



EEG Open Meeting Report

“The Recovery and Resilience Fund as a means to creating community and family-based care”

18 November 2021

In 2021, the EEG has been monitoring the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), its investments for social resilience and recovery since out of the six pillars of the RRF most of them aim at inclusive growth; social cohesion; health & social resilience; and policies for future generations. The Expert Group publicly called for the EU and its Member States to commit to investing this money into deinstitutionalisation (DI) as well as in community-based services, and strictly forbidding any investments in institutions. The EEG also has been reiterating the higher impact of the pandemic on people residing in institutions.

The online event *“The Recovery and Resilience Facility as a means to creating community and family-based care”*, which took place on the 18th of November 2021, aimed to provide an overview of the opportunities and the risks that the RRF might fuel within the European Union. Moderated by **Haydn Hammersley, Social Policy Officer at the European Disability Forum** and **EEG co-chair**, the event gathered almost 70 representatives from ministries of different countries, the European Commission and national and European civil society organisations.

The meeting opened with a **video message by Commissioner Helena Dalli** in which she highlighted that the RRF must respect the principles of gender equality and equal opportunities for all. She also encouraged Member States to put in place an inclusive process to monitor the implementation of the National Recovery Plans by including NGOs active in the area of equality and inclusion. She concluded with the following call: “Let us all contribute to a Union of Equality”.

At the very start of the EEG event, **Gerard Quinn - UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of person with disabilities** –highlighted the importance of the EU leadership and of its uniqueness, among the other existing regional systems, to “take abstract values and latch them on to the sinews of power”. In concluding his contribution, Quinn emphasised that the RRF is a potential source for leaving behind all forms of institutionalisation and expressed the hope that the EU might have the policy imagination to implement the needed changes. In these regards, Quinn highlighted how, if human rights deficiencies of people with disabilities still subsist in the European Union, this should not be attributed to the communitarian funds but to the actions of singular Member States.

The meeting was also an occasion to explore more details of the RRF. **Sophie Constant – Country Expert at the Recovery and Resilience Task Force of the European Commission** – highlighted that the plans adopted in 2022 account for around 134 billion euros and that all Member States have shown a commitment to improve healthcare assistance. In particular, Member States presented measures promoting home-based and community-based care by improving digital skills and labour market policies. Constant spoke about



Austria's plan, with digital network project as an example of a "community-based project", and the Czech plan, with the adoption of a legal framework focusing on the professionalisation of healthcare staff.

Lilith Alink – EU advocacy and Campaign Officer at Lumos – provided an insight into the EEG's work on the National Recovery and Resilience Plans. After analysing 12 National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs), the EEG came up with the recommendations to strengthen the DI process. Furthermore, she focused on the examples of Belgium, Czechia, Greece and Portugal. The concluding remarks of the EEG's work were that many Member States have included references about the importance of DI in their national plans but without really delineating a clear view on how to transit from institutions to community-based care. The EEG has also called for the Commission and the individual Member States to re-assess the investments and their compliance with the EU guidelines on equality.

Valentina Caimi – on behalf of Civil Society Europe – presented a study which aimed to assess the involvement of civil society in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of NRRPs in 11 countries. The results highlighted a general failure of the dialogue channel developed around the Recovery and Resilience Plans with some differences across member states. Moreover, it emerged that not all civil society sectors were involved in the consultation process: for example, the environmental sector was much more present in comparison to the cultural one. Overall, Caimi pointed out general recommendations to assure a greater involvement of civil society. These include a rigorous monitoring of NRRPs, the adoption of specific indicators for Civil Society Organisations' (CSOs) involvement and additional information concerning the consultation process in those Member States where the description was poor.

The event was also an opportunity to get insight in various NRRPs such as those of Romania, Portugal and Greece.

As described by **Florica Chereches – President of the National Authority for the Rights of Persons with disabilities, children and adoptions** – Romania plans to transform its social protection system from one that provide social benefits to one that deliver social services. The support through DI has been conceived by promoting legal reforms for the protection of vulnerable categories and through investments that promote the modernisation of community-based services. Similarly, **Ines Amaro – Director of the Department of Social Development at the Institute of Social Security** – illustrated Portuguese legal reforms defining the rules and conditions of the development of personal assistance. Furthermore, Portugal wishes to invest in different social projects like "Housing First" projects and an "Activities and Capacity Center for Inclusion (CACI)". Finally, **Dimitris Nikolsky – Head of Unit "Children with disabilities" at the Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs**, highlighted the investments of the RRF funds in the Greek Plan, which promotes the transfer of adolescents from child protection units to supported independent living apartments and the development of personal assistance programmes.

Further on, in order to deliver inspiration for good practice to the Member States, the EEG provided several examples of concrete projects which introduce indicators for monitoring of DI progress, promote housing initiatives and support young people entering into adulthood out of residential homes, including people with disabilities and homeless people.



Aaron Greenberg, Senior Regional Advisor at UNICEF ECARO, presented Eurochild and UNICEF's "Data Care Project" as a way to concretely assess data on the number of children in alternative care. Following the findings of the project, he introduced the comparable indicators across the EU Member States which can provide a means of assessing political reforms and the progress of political commitments. For this reason, Greenberg called for a sound, legislative regulation on the data system which could actually measure progress in DI.

Other initiatives that were presented at the online event included a special focus on renovating and creating social housing for people belonging to more vulnerable social groups. **Samara Jones from FEANTSA** described the project "Housing First for Youth" by Housing First Europe, which aims to provide a safe transition towards an independent adult life for young people who grew up in residential care.

Speakers from **the Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI) – Damien Walsh and Claire Kenny** – talked us through the housing situation in Ireland. Specifically, they introduced the "National Housing Strategy for Persons with Disability" of 2011 and its outcomes. Walsh and Kenny highlighted that, with more than 8,300 people with disabilities in residential settings, Ireland still has a worrying situation concerning accessible housing. ILMI's project "Making Inclusion a Reality" seeks to inform about the development of housing policy and to establish models of best practice for public bodies in how to engage in the design, delivery or implementation of policies that impact over the lives of people with disabilities.

Among the examples of projects, the issue of inclusive education for children with disabilities was presented by **Elisabeth Lammers – from UNAPEI France** – who presented the initiative "#jaipasécole" which gives visibility to children who do not have access to the mainstream education. The project aims to promote large-scale awareness and call for action on this issue, calling on the principles of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and the UNCRPD.

The event showed that the RRF truly represents a once-in-a-life occasion to boost the process of deinstitutionalisation and that these funds need to be carefully monitored in their use. The EEG thanks all participants who attended and contributed to the Open Meeting this year.

Related Material

- EEG statement "[Recovery and Resilience Facility must support community inclusion, not segregation](#)"
- [EEG analysis of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans](#)