

## From Marginalised citizen to equal participant

Flexibility, equality and diversity are the key words, when vulnerable citizens must be included on equal footing with others in general communities. This is highlighted in a new evaluation of three partnerships between municipalities and voluntary organizations.

Citizens, who are socially or mentally vulnerable, they often feel that they are lonely and stand outside of society than other citizens in general, and they rarely participate as active volunteers in activities in for example the local community.

This is the basis of a social financing initiative (2015-18), where you through three partnerships between organizations in the civil society and municipalities have worked to include various groups of vulnerable citizens in volunteer communities.

In all three projects there has in particular been focus on the idea that the vulnerable citizens were included on an equal footing with other citizens, and that there thus has been no talk about efforts for but instead with the target-group.

### The relations create the benefits

The project participants are:

- > INSP! and Roskilde Municipality. The partnership works in order to that several mentally vulnerable youths under the municipal social psychiatry become active participants in the citizen-operated culture house INSP! in Roskilde.
- > Cases that Collect and Aarhus Municipality. The partnership works to engage citizens without employment and citizens with weak network in specific cases that touch them or others.
- > Vimby and Aarhus Municipality. The partnership works among other things to invite citizens with mental disability to be volunteers in communities of a village society and activities.

Now there is an evaluation of the three partnerships. The evaluation has primarily focus on the learning potential in the projects, but also suggests that it overall has succeeded for the three projects to create inclusive frameworks, where citizens with different types of challenges have the opportunity to evolve from marginalized to equal participants.

This is for example reflected in the vulnerable citizens' assessments of their dividends, the extent of their participation and an increased activity level in the organizations. The report also highlights that the citizens' dividends and motivation vary in the three projects, but that it applies to them all that vulnerable citizens find their way to the activities through other people, and that it also is the relation to other people that gives them benefit by participating.

Flexibility, equality, diversity

The report has in particular focus on examining, what exactly need to be done, so that the cooperation between civil society and municipality contribute to vulnerable citizen groups being included in general communities. Here are three conditions highlighted, which other partnerships can work actively on:

- > Flexibility: That you as citizen can be unstable in your participation, because there are times, where you can participate, and other times where you cannot. You cannot necessarily participate continuously.
- > Equality: That you are met as a person, who can do something and can contribute on an equal footing with others, rather than someone who is sick or exposed.

> Diversity: That there are many different groups of people among the participants and not only vulnerable citizens and professionals.

In addition to the evaluation report, a booklet is published, "Short and precise" which summarizes the main results, experiences and recommendations to others, who wish to work with inclusion of vulnerable citizens.

The evaluation was prepared by VIVE and RUC for the National Board of Social Services.

Evaluation: Inclusion and participation of vulnerable citizen groups in co-operative arenas.

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