in Croatia and abroad. As an example we can mention the *Ivan Goran Kovačić* Academic Choir, which is a part of the academic cultural club of the same name (<http://www.igk.hr/index.php?lang=en>).

5.3. Dance

Dance as an art and a social activity has its beginnings in ritual customs of ancient peoples, and it is closely connected to music, that is, the rhythm and emotional energy which music evokes. Ritual dance had a strictly defined choreography of moves, music,

sound and costume design, and through such a symbolic, intensified meaning it strengthened, healed and brought members of a community together through a primordial need for (self-)awareness, creation and transcendence (Miholić et al., 2009). Even today dance has the same functions, and its influence on one's body, psyche and socialization are the topic of research. Research has shown, for example, that dance is a useful activity which contributes to one's entire human potential, increases one's self-confidence and reduces anxiety. Research on chemical changes which occur during dancing has also confirmed an increase in the level of particular hormones and neurotransmitters, for example of endorphin (the "happiness hormone"). These, in turn, reduce depression, aggressiveness and anxiety, as well as pain, and stimulate a positive emotional response. Dance can be used in the rehabilitation of students with disabilities in order to improve their physical and psychological functions. It improves muscle mobility and muscular fitness, and reduces muscular tension. When dancing, one improves one's self-image and self-confidence. When we dance we socialize, and become more spontaneous and creative (Livnjak, 2008; Miholić et al., 2007).

"For me dance is something special, passionate, inviolable, unfathomable, exciting, and yet ordinary. I started dancing in primary school. Dancing is a birthright. When we dance, we become more spontaneous and creative, we learn to move, we connect with other people and ourselves. Dance is a universal, non-verbal language which doesn't know any racial discrimination, disability, cultural differences... When I dance, I can be whatever I want to be: sexy, but also aggressive and expressive. It may sound ridiculous to someone, but through dance, motion and music I express my feelings, thoughts, the state I'm in... The fact is that there are interindividual differences, as well as differences in experiencing dance, music and rhythm. My personal experience has taught me that when I feel helpless, dance and music help me to hope and believe in a better tomorrow. Dancing gives me love and restores my faith. Life brings us sorrow and pain, but the magic of dance makes it all go away. Dancing makes me feel like I could overcome all the obstacles and achieve everything I want. At times I was hopeless and broken, but I always recovered and moved on thanks to the power of dance."

Sladjan Livnjak, a student with paraplegia

5.3.1. Recommendations

Students and/or universities could launch dance groups or social dance classes; universities should provide rehearsal space and pay for the dance equipment. All interested students, those with disabilities included, could take part. The group could cooperate with theaters, cultural centers or festivals, and thus get a chance to perform for the general public. Information desks at faculties may provide information about professional dance shows and social dance classes. These dance classes should be adapted for students with different types of impairments. For example, visually impaired students can easily participate in dancing activities. In order for them to learn various moves and steps, the usual method of teaching may be slightly changed, by having a visually impaired student act as the model on which the moves are demonstrated. It is also advisable to let the student gather additional information about the positions of the body and individual moves in particular dance figures through tactility.

5.4. Theater

A dramatic vision of the world is an inborn human characteristic, or, as Robinson (cited in Krušić, 1992) explains: “We have a fundamental ability for dramatic presentation which is inborn in the form of language and gesture. This ability appears in early childhood as a symbolic game and remains present throughout maturity as a capacity to take on roles.” The theater has its origins in ritual, which satisfied the community’s needs for the “collectivization” of the individual experience and the “individualization” of the collective experience. Symbolically, the theater scrutinizes various collective and individual experiences, and by participating in a theatrical event, “observing itself, the human being perceives what it is, discovers what it is not and imagines what it could become” (Boal, 1995).

In a dramatic plot set in an imaginary, dramatic world, the action or expression creates an experience and cognition which include all the components of one’s personality: cognitive, emotional, physical, and social. A dramatic world (a theater piece) is created by using signs for space, people and emotions. The signs become symbols and carry certain meanings that are represented by the actors, and interpreted by the audience. The symbols

make it possible to explore the deeper meanings of existence, and offer an insight into one's everyday life, as well as into the possibility of change. Aristotle named this kind of change catharsis (from Greek *kathairo*, meaning "I cleanse") (Klaić, 1966). The term catharsis describes a strong feeling experienced by the audience, who identify with the characters on stage at the moment when a tragedy (or a comedy) reaches its climax or turning point. Even though the audience and the action taking place on the stage are physically apart, the psychological mechanism of identification enables the audience to participate in a way and experience the action. The inner world of the participants (the actors and the audience) rises to the surface, and it is possible to observe, experience, develop and change it, both for those watching the play and especially for those actively participating in it.

Amateur drama groups have all the qualities that those who want to take up acting look for. Dramatic/theatrical activity ("acting") is a part of the process of producing a play that might become a work of art appreciated for its aesthetic value, but it can be helpful to the participants as well. Active participation in imaginary dramatic situations (monologues, dialogues, and group scenes) can help participants overcome stage fright (performance anxiety), boost their self-confidence, encourage them to be more spontaneous and creative, as well as help them express their feelings and reflect on themselves and others. As far as persons with visual impairments are concerned, acting and other theatrical activities can help them further develop the skills acquired during special rehabilitation programs for persons with visual impairments (such as social, communication, orientation, and mobility skills). In general, drama group activities improve communication skills that are necessary both in one's everyday life and professional life.

5.4.1. Examples of good practice

One of the theatres in which persons with disabilities are involved is the Theatre of the Blind and Visually Impaired *New Life* in Zagreb.

The Theatre of the Blind and Visually Impaired *New Life* (www.novizivot.hr) was founded in 1948. This amateur group has collaborated with a number of well-known professional Croatian theatre directors, scenographers, costume designers and choreographers. They have staged a great number of theatre pieces, taken part in a number of theatre festivals

and won many festival prizes. Today, this theatre has a professional status and organizes the BIT (Blind in Theatre) festival, a unique blind theatre festival in the world, which takes place every two years. The program of this theatre includes theatrical plays of the blind from different countries around the world, as well as a number of workshops, forums and round tables.



Figure 12 – The photograph shows a scene from *New Life Theatre's* play *The Ballade of the Penguin* featuring a man and two women (www.novizivot.hr).

The Theatre, Visual Arts and Deaf Culture – DLAN – association has been active since 2001, and its main goals have been to promote the culture, theatre and visual arts of the deaf in Croatia and abroad, to provide the community of the deaf and hearing impaired with easier access to artistic and cultural events, and to encourage the general public to accept the deaf community as a cultural minority group. Staging the play entitled *Planet tišine*, the association presented Croatia's first theatrical play in the Croatian sign language and thus began to take part in the world trends, which have been forming and promoting the deaf culture through theatrical art since the 1960s (Bradarić-Jončić & Naumovski, 2009). With its next plays and performances (*Ruke koje plaču*, *Muke i jadi gluhih preprodavača privjesaka*, *Ruke koje plaču II - Biti Gluh ili gluhih, koga briga!?*, *Podvodno odmorište za jezik*), as well as the first sign dance play in Croatia, entitled *Ritam, Znakovi i Rap*, the association attracted broader interest and has since performed at festivals in Croatia and abroad.



Figure 13 – The photograph shows a scene from the DLAN association’s performance entitled *Podvodno odmorište za jezik*, in which a diver can be seen using sign language in a swimming pool (<http://kontejner.org/underwater-rest-stop-for-language>)

5.4.2. Recommendations

A number of drama study programs and amateur theatre groups are offering students with disabilities the opportunity to take part in theatrical plays. The information about the possibilities of students’ participation may be provided at university information desks. At the initiative of students and/or universities, a university drama group can be launched; universities should provide a room for rehearsals and pay for the props. Students with disabilities can be part of the group, and theatrical performances can be given for the general public in cooperation with a theater, a cultural center, or an amateur theater festival.

TEST!

The international festival of student theater *TEST! – Theater to Students* has been held since 2000. Bringing together Croatian and European theater, dance, and performance groups, TEST! promotes non-competitive creative work of young artists, collaborative projects and meetings (<http://http://testzg.weebly.com/index.html>).

Theatrical programs can also be advertised at information desks. Theaters usually offer student discounts on tickets, which makes theatrical performances more affordable given the students' standard of living.

5.5. Libraries

Libraries play an important role in ensuring access to information in printed and electronic formats. In order to be available and useful to students with disabilities, libraries should be designed to be physically accessible. The available literature and information should be accommodated to all students regardless of their type of disability and impairment rate. In addition to the available printed and electronic materials in different formats, it is important that the library should provide the hardware and software support with adequate assistive technology for students with disabilities (for more information, see the handbook *Access to Information*). One of the projects in which the Croatian Library Association (<http://www.hkdrustvo.hr/en/>) participates is the accommodation of library materials according to the "Guidelines for easy-to-read materials" (HKD, 2011). The purpose of the guidelines is to make library materials more accessible to children, young and adult readers, particularly to those with difficulties and those with insufficient language skills. The accommodations that they promote refer to the language, content, illustrations, formatting, and text layout. The guidelines also include a definition of "easy-to-read materials", the characteristics of the target group of readers, recommendations for editors, publishing companies and other institutions that provide support for persons with reading difficulties.

Libraries are also places where other events, such as exhibitions, book launches or presentations could be held. When organizing such cultural events at libraries, it is extremely important to ensure that students with disabilities feel welcome. This includes, among other things, ensuring physical accessibility for wheelchair users and making available promotional materials that give information on the event in formats adapted for persons with visual impairments and dyslexia. It is also of great importance that the library staff should actively participate in assisting students with disabilities in terms of their orientation in the library, and be able to provide answers to students' inquiries about the events.

5.6. Other cultural and artistic projects

A series of projects have been launched in order to promote equal opportunities and integrate persons with disabilities in the community. Their purpose is to inform the public and raise public awareness through cultural and artistic engagement, as well as to highlight the problem of non-accepting disability and diversity.

Artistic events such as *Disability Art Festival: Extravagant Bodies*, an art festival for persons with disabilities, present the subject of disability as an important problem of contemporary society. This festival is organized by the Kontejner organization and some of the partner institutions of the project are the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, the University of Zagreb Student Centre, and the European Cultural Foundation. Artists who participate in the festival are persons with disabilities who use their bodies in performances (Fig.14), photography (Fig.15) and film, and who talk about their physical needs, putting diversity in the limelight without being afraid of public condemnation. A statement from the festival's brochure summarizes the festival's leading idea: "Disabled is exactly how we find classical sculptures today: without arms, legs, even without a head. But while they draw admiration and embody the classical canons of beauty, real bodies with no limbs provoke horror and are considered to be insufficient and unbeautiful – traumatic. The fact that different and other exist, related first of all to the body, causes negative identification, removal from society, fear, and hatred." It is from that perspective that these artists take a critical view of social, political and cultural positions and the identity of persons with disabilities (Kontejner, 2007).



Figure 14 – Bill Shannon: *Blueprint for an Ethereal Structure*. The image shows a man with crutches riding a skateboard (<http://kontejner.org/extravagant-bodies>)

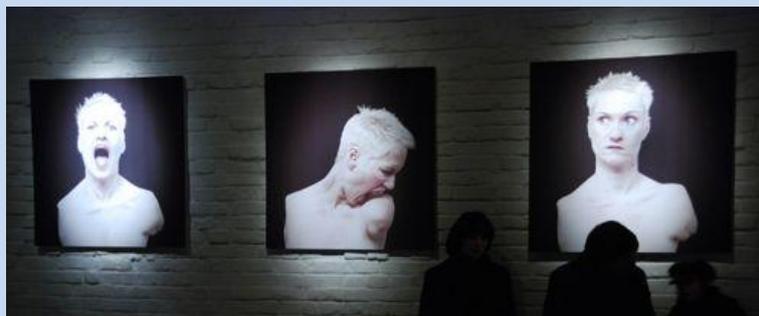


Figure 15 – Alison Lapper: The image shows three photographs of a woman with no arms (<http://kontejner.org/extravagant-bodies>)

The Multisensory Park for persons with disabilities in Zagreb, which is located on the south bank of Lake Jarun, is accommodated to the needs of blind and partially sighted as well as other disabled persons. It is also available to all those who want to know more about the problems of persons with visual impairments. The park is constructed in open space, without physical obstacles, and it combines horticultural elements and interactive sculptures made by artists and persons with disabilities who are users of the Day Care Center for Rehabilitation *Mali Dom - Zagreb* (Figures 16-18). The features of the park are coordinated in such a way that they interactively affect the five basic human senses: touch, smell, taste,

sight and hearing. This project gave persons with disabilities in Zagreb the opportunity to exhibit their works in a public space of the city for the first time and to become “visible”, thus paving the way for communication between worlds with and without impairments.



Figure 16 – The photograph shows the Multisensory Park and its sculptures (source: authors of the project)



Figure 17 – The sculpture *Zemlja grli Zemlju* (Earth hugging Earth) in the Multisensory Park. The photograph shows a sculpture of the planet Earth with colorful representations of the continents in relief (source: authors of the project)

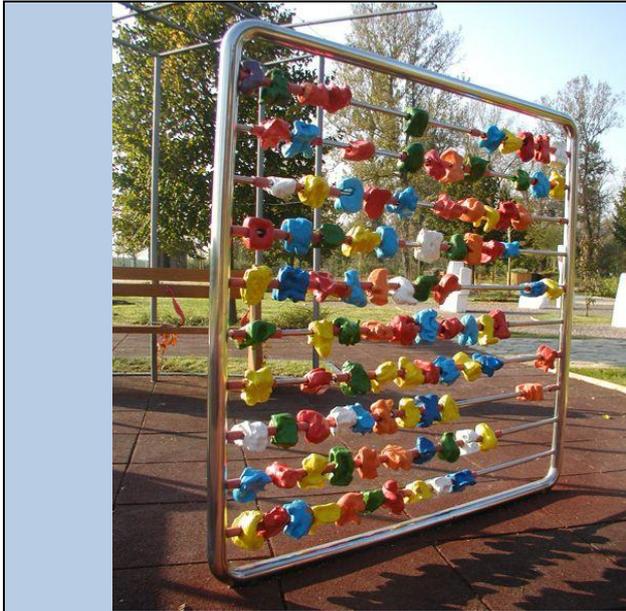


Figure 18 – The sculpture *Abakus* (Abacus) in the Multisensory Park. The photograph shows an enlarged abacus made of a metal frame and colorful elements (source: authors of the project)

6. SPORTS AND RECREATION

The Council of Europe defines sports as “... all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels” (White Paper on Sport, 2007). In other words, sports involve physical activities which are performed for fun, in order to strengthen one’s body, satisfy the competitive spirit, improve one’s psychophysical state, earn a living, etc. Sports can be played as a recreational, amateur or professional activity, whether individual or group, competitive or noncompetitive.

Playing sports is known to improve general health, that is, to have a positive influence on all organ systems: it helps reduce weight and lower cholesterol and blood pressure, improves the absorption of oxygen, corrects posture, etc. A prerequisite for achieving these results is regular physical activity. The World Health Organization recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (sports and other physical activities) a day for adults, and up to 60 minutes of such activity for children. Sports

have a positive effect on emotional development as well as personality development. Through sports, young people build friendships, socialize with their peers, connect with their coaches and supervisors, and gain new experiences. Furthermore, sports stimulate the collective sense of belonging to a certain group and facilitate social integration. They also help develop positive values, such as teamwork, intercultural dialogue, solidarity and tolerance (White Paper on Sport, 2007).

Students with disabilities who use their leisure time for sports or recreation benefit from it in several ways, particularly in developing and sustaining functions of body systems, such as motor skills. The benefits they get from group activities and socialization are invaluable for their mental health and equal integration into their communities. Persons with visual impairment can actively participate in various sports: Alpine skiing, Nordic combined, swimming, rowing, archery, shooting, futsal (five-a-side football for blind and partially sighted persons) goalball (a team game played with a bell ball), bowling, weight lifting, tandem, athletics, and judo.

6.1. Legislative framework

Sports-related issues, including the definition of sports for persons with disabilities, are regulated by the Sports Act (Official Gazette, 71/06,150/08,124/10)². The provisions of this Act emphasize that sports should be based on the principle of voluntary participation and should be equally accessible to everyone, regardless of their age, race, sex, sexual preference, religion, nationality, social status, political or other beliefs. The National Sports Programme establishes the goals and tasks in reference to the development of sports and the activities needed to achieve those goals and tasks; it also determines the necessary factors and control measures for its achievement (local and regional self-governing bodies, the Croatian Olympic Committee, the Croatian Paralympic Committee, the Croatian Deaf Sports Association, national sports federations etc.).

² For all quotations from the Sports Act, the official English translation (available on <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=2545>) was used, with minor changes in the phrasing.

Some rights granted by the Sports Act of the Republic of Croatia (OG, 71/06,150/08,124/10):

A categorized athlete shall be entitled to a sport grant. Grants are paid to categorized athletes by the Croatian Olympic Committee, the Croatian Paralympic Committee or the Croatian Deaf Sports Association, which also have public authority to determine athlete categories, or by county or city sports associations or sports clubs. A categorized athlete can enroll into, attend and graduate from a primary and secondary education institution according to special conditions prescribed in the regulations by the Minister, as well as from a higher education institution if it does not affect the principles of university autonomy. An athlete who, representing the Republic of Croatia, has won a medal in the Olympic Games, Paralympic Games or Deaf Olympic Games shall be entitled to a subsidized scholarship for higher education. Scholarship funds shall be provided from the state budget of the Republic of Croatia.

Some types of associations related to persons with disabilities envisaged by the Sports Act: In order to perform sporting competitions and sport and recreational activities of disabled persons, disabled persons can establish their sports associations and sports societies of disabled persons; such associations and societies can be founded by sport and by disability type, as determined by the Croatian Paralympic Committee and the Croatian Deaf Sports Association. Sports associations and sports societies are associated in sports federations of disabled persons on the level of towns, counties and the City of Zagreb, as well as on the level of national sports federations of disabled persons. Sports federations of disabled persons organize and implement competitions for disabled persons, regulate issues related to the registration of disabled athletes, the status of athletes and other sport workers, the disciplinary responsibility of athletes and sport workers, promote professional work in sports and look after the well-being of categorized disabled athletes. The Croatian Paralympic Committee and the Croatian Deaf Sports Association shall pass a general act determining the categorization of disabled athletes, the system, conditions and organization of sporting competitions of disabled persons in accordance with the rules of sports and standards of international sports associations of disabled persons. In order to perform sporting activities, higher education institutions shall found student sports associations. In order to perform their activities, student sports associations shall use the premises of higher education institutions and have priority in doing so over other external users. Student sports

associations active at an institution of higher education are organized into a student sports federation that sets up and manages the sports competition system within the institutions of higher education, and takes care of the status of student athletes as well. Student sport federations in the Republic of Croatia are organized into the Croatian University Sports Federation (<http://public.mzos.hr/fgs.axd?id=14187>).

6.2. Examples of good practice

A great example of sporting activities for students with disabilities is the project entitled *Fitness for All*, initiated by the *Sizif* association in collaboration with the University of Zagreb Student Center and the fitness center of the student dormitory *Cvjetno naselje*. This project has provided students with disabilities with an opportunity for organized training, with the expert guidance and assistance of a qualified trainer (Figure 19).

There are some difficulties in the realization of these activities. Some of them are related to the room capacity of the center. Another difficulty is the fact that some pieces of fitness equipment are not adapted for students with disabilities. However, this project offers equal opportunities and acceptance to everyone. It also enables complete inclusion of students with disabilities in the general student population through a common interest in sports and recreation.



Figure 19 – The *Fitness for All* project by the *Sizif* association. The photographs show students with disabilities exercising with free weights and other equipment

“All students with disabilities are approached individually. A program of sporting and recreational activities is created and adapted to maintain or even improve their motor abilities, depending on the student’s willpower, motivation and perseverance. Students are provided with help and assistance in performing warm-up exercises (for example, on an exercise bike), stretching exercises for different muscle groups, and strength exercises (with free weights). Blind students always have a trainer present while they exercise. Students are advised about the usefulness of certain exercises and the ways to do them. They are also given nutritional advice. The majority of students with disabilities who live in the *Cvjetno naselje* dormitory take part in the activities of the fitness center which is located there. Students with disabilities who don’t live in that dormitory come to the fitness center as well. Fitness is free for all students.”

Marko Škundrić, M.S. in Athletic Training - Specialist, the *Cvjetno naselje* fitness center – the *Fitness for All* project.

“Apart from the pleasure that exercise brings by influencing my physical and mental health and by relieving me from stress, I also enjoy spending time with other students who take part in exercise activities.”

A student with a disability – *Fitness for All* project

Another good example is a third-year student at the Faculty of Economics and Business, who has played chess since he was four years old. Today he is ranked eighth in the world in the disabled competition. His placement in the first category of top athletes has earned him a grant from the Croatian Olympic Committee. For three years now, he has been taking part in team competitions (four students) for the Faculty of Economics and Business.

“Chess, my team and competing for the university mean a lot to me, primarily for reasons of socialization. Sport gives me the opportunity to spend time with persons without disabilities. I think I am the only student with a disability at my university who plays sport. I get support from everyone in the Department of Physical Education; however, my biggest support is my friend Nikola.”

A third-year student at the Faculty of Economics and Business, top chess player

A student with a visual impairment also talks about her experiences:

“I took up sport, specifically rowing, when I was in secondary school. After a few years my sister Ivana, who did athletics, talked me into trying my hand at athletics. Today I train very actively. My disciplines are 200, 400 and 800-meter races, but I am also thinking about trying my hand at javelin throw. I train in the athletics club *Agram*, which cooperates with the athletics club *Dinamo Zrinjevac*, of which my coach is a member. At the European Athletics Championship for persons with disabilities in 2010, which was held on the island of Rhodes, Greece, I finished fourth in the 200-meter race.

“Why did I take up sport in the first place? In secondary school it was an excuse to miss my classes now and then, but today sport gives me the opportunity to be in contact with persons who are not disabled. It is interesting to observe how they treat me. In most cases their attitude is positive. I train with persons who are not disabled and they accept and encourage me. When I run a hurdles race, they help me jump over the hurdle. The competitive aspect of sport also matters. I want to show and achieve something, too. Now I can't live without sport and I train two or three times a week regardless of my obligations.”

Jasmina Matošević, a student at the University of Applied Health studies, 20/100 residual vision

The Croatian Deaf Sports Association is an example of an umbrella organization dealing with sporting activities of the disabled.

The Croatian Deaf Sports Association brings together deaf athletes from all parts of Croatia in all sporting disciplines for local and international competitions. The Association is a member of the European Deaf Sports Organization (EDSO), the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (ICSD), the International Committee of Silent Chess (ICSC) and the International Deaflympics Committee (IDC). The Association's motto is “Jednaki kroz sport” (Equal through Sport), which expresses the deaf athletes' pursuit of equality. In accordance with that, the goals and activities of the Association include promotion and care about sporting activities of the deaf on all levels of funding, legislative regulations, organization of sports competitions as well as categorization, education and care for the well-being of deaf athletes (<http://hssg.hr>).

Also worth mentioning is the initiative of the diving clubs *Geronimo* from Zagreb and *Mornar* (Sailor) from Split, which organize diving courses for persons with disabilities. The experience of diving, the therapeutic effects of water, spending time with friends, travelling and getting to know new people can have a positive effect on the development of all aspects of the disabled person: biological (musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, nervous system etc.), psychological and social (Kljajić, 2006).

The event "Student's Sports Day" is another good example of the promotion of professional, amateur and recreational student sports as an integral part of academic life that increases the quality of studying as well as the quality of life. The event is organized by the University of Zagreb (www.unizg.hr) and the Croatian University Sports Federation (www.studentskisport.com) with the help of the University of Zagreb Sport Federation (www.zsss.hr). In addition to its sports program, the event also has an informative purpose. It is a place where people can find information such as students' achievements at both local and international sports competitions.

6.3. Recommendations

Sports associations give the disabled students the opportunity to participate in sporting activities at the university. These associations exist at almost every university and bring together a large number of students in various disciplines of sports competitions. University teachers of Physical Education and Sports are at the core of such associations at their universities, and they can provide students with all the necessary information (choosing a sporting discipline, practice schedule etc.) and help with the organization of sporting activities.

7. TRAVEL

Pleasure travel, i.e. a journey conducted to spend one's leisure time, usually refers to tourist travel. There are different types of tourism (for example agritourism or rural tourism, ecotourism, etc.). Regardless of the type of tourist travel, most travel agencies provide

organized transport and housing for persons with disabilities. It is also important to mention organized student travel, that is, final year trips and excursions. The goal of student travel is to become acquainted with different destinations, cultures and customs, as well as to socialize, to get to know each other better. This kind of travel is usually organized by student associations and student unions. There are many travel agencies specialized in organizing student travel. Moreover, there is a wide choice of destinations and offers available.

Here is some information on disability travel:

- Under the 2000 Act on Reduced Fares in Domestic Transport, students and other persons with disabilities qualify for reduced fares, at a discount of 20-75% of the cost of a regular ticket;
- When organizing student travel, the needs of students with disabilities must be addressed in order to ensure accessible housing and adequate means of transport (including transport services within a chosen destination, for example wheelchair accessible buses with at least a wheelchair lift and an accessible toilet);
- It is also important to take account of the needs of students with disabilities for personal assistants.

8. VOLUNTEERING

The basic idea of volunteering is that it represents an act of self-actualization of individuals, who, through unprofitable and unpaid activities, benefit their communities and indirectly benefit society as a whole. According to the Universal Declaration on Volunteering, volunteerism is a way in which human values of community and caring can be sustained and strengthened. It is also a way of helping individuals as members of communities as they learn and grow throughout their lives. Moreover, volunteering offers individuals the opportunity to exercise their rights and responsibilities, as well as realize their potential. It enables making connections across differences that push us apart so we can live together in healthy and sustainable communities (Jurić, 2007).³ Some of the reasons to volunteer are to help others, to feel useful, needed and important, to support and be a part of something one

³ Source: <http://www.iave.org/content/universal-declaration-volunteering>

believes in, to tackle urgent and important social problems, to learn and gain personal and professional experiences and use them to benefit society, to develop and explore one's own strengths, etc.

8.1. Examples of Good Practice

"I started to volunteer in 2008, in the Homeless Support Program, a project organized by the Zagreb Volunteers' Center. Since then I've volunteered for several organizations and projects (the New Circus Festival, the humanitarian organization RTL Helps Children, Terry Fox Run, Children First, the Center for Training and Education *Slava Raškaj*). Now I volunteer for the Blue Telephone in the Big Brothers Big Sisters project and occasionally for the Club of Parents and Disabled Children *New Day*. In the Blue Telephone project, I'm a Big Sister to a thirteen-year-old girl. I spend time with her, we go for walks, to the movies, museums... Volunteering simply gives me a sense of fulfillment; I know that I am contributing to society. My day is completely full; I love being on the move and not sitting around the house watching TV. I also like the fact that the organizations I've volunteered for are flexible when it comes to the organization and carrying out of volunteering. This has allowed me to coordinate volunteering with my other responsibilities."

(Ivana Matošević, a student at the Business Academy Experta, enrolled in the Host in TV and Radio Shows study program; 10/100 residual vision)

"My sister Ivana and I are among the few, if not the only, students with disabilities who volunteer in Zagreb. Why don't more students with disabilities volunteer? On the one hand, I think that there are many obstacles on the part of volunteer organizers. We often hear things like: *You have a disability so you have to be supervised*. Because of this, the doors of organizations remain closed to these students and they are discouraged. On the other hand, students with disabilities set up their own barriers – many of them think that their disability poses an obstacle. How will I volunteer when I'm like *this*? So they give up.

I have volunteered for the Center for Training and Education *Slava Raškaj*. I wanted to enroll in the Occupational Therapy study program, but I didn't manage to do so directly after secondary school. I had a lot of spare time and went to the Center, where I helped

students with their studying, played with them, went with them to the theatre and other places, and helped prepare meals. It was a nice experience that also helped me test myself and my ability to work with children and people in general. The employees of the Center accepted me and this was an incentive for further volunteering. I knew I had accomplished something. After that, I volunteered for the Club of Parents and Disabled Children *New Day* and now I've got a part-time paid job there."

(Jasmina Matošević, a student at the University of Applied Health Studies, 20/100 vision)

8.2. Recommendations

For the past several years, there has been an initiative led by the Zagreb Volunteers' Center – in cooperation with the faculties of the University of Zagreb – with the aim of adding structure to the organization of student volunteering. In some faculties, volunteer work has become an elective course, catalogues of volunteer opportunities have been compiled, and student and teacher training in the formal-legal aspects of volunteering have been organized. The latter are based on the Volunteering Act of 2007, a legal act regulating, among other things, the basic aspects of volunteering, its principles and terms, as well as the rights and duties of volunteers and volunteer organizers (Volunteering Act, 2007).

According to the Center, relatively few students with disabilities volunteer, some of the reasons for this being the lack of appropriate volunteer positions and a certain amount of prejudice that potential employers or volunteer organizers have against persons with disabilities in general. Providing the public with information on disabilities and the abilities of persons who have them may help reduce prejudice and create equal opportunities for volunteering. It is, of course, important to take into account the nature of the disability, ensure physical accessibility and provide necessary accommodations in the workplace.

Within faculties, information can be disseminated via courses on volunteering, information desks at volunteer centers, as well as with the help of coordinators for students with disabilities and the Office for Students with Disabilities on the university level.

9. ACTIVITIES OF ASSOCIATIONS

An increase in the number of students with disabilities on all levels of education has led to a growing importance of available extracurricular activities – primarily student organizations/associations – in institutions of higher education. Like all students, persons with disabilities can only benefit from membership in various associations. While there are many ways of defining the latter, two partially overlapping categories will be analyzed here. These are student organizations and associations/alliances of associations of, or for persons with disabilities, each with their own area of activity, internal structure, level of expertise and equipment, as well as different degrees of cooperation with other organizations and institutions.

9.1 Student associations

At all institutions of higher education in the Republic of Croatia, students have the right to get together in professional associations, sports clubs and other nonprofit and non-governmental organizations (the Act on Student Union and Other Student Associations, 2007). There are currently more than a hundred active student associations (societies, unions, clubs, etc.) at Croatian universities, and they cover a wide array of students' needs. We can differentiate between student associations and clubs focused on a single goal (such as sports clubs or fine arts societies) and those focused on multiple goals (such as associations of students with disabilities, of students that come from the same region, of students enrolled in the same study program or different humanitarian associations).

Membership in an association involves participation in activities created on the initiative of both the members and the administrative bodies of the association. One of the biggest problems student associations face is the limited free time of their members due to their extensive and continuous academic obligations. Another possible problem is the

fluctuation of members; once students graduate they can no longer be members of a student association. Regardless of these possible problems, membership in a student association can be very beneficial to all students, including students with disabilities. Socializing with their fellow students, access to expert knowledge and development of communication skills, teamwork and helping other students, including those with disabilities, are some of the benefits of membership in a student association. Membership in an association, whether it is a professional association, a fine arts society, a sports club or an association of students with disabilities, is a reflection of one's habits and needs. Membership in any of these associations can stimulate existing positive aspirations towards advancement in different areas of life.

For example, professional student associations can be compared to a polygon for the improvement of knowledge acquired at a university and its practical application. They can also serve as a reference to future employers when hiring new personnel. Student associations organize different workshops, seminars and projects related to their fields of interest. They often collaborate with domestic and foreign companies and arrange student training programs. Such collaborations can solve the problem of limited choice of institutions and companies accessible to students with disabilities in which they can perform student training as part of their study program. These organizations also often mediate in international student exchange programs. (For more information please refer to the handbook *International Student Mobility*.)

9.2. Associations of students with disabilities

Through their activities, associations of students with disabilities encompass students' academic lives, as well as other aspects of their lives. Their goals are to improve

the flow of information relevant for students with disabilities, provide professional and peer support, promote the importance of studying among young people with disabilities, and offer technical assistance, such as organizing transportation, accommodating literature to blind persons' needs and coordinating volunteers in providing various types of support. Apart from activities aimed at students with disabilities, these associations occasionally organize training sessions for teaching and non-teaching staff, draw attention to difficulties in providing accommodations at institutions of higher education, and take part in preparing and carrying out new programs and activities for students with disabilities. In addition, members of associations of students with disabilities regularly participate in classes dealing with persons with disabilities. Some associations of students with disabilities are restricted to a particular type of disability, others to the geographic area of activity, and others still have no such criteria for membership.

9.3. Coalitions of associations of persons with disabilities

Traditionally, there are coalitions of associations addressing persons with disabilities with respect to a specific type of disability or the location of the coalition, but recently there has been an increase in the number of specialized associations of persons with disabilities as well. Coalitions normally have more funds at their disposal than student associations due to their regular cooperation with local or government institutions, as well as due to their longer tradition and broader membership. With a larger budget, associations and coalitions carry out longer-term projects and programs, have a more stable membership base, and are oriented towards satisfying basic life needs of persons with disabilities such as organizing transportation, personal assistants, fundraising events for the underprivileged members, etc. In addition to cooperating with the local community and government institutions, associations and coalitions often participate in drafting laws and regulations.

In Croatia, as in many other countries, there are various humanitarian nonprofit organizations whose aim is to improve the lives of persons with disabilities by helping them with socialization and becoming fit for life in the community. These associations consist of persons with or without disabilities, regardless of sex, age, denomination or nationality, and are usually operated by volunteers. Their activities focus on the organization of meetings with young people from around the world, meetings of persons with disabilities, visits to

persons with disabilities and the organization of thematic lectures, forums, workshops, pilgrimages, trips, etc. They often work together with the charity organization *Caritas* and with church-run institutions.

A smaller number of humanitarian nonprofit organizations are directed towards ensuring and enabling extracurricular activities for persons with disabilities in their free time. They mostly organize gatherings of their members on certain occasions, as well as creative, dance or drama workshops, excursions, etc. Together with some specialized institutions, these nonprofit associations also organize information technology courses, foreign language courses and other courses focused on students' additional training for the labor market. Being a member of an association for persons with disabilities does not necessarily imply participation in the organization of activities but rather only the passive use of services. However, active participation in the work of these associations can significantly contribute to the development of their social and professional skills.

In addition to the activities of students in organizations and associations, also worth pointing out is the good practice of higher education institutions that enhance the relationship with their students by helping them make decisions related to the development of their careers, usually through various services and organizations for professional orientation. Student organizations often make their contribution as well (Career Day, for example). The goal of these organizations is to direct students towards the type of work which would suit best their intellectual and professional interests. In the case of students with disabilities, there is a practice to assess their ability to work and to define the types of work these students can do considering their health condition and professional motivation. These activities help develop relationships with employers who employ persons with disabilities, thus ensuring part-time or steady jobs.

9.4. Recommendations

Under the Act on Student Union and Other Student Associations (2007), universities are "obliged to provide work space for the Students Union and Student Ombudsperson, to finance their activities and to provide administrative and technical assistance". They are also

“obliged to, in accordance with their abilities, support the activities of student organizations”.

It is important to arrange the activities of student organizations/associations, as well as those of any other association, according to the principles of universal design (concerning physical accessibility, access to information, and equal opportunities to participate in all of the association’s activities) and thus make them available to everyone – including students with disabilities. This would include, for example, accessible methods of communication with hearing and speech impaired students, the availability of printed materials in Braille, schedules which can be adjusted according to disabled students’ needs, the use of personal assistants, raising awareness among the other members regarding the phenomenon of disability, and the inclusion of disabled students in the work of the Student Union and other associations on all levels.

10. CONCLUSION

When it comes to spending their leisure time productively, students with disabilities can choose from a wide range of options. Each student will select the activity which best suits his or her personality, interests and preferences. However, if students with disabilities decide to spend their free time creatively and leave their dormitory room, they might encounter physical obstacles or inaccessibility of information, and also face the prejudice that disabled persons are less than able, or even unable, to have normal lives.

For this reason, the wider community and various state and other institutions (including those of higher education) need to implement the idea of inclusion and equal opportunities for everyone in all problematic areas (physical accessibility, accessibility of information, etc.). Global changes will certainly influence the quality of leisure time. On the other hand, students with disabilities also have to take initiative by expressing their needs and taking an active part in order to make these processes happen.

11. GLOSSARY

Cerebral palsy: The most frequent consequence of damage to the central nervous system, characterized by difficulties in development and functioning of the neuromuscular and musculoskeletal system.

Dysgraphia: Persistent and serious difficulties in learning to write which are not related to one's lack of orthographic skills.

Dyslexia: A specific learning difficulty of constitutional origin which is marked by problems in decoding, writing and correctly and/or fluently identifying words.

Epilepsy: Recurrent, chronic disorder of the nervous system, characterized by excessive and irregular outburst of nerve impulses in the brain, with consequences that can manifest themselves in the sensory, motor and autonomous nervous system and that are accompanied by frequent losses and disorders of consciousness.

Muscular dystrophy: Chronic and progressive disease of the muscular system characterized by gradual functional weakness of individual muscles and muscle groups and which can lead to a complete loss of the ability to walk.

Paraparesis: Full paralysis of both legs.

Paraplegia: Partial paralysis of both legs.

Assistive technology: Assistive, adaptive and rehabilitation aids used by persons with disabilities.

Spastic tetraparesis: Full paralysis of all four limbs, with pronounced muscular spasms.

Tetraplegia: Partial paralysis of arms and legs.

Physical disability: Functional disability arising as a result of motor impairment or damage to the central or peripheral nervous system, or as a consequence of chronic disease of other organ systems.

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