

EEG

European Expert Group

on the transition from institutions
to community-based support

Deinstitutionalisation as a Human Rights and Equality Priority

Recommendations of the European Expert Group on the transition from institutional to community-based support to the Irish, Lithuanian and Greek Presidencies of the Council of the European Union

Who we are

The [European Expert Group on the transition from institutional to community-based support](#) (EEG) is a broad coalition of European networks representing persons with disabilities, children, older persons, people experiencing homelessness, service providers, families, researchers and human rights organisations. Since 2009, the EEG has worked to promote the transition from institutional care to community-based support systems across Europe.

Why deinstitutionalisation matters

Across the European Union, a large number of children, persons with disabilities, people with mental health problems, people experiencing homelessness and older persons continue to live in institutional settings, despite long-standing policy commitments to independent living and inclusion in the community. Estimates suggest that **around 1.5 million people remain in institutional settings across the EU**, including approximately **466,000 children¹ and more than 900,000 adults with disabilities²**, as well as an unknown but significant proportion of people experiencing homelessness³.

Deinstitutionalisation is not only a social policy reform. It is a human rights obligation arising from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UN Convention on

¹ European Expert Group on the transition from institutional to community based care (EEG): Report on the transition from institutional to community-based services in 27 EU Member States, 2020, <https://deinstitutionalisation.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/eeg-di-report-2020-1.pdf>

² Eurofound: Living conditions and quality of life – Paths towards independent living and social inclusion in Europe, October 2024, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-10/ef23018en.pdf>

³ FEANTSA estimates that approx. 1 million people are in homeless shelter on any given night in the EU. This estimate is on the basis of official data from EU Member States, where it exists. FEANTSA: Homelessness in Europe – The State of Play, 2024, https://www.feantsa.org/public/user/Activities/events/2024/9th_overview/EN_Chap/1.pdf

the Rights of the Child, the European Pillar of Social Rights and broader European commitments to equality, participation and inclusion.

The transition to community-based living enables people to exercise their rights, participate in society, maintain family and community relationships and make decisions about their own lives.

As the Irish, Lithuanian and Greek Presidencies place human rights, equality and social inclusion among their priorities, the EEG encourages the Trio to recognise deinstitutionalisation as an essential component of these commitments.

Priority actions

1. Support the establishment of a strong and ambitious EU Alliance for Independent Living⁴

Ensure that the Alliance promotes concrete progress towards community-based support systems, meaningful participation of persons with lived experience and representative organisations, and stronger accountability mechanisms.

2. Ensure that the next Multiannual Financial Framework supports deinstitutionalisation⁵

EU funding should consistently support prevention of institutionalisation, development of community-based services, accessible housing and independent living, while avoiding investment in institutional or segregated settings.

3. Strengthen monitoring and accountability^{6,7,8}

Support the development of indicators and monitoring mechanisms that measure progress towards community living and social inclusion across the European Union.

4. Promote deinstitutionalisation through the European Semester and social policy coordination⁹

Encourage Member States to address institutionalisation, segregation and barriers to community living through social investment, housing and support service reforms.

⁴ Communication “Enhancing the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities up to 2030 https://commission.europa.eu/document/ab0bcea9-6b3a-48c1-875c-1cc687fba6d0_en

⁵ The 2028-2034 EU budget for a stronger Europe https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/eu-budget-2028-2034_en

⁶ Communication “Enhancing the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities up to 2030 https://commission.europa.eu/document/ab0bcea9-6b3a-48c1-875c-1cc687fba6d0_en

⁷ EU Anti-Poverty Strategy https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/addressing-poverty-and-supporting-social-inclusion/eu-anti-poverty-strategy_en

⁸ European Child Guarantee https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/addressing-poverty-and-supporting-social-inclusion/investing-children/european-child-guarantee_en

⁹ European Semester Spring Package https://reforms-investments.ec.europa.eu/european-semester-spring-package_en

5. Mainstream deinstitutionalisation across EU policies

Ensure that disability, child rights, mental health, homelessness, ageing, migration and enlargement policies consistently support inclusion in the community and respect for individual autonomy and choice. Facilitate mutual learning and promote the exchange of good practices between Member States as a practical contribution to the Trio's priorities on protecting fundamental rights, promoting equality and strengthening social inclusion.

Conclusion

The EEG stands ready to support the Trio Presidencies in advancing human rights-based and community-based approaches across Europe. We believe that deinstitutionalisation offers a practical pathway to delivering on the Trio's commitments to equality, participation, dignity and human rights for all.