

Conclusions of the participants of the Forum of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities

'Better services for persons with disabilities, a better society for all'

Forum of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, held in December 2013 in Belgrade, gathered more than 80 representatives of service providers from more than 20 towns/cities and municipalities in Serbia (Belgrade, Subotica, Ivanjica, Kragujevac, Leskovac, Požarevac, Smederevo, Zrenjanin, Pančevo, Kruševac, Aleksandrovac, Majdanpek, Novi Sad, Kanjiža, Niš, Vranje, etc.), as well as policy-makers in this field, officials from the central and local levels, NGOs, media and EASPD representatives. In order to accelerate the reform process in the area of social protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities, participants agreed on the following guidelines for the action in the upcoming period:

1. Improve communication among users of social services for persons with disabilities and service providers for persons with disabilities, their families and representative organizations (service providers), authority representatives from the local and central level, scientific research organizations of social policy, NGOs and other stakeholders through the organization of meetings that will focus on specific areas of service for persons with disabilities in the Republic of Serbia, with the participation of EASPD representatives from the various expert groups in certain areas of social services and relevant guests from the region;
2. Improve the process of licensing providers of social services by strengthening cooperation and encouraging mutual responsibility of all actors involved in the licensing process, both at the national and local level. Disabled people's organisation that provide local services need support in this process and therefore it is necessary to provide them with the support to promptly take an active role in the process of achieving the required quality standards of services provided, and to gather the necessary documentation confirming that they meet all the necessary requirements for obtaining a license for the service they provide. In the process of licensing, providers of social services for persons with disabilities can contact the Republic Institute for Social Protection for necessary professional support;
3. Enable direct participation of users and their representatives in the planning and allocation of funds intended for the implementation of services and monitoring and evaluation of the range of social services supported by the Republic and local self-governments in order to inform service providers from the NGO sector in a timely manner about the funds they can count on during the year and to be able to timely plan implementation of services and work on the continuous improvement of their sustainability;
4. It is necessary to improve multi-sectorial cooperation at the local level in order to encourage all stakeholders in the field of providing services for persons with disabilities to cooperate and jointly develop social services. An important step in this



direction would be increasing the transparency of decisions of local self-governments on the establishment and funding of social services at the local level. Transparency would enable that all relevant actors be informed about the defined priorities, types of services and providers, as well as the amount of funds intended for the implementation and/or support to the implementation of these services. The common interest is that the funding of services for persons with disabilities reflects the real needs of users in the local community. Consequently, further development of community services must be in accordance with the needs at the local level. Encouraging cooperation between different actors in the community enables development of the local policies that contribute to the improvement of the service quality and active participation of all stakeholders;

5. Promote existing database of service providers and encourage their expansion in order to continue mapping the need for social services at the local level and the existing social services (completing the data on the needs and resources in this sector through existing database open for further improvement);
6. Enhance training in the area of monitoring the quality of services for persons with disabilities for users and families, as well as for service providers, civil servants of local and government bodies responsible for social protection, inspectors in the field of social protection, representatives of the media and independent bodies;
7. Provide multiple, regular, timely, high quality and affordable ways of informing all stakeholders at the national and local level and at the level of those services about the new legislative framework, models of good practice, funding, conferences, relevant findings and reports, useful publications through an integrated and accessible system of linking of actors, irrespective of territorial, sectorial and other differences (type of disability, type of service, type of information);
8. Find modalities of encouraging innovative services through the project financing, regular monitoring and evaluation based on empirical indicators by the competent authorities until the time of their introduction into the system;
9. Provide regular exchange of information and communication between service providers and stakeholders, establish an information system as a technical support for the development of sustainability services for persons with disabilities and improve communication with the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities - EASPD through the national member organizations and other networks at the international level;
10. Support development of innovative services for persons with disabilities following the standards developed within the framework of the European Union and bring closer design of services through the field research and determination of the needs at the local level and improve greater involvement and participation of service providers in the international conferences related to the improvement of quality and service standards for persons with disabilities as well as promote regional exchange of experience in providing services for persons with disabilities .

