

# EASPD

# STRATEGY 2022-2025

## Moving Forward: smart transformation and building resilience



European Association of Service providers  
for Persons with Disabilities

# I. EASPD's Vision

At a time of radical **change** – digital, environmental, demographic and political – and as we learn to deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) is a stable compass for the development of a more inclusive world. Stable does not mean slowing down. In fact, it means **moving forward** as the UN CRPD continues to demand rapid developments in service provision towards better quality, more empowering and person-centred forms of support. A **smart transformation** of support services is needed now more than ever. It means training support workers to implement this in practice. It also requires ensuring that no person with a disability is left without the support they need, and that the diversity of support needs are taken into consideration.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the biggest crisis Europe has experienced in decades. Around Europe, service providers, professionals and volunteers quickly adapted their services, innovated, and shifted online to continue to provide the care and support millions of persons with disabilities need to live active lives in the community and in employment. As the pandemic continues to impact society, support services continue to innovate and adapt their services to this new reality. This is not without cost and not without consequences, in large part due to structural weaknesses and underinvestment over the past decade. **Building the resilience** of support services is thus crucial to ensure our sector recovers from the pandemic and accelerates its smart transformation.

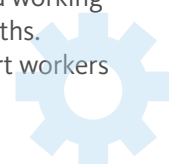
## As we rebuild, Europe also needs to learn the lessons from the pandemic.

Firstly, that **support services and the Social Economy more broadly are essential** and that we can no longer accept being seen as of secondary importance. For those we support on a day to day basis, for those we employ, we need to stand-up for our recognition; starting from recognising how essential we are to the societies we live in. This is not to say that we cannot do better and improve the way we work. It is to say that we must be able to work in an eco-system which values us, which understands how important our work is and acts in accordance. This also means meeting the sector's significant funding gap in the years to come and not adding to it.

Another aspect is clear: we were not prepared for such a crisis. Moving forward, we need to **build our capacity to deal with such shocks**. We need to **build our resilience**. As service providers, we need to create the right strategies & protocols to ensure we respond better in the future. Policy-makers and public authorities also hold responsibility. Partnership is needed to find real solutions towards building a fully resilient support services sector; able to support the people who need such services even in the worst of times.

**Guaranteeing human rights** becomes even more important during a crisis. The pandemic – however - brought back the old medical approach. Protecting people with disabilities by segregating them became more and more the norm. This was despite the fact that many moves towards protecting people often - in fact - placed them at higher risk as was the case in many large residential institutions. Moving on, providing persons with disabilities with real choice and control over their support needs to be at the heart of our sector's development and of what is considered to be a quality service. This is both for reasons of rights but also for reasons of public health. Providing support workers with the right skills and legal frameworks will be key to achieving this; as well as a recognition of the diversity of support people with disabilities may need and choose.

**Support services are nothing without support professionals.** At the very heart of the pandemic, millions of support workers continued to dedicate their careers towards helping others, often putting their own health on the line. This social entrepreneurship and commitment need to be recognized with improved wages and working conditions, training opportunities and career paths. Creating a more attractive workplace for support workers will be a key priority in the years ahead.



## Moving forward is also about making the most of new and evolving trends.

The digitalization of support services has accelerated tenfold. In the years to come, considerable attention and investment is needed to make the most of the incredible **potential of digitalisation** in enabling more inclusive and effective support. Tackling climate change is also a key issue. In the years ahead, support services will also have to think long and hard about how they can minimize their impact on the environment and what steps can be taken to **reduce their environmental footprint**.

Nonetheless, there is concern that policy-makers are prioritizing digital and climate investments ahead of social inclusion policies. It is therefore also important to ensure that these transitions are not done **at the expense of persons with disabilities** and the support systems that surround them. This is why the Sustainable Development Goals are so important.

Accessibility has long been crucial to more inclusive societies. As we continue to move in that direction, support services need to consider how they can contribute to increased accessibility. **Support services have significant experience and knowhow on accessibility and inclusion.** We need to make the most of that by reaching out to other and new stakeholders.

**Creating real co-production of services** continues to remain an important challenge. Increased effort is required to create the necessary conditions for the uptake of co-production in practice.

**Supported decision-making is fast becoming a cornerstone** for many support providers, who want to move away from substituted decision-making. Supported decision making consists of several measures designed at setting the sufficient conditions for a person with disabilities to make informed decisions on all aspects of their own life. Comprehensive legal reforms, a well-trained workforce and more practical guidance are needed to speed up the adoption of Supported Decision-Making principles.

Support services have to be better at taking into account the **complex and often intersectional personal identities** of people using the services, as well as the people employed; be it linked to their gender, sexuality, race, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, age and of course disability, as well as their socio-economic situation. This also includes finding solutions to the challenges brought by an ageing society.

The new European Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 **provides strong building blocks** upon which to implement the UN CRPD across Europe, including in non-EU countries.

The **European Strategy will thus serve to operationalize much of EASPD's own ambitions** towards the implementation of the UN CRPD through high-quality support services in the years to come. The United Nations and the Council of Europe will also be key partners in the development of quality support services across Europe and the World. Ambitions which can be summarized by the following: **"Moving Forward: Smart Transformation and Building Resilience"**.

## II. EASPD's Main Instruments to Implement the Vision

The following chapters outline the main instruments EASPD will use to implement this strategy.

### CHAPTER 1

#### Be an effective partner in policy development: key priorities

- 1.1. Be a strong partner for authorities & clear voice for service providers by monitoring and influencing policy development at the European, including in non-EU countries, and international level & follow how these policies are implemented at national level:
  - 1.1.1. Partner with the European and International Institutions to ensure service providers are structurally involved, and their voice are heard. This is particularly the case regarding the implementation of the European Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030;
  - 1.1.2. Raise awareness at EU & International level on the contribution of service providers to the implementation of their policies & highlight the main challenges for service providers, especially in areas related to EU policies;
  - 1.1.3. Promote a stronger "Rights" angle in European policy making;
  - 1.1.4. Support EASPD members to have a stronger advocating role at national level, when requested by Members of that country. This includes network building and regional cooperation.
  - 1.1.5. Strengthen cooperation with key partners,

including disability movement, social services and social partners.

- 1.2. Promote, support, improve and exchange promising legal frameworks across Europe. EASPD's Member Fora as well as the updating of the country factsheets will facilitate this work.
- 1.3. Lobby for and support the development of sustainable financial frameworks:
  - 1.3.1. Improve access to funding for service providers for persons with disabilities for projects in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; including through the development of European projects, capacity-building, simplified procedures and better cooperation with Managing Authorities;
  - 1.3.2. Facilitate the improved use of financial frameworks for service provision for persons with disabilities, including through public procurement, state aid, tax and other policy initiatives;
  - 1.3.3. Promote the development of user-centred funding models such as personal budgets;
  - 1.3.4. Work towards ensuring that the European Union's economic governance framework and fiscal rules help investment into service provision for persons with disabilities and the implementation of the UN CRPD, as well as create an environment for upwards social convergence in Europe.

## CHAPTER 3

### Be the point of reference for learning and knowledge exchange: key priorities

- 3.1. Create, collect and exchange knowledge and data within the wider disability sector, membership and the secretariat.
  - 3.1.1. Ensuring that information is easily accessible and searchable, adapted to different needs and uses, available in different languages and is written in plain language.
- 3.2. Identify and exchange promising practices, including those that can work at scale and can be applied universally. Making use of online resources and hands-on field visits to facilitate the adoption and testing of practices.
- 3.3. Improve transferability of knowledge and know-how both vertically (to different geographical, cultural and legal contexts) and horizontally (from EU or umbrella organizations to local levels), with the focus on actual practical transfer of practices.
- 3.4. Facilitate learning and capacity-building through e-learning and membership peer-collaboration.

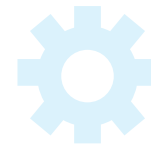
## CHAPTER 2

### Lead innovation, sustainable service provision & community building: key priorities

- 2.1. Drive innovative approaches and provide practical tools for supporting service providers in designing and delivering person-centred services in line with the UN CRPD.
- 2.2. Support members in the adaptation of their services to societal changes including crisis preparedness, green and digital transitions.
- 2.3. Focus on community development by building up cooperation with a wide range of mainstream stakeholders: housing, employment, arts and culture, sport, local authorities, etc. Use these networks to expand knowledge and expertise.
- 2.4. Ensure that the de-centralization of services and development of community-based social services at a local level is in line with the objectives of the UN CRPD.



# III. Concluding Remarks

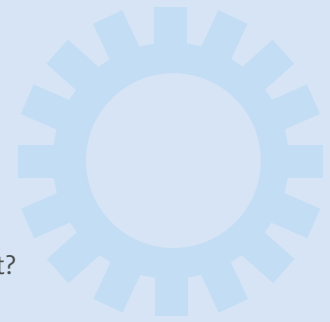


## **EASPD's new strategy for 2022-2025 is "Moving Forward: smart transformation and building resilience".**

Moving Forward means taking action, doing more and doing it better. Moving forward is the mantra of this new Strategy for the coming years. Smart transformation and building resilience are the two guiding forces to ensure this mantra leads to positive outcomes.

This strategy raises the main challenges for support services in the years ahead:

- 】 How can we ensure that support services are recognized as essential?
- 】 How can we build the resilience of support services?
- 】 How can we guarantee human rights enjoyment through support services?
- 】 How can we create a more attractive workplace for support workers?
- 】 How can we make the most of digitalization and improve our environmental impact?
- 】 How can we promote more inclusive societies?
- 】 How can we create the real co-production of services?
- 】 How can we ensure supported decision making becomes a cornerstone for support provision?
- 】 How can we best consider the complex and intersectional personal identities of support workers and persons with disabilities?
- 】 How can we ensure the European Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 makes a real difference for persons with disabilities through high quality support services?



It also highlights what EASPD can do to help support services find solutions to these challenges through three overarching pillars:

1. Be an effective partner in policy development
2. Lead innovation, sustainable service provision & community building
3. Be the point of reference for learning and knowledge exchange

This Strategy will guide EASPD's work in the years 2022-2025 to come focusing on "Moving Forward: smart transformation and building resilience".



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