



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Bucharest, 20 May 2019

It's time to invest in support services, it's time to invest in people

On the eve of the European elections, the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) and its partners, Dizabnet Federation, FONSS and FDSC, together with over 250 social sector leaders, have called for the sustainable funding of support services for persons with disabilities, to ensure the full implementation of the UN CRPD.

On 16th-17th May EASPD's European Conference 'Investing in Social Services, Investing in People,' co-hosted alongside their partners, **brought together support services, service beneficiaries, representatives of the European Commission, public authorities as well as public and private investors, to discuss the future that they want for the support services sector.** The two-day conference explored the **key funding and financing models** that are currently being developed across Europe to help the sector **meet its significant and growing investment needs.**

Katarina Ivankovic Knezevic, Director for Social Affairs at the European Commission, joined participants as she reaffirmed the crucial contribution support services make to a more social, inclusive and prosperous Europe. Speaking from the conference she asserted, *"social services represent a smart and sustainable investment in people, they not only assist people, but they also have a preventative, activating and enabling factor."* To be able to fulfil their potential however, service providers must be able to provide high quality, person-centred and community-based support and **this quality comes at a cost which cannot be ignored.**

The conference provided a vital opportunity to address the implementation of public procurement across Europe, where authorities at a local or national level have over-emphasized cost factors when procuring support services in their communities. *"If public procurement is to promote high-quality services **the use of quality criteria in the procurement process must be compulsory,**"* **Thomas Signal,**

EASPD Investment Policy Officer emphasized. Adding, *“Public procurement may not be the best tool that authorities can use to provide high quality support services. The use of Public procurement is a choice and authorities should re-consider their use of this model.”*

Looking to the possibilities of private investment, to compliment public funding and support the sector to innovate, **Luk Zelderloo, EASPD Secretary General**, **underlined the need for EU instruments to unlock additional funding opportunities for support service providers**. Speaking on the importance of capacity building he stressed that: *“the new InvestEU programme will invest €500 million in capacity building for implementing partners. While this is a step forward, the programme does not recognise support services as a key partner and instead this money will be invested into building the capacity of banks. The European Commission must acknowledge the important role support services play in the implementation of the program and support us in our capacity building.”*

The long-term sustainability of the sector was also a key concern of participants. Representatives from Romania, as well as elsewhere in Europe, rose awareness for **the dangers of using short-term contracts, which do not allow for quality care or an individualisation of support**. To overcome this, **authorities must take more responsibility** and ensure that the contracts that they offer facilitate the provision of consistent, person-centred care to those who need it.

To close the conference **EASPD President, Jim Crowe**, drew on the key messages of the conference highlighting that, *“funding models must further empower service users, giving them choice and control in deciding the type of care that they want to receive. For this, personal budgets are the way forward.”* Addressing the importance of coproduction he added, *“well structured dialogue between authorities, persons with disabilities and support providers is essential to the success of the funding of services. To be able to invest in services, we must invest in our partnerships.”*

The discussions that were held in Bucharest will form the foundation of EASPD’s report on the funding of support services. This report will guide our cooperation with key stakeholders and the sector in the coming year as the new European Parliament takes its seat. What will this parliament look like? And what impact will this have on the funding of high-quality services? It’s now up to Europe to decide. So, vote!

Material of the conference

- [Bucharest Conference Website](#)
- [EASPD Position Paper on MFF](#)
- [Press Release: Four steps to make InvestEU a success for Social Infrastructure Investment](#)
- [Press Release: The Price of Quality](#)

Note to editors

The European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities is a non-profit European umbrella organization, established in 1996, and currently representing over 17,000 social, health and support services for persons with disabilities. EASPD advocates effective and high-quality disability-related services in the field of education, employment and individualised support, in line with the UN CRPD principles, which could bring benefits not only to persons with disabilities, but to society as a whole.

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