



## **The European Expert Group**

### **on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care (EEG)**

## **Reflections on the 2019 European Semester Country Reports**

*European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care*

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### **Introduction**

Following the publication of the 2019 Country Reports, the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care (EEG) prepared reflections on their content to provide expert support to the European Commission in the drafting of the 2019 Country Specific Recommendations.

Since 2009, the EEG has collaborated with the European Union (EU) to advance the transition from institutional to community-based care in Europe. The EEG has closely followed and worked on the European Semester process by providing data to the European Commission on the state of deinstitutionalisation in various EU Member States, analysing Country Reports and Country Specific Recommendations, supporting national authorities and civil society in following and feeding into the process.

More than a million of children, persons with disabilities, older persons, homeless people and those from other disadvantaged groups continue to be segregated in institutional settings excluded from society. While often understood as the mere closure of institutions located in Central and Eastern Europe, the transition from institutional to community and family-based care refers to the process of developing a range of services in the community in all European countries, including Southern and Western Europe. Community-based care refers to a spectrum of services that enable individuals to live in the community such as housing, healthcare, education, employment and specialised services, such as personal assistance for persons with disabilities and family based or family like care for children.

Without adequate person-centred support in the community accessible for all persons and their families, institutionalisation will continue. This violates their right to live independently or to be raised by their

family and to have choices and control over their life, just like other people. Moreover, people in segregated institutional settings are usually prevented from benefiting from mainstream education or the open labour market. The economic and societal impact of their exclusion is very high.

Last year the EEG prepared info sheets providing information on the deinstitutionalisation process for both children in out of home care and persons with disabilities in six countries. The countries were: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary and Romania. These info sheets aimed to assist EU desk officers in the preparation of the 2019 Country Reports (CRs).

### **Analysis of the 2019 Country Reports and Recommendations**

As specified by Annex D of each Country Report of 2019, the preliminary views on priority investment areas will provide the basis for a dialogue between the Member State and the European Commission in view of the programming of the Cohesion policy funds (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Plus).

The EEG is pleased that deinstitutionalisation and community-based care are explicitly featured in the majority (18 CRs) of the 2019 Country Reports, namely Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain. We are glad to see that many of our concerns have been included in the relevant Country Reports.

The EEG strongly believes that the need to further and better invest in the transition from institutional to community-based care, including the development of family and community-based services, should be included in the 2019 Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) of all Member States.

**However, for some EU Member States these priorities should be particularly highlighted in the Country Specific Recommendations, given the urgency of the issue.**

For instance, the Report for **Hungary** points out that despite the commitment to invest EU funding to move 10,000 people from institutional to community-based care by 2023, *“the conditions for independent living could still be improved”* and that *“the supply of support services for community and home care is strongly limited.”* We welcome these observations and we believe there is a need to act as a matter of urgency given the process is currently taking place; therefore, we recommend this is further addressed in the CSRs for Hungary.

The Country Report for the **Czech Republic** states that *“long-term care focuses mainly on institutional care, which may not always be cost-efficient”* and that *“the system would benefit from further investment in primary, integrated, and psychiatric care, including in the required infrastructure.”* Institutional care also prevails in providing out-of-home care for children 0-3 years, thus violating the rights of the child. We recommend pointing out the need to develop better-integrated, inclusive and community-based care system for all target groups in the CSRs for the Czech Republic.

The transition from institutional to community-based care is not merely a Central and Eastern Europe issue, but concerns the whole continent. For example, [a recently published report from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on her visit to France](#) reported that approximately 300,000 children and adults in **France** reside in a broad range of institutionalised settings,

which are predominantly financially supported by the State. The European Semester and the CSRs should strongly emphasise the need for the transition from institutional to community-based care and support services.

For **Belgium**, it is noted that *“the lack of a de-institutionalisation strategy concerted between federal and federated entities (in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) makes the situation more difficult to tackle.”* More than 13,000 children live in institutions in Belgium and most of them are children with disabilities. It is necessary to take measures to tackle this situation in CSRs for Belgium.

As stated in the 2019 Country Report of **Greece** *“De-institutionalisation also remains a key challenge. Significant shortcomings have been found with respect to residential care for children with disabilities, the lack of policies for alternative care settings, and the lack of suitable care for children and teenagers with mental health and behavioural problems.”* Reforms of the social care system in Greece need to include deinstitutionalisation processes, with an adequate plan and resources to implement and monitor progress on this. We would encourage reference to this in the CSRs for Greece to ensure this issue receives the needed attention on the social policy agenda for the coming years.

## About the EEG

*The European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care (EEG) is a broad coalition gathering stakeholders representing people with care or support needs and their families, including children, people with disabilities, homeless people, people experiencing mental health problems; as well as service providers, public authorities and intergovernmental organisations. The Group has as its mission the promotion of person-centred, quality and empowering models of services and formal and informal care that fully respect the human rights of all people with care or support needs. The Group supports national efforts to implement the necessary reforms, in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (in particular with Article 19), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.*

## Contact details

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