



## 1. CONTEXT

Service Providers Forum has been organized with the aim to bring together all stakeholders in the development, provision and improvement of social services for persons with disabilities in Serbia, to open dialogue between all stakeholders on the most current topics in the field of service provision. Since deinstitutionalisation is one of the most common issues in the field of service provision these days in Serbia, we have decided to devote the Providers Forum to it with intention to discuss all success and challenges of the deinstitutionalisation process so far. Over the past ten years Serbia is investing great efforts to change the model that relied mainly on residential institutions into a model of community services for persons with disabilities. In 2005, with the support of numerous projects, Welfare Development Strategy was adopted and it was a policy framework for future initiatives, including efforts to reform the system of care. External evaluation of the progress of the process of deinstitutionalization, in 2006 gave guidance for future policy and action in this field. Although the Republic of Serbia has made remarkable progress on deinstitutionalization in term of bringing a modern legislation in line with international standards and protection of human rights, particularly in the field of social protection and education, there are still a lot of challenges in deinstitutionalization process and the major are: 1) the financing of social services (responsibilities for the process is on the local governments), 2) plurality of services, especially community services and 3) very slow process of transformation of institutions into the services in the community. One of the reason explaining very slow process is lack of cooperation between the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs, as key actors in the process of deinstitutionalization. The government has to clearly define the concept of the process, provide legal and by-laws and action plans so not to allow the local governments, without sufficient knowledge and with no experiences, independently work on this very delicate topic. Further, the most resistance to the deinstitutionalisation comes from the service providers (health and social workers). It is noticeable that there is no strong political will, but rather an interest in psychiatric patients remain in the framework of the institutional system, which is unacceptable and far from modern standards in treatment. Some small improvements can be observed within the social system, but health is very reluctant to deinstitutionalization, and it is supported by the recently adopted Regulation on detailed conditions for the use of physical restraints and isolation of persons with mental disabilities who are undergoing treatment in psychiatric institutions. The recommendations and reports of independent bodies such as the Ombudsman, the Commissioner for Protection of equality, and international bodies such as the



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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which is an integral part of the national legal framework of the Republic of Serbia and the recently adopted strategic documents, unanimously recognize the process of deinstitutionalization as a priority when it comes to respect for human rights and the rights of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Serbia.

## **2. PROVIDER FORUM PROGRAMME AND DISCUSSIONS**

The programme consist of two thematic areas: the first one is dedicated to the transformation of the institutions into community services and the second one to the revision of the existing Law on Social Protection (the detailed programme of the Providers Forum is in Annex 1).

After the opening ceremony, Mr Damjan Tatic, the member of UN Committee for human rights of persons with disabilities addressed to the participants by Skype. He explained the way of committee`s functioning, the tasks and mechanisms that are used when it comes to protecting and advancing the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as respect the UNCRPD, which are currently 153 member states have ratified. He stressed that one of the basic principles embedded in the Convention is a choice of persons with disabilities on an environment in which to live and spend time. The next session, titled "De-institutionalization in Serbia - achievements and challenges", has a two speakers: leader of the project "Open Arms" Monika Gabany, and Jelica Maric, the representatives of Provincial Institute of Social protection. Monika Gabany talked about the main challenges that the project faced: the lack of strategy on developing services in the community, the absence of clear signals for the transformation of institutions, including the lack of vision on the perspective of the process and lack of political will, lack of experienced and trained and uncertain financial stability. In her opinion, the question of further development of the process of deinstitutionalization is not complicated, but it is rather complex, and complications occur when stakeholders do not work together. He stressed that it is extremely important to communicate, build bridges, and put the users and their needs at the centre, through the assessment, creating an individual plan and enable and support to such a position that provides users with possibilities to buy services. It is necessary for service providers to adopt standards that will allow adequate quality of service, create conditions for transparent financing of services as well as provide adequate training for professionals and family members of the beneficiaries. Ms Jelica Maric presented the legal framework for deinstitutionalization: how relevant legislation is influencing the process of deinstitutionalisation, especially when it comes to the process of licencing services and financial sustainability. She stressed



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the problem of insufficient representation of the civil sector in the provision of social services.

The next session called “The plan for deinstitutionalisation” had a two presenters. Mr Zoran Vesic, representatives of the working group of Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs for the transformation institution into community services, presented the plan for financing process of transformation. Three basic principles of reform in the process of financing the services are: 1) transparent funding based on the real needs of users, 2) the participation of local government and 3) system “the money follow the user”. The presentation of the "Economic aspects to deinstitutionalisation", presented by Mr Bozidar Dakic, representatives of the Institute for Social Alternatives, was focused on the results of research aimed to answer the major questions related to financing the social services. When it comes to the financing of deinstitutionalization, it is recognized that there is no adequate mechanism to take care of financial status as they leave the institution, while in financing services in the community, it is necessary to insist on the implementation of “dedicated grants” (the additional money that government needs to pay for local services in the situation when local government is not able to pay for it). He emphasized the challenge in answering the question how much money is spent for the social services since there is no clear picture about money that comes from international donors.

During the next session (“Transformation of the institutions into community services), representatives of the two pilot institutions that are in the process of transformation (Mr Mirko Jankelic and Mr Milos Anitc) presented their experiences pointing out that they are facing a lot of challenges in of which the biggest one is a lack of political will and support. Two examples of good practices in the development of community services were also presented during the session. Mr Dragan Lukic (Serbian Association for Promotion Inclusion) discussed the service of protected living for persons with intellectual disabilities and all of the challenges they are facing (no support from the relevant ministries, unsustainable funding, the slow process of transformation and great dependence of deinstitutionalization on political will. Ms Slavica Markovic, representatives from the School Centre form Novi Sad, also agreed that they have also great experiences in answering the same challenges.

During the plenary session, representatives of different sectors in the service provision discussed the main issues of the process of deinstitutionalization: Ms Slavica Milojevic, representatives of Republic Institute for Social Protection, Ms Olivera Vukovic, representatives of civil society organisation, Ms Gordana Rajkov from disabled people organisation Centre for Independent Living, Ms Marija Jelenković, representatives of Local Authority and Ms Svetlana Glavinić, Association for Cerebral Palsy (service provider). They opened the discussion, during which they



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tried to answer many questions and offers solutions for all the challenges that are most likely to speak when it comes to deinstitutionalization. All agreed that the process is rather slow and that it is necessary to accelerate cooperation among all actors and to make a clear division of roles and responsibilities of the actors. They also pointed out that the constant monitoring of the process and learning from experiences.

The aim of the session "European perspective" was to get closer to the experience of other countries when it comes to improving services for people with disabilities, and an effective system of deinstitutionalization, as told by Sabrina Ferraina. It is explained closer the way in which EASPD operates, its structure, key mechanisms and courses of action, as the most important guidelines and documents which guide its actions towards improving the quality of available services of persons with disabilities in the overall network of its members.

At the last session "The right to live in the community - self-advocates of social services for people with disabilities" the presenters were Ms Euphemia Grgurov, the self-advocate, Ms Margareta Kecman, Creative Educational Centre Belgrade, Mr Goran Rojević from Child's Heart. The session was dedicated to the experiences of the persons with disabilities, especially persons with intellectual disabilities, with different services that they are using. People with disabilities talked about how services in the community have changed their lives and gave them a chance to feel as equal members of society.

### **3. OUTCOME AND FOLLOW-UP**

Second Providers Forum for Persons with Disabilities gathered over 120 representatives of social service providers, and policy makers in this field, civil society organisations, the media and representatives EASPD- a. The participants agreed on the following conclusions regarding the development of community services for people with disabilities, the continuation of the process of de-institutionalization and prevention of institutionalization, aiming to accelerate the process of reforms in the field of social protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities:

- It is necessary to develop stronger cooperation and coordinated action of all social actors involved in the process of deinstitutionalization; is therefore of particular importance proactive influence of decision makers' representatives, primarily the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, to develop and maintain cooperation with all actors involved in the process of deinstitutionalization in Serbia. Forum participants understood the absence of



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representatives of the Ministry at this Forum as an expression of the lack of concern of the Ministry for persons with disabilities, and have agreed that it is necessary once again send a strong message about the necessity of their participation in the following opportunities and of establishing deeper relations of cooperation and respect with other actors.

- The user of the social service has to be in the centre of setting up the system of service provision. The focus needs to be placed on self-representation that provide empowerment of persons with disabilities to engage more actively in the decision-making process, which will ensure that their needs are heard;
- Promoting an integrated approach in the use of available resources, mainly by promoting inter sectorial cooperation between social, health, education and employment systems, on the republic and local level;
- It seems for many people that process of de-institutionalization is complicated and cannot achieve the expected results. However, it is necessary to continue the, especially to develop a program of deinstitutionalization and plan for transformation of residential institutions;
- To eliminate the stigma and recognize the needs of persons with disabilities by the community, because it will enable and facilitate access to the resources necessary to improve their position in society;
- Improve the process of licensing social services by strengthening cooperation and encouraging mutual responsibilities of all actors involved in the licensing process, at republic and local level. Disability persons organizations that provide local services need support in this process, and it is necessary to provide them support in order to promptly take an active role in the process of achieving the required quality standards of the services provided, and then in collecting the necessary documentation confirming that they have fulfilled provided all conditions for obtaining the license for the service they provide;
- Carry out appropriate amendments to laws and bylaws regulating social services, set standards and a framework for the process of deinstitutionalization and ensure their proper implementation;
- Implement a systematic analysis of modes of financing services through funds from the budget, local governments, to project funding sources, with a view to establishing a stable and sustainable mode of financing services, including consideration of the effectiveness and efficiency of earmarked transfers and application of the principle “money follows the user”;
- Establish a network of service providers of supported housing in Serbia because of the increasing number of providers of this service, various and significant obstacles to the provision and the need for a common platform and



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harmonized action in the direction of representing the interests of users, as well as service providers; to advocate for adequate legal solution in terms of contracting, implementation and financing of social services, the provision of adequate minimum standards for the service, ensuring the minimum conditions of quality of service through the respect and implementation of the defined minimum service standards, the functional sustainability of the services and the exchange of experience and mutual learning on all relevant aspects of implementation services;

- Providing conditions for uninterrupted monitoring of European standards and progress in the delivery of social services for persons with disabilities and ensure more active participation in European networks such as EASPD;
- Continue ongoing exchange of information between the various actors in the field of social services for people with disabilities involved in the process of deinstitutionalization, at national and international level.

As the Providers Forum takes place only once a year, it was agreed to use e-mail lists of participants to share information, experiences, success and challenges related to de-institutionalization between two Providers Forum events. It is also decided to push the Ministry of Labour, as much as possible, in separate or joint advocacy and lobbying actions to take more responsibilities to the process and to define the clear steps that need to be taken. The conclusions from the Providers Forum will be delivered to all stakeholders, especially to relevant ministries.



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**Annex 1 – Programme of the Providers Forum**

**EASPD Provider Forum - 24 April 2015  
Programme**

09.00 – 09.30	<b>Registration of participants</b>
09.30 – 10.00	<p><b>Welcome and Opening ceremony</b></p> <p><b>Mr Goran Lončar</b>, President of Centre for Society Orientation</p> <p><b>Mr Predrag Petrović</b>, Director of Republic Institute for Social Protection</p> <p><b>Mrs Bernadette Grosyeux &amp; Ms Sabrina Ferraina</b>, European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities</p> <p><i>Moderator: Violeta Anđelković, Centre for Society Orientation</i></p>
10.00 – 10:20	<b>Mr Damjan Tatić</b> , Member of the UN Committee for Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Skype)
10:20 – 10.50	<p><b>Deinstitutionalization in Serbia – success and challenges</b></p> <p><b>Monica Gabany</b>, Team leader of the “Open arms” project <i>“Deinstitutionalization in Serbia – the project experiences”</i></p> <p><b>Ms Jelica Marić</b>, Provincial Institute for Social Protection <i>“The legal framework for deinstitutionalization”</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Mikica Budimirović, Forum of Youth with Disabilities</i></p>
10.50 – 11.20	<i>Coffee break</i>
11.20 – 12.10	<p><b>Deinstitutionalization in Serbia – plan for deinstitutionalisation</b></p> <p><b>Mr Zoran Vesić</b>, Representatives of the Working group for deinstitutionalization <i>“The plan for funding the process of transformation of institutions in the service of the community”</i></p>



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	<p><b>Mr Božidar Dakic</b> – Institute for Social Alternatives “Economic viability of the process of deinstitutionalisation”</p> <p>Moderator: <b>Violeta Anđelković</b>, Centre for Society Orientation</p>
12.10 – 13.10	<p><b>The transformation of institutions into community services</b></p> <p><b>Ms Nena Darmanović</b>, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs</p> <p><b>Mr Dragan Lukić</b>, Serbian Association for Promotion Inclusion, Belgrade</p> <p><b>Mr Mirko Jankelić</b>, Home for the mentally ill "Čurug"</p> <p><b>Mr Miloš Antić</b>, Institution for adults and older "Gvozden Jovančičević" Veliki Popovac</p> <p><b>Ms Slavica Marković</b>, School centre Milan Petrovic, Novi Sad</p> <p>Moderator: <b>Mikica Budimirović</b>, Forum of Youth with Disabilities</p>
13.10 – 14.10	<p><b>Lunch</b></p>
14.10 – 15.15	<p><b>Plenary Session – Deinstitutionalisation - Challenges in practice</b></p> <p><b>Ms Slavica Milojević</b>, Republic Institute for Social Protection, Belgrade</p> <p><b>Ms Gordana Rajkov</b>, Centre for Independent Living, Belgrade</p> <p><b>Ms Marija Jelenković</b>, representatives of Local Authority Knjazevac</p> <p><b>Ms Svetlana Glavinić</b>, Association for Cerebral Palsy, Ivanjica</p> <p><b>Ms Olivera Vuković</b>, SeCons, Belgrade</p> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <p>Moderator: <b>Nenad Stojanović</b>, Republic Institute for Social Protection</p>
15.15 – 16.15	<p><b>European perspectives</b></p>



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	<p><b>Ms Sabrina Ferraina</b>, European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities - EASPD</p> <p><b>Ms Bernadette Grosyeux</b>, Centre de la Gabrielle “EASPD Reaching Out Strategy”</p> <p>Moderator: <b>Jelena Pešić</b>, Republic Institute for Social Protection</p>
16.15 – 16.45	<i>Coffee break</i>
16.45 – 17.15	<p><b><i>The right to live in the community - Self advocates of social services for persons with disabilities</i></b></p> <p><i>Serbian Association for Promotion Inclusion, Belgrade</i></p> <p><i>Creative and education centre KEC, Belgrade</i></p> <p><i>Child`s heart, Belgrade</i></p> <p>Moderator: <b>Nenad Stojanović</b>, Republic Institute for Social Protection</p>
17.15 – 17.30	<p><b><i>Presentation of the network providers of supported housing service and signing the application form</i></b></p> <p><b>Mr Boban Petrović</b>, Serbian Association for Promotion Inclusion, Belgrade</p>
17.30 – 18.00	<b><i>Conclusions and closing of the Forum</i></b>



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