

Financial Resilience of Support Services:

is Europe doing enough?

Wednesday 24th February 2021

14h – 15h30 CET, via Zoom

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Context

In many countries across Europe, the social services sector is still recovering from the financial crisis of 2008 and the resulting austerity measures that were decided by Europe's policymakers. Even a decade later, many disability services are still in survival mode, especially in the countries affected most by austerity or where funding falls short of the social needs. Staff shortages are generally increasing. Social innovation is considered as an add-on, rather than a key part of policy strategies. This clearly impacted the resilience of services for persons with disabilities and their ability to withstand further shocks.

It was in this context that the COVID-19 pandemic hit the provision of support to persons with disabilities, with the outcome that we saw (EASPD Snapshot Report on impact of COVID-19 on Disability Services – [April](#) and [October](#) 2020). The system built to enable services to support persons with disabilities are -by in large- not as resilient as they should be given the importance they serve in the lives of millions across the continent. Disability Services are essential, yet fragile, services.

COVID-19 largely impacted the funding of Disability Services in two ways. Firstly, disability services had to invest: in additional staff and relevant staff expenditure, in technology, as well as in products and services to help them adapt their support. In short, expenditure often shot up in order to keep the services running as normally as possible. Secondly, the income of many services was also decreased or made unstable. This was due to overly strict contracts with their authorities, less new funding opportunities and a reduction in own income (fund raising, social enterprises, etc). In short, Income often dropped.

If left untouched, this situation (a fragile context, hit by increased costs and reduced income) not only further damages the resilience of the sector, but in some cases even puts in doubt the continuity and sustainability of social support across Europe.

For this reason, the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) is organising a webinar on “Financial Resilience of Disability Services: is Europe doing enough?”

One year on from the pandemic, the webinar will examine the following issues:

- What is the financial situation of disability services in several European countries?
- What are the existing and upcoming measures being done to support them?
- What more could be done to build up the resilience of Disability Services in Europe?

Programme:

14h00	<p>Technical Information by Thomas Bignal, Policy Manager, EASPD</p> <p>Welcoming Remarks by Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General, EASPD</p>
14h10	<p>Presentation of EASPD research on the “The Short-term Impact of COVID-19 on the Social Support Services sector: focus on services for persons with disabilities”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sigrid Rand, Goethe University of Frankfurt, Germany
14h20	<p>Panel on Financial Resilience of Disability Services in Europe</p> <p>Moderated by Thomas Bignal, Policy Manager, EASPD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emanuela Zaimi, Down Syndrome Albania - Maya Doneva, Karin Dom, Bulgaria - George Retsos, Estia, Greece - Joanne McCarthy, Disability Federation Ireland - Teresa M. Guimarães, Humanitas, Portugal - Elena Vasiliu, Close to you Foundation, Romania <p>Q&A with Participants</p>
15h25	<p>Concluding Remarks by Jim Crowe, President, EASPD</p>