

A historic opportunity for people in institutional care: EU Funds must be used to develop community-based alternatives in 2014 – 2020

Statement from the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-Based care

A historic breakthrough in the EU's legislative landscape

The European Union (EU) is preparing to implement the next 7 years of the Structural and Investment Funding. The framework put in place for this new programming period represents a historic opportunity to protect the rights of Europe's most excluded people - those living in institutional care. For the first time, the [new Regulations for the EU Cohesion Policy investment](#), adopted last December by the European Council and the European Parliament include specific references to support the "transition from institutional to community-based care". This represents a commitment that EU Funds will not be used to perpetuate institutionalisation, but to develop the much needed community-based alternatives. This commitment is crucial in the current times of austerity, as Member States can use EU Funds to cover the cost of transition to community-based services. Moreover, with the adoption of the [European Code of Conduct on Partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds](#) on 7 January, the European Commission issued a strong signal to Member States that any future investments of EU Funds should be planned and implemented in close cooperation with civil society and other stakeholders.

The European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-Based Care (EEG) is a broad coalition which brings together stakeholders representing people with care or support needs, as well as service providers, public authorities and intergovernmental organisations. Since 2009, the EEG has advocated for changes in the legislation which would ensure that EU Funds support the reform of the care systems in the Member States, and for a more meaningful involvement of the civil society organisations. The EEG therefore welcomes this **historic breakthrough in the EU's legislative landscape, which should improve the situation of children and adults in institutional care or at risk of institutionalisation and facilitate real effective innovation in the social services sector.**

Lasting changes for people with care and support needs.

Hundreds of thousands of children, young people, people with disabilities, people with mental health problems, older people and homeless people are segregated in institutions and suffer the life-long impact of institutionalisation. Alternatives can and must be developed, in line with international human rights treaties, consisting of quality community-based services which respond to the needs of each individual. The EEG has developed [Guidelines on the Transition from Institutional to Community-Based Care](#), which set out the key elements of moving away from institutional care to family-based and community-based alternatives. Together with the [Toolkit on the use of EU Funds](#), they can be used by the Member States and the European Commission to implement and monitor system reforms.

The EEG looks forward to developing partnership with the European Commission and the national governments.

Members of the EEG bring a wealth of experience, research and evidence on managing the transition from institutional to community-based care, based on their work in a number of countries and with a wide range of user groups. With the support of the European Commission, as well as national governments, EEG member organisations at the EU and national level are already playing a key role by facilitating national seminars together with the European Commission on the use of Structural Funds to support the transition to community-based care. The EEG looks forward to further developing this partnership with the national authorities and the EU institutions in the new programming period, to ensure that the potential of the new Regulations to deliver major improvements in the lives of people in institutional care or at risk of institutionalisation is fully realised.

With this objective, we urge the European Commission:

- To provide **guidance to the Member States**, in order to ensure that the priority of supporting the transition from institutional to community-based care, as clearly stated in the Regulations is fully implemented in the new programming period;
- To ensure that the commitments to transition from institutional to community-based care are clearly described in the **Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes of all Member States**;
- To ensure that implementation of these commitments is **effectively monitored** at the national level and by the European Commission, with a meaningful involvement of all the relevant stakeholders, in line with the European Code of Conduct on Partnership.
- To ensure that the **Country Specific Recommendations (CSR)** based on National Reform Plans are coherent with and used as instruments to achieve the objectives outlined in the new regulations.

To support this process, the EEG plans to update its Toolkit on the Use of EU Funds with a thorough analysis of the new Regulations from the perspective of the various user groups.



According to the recommendations issued by the [Ad Hoc Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based care convened in 2009 by Commissioner Špidla](#), the EEG brings together the expertise from international organisations, non-governmental organisations as well as services providers in order to facilitate deinstitutionalisation reforms. The EEG is currently co-chaired by the European Disability Forum, UNICEF and the European Social Network.

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