

PANEL AND FISHBOWL DISCUSSION

Prof. Dr Sven Sauter**Inclusion and Participation**

Joint contribution with Livia-Ioana Limbalata

Results from the Thematic Tables
10th International Partnership Meeting of the Danube Networkers
10 July 2026 · Edwin Scharff House, Neu-Ulm

We are deliberately reporting together, because participation should not only be discussed but practised. Education is the foundation of democracy. Democracy begins with good education, and this concerns everyone, not only people with disabilities.

Every state along the Danube has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. What matters, however, is not the document itself but its implementation in everyday life. Education must be accessible to everyone and every generation. Signing a document is easy; respecting its provisions and ensuring that different needs are met is much more difficult.

Democratic coexistence must be learned. It is not given by nature. Our key concepts are respect, visibility and acceptance. People with disabilities should not merely be tolerated, but recognised as people with their own rights, needs and contributions.

The guiding principle of the disability-rights movement is “Nothing about us without us.” At a future conference, more people with disabilities should therefore be actively involved. This requires accessible buildings, sign-language interpretation, guidance systems for blind people and further opportunities for people to speak for themselves and shape democratic debate.

Visibility also means leaving one’s own bubble, encountering people whose lives are different and speaking with one another. Changing perspective helps us recognise barriers and develop society together. Participation is a fundamental human right.

Editorial note: This contribution was corrected and edited on the basis of an automatically generated transcript. Obvious recognition errors, technical interruptions, repetitions and purely organisational remarks were removed. The substance of the contribution has been preserved.