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YOUTH DAY ORGANIZERS PREPARE FOR DISABLED

Aim to Help All Young People Participate Actively

MADRID, MARCH 2, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Organizers of the 2011 World Youth Day are preparing to welcome all young people, even those with disabilities, to Madrid as active participants.

The communications department of the event's organizational committee affirmed that they are including this consideration while arranging for all those participants who speak foreign languages.

In a communiqué, the department affirmed: "In addition to the thousands of languages spoken in the world, there are others that, because they are unknown, are not given much attention.

"Their words cannot be heard, they are written in the air, with their hands. It is the way that the deaf communicate."

For those who have difficulty reading long texts, the Youth Day organizers are offering informational videos on their Web site. Videos will also be offered on a YouTube channel dedicated to the event. One video gives practical details in international sign language.

A special team has been nominated to coordinate and receive those participants who have special needs. The committee includes representatives from various groupings of disabilities: visual, auditory, physical and psychological.

The team has been working for several months on the logistical details for making the Youth Day a good experience for all participants, especially those with special needs.

For example, they are working with the ONCE foundation (a Spanish national organization for blind people) to make the Web site accessible to blind persons.

Fully welcome

One team member, Jaime Gutierrez, has a hearing disability. Aside from his work for World Youth Day, he is responsible for the pastoral care of the deaf and the deaf-blind in the Archdiocese of Madrid.

Gutierrez stated that his goal is that the deaf people who attend the Youth Day will "feel fully welcome and integrated and able to participate without any communication barriers, so that it is a community and ecclesial experience that really marks their life, serving as a personal encounter with Jesus Christ."

He expressed the hope that the event will "be remembered as an intense experience of faith shared with the whole Church, in which we all have a place and can feel at home."

Gutierrez added that after the Youth Day is over, he would like to see "groups of young deaf people consolidate in all the dioceses, where they can mature and live that vocation and mission."

The team plans to continue producing informational videos that will help participants navigate the housing, registration, city tours, and other aspects.

A school in Madrid, La Purisima, has been named the headquarters for the deaf during the event. Special activities will be held there for the pilgrims with hearing disabilities, including Mass, catechesis and workshops.

Gutierrez stated the goal that "deaf young people from all countries, especially impoverished countries, will participate and be protagonists of World Youth Day and not mere passive recipients, giving us their testimony and experience of faith."

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On the Net:

World Youth Day site: <http://www.madridwyd2011.com/>

YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/2011madrid>