

Achieving community-living in Europe: The Common European Guidelines on De-institutionalisation

Inclusion Europe has taken a new step forward in its commitment to implement the right of people with intellectual disabilities to live included in the community. After the research conducted in the frameworks of the projects "Included in Society" and of the one focusing on people with severe disabilities and complex needs, we have now started a cooperation with all relevant EU-level networks to elaborate Common European Guidelines on De-institutionalisation. The purpose of this project is to reduce marginalisation and improve the inclusion and life chances of some of Europe's most vulnerable citizens by accelerating and improving the quality of de-institutionalisation throughout the European Union.

Inclusion Europe's involvement in this initiative is part of Inclusion International's Global Campaign on Article 19 of the UN CRPD. This campaign will produce a Global Report 2010-2012 on Promoting the right to live and be included in the community. More information about this campaign can be found at <http://www.ii-livinginthecommunity.org> .

The new European project is the outcome of the partnership and cooperation between the members of the European De-institutionalisation Expert Group in which Inclusion Europe has been involved over the past two years: to promote person-centered, individualised, quality and empowering models of services and formal and informal care that fully respect the human rights of all people with care and support needs and their families. The European De-Institutionalisation Expert Group is a broad coalition gathering stakeholders representing: people with care or support needs including children, people with disabilities, people experiencing mental health problems, their families; and service providers. The project will be implemented in partnership by the following organisations: Lumos, COFACE (Confederation of

Family Organisations in the EU), EASPD (European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities), ENIL/ECCL (European Network on Independent Living/European Coalition for Community Living), EDF (European Disability Forum), Eurochild, Inclusion Europe, Mental Health Europe and the European Social Network, together with UNICEF and OHCHR.

The project is instrumental in advancing the working objectives of the Group which are:

- (1) To raise awareness at EU level of the needs of different groups with care or support needs and to draw the attention to infringements of the human rights of people in institutional care;
- (2) To ensure that EU and national policies and funding mechanisms support the transition from institutional care to community-based services, including investment in family support and the development of high quality services on the ground;
- (3) To offer expertise and impartial advice to Member States and the EU institutions that are considering, planning, reviewing or implementing de-institutionalisation policies and funding programmes, and to encourage Member States to fully involve user groups and their families in this process, as well as other stakeholders such as service providers, public authorities, civil society and the research community – both within their borders and internationally;
- (4) To gather and enhance knowledge on the transition from institutional to community-based services and to gather and promote practical examples of good practice demonstrating the social and economic value of high quality family-based or community-based alternatives, as well as how de-institutionalisation reforms can be best carried out.

The *added value* of this project is that it provides a holistic policy perspective on de-institutionalisation at the European level, crossing the following user groups, children and families, people with disabilities of all ages and older people, and people experiencing mental health problems.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- To develop a set of Common European Guidelines for transition from institutional to community-based care. These will provide guidance to decision-makers at European and member-State level, as well as those managing and implementing the process of change.
- To create a Toolkit for the assessment of strategies, policies and plans on de-institutionalisation and the provision of holistic care services for and with all groups affected by institutionalisation.
- To develop a Training module which can be used to introduce the Common European Guideline to the identified target groups, and for the training of trainers.
- To facilitate mutual learning and mobilise policy support through the broad dissemination of the Common European Guidelines and the Toolkit, using NGO and user-group networks, European platforms and through holding multi-stakeholder mutual learning events.

The developed materials are aimed primarily at:

- European level politicians and officials responsible for EU social policy and the implementation of the Social Agenda
- Officials at the European Commission and in the Member States responsible for allocating and managing Structural Funds
- Politicians and senior civil servants in member States, responsible for policy on service provision for vulnerable citizens
- Local authorities responsible for local service provision and management across member States
- Service providers, both public and private
- NGOs and DPOs advocating for change.

Inclusion Europe will publish regularly further information about the progress and results of this important initiative.