

# **Crossing borders : Social development and group activities for youngsters with visual impairment**

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# History

- 5 Organisations from Belgium and the Netherlands
- Since 2005: 3 meetings each year to exchange information and mutual learning
- Out of these meetings: the idea of a city camp

# WHY?

- For our population:
  - there are not that many opportunities to spend time together
  - To widen their world
- For the tutors:
  - To widen the scope of our cooperation
- A citycamp?
  - Chance to experience new culture, sports, city day and nightlife

# Leuven, November 2009



# Participants

- Visually impaired youngsters between 16 and 21 years old
- 21 participants



# Tutors

- 6 tutors
- Voluntary workers when necessary



# City Tour Leuven



# Guided by a blind guide



# Sports: Self defence



# Adjusted lesson for our group



# Spinning



# Royal Museums for Arts and History - Brussels



# China exhibition



# Small groups – everything touchable



# Outcome

- For participants:
  - Not being 'different'
  - Being able to vanish in a group
  - Talk freely about handicap and feel recognized
  - Opportunity to meet new people
  - Opportunity to start a relationship

# Friends and much more...



# Outcome

- For tutors:
  - Learn from each other's way of tutoring
  - Learn from each other's attitude towards social competence, integration
  - See them act like other youngsters
  - See them learn from each other and talk easily about their handicap

# Disadvantages

- Large group:
  - Unwanted attention
  - Integrated impression?
- A lot of waiting time:
  - Guidance?
  - Multiple choices

# To discuss... Cultural differences?

- Ways of communicating:
  - Direct?
- Use of the white cane:
  - Resistance?
  - Reasons?
    - Adjusted society?
    - Religion?
    - Understanding?

# The group



Thank you for your attention!

Karen Van Hemelrijck

