



IMPROVING SERVICES  
IMPROVING LIVES

newsletter

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## REACHING OUT EASPD STRATEGIC CHOICES 2014-2017: *Building an Inclusive Society*

### Preface

The European Union and almost all Member States have signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This decision opens new pathways to inclusion and should make our societies more cohesive.

Disability in this convention is no longer seen as an attribute of a single person but should rather be understood as the responsibility of society as a whole, in every area of life. Frameworks which guarantee the participation of each person in every aspect of life are the social challenges which all governments now have to take up.

Our members are specialised service provider organisations for persons with disabilities and have a vast experience in the matter of designing appropriate frameworks. One of the objectives of EASPD is now to promote and expand on these best practices and experiences with society as a whole over the next few years.

I am very proud to present you the new strategic orientation adopted by EASPD that we have decided to name **“Reaching out strategy – to build an inclusive society”**. This document introduces our new focus on further reaching out towards persons with disabilities, our members and allies as well as towards other stakeholders such as the European institutions. The strategic decisions and measures we have decided to implement will also be converted into concrete actions in our annual action plans for 2014 to 2017.

Through this document, EASPD has once again positioned social service providers as enablers of human rights for persons with disabilities. Enjoy your reading!



Franz Wolfmayr, EASPD President

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## Introduction: Our reaching out strategy

With European society struggling to balance social rights with budget cuts in the face of the lingering economic crisis, the disability sector finds itself at a crossroad. The coming years will be decisive in shaping the social support services sector of the future, and we cannot do it alone. Cooperation and networking have to be developed at all levels to pave the way for an inclusive society where persons with disabilities can fully enjoy all their rights, and if needed, be supported by community-based services.

In order for us to build an inclusive society, we must go beyond our comfort zone and reach out.  
Our reaching out strategy is built on 4 key pillars:

### OUR MEMBERS

**Service providers for persons with disabilities...**  
*...to build a more effective and dynamic sector based on their expertise and knowledge*

### OUR KEY PARTNERS

**Persons with disabilities, their friends and families...**  
*...to involve them in the development of social support services*

### OUR STAKEHOLDERS

**Actors not directly involved in the disability sector...**  
*...to build with them an inclusive society beyond the limits of our sector*



### ALTERNATIVE FUNDING

**New ways of funding our activities...**  
*...to be more sustainable and less dependent on external funding in order to represent the disability sector in the future*

# I. Reaching Out to Persons with Disabilities

- » **CONTEXT** The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) explicitly states that persons with disabilities shall have “full and effective participation in society” (art.3), and that “community services are available [...] and responsive to their needs” (art.19).

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- » **RATIONALE** By empowering persons with disabilities, service providers for persons with disabilities, and EASPD as their representative, will actively contribute to the enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities. Art 3 of the UNCRPD and the European Disability Strategy remind us that part of these rights is to be independent and have control over your own life.

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- » **OBJECTIVES** EASPD aims to further enhance the representation of persons with disabilities in its own structure, projects and themes.

## EASPD OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

### Facilitate the structural involvement of persons with disabilities in EASPD’s work and governance bodies

Persons with disabilities should have an active involvement in the shaping of policies that define their rights and opportunities, and will bring an invaluable first-hand expertise to improve the quality of the EASPD work. EASPD also intends to encourage such involvement by its members through exchange and promotion of best practices.

### Develop partnerships with Disabled People Organisations in all relevant projects where support for persons with disabilities is discussed

If “Nothing about us without us” is relevant for policy-making, it should certainly be relevant in the implementation of projects. EASPD will seek to develop partnerships with Disabled People Organisations in all relevant projects where support for persons with disabilities is discussed, to ensure that their voice is properly heard by service providers.

### Develop the new Interest Group on Early Intervention

In order to build an inclusive society, persons with disabilities have to be included in society in every step of their lives. From the very early stages of life, we must build on the capabilities, skills and resources of the person and their family. EASPD will thus develop the new Interest Group on Early Intervention, to join existing groups on education and employment and cover the whole life-span.

## WHAT OUR MEMBERS THINK



### What does this Reaching out strategy mean for your Standing Committee or Interest Group?

KIRSI KONOLA, Chair of the Policy Impact Group (PIG) and Executive Committee member

‘The new strategy of EASPD –Reaching out –gives clear guidance for the work of the Policy Impact Group. It sets the objectives and identifies the fields of action for EASPD for the coming years and as such also for its policy work. Once again it makes our vision –service providers as human rights enablers –clear and sets our position. In the Reaching out strategy we make our aims clear: we want to ensure good quality service provision for people with disability across the continent, support our members in doing so and do that in collaboration with other stakeholders and in a sustainable way. In the strategy we also recognise our different fields of work: on the one hand, we must be able to make policy at European level but on the other also support our members in their policy objectives at national level. This will definitely be one of the key areas of action in coming years.’

## II. Reaching Out to its Members

» **CONTEXT** EASPD promotes and represents 10.000 service providers for persons with disabilities at the European level, and is the only truly representative organisation of this sector at this level. EASPD members represent a significant economic stakeholder at the European level, and are EASPD's most important asset.

» **RATIONALE** As the representative of service providers at European level, EASPD strives to improve its advocacy of members' opinions to the European institutions and to support their national lobbying activities through actions at European level. EASPD also benefits from its members' expertise on the ground and makes sure they share their knowledge and good practices to improve services for persons with disabilities across Europe.

» **OBJECTIVES** EASPD aims to fully include members in its work, ensure a fruitful and effective exchange of expertise, and increase its European representativeness.

### EASPD OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

**Explore the introduction of new member categories to better represent the voice of its members in the shaping of policies.**

EASPD members need to be properly and fairly represented. At the moment, the representation of members through the member categories does not always reflect this objective.

**Recruit new members, with a strong focus on recruitment in Scandinavia, Spain and Turkey to be as representative as possible of the European disability sector**

Service providers from these countries are unfortunately still under-represented and EASPD will seek to ensure their adequate representation.

**Explore the specific situation of Central and Eastern countries and develop region specific lobby strategies**

Social services for persons with disabilities are not equally developed throughout Europe. In particular, service providers from Central and Eastern Europe have to bridge the gap in service provision that exists compared to Western countries, and promote the process of deinstitutionalisation.

### WHAT OUR MEMBERS THINK



#### What does this Reaching out strategy mean for your Standing Committee or Interest Group?

VASILKA DIMOSKA, Chair of the Interest Group on Early Intervention (IG EI)

"Launching the new Interest Group for Early Intervention is a new challenge for the EASPD's members. Keeping focus on the potential and capacity is essential as early childhood is one step forward in the improvement of the abilities and skills of the child as well as an increasingly needed support of the parents. Early Intervention services play a crucial part in the process of support and empowerment of families in such an essential period in their lives, when they have mixed feelings of and fear the new and unknown. On the other hand, it is the only way for building an effectively inclusive society."

### Challenge the 'neutrality of the provider' concept adopted by the European Commission

EASPD promotes not-for-profit initiatives. The European Commission considers that the quality of services is not defined by the nature of the provider, be it public, for-profit, or not-for-profit. However, the nature of the provider has an important, decisive impact on the way the service is provided, and the type of service provided. Service providers should focus on the social added-value of their work and not on the financial profit coming from its delivery.

### Invest in the European Semester and in the Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs)

An important evolution in the European arena is the development of the European Semester, set up as an instrument to fine-tune the national policy-making process in accordance with the objectives of the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The Semester is a multi-annual consultation process between European and national levels ending in July with the publication of Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) addressed to Member States. In this process, EASPD can have an impact during the civil society consultation prior to the establishment of the CSRs, and our members must be informed and empowered to influence the implementation of these CSRs by national authorities.

### Explore the establishment of national contact points

In order to empower EASPD members to effectively impact at local level, and convey their issues and concerns, EASPD's perspective has to evolve in order to include, in parallel to a top-down point of view, a bottom-up approach. The establishment of national contact points would allow for a better coordination of national efforts, a greater interaction and feedback between EASPD and its members, and lead to an increased participation.

### Introduce a strategy to unlock the expertise and knowledge of its members

EASPD members represent a seemingly unlimited amount of barely tapped know-how that could help the entire sector. EASPD will introduce a strategy to unlock the expertise and knowledge of its members, and spread the local know-how.

### Conduct a study on funding of the disability sector

With the focus of EASPD on its members, it is necessary to understand how disability service providers are being financed across Europe. EASPD will thus conduct a research to examine the changes in funding systems – in particular the shift towards direct payments instead of subsidies – and assess the sustainability of the sector. This project will also provide valuable information giving an overview of the sector's financial health that can be used in EASPD's lobby work to promote the funding of the sector at European level backed by concrete data.

## WHAT OUR MEMBERS THINK

### What does this Reaching out strategy mean for your Standing Committee or Interest Group?

Chairing core group of the Interest Group on Person-Centred Technologies (IG PCT)

"The EASPD Interest Group on Person Centered Technology aims at improving and fostering the uptake of Person Centered Technology (PCT) in everyday practice by EASPD members and in society in general. Based on a user centered, user empowering and user involving approach people with disabilities should benefit from new technological developments both in terms of person centered technology and access to the mainstream information society. By exploiting and expanding partnership and networking, information and innovation transfer, project development, research and lobbying EASPD should become a leading organisation in promoting and advancing PCT based service provision."

## III. Reaching Out to External Stakeholders

### » CONTEXT

We hope to reach an inclusive society where persons with disabilities can fully enjoy their rights, have access to education (UNCPRD, art.24), be employed (art.27), benefit from social protection (art.28) or participate in the political and public life (art.29). However, how can they be active in all the facets of their life if we do not ourselves reach out from the disability sector to build inclusive communities with other actors in society?

### » RATIONALE

The sector is undergoing major changes to improve the quality of life of the people we support. These include: the deinstitutionalisation process, the development of person-centered technologies, access to inclusive education, access to the open labour market, the shift towards personalised budgets for persons with disabilities and, in some countries of Central and Eastern Europe, decentralisation and complex reform of regulatory processes. The future of the disability sector is highly dependent on innovation, and EASPD intends to lead the way. In order to tackle these changes, the sector has to unlock the knowledge of other relevant stakeholders, as well as to give them access to its own expertise.

### » OBJECTIVES

EASPD aims to develop cooperation and partnerships with non-disability specific structures and organisations. We want to extend the scope of our work to ordinary employers, schools, hospitals, researchers and develop with them a disability-friendly perspective in society.

### EASPD OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Explore strategies to collaborate more systematically with other sectors

Social services represent a vast web of interconnected issues and expertise. EASPD is going to explore strategies to collaborate more systematically with other sectors such as social housing, health care, mainstream education, employment agencies and employer organisations.

## WHAT OUR MEMBERS THINK



### What does this Reaching out strategy mean for your Standing Committee or Interest Group?

JAMES CHURCHILL, Chair of the Interest Group on Workforce Development and Human Resources (IG WD&HR).

"The IG recognises that the 'collective' workforce of EASPD's membership is a major resource and is the key to changing the way services are delivered. We intend to collect data on this particular specialist workforce, and use that data with external stakeholders and funders to highlight the need for proper investment in ensuring a common foundation in care across the EU (objectives II & III). Our work will try to help providers

show how they are doing this and demonstrate where, why and how things fall short.

It follows from this that all staff needs to have training in and deliver care based on these UN principles. Providers and funders should expect people who use services to be involved in the induction and training of their staff. EASPD will soon be able to widen its 'offer of services' to all members through the provision of country specific training courses for the European Care Certificate (ECC). We will also press for the development and formal recognition of a workplace based 'mentoring role' for experienced staff to help promote a 'user centred' culture and way of working amongst all care staff (and especially new staff). These services should also contribute to EASPD becoming more financially sustainable (objective IV)."

### Develop research partnerships to create a link between researchers and EASPD

Technical and theoretical innovations are fundamental to our sector. Unfortunately, a gap is too often seen between the research and the reality in practice. On the other hand, local organisations often do not have the capacity to carry out research, and EASPD needs precise data for effective lobby activities. Bridging this gap and establishing cooperation with researchers will enrich the outcomes of both the research and the services provided, and will also help to develop a more comprehensive perspective.

### Develop a major Horizon 2020 research project on the quality of life and its correlation with quality of service provision

The Europe 2020 Strategy is the EU's growth strategy based on a smart sustainable and inclusive economy, which includes people with support needs. In this perspective, EASPD will launch the development of a major Horizon 2020 research project on the quality of life of persons with disabilities and its correlation with quality of service provision.

### Lobby for the development of the best environment for quality services that meet the needs of persons with disabilities

EASPD will reaffirm its operational lobbying for the development of the best environment for quality services that meet the needs of persons with disabilities through European policies and legislation.

### Support service providers in their lobby effort towards inclusive policies and practices

EASPD is going to support service providers in their lobby effort towards inclusive policies and practices aiming to the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in society.

### Establish a plan of exchange of good practices and coordinate common advocacy campaigns with other associations

In order to improve efficiency and innovation in social services, it is vital that information is spread among stakeholders. EASPD will exchange good practices within the framework of European funded programmes and will coordinate common advocacy campaigns with other associations.

## WHAT OUR MEMBERS THINK



### What does this Reaching out strategy mean for your Standing Committee or Interest Group?

FABRIZIO FEA, Vice President of EASPD and Chair of the Standing Committee on Employment (SC Empl)

"Reaching out" has a quite complex meaning, it stands for: to catch up with somebody, to achieve a goal, to contact with someone, to stretch out a hand to a person, to aspire to a quiet life, to refer to, to address to and... much more.

Through almost 10.000 organizations represented by EASPD, we promote the quality of services provided to persons with disabilities, our main clients, according to the UNCRPD from its launch on. During some of our most relevant meetings of the last years, significant documents - such as the Declaration of Thessaloniki on Employment in 2009 - have been published and highly important events - such as EASPD's Conference on Employment in 2013 - have taken place. For the forthcoming future we have ambitious plans for our Standing Committee.

"Reaching out" is a motivating and inspiring way to include all relevant stakeholders involved in our field of interest together with persons with disabilities in order to combine forces to attain our objectives. Let's reach out!"



## IV. Reaching Out to Alternative Funding

» **CONTEXT** The social services sector's funding remains largely unpredictable and short-term based. EASPD in particular is overly dependent on the funding of European projects. This makes EASPD dangerously vulnerable to a change of policy by the Public stakeholders and could create a potential clash of interests between them and EASPD member policies.

» **RATIONALE** EASPD has to be less reliant on EC funding to become less vulnerable to political changes. Securing alternative funding will allow EASPD to have more time and resources to focus on the development of the sector and have a stronger impact on European policies.

» **OBJECTIVES** EASPD aims to become more sustainable and reach out to alternative ways of funding

### EASPD OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

#### Diversify its funding through various activities and develop its own products generating income

EASPD has to diversify its funding through various activities, and develop its own products generating income. The multiplication of income sources will diminish the vulnerability of EASPD.

#### Develop projects funded by its members and enriched with their expertise

In taking a step back from European projects EASPD plans to develop projects funded by its members and enriched with their expertise. Members have to be empowered to take the initiative in European projects with EASPD providing support and a continent-wide perspective to have a better impact at local level. While EASPD will benefit from this internal support, the development of projects among members will also stimulate innovations in their services and encourage the development of local stakeholder networks.

#### Identify funding opportunities that could be used by its members, which would be beneficial to the the disability services sector

EASPD will strive to identify funding opportunities that could be used by its members, which could bring direct (or indirect) benefits to the disability sector, even when the main target of these funds is directed towards sectors such as rural or community development, support to small and medium enterprises, human resources, research and development, culture and education.

### WHAT OUR MEMBERS THINK



#### What does this Reaching out strategy mean for your Standing Committee or Interest Group?

BERNADETTE GROSYEUX, EASPD Treasurer and member of the Executive Committee

"The 4th pillar of the reaching out strategy is crucial for EASPD as it should ensure the financial sustainability and political independence of the organisation. We are all aware that the entire social sector is going through difficult times: austerity is pushing the sector to its limits. The reaching out strategy will help the sector to become even more performant and effective, once the crisis is over."



## WHAT OUR MEMBERS THINK



### What does this Reaching out strategy mean for your Standing Committee or Interest Group?

STEFAN PIMMINGSTORFER, Chair of the Interest Group on Independent Living (IGIL)

“The work of the Interest Group on Independent Living (IGIL) is very much focused on the implementation of Art. 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which recognises the right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community with choices equal to others. The members of the IG are experts in the disability sector, especially in the field of housing and living.

For our IG the ‘Reaching Out Strategy’ is very clear and important, especially because it is focused on future changes. As an IG we have to collect best practices, learn from each other and develop together new ways for people with disabilities to be included in the community. This strategy, especially its goal ‘to be less dependent on external funding, for more involvement of persons with disabilities and an inclusive society’, is directed precisely to address these current issues.

The members of IGIL are proud to be part of the EASPD association, ready to go beyond their comfort zone and are fully committed to the 4-year plan of EASPD.”



AKOS PORDAN, Chair of the Standing Committee on Enlargement (SC Enlrg)

“The importance of the Enlargement Committee’s work is going to be increased in EASPD over the next few years. We would represent the interest of recently joined and candidate countries service providers more effectively. We’d like to achieve this goal through organising EASPD events in the given region drawing on the political importance of service provision. Furthermore we are going to continue our networking activities in order to strengthen the activities of the umbrella organisations and their members, facilitating the active cooperation of NGOs through provider foras and project development seminars. We have to keep on enhancing the networking, the provision of information and lobby activities with the service provider organisations in Central and Eastern European Countries, particularly on topics such as deinstitutionalisation and assistive decision making in order to provide a higher quality of life for persons with disability in accordance with UNCRPD.”



BRIAN O'DONNELL, Chair of the Standing Committee on Education (SC Educ)

“Inclusive education is a responsibility of all and must be seen as part of the development of an inclusive society for all. Educational policies and systems should take into account the needs of all people in the planning, financing, monitoring and evaluation of all education strategies. The main goal of inclusive education should be a school with good learning results where all stakeholders are participating and all learners are treated equally. The Standing Committee on Education (SCEd) focuses on the educational needs of all persons with disabilities in Europe, throughout their entire lifetime, whatever the legal frameworks and the structures in their country might be, and aims to develop and promote person centered inclusive education at all levels of education.”



## About EASPD Policy

Our main driver is to promote equal opportunities for persons with disabilities through the provision of user-centred services, based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD).

As the voice of such service providers in Europe, we aim to drive European policy developments towards creating a setting where persons with disabilities will be fully included and active members of society. We have also created partnerships with key stakeholders at European level, with whom we work to advance our objective for a social Europe. This means that our voice cannot be ignored - and that we have the right connections to make it heard!

If you would like to find out more about our policy or about the social services sector for persons with disabilities, please visit our website under [easpd.eu/en/content/european-policy](http://easpd.eu/en/content/european-policy).

## About EASPD Projects

Research and innovation have always been high on EASPD's agenda, and we have significant experience in being involved in project development and management ever since our creation in 1996. We are currently in charge of coordinating five projects and act as a partner in many others, involving fields as varied as employment, vocational and educational training, inclusive education, assistive technologies, independent living, and innovation in service provision.

If you would like to find out more about our work or would like to participate in one of our European projects, please visit our website under [easpd.eu/en/content/projects](http://easpd.eu/en/content/projects) or contact us at [info@easpd.eu](mailto:info@easpd.eu)

## Social Media

It is impossible to truly reach out today without the use of social media. For this reason, EASPD has invested significantly on improving our output on both Facebook and Twitter. Through our online strategy, as well as our website, we aim to promote the work of EASPD, our partners and also our members, as well as to inform and share opinions with European stakeholders.

To keep up-to-date with EASPD, don't hesitate to follow us on Twitter using [@EASPD\\_Brussels](https://twitter.com/EASPD_Brussels). You can also like us on Facebook using [EASPD Brussels](https://www.facebook.com/EASPD.Brussels).





## Conclusions

In the midst of talks at European level to enhance the concept of a social Europe, be it through the European Semester mechanism or through the Economic and Monetary Union, EASPD is redefining its multiannual strategy towards a more comprehensive approach to building an inclusive society. The keyword here is 'to reach out' to individuals in the need, researchers, external stakeholders such as regular schools, employers, hospitals and other actors in society.

It is through cooperation and collaboration between all social sector actors that we will create a more inclusive society for all.

Through its Reaching Out Multiannual Strategy, EASPD intends to lead by example.



Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of EASPD

Newsletter edited by Philippine Cartier and Andrea Tivoli



EASPD, a European NGO in the disability sector, promotes the views of over 10, 000 social services and their umbrella associations. The main objective of EASPD is to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high-quality service systems. EASPD is fully committed to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

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