

Disability Awareness Day 2025: What is the role of non-formal adult education in ensuring the rights of people with disabilities?

This article is written in Simple English.

What is a Disability?

A disability is something that makes everyday life and learning more difficult. This might be a physical condition, a mental health challenge, an intellectual difficulty, or a sensory issue such as problems with hearing or seeing.

Disabilities often become more limiting when there are barriers—like buildings that are hard to enter, lack of support, or people not understanding. These barriers can prevent full participation in school, work, or society.

The United Nations and the European Union both agree that all people with disabilities have the same rights as others.

Rights in the European Union

In the European Union, there is a plan called the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2021–2030).

This strategy says that every person with a disability should be able to:

- Live independently
- Enjoy a good quality of life
- Take part in learning and work
- Be treated fairly and equally

Even with this strategy, many people with disabilities still leave school early or find it hard to get a job. This shows how important it is to improve learning and support.

The Role of Learning

Learning is a key part of being independent, feeling included, and finding work.



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EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

Vocational Education and Training (VET) helps people gain skills for jobs. However, many learners with disabilities are not able to join VET programmes because there are many barriers in going to school and they can't get the right kind of support.

The EU is encouraging all countries to help everyone receive the education they want. They need to give people information about learning opportunities, help to learners who need it, and work closely with job centres and guidance services.

The Importance of Adult Education

Adult education offers learning opportunities for people after school age. It includes many different types of learning, including community education.

Community education takes place in neighborhoods and cities, close to where people live. In community education, people often learn in groups. This type of education is flexible and welcoming, especially for people who may have felt left out in the past.

Research from Ireland's national adult learning organisation, AONTAS, shows that community education creates a safe space for people who have been left out from opportunities - including people with disabilities. It helps build confidence, social connection, and a love of learning. The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) supports this type of education. According to the EAEA, adult learning creates fairer societies and gives people second chances to learn and grow—no matter their background.

Helping with the Move from School to Adult Learning

A project called INCLUSIVE PATH is working to support students with intellectual and developmental disabilities as they move from secondary school to adult education.

This project helps teachers and family members understand how to support learners through this transition. It focuses on making learning more flexible and enjoyable—using tools like games and personalised approaches. The aim is to create an environment where learners feel welcomed and ready to continue their education.

People with disabilities have the right to learn, grow, and be part of society.
Adult education—especially learning in communities—can make this possible.

Lifelong learning should be open and welcoming to everyone.



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