



SNOWBALL

Description project

The last disability related developments in Bulgaria in terms of policy, de-institutionalisation and community based settings emphasised the need on the one side of better qualitative of services provided coming along with better trained staff and on the other side stressed the need for a real network of providers, able to offer support and voice the concerns of the sector.

Therefore the main aim of this project is to empower the Bulgarian network of providers for people with disabilities, in order to become able to voice the concerns of the sector, to offer legal advice to members, to lobby with authorities at every level, to facilitate innovation by organising exchange and training and offer any other type of support needed in order to provide qualitative services.

The proposal is addressing key challenges that Bulgaria still faces in terms of provision of high quality services for people with disabilities, especially children with disabilities. Structural cooperation between service providers is very important in the de-institutionalisation process that Bulgaria is going through. The Mogilino¹ case stressed once more the importance of a reform in the way services are provided to children and adults for disabilities and moreover, the need for a functioning structure of innovative service providers able to support this reform. Real cooperation amongst the main stakeholders involved in the process is indeed needed. This project wants to enable service providers to get united in a sustainable network, so that they can offer support, good quality services and can communicate and lobby with the local, regional and central authorities involved in order to be able steer the reform process.

In order to transfer these objectives into reality, a series of measures and actions will be undertaken and implemented during the project's lifetime:

- A. *Desktop research on the existing social services legislative framework and its bottlenecks and challenges will be undertaken by the helpdesk that will be set up in Bulgaria.*
-

¹ Mogilino : **Mogilino** is a village in Ruse Province, northern Bulgaria. It became well known internationally after several reports about the institution for children with physical and mental disabilities. In 2007, BBC showed the film "Bulgaria's Abandoned Children", which focused on the situation of children with disabilities in Mogilino. This documentray and the whole discussion around Mogilino stressed the need for de-institutionsalisation and high quality services for children and adults with disabilities in Bulgaria. This project partnership project is of the opinion that only though only through real stakeholder cooperation we can improve the quality of the services provided to disadvantaged categories in society;

B. *Training on capacity-building of service providers organisations, particularly:*

- *Development and management of services,*
- *Project development and management,*
- *Stakeholder cooperation,*
- *Networking building,*
- *Lobbying activities (especially with representatives of authorities),*
- *Empowerment of local/regional/national service providers by fundraising and information share on EU budget lines and other sources of private or public funding.*

By tackling the issues, the partnership does not only wish to collect and transfer know-how and expertise, but also to proceed to structural interventions and support the sustainability of the network of service providers, so that it can function as a real network of providers. is to strengthen and reinforce the recently established network of NGO /GO social service providers in Bulgaria and make it sustainable. At the same time, the project wants to raise capacity of social service providers. Training sessions (2 times four days) will be organised with the support of the Flemish promoter PPG the co-promoter, the EASPD, the Agency for Social Development Vision and members of the network. Trainers/experts and collaborators from Flanders (Europe) and Bulgaria will give trainings and support the network in further development of its activities.

C. Twinning initiatives (10) between Flemish organisations/agencies and Bulgarian counterparts will be equally set up so that the last ones can benefit directly from the expertise, experience and knowledge existing in the sector in Flanders (and the other way around).

Needs and problems of the target group and target area of the project and the project intend to address those needs and problems. Who will benefit from the transfer of knowledge/capacity building?

The Bulgarian social sector and particularly the disability sector currently goes through a process of change. Service providers, both not for profit organisations (NGOs) and governmental organisations (GOs) are confronted with new legislative and practical challenges.

On one side, the recent UN Convention for the Rights of People with Disabilities and the Disability Action Plan of the European Commission 2003 – 2010 emphasise the full rights people with disabilities have and the role service providers play in empowering people with disabilities. This brings in new challenges for service providers. On the other side, the replacements of large residential institutions with modern community based settings and person centred services as well as setting up new structures is considered to be key priorities for the sector.

In this context, a sustainable network of social service providers is demanded. Local and national service providers, but also the EU actors have mentioned in a number of occasions the need for a better established voice (and network) of the Bulgarian social service providers sector, a network that could not only offer legal advice and support in developing new modern and innovative services, but also act an interactive platform for exchange of knowhow, expertise and good practices and lobby towards authorities and other stakeholders for the right structures to be put in place.

Therefore, this project aims at enabling the recently established Bulgarian network of providers to become a self-sustainable network, able to support its members in a variety of ways. In order to do so, the project partnership will thus undertake a series of activities: map the situation in order for local providers to acknowledge the bottlenecks and legislative challenges in the sector, offer training on development of new services, networking, lobbying and stakeholder cooperation, and also the possibility to exchange best practices with/between both local and organisations from Flanders through a twinning initiative. The aim is to have at least ten twins between organisations from Flanders, members of the co-promoter's network and Bulgarian organisations. Moreover, a helpdesk established in Bulgaria will support the members of the network, offer legal advice, know how, support in lobbying activities and help in every possible way. A website will be set up as well to give online advice and be continuous sources of information for the Bulgarian service provision sector and particularly for this network.

Primarily, the project addresses social service providers (not for profit organisations, but also governmental organisations) in the field of disability and front line staff working in this field. Managers and support professionals need to be trained and supported throughout the whole process so that all together they can learn how to deal with these changes and bring the right contribution. Thus the project aims at training a number of 40 managers from across Bulgaria, members of the new set up Bulgarian network of providers or wanting to become members of the network and 10 front line staff, which will be act as trainers of other staff (train the trainers approach) and be thus multipliers of this project.

On a secondary level, the project addresses also local politicians and representatives of municipalities in charge with the reform and its implementation, also responsible for the long-term (financial) sustainability of social service providers in Bulgaria. 10 representatives will be invited as well to take part in the trainings and debates.

Of course, people with disabilities are the ultimate beneficiaries of this project.

In it essential that all relevant stakeholders work together for better life conditions, better education and better employment, all in all a better social inclusion of people with disabilities.

All these activities will take place with the support of the Flemish service provider network as well as of the co promoter and the Bulgarian providers. The best approach is the one in which both the Flanders and Bulgarian providers can benefit from each other's experiences.

Managers, directors and/or project developers of services for people with disabilities as well as civil servants involved in de-institutionalisation strategies in Flanders and Bulgaria will be involved in the project. They will give direct support via the trainings to be organised and will support the helpdesk and transfer knowledge and expertise via the website.

Sustainability of the project after 2010

The project is aiming at capacity building, transfer of innovation and already existing expertise, knowledge, and practices to the Bulgarian network of service providers to support them in the reform process ongoing in Bulgaria.

The Flemish partner's experience and input is particularly welcomed in this field, as the contractor has been already involved in de-institutionalisation processes in Flanders and in Bulgaria. PPG is in itself an umbrella network of service providers in Flanders and through has experience in respect to the activities undertaken by a network as well as practical experience in de-institutionalisation process taking place in Flanders.

The co-promoter, EASPD, is the umbrella organisation of European service providers, representing over 8000 organisations Europe and disability wide. Through its members and more precisely the members and the activities of the Standing Committee on Enlargement, EASPD will continue to support the network, as well as the helpdesk and the website. EASPD is also promoting a twinning initiative between partners from East and West since several years (2003). They will support the new-formed twins. The twins will continue to develop activities, collaborate and exchange know how even after the lifetime of the project. The partnership commits to support the twins and the formation of new twins even after the lifetime of the project.

The partnership and their members commit as well to support the website and keep it up to date even after the lifetime of the project. It will be a continuous source of information for the members of the new network and other service providers in Bulgaria.

Moreover, PPG and EASPD have long lasting history of cooperation with the CEE partner and other Bulgarian agencies and long standing experience in the field of capacity building and networking, being themselves networks of service providers. Vision is the lead organisation of the recently established network of service providers in Bulgaria and represents a trustable partner in this project.

The concept of capacity building and the activities to be undertaken in this project (training, twinning, networking, project development & fundraising) represent in themselves sources of sustainability for the project and the network.

A follow up of the transfer of knowledge and support offered to the network is ensured via the so called "provider forum meetings" that the promoter and the co-promoter is organising in Bulgaria since last year. Private donors provide the funding for these activities. Also, thanks to the European Social Fund, the TAIEX the Leonardo da Vinci programmes of the European Commission, such types of activities are and will continue to be financed at least for the duration 2008 – 2013. Moreover, the helpdesk and the municipalities involved in the project will commit before hands to sustainability for the project and its activities even after

its lifetime. Sustainability is to be guaranteed also through lobbying with authorities and their involvement in this project.

The Bulgarian organisation Vision Varna is the lead partner of the very young network of service providers in the country. The network is composed out of 59 organisations (and more than 60 representatives involved). By being involved in this project and the network, these organisations and Vision Varna commit to transfer the knowledge, expertise and experience gained to other organisations service providers in the country. Moreover, the organisations part of the existing network do not only belong to the region of Varna, but they are from all regions in Bulgaria and thus able to build up knowledge and capacity across regions and the sector of service provision. The front line staff who took part in the training will train other staff, acting as multipliers for the service provision sector in Bulgaria.

PPG and EASPD also guarantee firm anchoring in Flanders and respectively Eastern Europe through their networks.

Also, the website will contribute to accessibility and visibility of high quality information in three languages (Dutch, Bulgarian, English) with regard to staff training, networking opportunities, project development opportunities and fundraising.

PPG, EASPD and Vision Varna commit themselves to keep the website open and up to date even after the lifetime of the project.

Possible risks or adverse effects the project may have - Prerequisites for avoiding and tackling such problems

1. Risks: Training which does not correspond to the knowledge level and the requirements of the participants

Solution: mapping the key challenges for the disability service provision sector and ask questions (FAQ) to relevant stakeholders

2. Risks: Staff training without a proper follow up

Solutions: 2 members of the staff will offer the participants in the training ongoing support and follow –up through personal contacts via email and telephone, helpdesk, dissemination amongst service providers

3. Risk: Networking could bring together service provider organisations that don't necessarily work together and don't feel inclined towards a strong stakeholder cooperation or that they don't have the same values and approaches.

Solutions: The screening of all partners and general communication (a first contact is already established through the young national network) with the support of the helpdesk and of the members of the Steering committee

Active promotion of the event in Bulgaria.

4. Risk: Helpdesk that don't tackle the real needs of the region to be developed.

Solution: Give feedback to project responsible concerning developing ideas

Involved management and first line workers

5. Risk: Steering Committee – not adapted steering of the project by the Steering committee, which will be composed of members if each organisation 1 to 2 member organisations and

will act as a management committee

Solution: written mandate and letter of commitment from all participating organisations

Inform the Executive Committees of each partner organisation on the way the project evolves and ask for advice and support when needed.

6. Risk: Competition instead of cooperation amongst providers

Solution: involve both providers and authorities in the trainings and the project

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the project

Strengths	<p>The project offers tailor made trainings to both managers and front line staff</p> <p>The project wants to empower the young network of service providers organisations in Bulgaria to be self sustainable</p> <p>The projects focuses on a very particular issue at stake now in Bulgaria: capacity building of the social sector provision and de-institutionalisation of services for people with disabilities</p> <p>The projects wants to involve other stakeholders, such as municipalities which play an important role in funding the service provision sector</p>
Weaknesses	<p>The organisations and the staff that will undertake the training might not be fully receptive to this type of training</p> <p>Networking of organisations that might not fit together</p> <p>Duration of the project limited & limited resources</p> <p>The project offers the possibility of networking to organisation through Bulgaria, organisations who do not necessarily meet on other occasions (other than the organisations already belonging to the young network of service providers)</p> <p>The project offers the possibility to support a young network of providers</p>
Threats	<p>The project might not be steered properly</p> <p>The organisations might be reluctant to certain types of information or attitude</p> <p>The project might meet have to face external obstacles such as the changes in staff involved in the project, sickness, changing (political) environment etc</p>

Dissemination in Bulgaria and in Flanders.

Show how the visibility of the contribution of the Flemish government will be guaranteed.

In Flanders:

- On the website of PPG, EASPD: info & logo of the 'Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap' will be published;
- On every folder/leaflet: info & logo of the 'Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap';
- Reports will be made available via the mentioned websites;

- Training & events: flag, logo;
- Every time there is an important development in the project, EASPD and PPG networks will be informed through newsflashes, newsletters and other means of communication that PPG, Vision and EASPD as important Flemish, Bulgarian and respective EU networks dispose; PPG as very important umbrella organisation in the sector will spread the information to all its members, that will be able to circulate it as well.

In Bulgaria:

- On the website of Vision Varna, of the organisations belonging to the network and of the network (www.easpd.bg);
- On every folder/leaflet: info & logo of the ‘Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap’;
- Training & events: flag & logo will be mentioned;
- Reports will be published on the website;
- Newsletters & every developed project – will have the logo and the mentioning of the support of the Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap’
- Organisations belonging to the network will make visible on their websites;
- Local authorities.

Results:

- Will be published on the different websites;
- The FAQ page will be published as a leaflet in 3 languages and used across Europe;
- In every “second generation” project the original founders will be mentioned;
- Newsletter of PPG, EASPD and municipality of VISION will report on the project;
- Media will be invited to visit some twins and projects;
- A press conference will be organised in cooperation with other project meeting, as well as stakeholders’ meeting at the beginning and towards the end of the project

