



**MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL POLICY
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**NINTH NATIONAL FORUM
OF THE SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS
„EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP FOR NEW AND QUALITY SOCIAL SERVICES “
HOTEL “INTERNATIONAL”
GOLDEN SANDS - VARNA
11-13 JUNE 2014**

REPORT

The Ninth National Forum of Social Service Providers was held on June 11th to 13th 2014 at International Hotel, Golden sands - Varna. It was organized by the National Alliance for Social Responsibility /NASO/ with support and partnership of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria and the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities /EASPD/.

The forum was attended by over 150 managers, experts, specialists and representatives of state and municipal institutions and structures, NGOs, socially responsible organizations, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of finance, the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria, the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, the Social Assistance Agency, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, the National Alliance for Social Responsibility, municipalities, service providers, employers, other educational institutions, social service users, representatives of national disability organizations, social and personal workers and others.

This year's forum included several separate sessions.

The first session included a training provided by the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities. A new instrument was presented by Mr. Luk Zelderloo - The European semester - as a means of partnership between Member States and the European Council. Ms. Stefana Cankova presented some of the main recommendations to our country as: - taking steps to accelerate the reform of the pension system; - actions against poverty, providing appropriate forms of employment, deinstitutionalization of children; provision of social housing for vulnerable groups etc. Mr. Georgi Georgiev noted the importance of the European Semester as an instrument, and the importance for the community to find a way to work within the process, the question is how to organize our work in Bulgaria, and also noted that each organization has a place in this procedure.

The leading session included carrying out a meeting on Quality of Social Services and Development of new social services – of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with municipalities, social service providers and users. Welcome speech on behalf of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, was



**This event was sponsored by the PROGRESS Partnership Programme of the European Commission,
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities**



delivered by Mr. Ivaylo Ivanov, Executive, Director of Social Assistance Agency. On behalf of the Municipality of Varna, a host of the event, the participants were welcomed by Dr. Lidiya Marinova, Deputy Mayor of Varna. Traditional welcome to all participants was also given by Mr. Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities. The meeting was attended by: Mr. Luk Zelderloo - Secretary General of the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD), Mr. Ivaylo Ivanov - Executive Director of the Social Assistance Agency, Ms. Rositsa Dimitrova – a representative of the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria, Ms. Pravda Ignatova - Director of International Cooperation and European Integration at the Social Assistance Agency, Mr. Dimitar Chuturkov – Deputy governor of Varna region, Mrs. Lidiya Marinova – Deputy mayor of Varna. On behalf of social service users Ms. Vesselina Stoilova - an ombudsman for people with disabilities in Varna gave a speech at the meeting. Within this formal part of the forum the traditional annual national awards of the National Alliance for Social Responsibility for active and socially responsible policies and contribution to social and European development of Bulgaria were given:

1. This year the grand prize was awarded to the Plovdiv municipality and Karnobat municipality. The award was given by Mr. Ivaylo Ivanov, Executive, Director of Social Assistance Agency and the Secretary General of the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities Mr. Luk Zelderloo. On the award was received by Mr. Georgi Titukov, Deputy mayor of Plovdiv municipality and Mr. Georgi Dimitrov – Mayor of Karnobat Municipality. This year a third award was given to International social service - for active and socially responsible policies and contribution to social development of Bulgaria – the award was received by Mrs. Sabina Sabeva – Executive director of the organization.

Within the forum's topic on quality examples of best practices were presented by: Mr. Ivaylo Ivanov, Executive, Director of Social Assistance Agency, Mr. Daragomi Draganov – Deputy Chief Director of Directorate "European Funds and International Programmes and Projects" in Ministry of labor and social policy, Ms. Marie Dubost - a Representative of the Platform for European quality of social services, Mr. Luk Zelderloo - Secretary General of the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, Mrs. Maya Kazandzieva - Director Directorate "Health, social services, prevention and sports", Burgas Municipality, Ms. Silveta Papzyan – NASO social services expert, Ms. Rosica Dimitrova - Director of Social Work and Health at the Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo, Mrs. Lidiya Marinova – Deputy mayor of Varna, Ms. Sabina Sabeva - Executive Director the International Social Service Foundation and others.

Within the event the participants were able to obtain information, exchange views and experiences, discuss and seek answers to questions and solutions to problems, and implement national and international partnership.

The participants and guests assessed highly the organization, effectiveness and usefulness of the forum. The vocational debate was held including a lot of presentations, shared experiences and





discussed problems; a lot of recommendations and suggestions were also formulated. The main of them included the following:

1. A positive assessment was given of the developed prepositions by NASO on Quality of social services and Supported employment formally serviced to the Bulgarian authorities.
2. The efforts of the organizers to work together with representatives of institutions involved in social services at all levels were greatly appreciated.
3. Emphasis on the importance of the development of integrated cross-sectoral services.
4. Together with the conclusion formulated that good decisions and practices were realized nationwide, it has been confirmed that there are greater needs for resources and solutions to improve the quality of life of the needy. Furthermore, the importance of social services was assessed as a tool to support the needy.
5. Suggestions have been made to:
 - a. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy for:
 - adopting quality standards of social services and increasing their efficiency and scope;
 - providing opportunities through policies, programs and projects to include NGOs equally as the municipalities;
 - b. Municipalities for:
 - expediting the procurement process of implementation of social services to external providers, including NGOs, personally and professionally involved with groups in need and holding capacity and quality services;
 - expanding the types and scope of social services and sources of funding.

The second session of the forum included carrying out a national seminar with international participation on employment with a focus on supported employment. The participants were welcomed by Georgi Georgiev – Chairman of NASO, Mr. Ivaylo Ivanov, Executive, Director of Social Assistance Agency and representatives of Employment Agency. Leading presentations on the topic were given by: Mr. Ivaylo Ivanov, Executive, Director of Social Assistance Agency, Mr. Martin Konrad Representative of Atempo, Austria, Veselina Stoilova – Varna ombudsman for people with disabilities. Needs for new services for employment for persons with disabilities; Models of good practice were presented by: the Municipality of Varna, the Agency for Social Development Vision. The discussion was attended by employers, NGO's, persons with disabilities and others.

The Ninth National Forum ended with holding a general meeting of the National Alliance for Social Responsibility where the organization's strategic plan 2012-2015 was updated.

