

A HOME FOR ALL



HOUSING AND SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH SUPPORT NEEDS

CONFERENCE REPORT

#ahome4all

9- 10 October 2014

Oslo Congress Center



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A Home for All: Housing and Services For People with Support Needs

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RATIONALE

Every woman, man and child has the right to adequate housing that guarantees living in dignity in a secure home within the community. Housing is a prerequisite for exercising other fundamental human rights and should not be viewed in a narrow, restrictive way. Apart from fulfilling basic physical needs by offering shelter, security and protection from the environment, a home fulfils psychological needs by providing a sense of personal space and privacy as well as social needs by creating a sense of belonging and inclusion into a community.

International human rights law recognises everyone's right to an adequate standard of living and adequate housing. Nevertheless, in spite of the central place of this fundamental right in the global legal system, there is a growing gap between the international norms and standards and the widespread phenomena of inadequate housing conditions, homelessness, unaffordable rents and lack of access to adequate housing¹. The consequences of inadequate housing and homelessness are severe and affect almost every other human right: the right to health, basic services, protection of the family, freedom from discrimination, work and even life.

Persons with disabilities, people with mental health problems, persons living in poverty and exclusion, and other vulnerable groups often suffer the most from the lack of clear national and implementation policies, financial constraints and the lack of proactive, concrete and innovative measures aimed at guaranteeing their fundamental rights.

By bringing together relevant actors and experts from the housing sector, the overall objective of the conference was to showcase that with the appropriate policies, initiatives, support and innovative measures, decent, affordable and sustainable housing in inclusive communities can be a reality for all.

¹ UN report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination, A/69/274, pag 6; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/498/19/PDF/N1449819.pdf?OpenElement>

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CONTENT

The “A Home for All” conference: Housing and Services for People with Support Needs took place in Oslo, Norway on the 9th and 10th October. The event was organised by the European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities (EASPD) in collaboration with the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues (NVC), the Norwegian SOR Foundation and the partners of PUSH Europe: the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), CECODHAS/Housing Europe and Mental Health Europe, with the financial support of the European Commission, Husbanken and Triodos Bank. The event was attended by 190 participants from across Europe, which included persons with disabilities, politicians and decision-makers in the field of housing, housing providers, service providers for persons with disabilities and others.

Welcome session

The introduction session of the conference was opened by Franz Wolfmayr, President of EASPD and was followed by Guri Bergo, the regional director of Husbanken, a video message from Leilani Farha, the newly appointed UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, Maarit Aalto, project manager at the Nordic Centre For Welfare and Social Issues, Trude Stenhammer, director of the SOR Foundation, and last but not least, Luk Zelderloo, Secretary-General of EASPD.

Setting the scene of the conference, the key messages of the introductory session were:

- ▶ The right to housing is embedded in many international treaties, inextricably linked to many other rights, such as the right to non-discrimination and equality. Common understanding of ‘adequate housing’ goes beyond four walls and one roof, and makes reference to several fundamental criteria such as: security of tenure, availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, location and cultural adequacy;



Message from Franz Wolfmayr, President of EASPD:

“The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities explicitly states that persons with disabilities should fully participate in society and consequently, community services need to respond to their needs. The services should adapt to their needs. We must go beyond our comfort zone and reach out.”

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- ▶ In order to be effectively implemented, international norms and standards must be translated into national and subnational legislation and initiatives adapted to national contexts. Consequently, we need a better understanding, coordination and monitoring system of the existing legal frameworks at all levels;
- ▶ Housing services should be person and community-centred. In order to fully realise the shift in paradigm, policies and practical measures should be drawn-up based on the human rights framework and focus on deinstitutionalisation, personalisation and integration.

Message from Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing:

“The old pattern of pushing people into services was an approach that did not ask the service provider to really look at and understand the needs of the individuals. By bringing services into communities, it requires us to do exactly what the human rights approach implies: putting the people with needs at the center of our analysis and understanding, listening in new ways and interpreting that appropriately into providing adequate and meaningful services”.

Plenary session 1: “Integration of housing and services for people with support needs. An emerging priority”

Moderated by Dominic Richardson, policy analyst at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the first plenary session focused on the current context of the social housing sector in Europe and on the necessity and possible ways of integrating housing and services for people with support needs. The perspective of different service providers working in the field of disability, homelessness, social housing and mental health was shared during the panel discussion. The main messages were:

- ▶ The process of deinstitutionalisation should go hand-in-hand with the development of available and affordable, high-quality community-based services designed around the needs and personal preferences of individuals. Research shows no evidence that community-based services are inherently more expensive than institutions, while others point out that these may be in fact more costly than community-care. Once support

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services are not needed anymore, users should be given the chance to keep the housing;

- ▶ There is a need to better promote the integration of housing and services for vulnerable groups. This implies the(re-) training of staff with appropriate skills for community-based care, identifying and developing effective practices, testing and scaling up social innovation as well as developing infrastructure in order to re-organise community-care delivery. In this regard, the EU has the power to provide guidelines and recommendations on the development of policies at national levels, but also the necessary budgetary allocations;
- ▶ A continuous awareness-raising among decision makers as well as the broader public is needed in order to enable and foster inclusive attitudes in local communities.



Message from Dominic Richardson, Policy Analyst at the OECD:

"Governments only dedicate around 2% of their national budgets for social housing policies. The partnership approach leads to much more effective policy-making, when governments work together with service providers and third parties".

Plenary session 2: Successful examples of integrated services in housing and support services across Europe:

In the second plenary session, moderated by Julien Dijol from CEDODHAS Housing Europe, several successful examples of integrated housing and supported services across Europe were presented. The common elements of the models of good practices illustrated during this plenary session were:

- ▶ Community-based services grounded on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with respect for dignity and individual autonomy, freedom to make one's own choice, based on participation and empowerment;

Message from Luk Zelderloo, Secretary-General of EASPD:

"We are facing three main challenges in the social services sector. Firstly, to ensure the shift from patronising service provision to the human rights approach. Second, to understand that public authorities are withdrawing from the social sector and see their role differently in response to the increased liberalisation of social services. Thirdly, we need to adapt to the demographic changes by raising awareness within our communities, further promoting the 'design for all' concept, improving communication between all relevant stakeholders in the field and to enhance professional training and skills in the sector".

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- ▶ Home as the point of departure for recovery, for meeting the support needs of the target groups, rather than the final destinations. These housing services create the opportunity to live in an ordinary home with flexible support according to the individual needs of the residents based on the freedom of choice and individual arrangements;
- ▶ Cross-sectorial cooperation between the social, medical and care sector working around the service users



Message from Ruth Owen, Policy Coordinator at FEANTSA:

“We need to see the special power that a home can have to facilitate social inclusion. Once people have the security of their own home, they are better enabled to manage their support needs and that results in a use of services which is often more efficient from the point of view of public authorities”.

Key Note Speaker

The second day of the conference was opened by Sam Tsemberis, the founder of 'Housing First', a housing and service programme that provides immediate access to permanent housing and support services. Replicated across the US, Canada, the EU and Australia and holding a high success rate in providing housing stability, the programme was designed as a paradigm shift, breaking away from the erroneous beliefs regarding housing and support services. Dr Sam Tsemberis highlighted the following key elements of this shift:

- ▶ A change in understanding the causes and solutions for homelessness - poverty and not psychopathology;
- ▶ A change in programme philosophy where the user drives the treatment and programme;
- ▶ A change in regard to the users where people are capable of making their own choices;
- ▶ A change in power relationships where the user chooses his/her type of support services;
- ▶ A change in service orientation towards community-based services.

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Message from Sam Tsemberis, founder of “Housing First” programme:

“The real challenge is not finding innovative models; it is about changing our politics and values and taking risks. It is about changing the societal values and economic policies that affect income disparity and how we help those who are less fortunate.”



Plenary session 3: Research perspectives on housing and support services

In the third plenary session, academics in the field of disabilities studies, housing and built environment, wellbeing and health presented their research. These included the analysis of media representations of people with intellectual disabilities in Norway, research projects on deinstitutionalisation and integration of housing and support services in Belgium as well as research on floating support services in Northern Ireland.

The key messages of this plenary session were:

- ▶ A change in societal values and attitude towards people with support needs is a fundamental factor in any development at policy and implementation level;
- ▶ Support services, such as ‘floating’ services linked to individuals rather than their accommodation, help the users live independently aiming at meeting their needs through case management and cooperation with other services

WORKSHOPS

The eight parallel workshop sessions organised on the second day of the conference discussed the multidimensional aspects concerning housing and support services. Each workshop concluded in recommendations and key messages which are presented below.

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Rights-based responses to housing and support needs

Housing should not be viewed in a narrow and restricted sense. In this way, institutionalisation can also be viewed as a form of homelessness, affecting many other human rights. In order to change societal mentalities and reflect it in adequate policies, an integrated and multi-sector approach is needed. This should include all relevant stakeholders, from politicians at local, regional and national levels; individuals and organisations at local levels, human rights bodies, the media; legal practitioners and communities at large.

Financial and social policy aspects of housing

Across Europe, the financial and social contexts of countries are different. Regardless of this, human rights are universal and should be equally respected. Access to housing, with the possibility of ownership, is a key form of inclusion in society of all individuals. The involvement of people, ministries, municipalities, political leaders, experts and state banks is necessary to put in place overall strategies in social housing. Cooperation and coherence amongst stakeholders are essential in developing successful financial and social policies.

Monitoring and evaluation of housing for persons with support needs

People with disabilities should participate in the monitoring and evaluation processes as experts by experience. They need to be included in each stage of the monitoring process (developing indicators, measuring, interviews) to provide a real picture of the outcomes and benefits of the provided services. In order to create efficient monitoring and evaluation systems of housing for special persons with support needs, networks of agencies (NGOs, associations of persons with disabilities, local and national authorities, decision makers) need to be developed.

Where and how do persons with support needs live? A focus on Nordic countries

Policies in the Nordic countries have supported the process of deinstitutionalisation and the development of community-based services, including housing alternatives with access to support services. Meanwhile, legal responsibilities have shifted from the national/regional level towards the level of municipalities. The different types of housing alternatives have created opportunities to move away from family homes into normal housing environments, promoting full inclusion and independent living. Despite these developments, research shows that persons with intellectual disabilities still have few opportunities to choose where and with whom to live. At the same time, given the creation of larger housing units in the past years, NGOs and researches aside have pointed out that there might be a risk of 're-institutionalisation'.

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Where and how persons with support needs live? A focus on the use of technology

The use of technology should be person-centred, reflecting the needs and the wishes of the particular user. Technology can facilitate independence regardless of the consequences. The role of technology and support providers is to enable the user to enjoy his/her rights, and not to decide in their place whether they can cope or not with the consequences of their independence.

Growing My Own Care & Support

In order to realise a change in mentality to be reflected at policy level, a bottom-up approach is needed, starting from grassroots organisations, communities and moving up to the local level. Partnerships with local authorities are necessary in order to develop community support.

Users' voice and the right to choose where to live and whom to live with

We need to create awareness about what independent living is and implies. There is a tendency to understand independence from a medical/functional point of view and not as being in control over one's life and having the opportunity to make free choices. Housing laws and policies need to take into consideration the full spectrum of housing needs of vulnerable groups and offer a wide range of support services which facilitate social inclusion, not merely integration. There is all too often a primary focus on physical conditions rather than on the general quality of life and inclusion.

Parents of people with intellectual disabilities sometimes prefer traditional settings and take control over their decisions. This can lead to learned passiveness and an institutional mind-set that affects and can be perpetuated amongst parents, people with disabilities, service providers and society as large. By providing support services to children with disabilities from an early age, they can grow up being independent and active members of society. Parents should be provided the right framework of raising children with disabilities as not someone with so-called "special needs", but as children with ordinary needs.

Leadership and management: competence and professionalism in housing services

Person-centred leadership implies several key characteristics, such as: authentically living the organisation's values, enthusing others with the vision and its possibilities, paying attention to relationships, building trust and working together and demonstrating person-centred practices in all their roles.

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Plenary session 4: The transition to community-based and person-centred housing and services

The following plenary session moderated by Stefan Pimmingstorfer from Caritas for People with Disabilities, Austria discussed different aspects regarding the transition to community-based and person-centred housing and services. Two projects that aim at facilitating this process were presented:

- ▶ ELOSH (European Core Learning Outcomes for Integration of Support and Housing), a three-year long project started in October 2013 and coordinated by EASPD which aims to address the crucial issue of social exclusion of people by improving cooperation between social support services and the housing sector;
- ▶ Zero Project, a project initiated in 2011 by the Essl Foundation which focuses on the rights of people with disability at a global level. It does so by identifying solution-based approaches in matters of accessibility, employment, independent living and political participation and delivering them to decision makers and opinion leaders worldwide.

Furthermore, the topics of ergonomics and person-centred support were also tackled. The main messages were:

- ▶ Ergonomics should be taken into consideration in developing universal design homes which are inclusive and consider the needs of people of all ages and abilities. Universal design features cost little when included in initial design and construction;
- ▶ In order to achieve quality person-centred support services, there are still quite some barriers ahead. In Greece, as in many other countries, supported housing is characterised by a lack of user participation in planning or decision-making, overprotective families, lack of trained and certified staff, lack of advocacy and self-advocacy.

Policy recommendations and conclusions

The last plenary session chaired by Ruth Owen (FEANTSA) consisted of a roundtable discussion on the existing policies and legal frameworks regarding social housing at European level and the steps needed to be taken in order to address the implementation gaps at national level. This session was joined by Maria-Luisa Cabral, Head of the Unit on the Rights of Persons with

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Disabilities in the European Commission, Dimitris Nikolsky, Chair of the Committee of Experts on the rights of People with Disabilities of the Council of Europe, Ines Bulic from the European Network on Independent Living and Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of EASPD.

CONCLUSIONS

The **main messages of the conference** were:

- ▶ In order to achieve an inclusive society which provides a home for all, we need to build bridges and create strong partnerships between all relevant stakeholders; that is, between the disability sector, organisations working on homelessness, the mental health sector, the social and private housing sector as well as universities training architects and engineers. Nevertheless, cooperation should happen in all areas, such as education, employment, medical care, and so on;
- ▶ Inclusion is a result of acceptance, partnerships, choice and participation. In this regard, services need to be developed in the community while collaborating with the community. All services should be individualised and deliver person-centred support based on continual listening and learning of individual needs and desires. For people in need of housing support, accommodation is essential and should be prioritised, while support-services should be additional and interrelated;
- ▶ The implementation gaps between the national and local levels of the UN CRPD in the member states should be addressed through improved monitoring and implementation instruments;
- ▶ The re/ training of staff outside the institutional mind-set is fundamental in developing and achieving high quality support housing services.

Message from Mr Dimitris Nikolsky, Council of Europe:

“The Disability Action Plan of the Council of Europe, the Europe 2020 Strategy of the EU and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities are enough to make the necessary changes towards an inclusive society. What is missing, though, in this process is the implementation of legislation in the member states”.

Message from Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of EASPD:

“The ultimate goal is reaching an inclusive society where there is a place for everybody regardless of one’s abilities, disabilities, age, gender, and race. In order to do that, we should stop thinking and working in ‘silos’ and start working together”.

