
Reflecting the Needs of Persons With Disabilities in New Types of Social Service Provision

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Résumé

Background: In recent years, there has been a shift towards more person-centred social services, in the community and at home, provided to persons with disabilities and other groups with care and support needs. Albeit European countries are at different stages of this transition from residential to community-based services (DI/deinstitutionalisation), the process has been accelerated since the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Delivering these alternative care models often requires new skills and therefore highlights training needs of the social care workforce, including those needed for the use of digital technologies. However, it is unclear what kind of support care workers receive to meet the requirements of the changing sector. Emerging needs of service users should also be considered when developing and implementing new care models. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about additional changes in the organisation of work in the social services sector, for example by further pushing the use of digital technologies.

The problem: The UNCRPD requires the active involvement of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations in the development of legislation, policies, and decision-making processes concerning issues relating to them. This would also concern various social services supporting them in the community, in relation to the skills development and training of social care workforce. The new care models require the delivery of person-centred care, in line with the principles of the UNCRPD (i.e. autonomy, dignity, choice and control, privacy etc.). However, there is very limited information about how the needs of service users (persons with disabilities) are channelled in the development of social service provision, and what role their representative organisations play in skills development and training of social care workforce. At the same time, the social care sector is facing workforce shortages, thus it is important to understand the needs of care workers and ensure the provision of good quality care and decent working conditions.

Methods: This paper is building on data collected for the purposes of the FORTE project (101051751, financed by the European Commission), through extensive desk research and interviews conducted with representatives of employers/service providers, trade unions and representative organisations of persons with disabilities from 8 EU Member States and from the European level.

Results: The paper provides a unique viewpoint on the organisation of social care for persons with disabilities and assesses from a multi-stakeholder perspective to what extent users are involved in the development of social support services. It will also provide an overview on the training and skills needed to provide good quality care in the community. Existing

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practices by service providers on channelling the needs of persons with disabilities into social service development will be presented along with an overview of care workers' needs when delivering day to day frontline support and with the views of the representative organisations of persons with disabilities. The results highlight sector-specific challenges and offer a synthesis of different approaches of service providers, service users and workers' representatives which would ultimately lead to more sustainable support service provision.