ICALL: Inclusive communities for all

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Report on the state of play of inclusive communities in Europe

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Introduction of the ICALL project

Imagine navigating a world where the simplest tasks—like accessing public transportation or participating in community events—are fraught with barriers. For the 1.3 billion people living with significant disabilities, this is a daily reality, confronting them with challenges that are 15 times greater than those faced by individuals without disabilities[1]. The pressing need for local communities to become inclusive and accessible is not just a matter of policy; it's a fundamental human right.

Persons with disabilities should be able to access all services offered to the public and have a full social life. Influenced by the need for equity within communities and motivated to report on the state of play when it comes to inclusive communities in Europe. The ICALL project aims to develop high-quality learning paths and evidence-based, scalable models for sustainable community inclusion. The project's consortium consists of partners from Belgium, Hungary, Poland, Greece and Finland.

According to Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), Article 26 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, individuals with disabilities have the equal right to live independently and be fully included in the community. This right entails having the same choices as others regarding where, with whom and how they live. While substantial progress is still needed to fully respect and implement the principles outlined in the UNCRPD and the EU Strategy, the direction for supporting independent living is well defined. However, there remains less clarity around what community inclusion of persons with disabilities truly entails, and many key professionals—such as those working in municipalities, local NGOs, or companies—often lack the skills and knowledge to foster inclusive communities effectively. Consequently, there is a growing need for comprehensive resources and training materials that address what community inclusion means specifically for persons with disabilities and how to strengthen inclusive communities through varied practices and approaches.

The objective of the ICALL research on Inclusive Communities in the EU is to frame the model of inclusive communities and build the conceptual framework on the topic by mapping out existing practices, literature and policy frameworks. To know more about the project please visit: https://easpd.eu/project-detail/icall/

[1] WHO (World Health Organization (2021). Disability and Health. https://www.who.int/news- room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health (accessed March 13, 2022).

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Executive Summary

This Research report will provide useful data and a conceptual framework for understanding the main processes and determinants of inclusive communities for people with significant support needs. More specifically, the identification of state of play, challenges and policy regulations regarding inclusive communities (in terms of independent living, inclusive access to mainstream services, targeted support services for persons with disabilities, cultural, leisure and social activities offered to the public and accessibility of public spaces, etc.) will determine the processes and characteristics for quality empowerment and inclusion and point out the main gaps in terms of capacity & training within the local communities involved. This will enable the development of common understanding on what inclusion in the community of persons with disabilities means more broadly and have shared concepts among all stakeholders. In addition, local authorities, service providers, and NGOs will have increased understanding of the specific needs and wishes from PwD as regards the build-up of inclusive communities, as well as how to engage with multiple actors to ensure participation and wellbeing in community living of PwD, within the capacities and long-term vision of responsible bodies.

More specifically, the research report will examine the potential of the local communities involved to ensure full inclusion and participation of PWD. It will address various aspects such as:

- Which are the main features of an inclusive community within different European countries?
- What is the EU legal frameworks' state of play? What is the national legal frameworks' state of play?
- What role do inclusive communities play in the social definition of disability?

The report is divided into two areas: a) a report based on the findings of the desk research on National (Greece, Poland, Finland, Hungary) and EU legislations and b) a report based on the findings of the national field research. The Desk research finding report will particularly focus on the legislations and promoted public policies at central, regional and national levels of the project partner countries; as well as the compatibility of the national laws with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The National field research findings report, following a multi-stakeholder approach, represents the following target audiences: the voice of PwDs advocates, local authorities and direct support services (NGOs, community centers etc). It aims to empower and cooperate with all actors that are involved in the process of creating and improving inclusiveness and sustainability of local communities. The field research methodology used both quantitative surveys and focus groups in order to achieve a deeper evaluation of the current situation of how inclusive the communities are in the involved countries.

The ICALL project consortium strongly believes that the harmonisation of the UN Convention with the national institutional frameworks and the respective policy actions on the rights of persons with disabilities should go hand-in-hand with initiatives on community development in order to create

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sustainable inclusive communities.

Introduction

Even though being included in the community is a fundamental human and social right, for people with disabilities living and participating equally in local communities is less than established. Individuals with disabilities face various obstacles everyday which hinder their accessibility to social and public life[2]. It is imperative to support and promote inclusive communities for everyone. Substantial academic research has shown that living in inclusive communities significantly enhances quality of life, and promotes autonomy and social interaction; it is also seen to have various significant positive effects for the local communities[3].

There are several definitions for “inclusive communities'', among those, the ICALL consortium selected the following: “An inclusive community is a community that overrides differences of race, gender, class, generation and geography and ensures inclusion, equality of opportunity as well as capability of all members of the society to determine an agreed set of social institutions that govern social interaction"[4]. In addition, accessibility in infrastructure, inclusive educational and job prospects, and community initiatives tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities enable their complete engagement in community activities as citizens.

It's important to look beyond physical performance and daily activities to include broader subjective dimensions such as quality of functioning, acceptance, satisfaction, decision-making, and personal control, which are often neglected[5]. Addressing these dimensions can significantly enhance the well-being of individuals with disabilities.

Participation in society is a vital health objective due to its impact on inclusion, prognosis, and long-term well-being[6]. Health is defined not only from an individual perspective[7] but also in terms of social well-being[8], which includes integration, contribution, acceptance, trust, and understanding of societal dynamics[5]. For individuals with disabilities, aspects like independent living, self-determination, and satisfaction with participation are essential for ensuring a high quality of life and emotional well-being. This emphasizes the need for health and social services to focus on empowerment and self-

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[2] Harris, S., Owen, R., & De Ruiter, C. (2012). Civic Engagement and People with Disabilities: The Role of Advocacy and Technology. Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship, 5(1). https://doi.org/10.54656/awpe1856

[3] Etmanski, A. 2020. *The Power of Disability: 10 Lessons for Surviving, Thriving, and Changing the World*. Canada: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

[4] https://dev.to/favourmark05/inclusive-community-1l4g

[5] Hammell, K. W. (2015). Quality of life, participation and occupational rights: a capabilities perspective. *Aust. Occup. Ther. J.* 62, 78–85. doi: 10.1111/1440-1630.12183

[6] https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/sites/default/files/9789289054553-eng.pdf

[7] Stone A, Mackie C, editors. Subjective well-being: measuring happiness, suffering, and other dimensions of experience. Washington (DC): National Academies Press; 2013 (https://www.nap.edu/catalog/18548/subjective-well-being-measuring-happinesssuffering-and-other-dimensions-of).

[8] Keyes CLM. Social well-being. Soc Psychol Q. 1998;61(2):121–40.

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determination for this population[9].

The concept of ***citizenship*** is exclusionary, based on a template of an ideal citizen, rational and independent, excluding disabled people. There is a notion that citizens ought to be healthy and have productive social roles to participate and be active in society[10]. Inclusion is crucial to consider and be implemented in every aspect of the community. Normative values create inaccessible environments and ableist attitudes, thus limiting opportunities for full societal participation for disabled people. Significance should be given to the personal experience of individuals with disabilities. Inclusion must recognise the different needs and wants of disabled people to counter this social isolation and inactivity[11]. An important distinction must be made between ***being*** and ***doing*** regarding ***citizenship***. The former mostly refers to a status whereas the latter highlights an active participation in society.[12] Active citizenship is about engaged people participating in activities that support a community. Although disability legislation acknowledges the right of disabled people to be engaged citizens and access public life on an equal basis with others, continuous limitations prohibit access to civic engagement.[13] Disability research has distinguished two contrasting uses of citizenship. On one hand, the idea of citizenship may be promoting principles of inclusion and participation in society but on the other hand, studies have highlighted cases of discrimination making inclusion more difficult.[12]

Furthermore, the Independent Living (IL) paradigm proposes that the presence of environmental barriers critically affects the level of independence of people with disabilities and their ***participation*** as citizens in society.[14] Providing opportunities for co-creation and participation can be associated with efforts to valorise disability experiences and to overturn the devaluation that society holds for people with disabilities[15][16][17]. This is connected with the Article 30 of the UNCRPD, which requires

9 Cegarra, B., Cattaneo G., Ribes A., Solana-Sánchez J., Saurí J., (2023). Independent living, emotional well-being, and quality of life in people with disabilities: the mediator role of self-determination and satisfaction with participation. Frontiers in Psychology, 14. DOI=10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1279014

10 Waldschmidt, A., & Sépulchre, M. (2019). Citizenship: reflections on a relevant but ambivalent concept for persons with disabilities. Disability & Society, 34(3), 421–448. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1543580

11 Christiaens, M., & Brittain, I. (2021). The complexities of implementing inclusion policies for disabled people in UK non-disabled voluntary community sports clubs. European Sport Management Quarterly, 23(4), 1–21.https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2021.1955942

12 Wyness, L. (2013). "Talking of citizenship … " Exploring the contribution an intergenerational, participatory learning project can make to the promotion of active citizenship in sustainable communities. Local Environment, 20(3), 277–297. https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2013.839645

13 Harris, S., Owen, R., & De Ruiter, C. (2012). Civic Engagement and People with Disabilities: The Role of Advocacy and Technology. Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship, 5(1). https://doi.org/10.54656/awpe1856

14 DeJong, G. (1979). Independent living: from social movement to analytic paradigm. *Arch. Phys. Med. Rehabil.* 60, 435–446.

15 Jakubowicz, Andrew, and Helen Meekosha. 2003. "Can Multiculturalism Encompass Disability?" In *Disability, Culture and Identity*, edited by Sheila Riddell and Nick Watson, 180–199. UK: Pearson.

16 Leahy, A., and D. Ferri. 2022. "Barriers and Facilitators to Cultural Participation by People with Disabilities: A Narrative Literature Review." *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 24 (1): 68–81. https://doi.org/10.16993/sjdr.863.

17 Chaidemenaki, L., & Kolokytha, O. (2024). Whose culture is it anyway? Perceptions of accessibility in museums by professionals working with people with intellectual disabilities in Greece. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2024.2357073

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assessing the barriers in cultural accessibility (cultural goods, heritage) and undertaking specific measures that will allow this target group the opportunity to 'develop and utilise their creative, artistic and intellectual potential'.[18]

It is important to build communities with environmental characteristics for participation, minimising activity limitations for people with disabilities. Being able to participate and be involved in life situations should apply to everyone.[19] Observed characteristics of the urban environment, (such as uneven sidewalks, pavements, etc) have been debilitating outdoor access. These barriers within the built urban environment, hinder the social participation of people with underlying impairments or activity limitations.[20] Societal participation of people with disabilities and being able to experience public life are not always easy. Continuous obstacles significantly inhibit access to all aspects of community engagement.[21] Being able to exercise duties in society and possess civil, political, economic and cultural rights are implemented in citizenship. Due to societal barriers though, people with disabilities face major difficulties fulfilling citizenship roles.[19]

As indicated, participatory and inclusive living practices contribute to the overall health and well-being of the community by encouraging diversity and empathy among citizens. Communities should be strengthened in order to provide equal opportunities for all. To optimize community development, it is crucial to involve people with disabilities in planning and decision-making processes, ensuring that their perspectives and needs are adequately represented. A definition of ***co-production*** states that *"the process of collaboratively designing and delivering a project with people with lived experience, by recognizing and celebrating **the value** of direct life experience (rather than only professional experience) in the planning, designing, delivering of a project"*[22]. Additionally, ongoing education and awareness campaigns can dismantle societal barriers and stigmas, paving the way for a more inclusive and supportive environment. Investments in adaptive technologies, accessible public spaces and comprehensive support services are also essential to create a framework where individuals with disabilities can thrive and contribute meaningfully to the creation of inclusive, sustainable communities. Community development aims to empower individuals within a community, fostering stronger and more interconnected relationships among its members. It is a comprehensive approach based on the values of empowerment, human rights, inclusivity, social

[18] UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. n.d. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html.

[19] Waldschmidt, A., & Sépulchre, M. (2019). Citizenship: reflections on a relevant but ambivalent concept for persons with disabilities. Disability & Society, 34(3), 421–448. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1543580

[20] Clarke, P. J., Ailshire, J. A., Nieuwenhuijsen, E. R., & de Kleijn – de Vrankrijker, M. W. (2011). Participation among adults with disability: The role of the urban environment. Social Science & Medicine, 72(10), 1674–1684. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.03.025

[21] Harris, S., Owen, R., & De Ruiter, C. (2012). Civic Engagement and People with Disabilities: The Role of Advocacy and Technology. Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship, 5(1). https://doi.org/10.54656/awpe1856

[22] ICOM Conference, 2023 Athens.

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justice, self-determination, and collective action[23]. Disability inclusion in community development refers to a collaborative effort that ensures the participation of women, men, girls, and boys with disabilities in their local communities.[24]

The following report presents results of both desk and field research regarding inclusive community living for PwDs. Partners investigated legislations, policy regulations and initiatives that already are advancing inclusion, on European and National level. Emphasis was given to various facets of inclusive community living for PwDs such as protection of rights, community development, social support, independent living, employment, and education. Field research comprised of three online surveys and focus groups targeting Local Authorities, NGOs, PwDs, Service providers and Organizations. Results highlighted present issues and obstacles of everyday living in addition to proposing solutions, ideas, and focus areas to further secure inclusion.

A. Desk research on Inclusive Communities in the EU: state of play and policy regulations

The ICALL aim is to empower communities where people of diverse backgrounds and generations have the knowledge and practical tools to deliver services, programs, and accessible spaces that meet the needs of people with disabilities, supporting their active social and societal participation. The ICALL project acknowledges the vital role of local governments and community stakeholders in promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities, supporting the implementation of both the EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 and Article 19 of the UNCRPD at the local level. It further focuses on strengthening the capabilities of local authorities and stakeholders to create and sustain inclusive communities where people with disabilities can fully engage in society. The following chapter focuses on identifying across partner countries and in the EU, national legislations, policies and initiatives that are already advancing inclusion. The Desk Research will examine various facets of inclusive community living for individuals with disabilities—such as protection of rights, independent living, access to general and specialized services, inclusive cultural and recreational opportunities, and public space accessibility. There is a noticeable difference in legislations, existing policies and strategies in the involved partner countries; therefore a unified structure as to the description of the current legislation status was not possible.

A1. Desk Research findings - Greece

Protection of Rights: During the last decade, Greece has made major legislative reforms, seeking to put in place a new legislative framework that safeguards the rights and promotes the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the community. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

[23] Kenny, S., & Connors, P. (2017). *Developing Communities for the Future* (5th ed.). South Melbourne: Cengage Learning Australia.

[24] https://www.licht-fuer-die-welt.at/app/uploads/sites/8/2021/09/13_2019_Policy_DICD_accessible.pdf

is the first legally binding international human rights instrument. It sets minimum standards for the protection and enjoyment of a full range of civil, political, social and economic rights for persons with disabilities. Ratified by the plenary of the Greek Parliament in 2012, which obliges the country to comply with it, which implies changes in legislation and administrative functioning to ensure the equal participation of people with disabilities in social, economic and political life. Moreover, the ratification of the Additional Protocol allows recourse to international bodies for any violations by the State of human rights protected by the Convention.

An important initiative for the Rights protection of people with disabilities was the enactment of Part IV of Law 4488/2017 which, drawing on the requirements of Article 33 of the UN CRPD, to enact guidelines for implementing the UN Convention at national level[25]. With this law, there are organizational provisions for the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities The Minister of State is appointed as the Coordinating Mechanism for the implementation of the Convention, i.e. it coordinates between all the competent Ministries for the formulation and implementation of public policies that promote the rights of persons with disabilities and the Ombudsman, as the constitutionally enshrined Independent Authority in cooperation with the National Confederation of Persons with Disabilities.

In 2020 the National Confederation of Disabled Persons (NCDP) with the Ministry of State[26] developed the National Strategy for the Protection of Rights of Persons with Disabilities that conforms with the Convention (UNCRPD). The Strategy incorporated 6 pillars and 30 target goals in order to safeguard that the Rights of People with Disabilities are protected, and more specifically: to improve daily living and rights-based disability approach, accessibility in the structured environment, transportation, expression and accessibility to information, participation in all community aspects and raising awareness on disability inclusion of the local community and of public administrations. The National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities constituted the first horizontal public policy aimed at the State's commitment to protect, defend and enjoy the rights of persons with disabilities for the period 2020-2023. Among others benchmarks were defined in all Ministries, Regions and Municipalities of the country.

In 2021, the Deinstitutionalisation Strategy & Action Plan was developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with the aim of creating a cohesive and all-encompassing policy to promote deinstitutionalisation and ensure a supportive framework for vulnerable persons, such as children, children with disabilities, adults with disabilities and elderly. According to current research, 1642 adults and 100 children with or without disabilities are housed in closed institutional structures[27]. The

[25] https://easpd.eu/project-detail/di-greece-technical-support-on-deinstitutionalisation-di-process-in-greece/

[26] https://www.primeminister.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020-ethniko-sxedio-drasis-amea.pdf

[27] https://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/empl_portal/ede/EL-ANED%202018-19-Country%20report%20Living%20independently%20-%20final%20for%20web.docx

Strategy was based on the principles of participation and inclusion, non-discrimination, equality, choice of life and the right to receive individualised care[28].

The only alternative to institutional care at the moment in Greece are "Supported Living Homes" providing support to persons with physical, psychosocial, intellectual and/or sensorial disabilities with various needs. As of June 2018, there were 28 organisations operating 65 Supported living arrangements where 389 Persons are living[29]. The establishment and implementation of Supported Living Homes was a major reform towards community-based, supported living.

In addition to the above, in 2022, the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs initiated the piloting of the "Personal Assistant" Program for people with disabilities, the goal of which is to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and of their families while providing options for independent living and equal participation in the social, cultural and financial aspects of the community[30]. The adoption of the personal assistant scheme has been a long-standing demand of the disability movement in Greece, which seems to be partially met but still serves a small number of disabled people.

Accessibility & Structured Environment: In Greece special regulations on disabled accessibility to public buildings and infrastructure[31] as well as provisions for the establishment of an accessibility committee at the Ministry of Environment and respective central and regional accessibility committees[32] have been established. In particular, the National Accessibility Authority was established as an advisory body under the Prime Minister, with the aim of promoting access for persons with disabilities in all areas of human activity. According to the National Confederation of Disabled Persons, accessibility has been promoted with the existing legal framework in line with the provisions of the CRDP. However, significant issues remain in several areas (i.e. transport, beach accessibility, public buildings)[33].

Freedom of expression and access to information: An important aspect of community development is facilitating freedom of expression, opinion and access to information of PwDs. Failure to access information is primarily due to the lack of technological means, skills and training that would allow access to electronic information. Accessibility issues for disabled persons can be found on several public administration websites based on the obligation to provide appropriate means of communication and access to information[34]. Information that is associated with benefits, aids and rights as well as relevant applications, are becoming electronic even more. There are significant

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[28] https://easpd.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/DI_Strategy_-_EN_with_layout.pdf
& The Greek Ombudsman Report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

[29] https://easpd.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/DI_Strategy_-_EN_with_layout.pdf

[30] 4837/2021. https://ypergasias.gov.gr/xekinise-i-efarmogi-tou-prosopikou-voithou-gia-atoma-me-anapiria-stin-ellada/

[31] Law 2831/2000 (Article 28) and Law 4067/2012 (Article 26)

[32] Law 4067/2012, Law 4495/2017

[33] National Confederation of Disabled People of Greece (NCDP), 2019. Human Rights and Persons with Disabilities. Alternative Report of Greece 2019(final version) and responses to the *List of Issues* and *Recommendations.*

[34] Law 4488/2017 article 65

barriers in accessing digital information which is essential in improving quality of life[35]. In addition, the staff of public authorities, providers of public services, engineers, designers, and so on, lack knowledge regarding the support needs of persons with disabilities. The State does not provide any training on disability and accessibility issues, and there is not any educational structure responsible for providing training on these matters[36].

Awareness raising and protection of Rights: The Greek state has made significant efforts to raise awareness and promote respect and dignity for the rights of persons with disabilities with the following actions: a) establishment of the National Council against Racism and Intolerance, with the participation of NCDP, b) National Action Plan against Racism and Intolerance, c) establishment of the National Supervisory Mechanism to implement the judgments of the European Human Rights Court d) enactment of the Law 4443/2016 regarding the principle of equal treatment e) Enactment of the Law 4488/2017, which concerns the monitoring and proper implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, f) the Greek sign language has been recognized as equivalent to the Greek language[37], and Greek Braille as the official way of writing of Greek blind citizens, g) enactment of the Law 4491/2017 (Government Gazette 2017b) regarding the legal recognition of gender identity.

Employment: The Greek State has made efforts to increase the employment rate of persons with disabilities through the adoption of legislative measures[38]. The social disability movement in Greece indicates that revision legislations have had a limited impact on the employment rate of persons with disabilities in the public sector and almost no impact in the private sector[39]. In 2016, the enactment of Law 4440/2016 has already created a new legal environment for the recruitment of persons with disabilities and their family members in the public sector, which has significantly increased the rates of people with disabilities.[40] Specifically, this Law foresees that 10% and 5% of the positions to be filled by regular personnel and personnel with non-fixed private law contracts in the public sector -including legal persons governed by public law and organizations of local authorities- should be covered by persons with disabilities with a certified disability percentages of them and/or their family members.

[35] On its website www.synigoros-solidarity.gr the Greek Ombudsman has created a specific thematic tab for disabled persons: https://www.synigoros-solidarity.gr/katigoria/eualotes-omades/atoma-me-anapiria-amea

[36] National Confederation of Disabled People of Greece (NCDP), 2019. Human Rights and Persons with Disabilities. Alternative Report of Greece 2019(final version) and responses to the *List of Issues* and *Recommendations.*

[37] Law 4488/2017

[38] Law 1648/1986 (Government Gazette 1986) and revision Law 2643/1998 (Government Gazette 1998)

[39] National Confederation of Disabled People of Greece (NCDP), 2019. Human Rights and Persons with Disabilities. Alternative Report of Greece 2019(final version) and responses to the *List of Issues* and *Recommendations.*

[40] The enactment of this Law is the result of the Greek disability movement campaign to remedy the unequal treatment that persons with disabilities are facing in the recruitment in the public sector compared to other social groups, such as families with more than three children, Government Gazette 2016b

However, this Law refers only to the public sector [41]. Further research evidence [42] shows that the access of persons with disabilities to the existing labour market is limited in Greece indicating: i) significantly lower percentage of employed people with disabilities comparing to people without disabilities aged 20-64 (24,2% in comparison to 57,6%) and significantly lower than the national goal of the "Europe 2020" strategy; ii) within the population of "persons with severe disabilities"[43], the 83% of persons between 20-24 years old, the 72% of persons between 25-29 years old, and the 55,5% of persons between 30-34 years old, they do not have any working experience and iii) the 84% of employed people with disabilities mention that employers have failed to provide them adequate accommodations, especially in the private sector. The latest point shows that the fear of dismissal in the private sector is a critical barrier for persons with disabilities in making use of the respective legal framework[44]. In addition, the Manpower Employment Organization (OAED), which is the central management structure of active employment policies, offers limited opportunities for people with disabilities and limited incentives to employers in the private sector in regard to employing disabled workers. Based on all the above, more measures have to be taken for improving the placement of persons with disabilities in the labour market.

Education: In Greece, education for people with disabilities is provided in general education schools with inclusion classes as special educational measures and parallel support as an individualised measure, as well as in separate special schools. According to the Greek Ombudsman[45], positive changes have been promoted by the Greek State[46] with the announcement and implementation of inclusive policies. However, essential problems are reported in relation to organisation, resources, staff, teaching programmes and methods, educational material, perceptions and practices in the education of children with disabilities[47].

A2. Desk research findings - Poland

Social policy towards persons with disabilities derives in Poland from the Polish Constitution. This act establishes the prohibition of discrimination, indicating that no one shall be discriminated against in

[41] To give some examples and/or recommendations, e.g., i) provision of tax and insurance incentives to the private sector employers, ii) implementation of the model of supported employment, iii) adoption of the personal assistant, to name but a few.

[42] For this study the Observatory on Disability issues of NCDP used the employment variables included in the sample survey Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) in 2016 (with reference year 2015) as conducted by the Hellenic Statistical Authority in collaboration with Eurostat.

[43] this term here does not reflect the opinion of the authors but of the published research paper

[44] see the respective Law 4440/2016

[45] The Greek Ombudsman Report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

[46] Co-education programmes Law 4368/2016 - Official Government Gazette 21/A/21-2-2016, Article 82. and Ministerial Decision 172877/D3//04.11.2016 Official Government Gazette B 3561

[47] ttps://www.synigoros.gr/?i=childrens-rights.el.files.398932https://www.synigoros.gr/?i=childrens-rights.el.stiriksi.37349https://www.synigoros.gr/?i=childrens-rights.el.smea.28928 https://www.synigoros.gr/?i=childrens-rights.el.aksiologisi.29858

political, social or economic life for any reason whatsoever (Article 32)[48]. An important document regulating the situation of persons with disabilities is also the Parliamentary resolution of 1st August 1997 – the Charter of Rights for Persons with Disabilities confirming the right of persons with disabilities to independent, autonomous, active and free from discrimination living. This document contains a catalogue of ten rights, including: access to goods and services enabling full participation in society, inclusive education and employment on the open labour market.[49]

The system of support for professional and social activation of persons with disabilities in Poland is regulated under the provisions of the Act on vocational and social rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities. Issues related to the topics of architectural, digital and cognitive accessibility are included in the Act of 4 April 2019 (amended 17 April 2023) on digital accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public entities[50] and in the Act on Providing Accessibility to People with Special Needs of 19 July 2019[51].

The Act of international law that is particularly important for improving the quality of life of people with disabilities, setting the stage for building inclusive communities, is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), ratified by Poland on 6 September 2012. Article 1 of the UNCRPD states that its purpose is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity[52]. The ratification of the UNCRPD placed an obligation on Poland to remove all barriers faced by persons with disabilities to the effective realisation of their rights, including the right to live in the community on an equal basis with others (Art. 19). Coordinating the implementation of the UNCRPD at the central level is the responsibility of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, who, together with the Team for the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[53], presents cyclical reports on activities aimed at the implementation of the adopted obligations. Separate reports on this subject are presented by the Ombudsman together with the Commission of Experts on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the social consultative and advisory body) appointed by the Ombudsman.[54]

Persons with disabilities, their environment and their representative organisations are also active in the process of monitoring the implementation of the Convention in Poland. In 2015, the first Social Alternative Report on the implementation of the UNCRPD was produced; updated in 2018 with information on key violations of the Convention's provisions[55]. Both documents were submitted to the

48 Current text of the Polish Constitution https://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/polski/kon1.htm

49 The Parliamentary resolution – Charter of Rights of Persons with Disabilities https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/karta-praw-osob-z-niepelnosprawnoscia

50 Amended Act https://www.gov.pl/web/dostepnosc-cyfrowa/nowe-przepisy-ustawy-o-dostepnosci-cyfrowej

51 Information material https://niepelnosprawni.gov.pl/p,176,ustawa-o-zapewnianiu-dostepnosci-osobom-ze-szczegolnymi-potrzebami

52 Current text of the Convention https://niepelnosprawni.gov.pl/a,53,konwencja-onz-o-prawach-osob-niepelnosprawnych

53 https://niepelnosprawni.gov.pl/p,110,zespol-ds-konwencji-o-prawach-osob-niepelnosprawnych

54 https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/komisja-ekspert%C3%B3w-ds-os%C3%B3b-z-niepe%C5%82nosprawno%C5%9Bci%C4%85-%E2%80%93-sprawozdanie-z-dzia%C5%82a%C5%84-w-2018-r

55 Content of the report http://konwencja.org/cala-tresc-raportu/. The Report update https://konwencja.org/aktualizacja-spolecznego-raportu-alternatywnego/

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UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and taken into account when formulating recommendations for Poland[56].

Another form of monitoring the implementation of the provisions of the UNCRPD in Poland, which has been initiated and implemented by the non-governmental community, are the Congresses of Persons with Disabilities - organised annually since 2015[57] (preceded by regional/sub-regional Conventions of Persons with Disabilities, which are a platform for discussing issues important for regional environments of persons with disabilities and their families, organisations and other professional institutions; in the Lower Silesian Voivodship the last two Conventions were organised and hosted by self-advocacy groups operating at the Eudajmonia Foundation).

An important document making the possibility of building inclusive communities a reality is the Government's Strategy for Persons with Disabilities for the years 2021-2030.[58] The document assumes a comprehensive, horizontal, cross-sectoral approach of public policy to support persons with disabilities, taking into account their needs for independent living and social inclusion. Based on this diagnosis of the actual situation of persons with disabilities, 8 priority areas of the Strategy have been identified: Independent Living, Accessibility, Education, Work, Living Conditions and Social Protection, Health, Awareness Building, Coordination. Within the Independent Living priority it is planned, among others, to initiate a process of deinstitutionalisation (in line with the upcoming European Guidelines for the transition from institutional care to community-based support) with the appropriate involvement of the community, including in particular organisations of persons with disabilities and social economy actors.

The next step in implementing the idea of independent living and social inclusion of persons with disabilities was the adoption in August 2022 by the Polish government of the Strategy for the Development of Social Services, Public Policy until 2030 (with an outlook until 2035). The Strategy defines directions for people requiring support in daily functioning: giving priority to community-based social services over institutional care, supporting the development of individualised community-based social services, including services of a preventive nature, which will reduce the need for institutional care[59]. At the regional level, coordination of the Strategy's implementation will be carried out by provincial governments through the Regional Centres for Social Policy (ROPS), which will develop regional plans for the development of social services and deinstitutionalization (these will have a direct impact on the disbursement of ESF funds stimulating the development of community services).

Another important step to support independent living for persons with disabilities was the adoption of the Act of 28 July 2023 amending the Social Assistance Act and certain other acts, which expands the catalogue of entities authorised to operate training or supported accommodation (it also changes the nomenclature by dropping the name of sheltered housing). The amendment has introduced new

56 Recommendations https://www.rpo.gov.pl/sites/default/files/Rekomendacje%20Komitetu%20ONZ%20dla%20Polski%20%28j%C4%99z.%20angielski%29.pdf;

57 Congress reports from 2017-2019 https://konwencja.org/, from 2022-2023 https://pfon.org/kongres/

58 https://niepelnosprawni.gov.pl/p,170,strategia-na-rzecz-osob-z-niepelnosprawnosciami-2021-2030

59 https://www.deinstytucjonalizacja.info/blog/strategia-rozwoju-uslug-spolecznych-opublikowana-w-monitorze-polskim

services to the social assistance scheme, i.e. care services provided in the form of neighbourhood services and short-term stays at social assistance homes in the form of day or 24-hour care[60].

In November 2023, work carried out with ESF funds by the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Persons with Disabilities, together with the social partners, on the drafting of a new law, together with its implementing acts, as well as proposed amendments to other laws that will implement the provisions of the Convention, was completed[61]. The expected adoption of the proposed law will be a milestone in realising the rights of persons with disabilities to live independently in inclusive communities.

A3. Desk research findings – Finland

Through the UNCRPD (Articles 3 and 4), Finland is committed to the fact that all decisions regarding disabled persons must be closely negotiated with disabled persons. People with disabilities must also be actively involved through the organizations that represent them. One of the principles of the UNCRPD is the full and effective participation and inclusion of people in society[62].

The National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities determines the measures that will be taken to promote the implementation of the Convention in different administrative branches during the second action plan period 2020-2023[63]. The Action Plan emphasises the importance of social inclusion of persons with disabilities in the changing operating environment and the importance of accessibility as a precondition for implementing the other rights. One of the main objectives of the Action Plan is to increase awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and to mainstream these rights in different administrative branches and more widely in society.

Report on the realization of human rights in the everyday life of disabled people[64]. The survey was carried out by the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (VANE) by order in summer and autumn 2023 as part of the University of Helsinki's Exercise of Rights the everyday life of disabled people research project. It was made to support the national implementation of the UN Convention on Disability and the action program in the period 2024–2027. The subject of the survey was the disabled persons' own experiences in everyday situations and how they see the rights of people with disabilities being realized in the early 2020s in Finland. Based on the results of the survey, it can be stated that the rights of many disabled people are constantly insulted and there are serious deficiencies in their safety. The structural aspects of society (obstructiveness of the built environment, information and deficiencies in digital accessibility, insufficient disability services, bureaucracy,

60 https://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/DU/2023/1693

61 A draft of the Act with Explanatory Memorandum https://wyrownywanieszans.mrips.gov.pl/materialy-do-pobrania/

62 Finland, up-to-date legislation on UN CRPD https://www.finlex.fi/fi/sopimukset/sopsteksti/2016/20160027/20160027_2

63 Right to social inclusion and equity: National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020-2023) https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163217

64 Report on the realization of human rights in the everyday life of disabled people https://tuhat.helsinki.fi/ws/portalfiles/portal/283164457/loppuraportti.pdf

deficiencies related to the realization of the services provided, etc.) and social obstacles (attitude, lack of awareness, etc.) should be dismantled.

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: Securing the inclusion of people with disabilities in disability services — Report by the working group on promoting inclusion[65]. The aim of the working group was to secure and further increase the inclusion of people with disabilities in the decision-making and organisation of services concerning them, clarify the legal remedies for choosing the way of organising services; improve the quality of services, strengthen the right to receive services that meet individual needs; and increase the equal treatment of people with disabilities. The government proposal for the overall reform of legislation on services for people with disabilities (159/2018), which lapsed in spring 2019, served as the basis for the working group's discussions. The working group's proposals concern the proposed provisions and reasoning related to the client processes in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance and the Social Welfare Act. The provisions concern supporting the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities, assessing the need for services, planning services, and making and implementing decisions. In addition to the proposals for strengthening inclusion, the working group proposes that a number of provisions together with their reasoning be added to the new act on services for people with disabilities to improve the ex ante legal protection of people with disabilities.

Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities VANE: The Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the national coordinating mechanism for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Its function is to promote national implementation of the Convention and to take into account the rights of persons with disabilities in all aspects of government. The Board operates under Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. It consists of representatives of ministries, persons with disabilities and their families, labour market organisations as well as representatives from regional and local government[66].

The Disability Rights Committee operates as a permanent division under the Human Rights Delegation. Under Article 33(3) of CRPD, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations shall be involved and participate fully in the monitoring process of CRPD implementation. The Disability Rights Committee was set up for this purpose. The Committee works to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Finland[67].

Report: Human Rights Center: Equal participation of persons with disabilities in society - what does the situation look like? [68]. Equal participation of persons with disabilities is unfinished in society: It is not

65 Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: Securing the inclusion of people with disabilities in disability services — Report by the working group on promoting inclusion https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162611/STM_2020_37_R.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

66 Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities VANE https://vane.to/en/frontpage https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2016/20160908

67 Disability Rights Committee https://www.humanrightscentre.fi/about-us/human-rights-delegation/disability-rights-committee-viok/

68 Report: Human Rights Center: Equal participation of persons with disabilities in society - what does the situation look like? https://bin.yhdistysavain.fi/1586428/idU8vpNfUXK4V3b8hdGU0UnVV-/Yhdenvertainen%20osallisuus%20yhteiskunnassa.pdf

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enough to remove obstacles to better inclusion, rather, measures must be taken to advance the change ("transformative equality"). Involvement ("involve"): the contracting parties must actively involve disabled persons about themselves for the planning, preparation, implementation and for monitoring. Good social inclusion requires people with disabilities listening to people, involving them. For all of this, we also need attitude modification in society more broadly.

Non-Discrimination Ombudsman: Equal Participation for Persons with Disabilities in Working Life[69]. One of the focus areas of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman has been in 2021—2022 the promotion of the inclusion of disabled people in working life. The goal of the publication is to support, for example, employers and the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, employment offices and disability services experts in promoting the employment of disabled people. The purpose of the publication is to bring up measures that promote participation in working life.

A4. Desk Research findings - Hungary

The basic measure of a society's development is how it relates to its citizens with disabilities, and to what extent it takes into account the interests and points of view of those who are forced to live with some kind of disadvantage during its decisions.

With the adoption of Act XXVI of 1998 on the Rights and Equal Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities, Hungary created a basic document aimed at defining the rights of persons with disabilities, the means of enforcing their rights, and regulating the complex rehabilitation to be provided to persons with disabilities, and as a result, ensuring equal opportunities, independent living and active participation in social life of persons with disabilities.
The basic principles set out in the legislation are:

- The State, the organisations and members of society must carry out their activities in such a way that they do not cause damage that leads to disability, and conditions must be created in which people with disabilities will be able to live fuller lives and their burdens arising from their disability can be reduced.
- Behaviour and activities related to persons with disabilities must be carried out in such a way as to prevent the worsening of the disabled condition and mitigate its consequences.
- During planning and decision-making processes, the special needs of persons with disabilities must be given priority, and attention must be paid to the fact that persons with disabilities can only take advantage of the opportunities available to anyone if special solutions are applied.
- When making decisions concerning people with disabilities, it must be taken into account that persons with disabilities are equal members of society and the local community, therefore conditions must be created that enable them to participate in social life.
- The state is obliged to ensure the enforcement of the rights of persons with disabilities and the operation of an institutional system compensating for the disadvantages of

69 Non-Discrimination Ombudsman: Equal Participation for Persons with Disabilities in Working Life https://yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu.fi/documents/

persons with disabilities in accordance with the current possibilities of the national economy.

The legislation also defines the main areas of measures to be implemented in the National Disability Programme in order to achieve the goals and provide basic principles.
The programme has four target areas that set out objectives to be achieved:

- raising social awareness,
- improving the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families,
- active participation in the life of society,
- rehabilitation.

The programme must be enforced in health, employment, social policy, education, transport planning, urban development and other decisions falling within the scope of state planning.
The Programme (valid 2015-2025) contains a long-term concept. Its implementation requires carefully planned, coordinated measures, which **define as Action Plans** the implementation of tasks, the available resources, the metrics required for their fulfilment, the cooperation of the professional areas and the continuous monitoring of the measures.

Hungary **ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the related Optional Protocol** adopted within the framework of the United Nations in New York on 13 December 2006 **by Act XCII of 2007**. With this, Hungary has committed itself to accept and comply with its provisions.
The Convention brings together the fundamental rights of people with disabilities as a code and sets out what governments should do to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

With the adoption of Act CXXV of 2003 on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities, the legal and institutional framework of anti-discrimination equal opportunities policy has been established in Hungary. The legislation defines disadvantaged groups suffering discrimination and indicates the mechanism of sanctioning. The law applies to legal relationships in all areas of life, providing detailed rules on employment, social benefits, health, housing, education and training, and the use of goods and services. According to the Act, each local government adopts a five-year local equal opportunities programme every five years, which it must review every two years. After 1 July 2013, local governments may participate in tenders financed domestically, co-financed by the EU or from other sources, if they have a local equal opportunities programme in force. The Equal Treatment Authority **has been set up**, whose task is to investigate violations under the law, approve possible settlements and, if necessary, determine sanctions.
For the target groups and target areas defined in the above legislation, special administrative legislation has been enacted, in which the personal and material and entitlement conditions of services and benefits, as well as the conditions for cash and in-kind benefits are laid down.

The legislation on social benefits preceded the rules on equal opportunities but has undergone significant changes since 1993. In the field of benefits and services, new services have been created that aim to ensure the realization of independent living. The process of "deinstitutionalization" has begun, but implementation is not smooth. According to the legislation in force, it is mandatory for

local governments with more than 10,000 inhabitants to organize day care for people with disabilities, during which access must be ensured. The state provides specialist care for persons with disabilities. Both the local government and the state can provide services under a supply contract – with church and civil contributors.

In addition to performing state tasks, the activities of civil society organizations are also significant in Hungary. In addition to national organizations, there are also regional organizations. The operation of NGOs is essential, as they are organized from the bottom up, they seek and respond to needs that appear at community level and are based on real needs. NGOs are present both as service providers and as interest representatives in the field of social services.

The creation of independent living for people with disabilities has undergone significant changes in recent decades. The legal regulation is constantly changing, but the change of attitude necessary for its implementation and implementation into everyday practice has not been implemented in all areas. It is essential to adopt good practices that will help to expand social inclusion.

B5. Legislative / Policy and strategic directions on EU level for the inclusion of persons with disabilities

1. ***Existing legislation, funding instruments and policies at EU level***

The EU promotes the inclusion of persons with disabilities and the development of inclusive communities through legislation, funding and policies. The most important instruments in this respect are:

- Legislation
    - The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The EU, as well as its member states, have ratified the UNCRPD. This means that every EU country must protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The European Commission coordinates the implementation of the Convention at EU level.
    - The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (CFEU). The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (CFR) enshrines certain political, social, and economic rights for European Union (EU) citizens and residents into EU law.
- Funding

The EU promotes human rights and social inclusion through its funding instruments. On the one hand, by using these funds for projects and interventions in the area of human rights and social inclusion, as well as by making access to some funds conditional to the existence of relevant social inclusion frameworks at national level. This is the case for the funds which are governed by the Common Provisions Regulation, including the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus and the Cohesion Fund. Annual grants for EU-level organisations of persons with disabilities and NGOs are available through the CERV and EaSI programme.

- Policy

The EU further fosters social inclusion through various policy frameworks. These frameworks are not legally binding, but set the objectives, guidelines and priorities of the EU to move to a more inclusive Europe, and are often backed up by the commitment of Member States through council conclusions or council recommendations. The most relevant policy frameworks addressing the inclusion of persons with disabilities are the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, the Disability Employment Package, the European Care Strategy, the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee.

2. ***How is inclusion promoted by the EU?***

Inclusion of persons with disabilities as an overarching principle

- Article 26 of the CFEU concerning the integration of persons with disabilities states that *"The Union recognises and respects the right of persons with disabilities to benefit from measures designed to ensure their independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the community."*
- The European Pillar of Social Rights states that people with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures living in dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs (principle 17).
- The UNCRPD's third General Principle (in Article 3) is the full and effective participation and inclusion in society.

Disability rights advocate groups are uploading the voice of people with disabilities at EU level

At the European Parliament, a specific ""Disability Intergroup"" brings together MEPs from different political groups as well as civil society organisations (many of them representing persons with disabilities, service providers, etc.) to defend rights of persons with disabilities and discuss possible improvements of EU policies in this respect. The European Commission consults the implementation of UNCRPD and member state level in the Disability platform expert group which consist of the representatives from the European Commission, experts from EU member states and representatives from several EU-level NGOs, including persons with disabilities.

Independent Living, community-based services, and community inclusion

- The UNCPRD's Article 19 is crucial when it comes to inclusion of persons with disabilities in the community. Through this Article, *State Parties* ***recognise the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community****, with choices equal to others, and they commit to take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including by ensuring that:*
    - *a) Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;*

- *b) Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;*
- *c) Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.*

- UN Guidelines on Deinstitutionalisation also offer further interpretation of what community-based support entails: *"A core element of living independently and being included in the community is that all persons with disabilities have the support, based on their own choices, that they may require to carry out daily activities and participate in society. Support should be individualized, personalized and offered through a variety of options. Support encompasses a wide range of formal assistance, as well as informal community-based networks."* The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' General Comment 5 gives further clarification on Article 19, with a specific paragraph on community inclusion: *"[The right to be included in the community]* ***includes living a full social life and having access to all services offered to the public and to support services offered to persons with disabilities to enable them to be fully included and participate in all spheres of social life.*** *These services can relate, among others, to housing, transport, shopping, education, employment, recreational activities and all other facilities and services offered to the public, including social media. The right also includes having access to all measures and events of political and cultural life in the community, among others, public meetings, sports events, cultural and religious festivals and any other activity in which the person with disability wishes to participate".*
- In the European Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it is emphasised that *"Persons with disabilities, old and young, have an equal right to live independently and be included in the community, with choices equal to those of others about their place of residence and with whom and how they live. (…) Independent living requires a differentiated landscape of quality, accessible, person-centred and affordable, community- and family-based services comprising personal assistance, medical care and interventions by social workers, thereby facilitating everyday activities and providing choice to persons with disabilities and their families."* However, the Strategy points out that much remains still to be done in this respect: *"Still, many persons with disabilities, adults and children, are segregated from community life and do not have control over their daily lives, in particular those living in institutions. This is mainly due to the insufficient provision of appropriate community-based services, housing and technical aids, as well as to the limited availability of support for families and of personal assistance, including in the area of mental health."* The Strategy therefore states that reinforced efforts by Member States is required, and that the Commission will use different funding instruments to foster deinstitutionalisation and independent living in the EU.
- Another element of community inclusion is enshrined in UNCRPD Article 30, in which State Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport. In the European Disability Strategy, the

EC has announced it will launch a study evaluating the implementation of Article 30 of the UNCRPD to support Member States in policies to increase the participation of and support to persons with disabilities in sport, culture and leisure activities. In addition, to facilitate persons with disabilities taking part in these activities abroad during short-term stays, the EU has recently introduced the European Disability Card.

- Also local and regional policy-makers from different cities and regions in the European Union call for appropriate frameworks and action to be put in place at local, national and European level to enable persons with disabilities to live an independent life and to fully participate in society. In its opinion on the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) stresses, for example "that people with disabilities must be given every opportunity to lead an independent life, and that the right to autonomy throughout their lifetime must be guaranteed." The CoR also points to "the key role played by all persons with disabilities as experts on themselves. It considers that "local and regional authorities play a key role when it is necessary to recognise their active participation in the decision-making processes, including on accessibility."
- Community-led Local Development is an instrument put at the disposal of local communities in the framework of Cohesion Policy/Cohesion Policy Funds and other European Funds (such as ESF+, ERDF but also EAFRD). It provides financial support for a bottom-up development and implementation of strategies and initiatives at local level by so-called local action groups composed of public and private local actors. CLLD can be of relevance also for the creation and realisation of local strategies for inclusive communities.

Upcoming: The European Commission will issue **Guidance on deinstitutionalisation and independent living,** expected in the second half of 2024. It will also communicate a **Framework for Social Services of Excellence for Persons with Disabilities**, also expected towards the end of 2024.

Family-based care and inclusion of children with disabilities

- The right of a child to grow up in a family and in the community is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) .
- The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child states that all children, including those with disabilities and from disadvantaged groups, have an equal right to live with their families and in a community. In addition, it states that integrated child protection systems, including effective prevention, early intervention and family support, should provide children without or at risk of losing parental care the necessary conditions to prevent family separation.
- The European Child Guarantee aims to guarantee effective access of children in need to key services, and children with disabilities are among the target groups. This objective is backed up by ESF+, as Member States with a child poverty level above the EU average, should dedicate at least 5% of their ESF+ resources to combat child poverty and social exclusion of children. Other Member States are also encouraged to invest in this objective.

Accessibility and access to mainstream services

- The Commission states that accessibility to the built and virtual environments, to information and communication technologies, goods and services, is an enabler of rights and prerequisite for the full participation of persons with disabilities (the European Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).
- The Common Provisions Regulation states that accessibility for persons with disabilities shall be taken into account throughout the preparation and implementation of funding programmes. In addition, improving accessibility for persons with disabilities is among the priorities of both the ESF+ and ERDF.

Inclusive education

- The right to inclusive education is enshrined in the UNCRPD Article 24, and General Comment 4. The European Pillar of Social Rights also enshrines the right to inclusive education (principle 1), and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child states that access to inclusive, non-segregated, quality education should be guaranteed. Inclusive education is also a priority of the European Education Area, and the European Child Guarantee.
- Early Childhood Education and Care is also a priority area of the EU, and access is being promoted through the Barcelona targets.
- In the European Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Commission states that *"many children and young persons with disabilities are enrolled in special schools which do not always offer effective bridges to the mainstream education system, continued training, or to the labour market."* In this respect, in the ESRPD the Commission emphasises once more that persons with disabilities have the right to participate in all educational levels and forms, including early childhood education and care on an equal basis with others. The Commission also calls on Member States to support the development of inclusive schools.
- European funds, in particular ESF+ and ERDF can also be used to foster, develop and promote inclusive education systems.

Inclusive employment and social economy

- In the UNCRPD's Article 27, State Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others, which *"includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities".* General Comment 8 gives further guidance on how to interpret this article.
- The European Pillar of Social Rights states that everyone has the right to active support to employment (principle 4).

- The European Commission launched its Disability Employment Package which should support Member States in ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy social inclusion and economic autonomy through employment. Some key deliverables are: Strengthening capacities of employment and integration services; promoting hiring perspectives through affirmative action and combating stereotypes; ensuring reasonable accommodation at work; exploring quality jobs in sheltered employment and pathways to the open labour market.
- The European Commission, in its Action Plan for the Social Economy, highlights the need to more strongly promote social economy entrepreneurship as an opportunity for persons with disabilities (as entrepreneurs or employees of social economy enterprises and organisations).

Political and public engagement

- In the European Disability Strategy, the EC stresses the importance of further action to implement Article 29. To support this effort, it has published a guide of good electoral practice addressing participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process. In addition, the Commission financially supports inclusive democratic participation, including for persons with a disability, through the Citizenship, Equalities, Rights and Values programme (CERV).

B. National Field Study Research Report

B.1 Methodology

The field research aimed at a) collecting in-depth and localised information on key challenges and barriers linked to the creation and maintenance of high-quality level inclusive communities for PwD and b) ensuring early-stage involvement of local communities achieving full participation by the target groups. The research activities followed a multi-stakeholder approach, in order to target the different needs and areas of interest of the audiences and to empower and cooperate with all actors (local authorities, service providers, NGOs, PwD, and other local stakeholders) involved in the process of creating and improving sustainability and inclusiveness of local communities. Having included the voices of all the above stakeholders, the ICALL Consortium will be able to later develop a tailored awareness-raising and capacity-building programme according to PwD needs.

The field study involved two activities: online surveys and focus groups which were conducted by the partner countries, Hungary, Finland, Poland and Greece. The following target audiences were addressed in the field study:

- Local authorities: Municipalities, Local Governments, Secretariats, other local-level structures responsible for coordinating and implementing social cohesion, diversity, leisure, cultural and inclusion activities, that play a fundamental role for the design of the public sphere and the infrastructure of services, and therefore are crucial to ensure that local communities are inclusive.
- PwDs advocates and representative organizations: Persons with disabilities should always be involved in activities that concern them, as they can best indicate what their preferences, interests and needs are ("nothing about us without us" principle). PwDs advocates and advocacy organizations were therefore involved in all research activities.
- Service Providers: Addressing Service provider services (both mainstream and targeted services for persons with disabilities, NGOs, volunteering associations and leisure centres) is crucial to ensure disabled persons' inclusion in the community.

B2. Online surveys

Online surveys were designed and distributed involving a larger audience at a local, regional and national level generalizing findings to larger populations. Three different surveys were designed in order to fully address the needs of the aforementioned target audiences. These were disseminated in the national networks through all the available dissemination channels of the partner organizations in Hungary, Finland, Poland and Greece. Survey questions were closed-ended and scored on a Likert scale 0 to 5, allowing respondents to express their agreement, disagreement, or neutrality about the statements presented: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree . All surveys included demographic questions (i.e. representing organization, the position of respondent, target audience, how many beneficiaries they support) (*see annex 2 for survey questions*).

B2.1 Survey findings - Greece

Local Authorities:
Five people in total (N=5) representing local authorities from different Municipalities of Attica region (social services, administrative officers) and Local-level Authorities responsible for coordinating and implementing social cohesion, diversity, leisure, cultural and inclusion activities responded to the survey.

In regards to how accessible are spaces for people with disabilities, answers were mixed with 20% disagreeing to public spaces being accessible, 40% being neutral and 40% agreeing. In regards to "whether community activities are addressed to the public and how open they are to PwDs", the majority of respondents disagreed (20% disagree, 40% neutral) and 40% agreed (20% agree, 20% strongly agree). Moving on to the question "whether the local authorities did employ PwDs" the majority of respondents agreed (80%). In regards to the final question "whether PwDs are taken into

consideration when designing local community activities" 60% of the answers were positive (40% agree and 20% strongly agree), the rest 40% remained neutral.

Service Providers:
Eleven people in total (N=11) responded to the survey. Respondents were working as staff members of different Organizations (i.e. NGOs, Day centers, Rehabilitation Units, Assisted Living Facilities) who provide direct and everyday support PwDs. Respondents were of various backgrounds i.e. administrative employees, psychologists, unit coordinators, social workers, directors, president or members of the Board of Directions). The number of beneficiaries supported by each organization ranged from 35 to 345 people.

In regards to the space accessibility factor and "whether local communities have undealt issues with physical/space accessibility that hinder the access to community resources for PwDs" more than 70% of respondents (27.3% strongly agree and 45.5% agree) recognized significant difficulties for PwDs accessing public spaces whereas the 27.3% remained neutral. As per question "In your local community there are issues with language accessibility that hinder the access to community resources for PwDs" 27.3% of the people replied neutral, 54.5% agree and 18.2% strongly agree. The question about "whether the local community is inclusive and welcoming for PwDs" most of the answers acknowledged an accepting community (54.5% agree and 9.1% strongly agree). As to whether PwDs participate in community programs that are primarily addressed to the general public" responses revealed varying levels of participation; 9.1% strongly agree, while 63.6% agree, 9.1% remained neutral and 18.2% disagree. Participants were also asked if they "provide support for the development/sustainability of informal networks (excluding paid staff) around their beneficiaries", the significant majority of almost 90% agreed that they facilitate the creation/sustainability of national community networks and the 9. 1% was neutral. Regarding the participation and advocacy of PwDs in the context of the Service Providing Organizations the question posed was "whether respondents support the beneficiaries to have a voice/are involved in the decision making of the organization", interestingly, there was no strong agreement indicated (45.5% agreeing), 27.3% being neutral and rather important disagreement at at 27% (18.2% disagreeing and 9.1% strongly disagree). Respondents indicated similar results as to whether " the people they support have a voice/are involved in the decision making in respect to their everyday life", only 45.5% agreed, 27.3% were neutral and 27% disagreed (18.2% disagreeing and 9.1% strongly disagree). Finally, the important question on the contribution of PwDs in the local communities (i.e. volunteering, employment) results were neutral to negative, with 36.4% disagreeing, 27.3% being neutral and 36.4% disagreeing.

PwDs, Advocate organizations:
In total fourteen PwDs and representative organizations participated in the survey (N=14). The respondents were mostly PwDs and some representatives of PwDs from the advocacy organizations (i.e. Assisted Living Facilities) who were mediators in order to facilitate the response of PwDs to the survey.

The first question was about whether PwDs have adequate support regarding living independently. Most respondents were neutral or disagreed/strongly disagreed (14.3%, 14.3% and 21.4% accordingly). In regards to the support for having an independent social life, respondents were 57.1% agreeing and 42.8% were neutral or disagreed (7.1%, 21.4% and 14.3% strongly disagree). In the important question about having adequate support so that they can be active and contributing members of the community, the vast majority of respondents were either negative or neutral (35.7% were neutral, 28.6% disagreed and 14.3% strongly disagreed). As to whether public spaces are accessible for PwDs (space accessibility) 64.3% of respondents disagreed (21.4% strongly disagree, 42.9% disagree) and 35.7% neutral. About the opportunities that PwDs have in order to participate in programs (i.e. community sport activities, cultural activities) that are addressed for the general public, 78.7 % disagreed (14.3% strongly disagreed, 36.7% disagreed) or were neutral (21.4% were neutral). When asking about the community attitudes and more specifically if "the local community is welcoming and inclusive to PwD (neighbors, community centers and services); whether PwD face discrimination, racism or violence-related behaviors)" 21.4% were negative (7.1% disagree and 14.3% strongly disagree) or neutral (35.7% neutral). Finally, when asked about the access to policy-making concerning matters that influence their lives, 35.7% agreed that there is access, 28.6% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 35.7% disagreed (21.4% disagreed and 14.3% strongly disagreed).

B2.2. Survey findings - Poland

Local Authorities:

Ten individuals took part in the survey. These are local authorities. They include administrative officials, social welfare officials and municipalities' management.

"Public space is accessible to people with disabilities (accessibility of space)": 60% of all respondents disagreed with this statement, which is 6 people. Three respondents have no opinion, which is 30% of all respondents. One person agreed that public spaces are accessible to people with disabilities.
The second question concerned the claim that people with disabilities participate in community activities (e.g. sports, cultural activities) that are primarily aimed at the general public. 40% of the respondents, i.e. 4 people agreed with this statement. Five people disagreed which represents 50% of all respondents. One respondent has no opinion on the matter.
"Develop employment policies/strategies that promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market": This is another statement with which only 30% of respondents agreed. Also three respondents disagreed with the above statement. 30% of respondents do not have an opinion on this topic and one respondent strongly disagrees with the statement that local authorities develop employment policies/strategies that promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market.
"They are linked to policies/strategies that enable people with disabilities to acquire the skills and abilities needed in the labour market": Two people agreed with the next statement representing 20%

of all respondents. One person strongly agrees with this statement. 40% of respondents do not have an opinion on this issue. On the other hand, 30% of respondents, i.e. 3 people disagree.
Another statement is that when designing activities for local communities, we take into account accessible communication strategies to convey information to people with disabilities (i.e. we use text that is easy to read and understand). 5 people agreed with it, representing 50% of all respondents. 30% of respondents do not have an opinion. One person disagrees with the given statement. Also one respondent strongly disagrees.
"Do you agree with the following statement". Our institution supports multi-stakeholder collaboration and networking (i.e. collaboration with cultural centres, organisations offering direct support, families, people with disabilities) to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in various aspects of community life (employment, education, culture, social services, local democracy). This is the next question. 70% of respondents answered that they agreed with the statement. 20% disagreed and one person said they strongly disagreed.
"We employ people with disabilities": Here, all respondents, i.e. 100% answered unanimously yes.

Service providers:
Seven people responded to the survey. These are entities and organisations that provide services to persons with disabilities. These include psychologists, social workers and rehabilitation units.

The first question asked about the claim that there are architectural/spatial accessibility issues in our local community that make it difficult for people with disabilities to access community resources. 71.4% of respondents agreed with this statement. And 2 respondents representing 28.6% of respondents strongly agreed that there are architectural/space accessibility issues in our local community that make it difficult for people with disabilities to access community resources.
"There are information and communication accessibility issues in our local community that make it difficult for people with disabilities to access community resources": this is the second statement in which 71.4% of respondents agree. In contrast, 28.6% of respondents strongly agree. "We are involved in developing policies related to supporting people with disabilitie":. 42.9% of respondents agreed with this statement. One person (14.3%) has no opinion on this topic. In contrast, 3 respondents representing 42.9% strongly agree that organisations providing services to people with disabilities are too involved in creating policies related to supporting people with disabilities.
The fourth question related to the statement that the local community is friendly and inclusive to the people with disabilities we support (neighbours, community centres and service providers). This was agreed with by 85.7% of respondents, or 6 out of 7 respondents. One person strongly agrees with the given statement and represents 14.3% of all respondents.
"Those who are supported participate in programmes that are primarily aimed at the general public": Five people agreed with this statement, representing 71.40% of respondents. On the other hand, 14.3% or one respondent disagrees that people who are supported participate in programmes that are primarily aimed at the general public. One person also has no opinion on this issue.
"The next question concerns the claim that we support the development/sustainability of informal networks (excluding paid staff) formed around the people we support": Four respondents agreed with this statement, representing 57.1%, and 42.9% of respondents, or 3 people, have no opinion.

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"We support the recipients of our activities to have an impact/be involved in decision- making in our organisation": this is another statement with which 57.1% or 4 respondents agree and 28.6% strongly agree. One person or 14.3% has no opinion on this.
"The people we support have influence/are involved in making decisions about their daily lives": 57.1% or four respondents agreed with this statement. 28.6% strongly agreed and one respondent disagreed with this statement which represents 14.3% of all respondents.
The next question included the statement that "the people we support are involved in local community development (e.g. volunteering, domestic roles)": two respondents representing 28.6% of all respondents agreed with this statement. Two strongly agreed and a further two had no opinion on the matter. One person disagreed with the statement that people who are supported are involved in local community development (e.g. volunteering, domestic roles). This represents 14.3% of all respondents.

PwDs, Advocate organizations:
Five respondents participated in the survey. They are self-advocates, i.e. people with disabilities and those who represent and support people with disabilities. These include
activity coaches, assistants and coordinators.

For the first question, which concerned the statement that people with disabilities receive adequate support for independent living, 80% of the respondents answered that they do not agree with this statement. This is the opinion of 4 out of 5 respondents. One respondent answered that he strongly disagrees that people with disabilities receive adequate support for independent living. The second question asked about the statement that people with disabilities receive adequate support to live independent social lives. Three respondents disagreed that people with disabilities receive appropriate support to live an independent social life and one respondent strongly disagreed with the statement given. Moreover, when respondents asked if people with disabilities receive adequate support to be active members of the community, the majority disagreed; four people disagreed and one respondent strongly disagreed. In regards to whether public spaces are accessible for people with disabilities, four out of five respondents disagreed.

In regards to the statement "people with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in programmes (e.g. sports, cultural activities) aimed at the general public", 4 respondents answered that they disagree with the statement given and one respondent strongly disagrees that people with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in programmes aimed at the general public. In regards to the question whether the local community is welcoming and inclusive of people with disabilities (neighbours, community centres.), people with disabilities do not face discrimination, racism or violent behaviour), one respondent agreed and 4 respondents, disagreed that the local community is welcoming and inclusive of people with disabilities. The final question asked about the claim that people with disabilities are involved in policy-making with regard to supporting their rights and life choices. Four respondents disagreed with this statement and one respondent strongly disagreed.

B2.3 Survey findings – Finland

Local authorities:

A total of 7 respondents participated. Respondents generally felt that public spaces are accessible to people with disabilities, but there is variation in opinions. The average rating for the accessibility of public spaces was 3.4 (median 3.0). The participation of people with disabilities in activities open to everyone (such as sports and cultural events) was rated with an average of 3.4 (median 3.0). This suggests moderate levels of participation, with the majority feeling somewhat neutral or undecided. When planning local activities, consideration for communication methods accessible to people with disabilities (e.g., plain language, screen readers) was rated with an average of 3.7 (median 4.0), indicating a generally positive approach. Municipalities support collaboration between different stakeholders (such as disability organizations, personal assistants, families, disability councils, and people with disabilities themselves) to ensure equal opportunities for participation across various areas of life (employment, education, culture, social services, local democracy). This received a high average rating of 4.1 (median 4.0), reflecting a strong commitment to inclusive practices.

The survey results suggest a general commitment among municipalities to improve inclusivity and accessibility for people with disabilities. While there is progress in some areas, such as employment practices and accessible communication, there are still challenges, particularly regarding the consistent accessibility of public spaces and active participation in community activities. Collaboration among various stakeholders is seen as essential to fostering inclusivity, and there is strong support for continued efforts in this area.

Service providers:

A total of 8 respondents participated. Many respondents feel that their local communities face accessibility challenges, especially related to physical spaces (e.g., inaccessible civic institute facilities), the average rating for the impact of accessibility issues was 3.4 (median 4.0). Linguistic accessibility issues were also noted, such as the lack of easy-to-read information in public services, the average rating for these issues was 3.6 (median 4.0).

The survey results suggest that service providers play a significant role in supporting people with disabilities and promoting their participation in communities. Accessibility challenges, both physical and linguistic, are significant barriers that still need to be addressed. There is a noticeable commitment to influencing political policies and promoting inclusivity, but there is also room for improvement in community attitudes and the participation of service users.

PwDs, Advocate organizations:

A total of 12 respondents participated, 10 of them representing an advocate organization of some sort. Respondents generally felt that people with disabilities do not receive sufficient support for independent living. The average rating was 2.7 (median 2.5), indicating a need for improvement in this area. The support for enabling an independent social life for people with disabilities was rated even lower, with an average score of 2.3 (median 2.0). Respondents felt that there is inadequate support for people with disabilities to be active and participating members of the community, with an average

rating of 1.9 (median 2.0). Opinions on the accessibility of public spaces were mixed, with an average rating of 2.6 (median 2.5). This indicates that public spaces are perceived to be somewhat accessible but not without issues. The ability of people with disabilities to participate in general community activities (such as sports and cultural events not specifically designed for them) was rated with an average score of 2.3 (median 2.0), suggesting limited participation.

The survey results indicate significant challenges in supporting people with disabilities in achieving independent living, social life, and active community participation. Accessibility of public spaces and community inclusivity also need further improvements to ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities. The involvement of people with disabilities in decision-making processes concerning their lives remains insufficient, highlighting the need for more inclusive practices and policies.

B2.4 Survey findings - Hungary

Local authorities:

A total of 4 municipalities and one county government participated in the survey. Local leaders, representatives and an equality officer participated in the research.

In regards to the question whether PwD participate in community activities (i.e. community sport activities, cultural activities) that are primarily addressed for the general public, 40% of survey participants agreed (4), 60% completely agreed (5). On the issue of whether "we develop employment policies/strategies promoting the integration of persons with disabilities into the labour market" 40% (2) of respondents disagreed with the statement. 40% (4) of the respondents agreed, and 20% (5) fully agreed with the statement. *In the question of if these are linked to policies/strategies enabling persons with disabilities to acquire the necessary skills and capacities for the labour market*, the development of strategies is considered important by all municipalities, 60% (4) agreed, 40% (5) fully agreed with the statement. In response to the question "We actually employ PwDs. Please score this question with Yes or No", people with disabilities are employed by 80% of respondents. Furthermore, in the question "when designing local community activities we take into consideration accessible communication strategies to inform PwD (i.e. easy to ready formats)", in local community activities, 40% (5) of municipalities fully agree that disability accessible programmes are taken into account, 60% (4) agree. Finally, in the question whether "the municipality/secretariat supports multi-actor cooperation and networking (i.e liaison between community centers, direct support organizations, families, PwDs) in order to foster the inclusion of PwDs in different aspects of community life (employment, education, culture, social services, local democracy)" all municipalities consider multi-stakeholder cooperation important – 60% (4) agree, 40% (5) completely agree.

Service providers:

Respondents provided data from public and civil (40% - 60%) and manager of service providers. In their daily work, the service providers provide assistance to children and adults with disabilities in the fields of education (20%), sport (10%) and social services (70%).

"In our local community there are issues with physical/space accessibility that hinder the access to community resources for PwDs": 40% (4) of respondents agree that barriers still exist for people with

disabilities. However, 60% (2) replied that they did not agree with this statement. Double judgement may result from the fact that accessibility is already fully ensured in the newly designed spaces, and even the transformation of previously created spaces is difficult.

“In your local community there are issues with language accessibility that hinder the access to community resources for PwDs”: 100% of respondents disagree that language barriers make it difficult for people with disabilities to access community services.

“We are involved in policy making in relation to the support of PwDs” 60% of respondents (2) do not participate in political decisions. 30% (4) of service providers agree and 10% (5) fully agree that they contribute to policy decisions. There is a case law in Hungary when legislators ask service providers to consult socially before changing legislation. It can take two forms, through representative bodies and directly by contacting service providers (accessible to everyone online). Based on the replies received, the majority of service providers do not participate in these consultations.

“The local community is welcoming and inclusive to PwD that you support (neighbors, community centers and services) community attitudes”: 70% (5) of service providers fully agree and 30% (4) agree that the community is inclusive.

It is important to note here that survey respondents have a history of service providers that promote inclusiveness in communities. However, it is well known that not all communities are inclusive when launching a new service.

“Our beneficiaries participate in programs that are primarily addressed to the general public”: 80% (4) of service providers' beneficiaries participate in programmes organised for large communities. For two organisations (20%; (2)) disagrees. This is due to the fact that the two organizations cover a narrow range of groups – nursery care, special sports club.

“We support the development/sustainability of informal networks (excluding paid staff) around the people you support”: 60% (3) of service providers did not provide a relevant answer to the question. The answer may also be due to the fact that the request covers too large an area – financial issues, quality of service, launching new services. 30% of respondents (4) involve beneficiaries in decision-making, 10% (2) disagree.

“The people we support have a voice/are involved in the decision making in respect to their everyday life” In connection with the previous question, it is already clear that service providers already involve beneficiaries in everyday life, in the organization of services – 60% agree (4), 30% fully agree (5). There was one organization that could not give a relevant answer – 10% (3rd)

“The people we support contribute to the local communities (i.e. volunteering, house roles)” 90% of respondents agree (4) that the people they support contribute to community life. There was one provider (10% (2)) who disagreed, which may be due to the fact that they care for children from 24 months to 3 years old.

"Social relations are basic human needs. In order for a service provider to be able to perform its tasks as widely as possible, cooperation with other participants in service organization is necessary": 70% of respondents agree (4) with its importance, 30% fully (5) agree.

"We support our beneficiaries to have a voice/are involved in the decision making of your organization": In connection with the previous question, it is already clear that service providers already involve beneficiaries in everyday life, in the organization of services – 60% agree (4), 30% fully agree (5). There was one organization that could not give a relevant answer – 10% (3rd).

"The people we support contribute to the local communities (i.e. volunteering, house roles). 90% of respondents agree (4) that the people they support contribute to community life" There was one provider (10% (2)) who disagreed, which may be due to the fact that they care for children from 24 months to 3 years old.

PwDs, Advocate organizations:

Three national advocacy organizations completed the questionnaire. It is an organization called the National Advocacy Organization for the Blind and Visually Impaired, an advocacy organization for autistic people and an association related to child protection specialist care, where children with mild and severe disabilities are cared for.

"PwDs are supported adequately in regards to independent living" 33.33% of advocacy organisations disagree (2) 33, 33% strongly disagree (1) that people with disabilities should be adequately supported in independent living. The organisation representing the blind and partially sighted gave a neutral answer (33.33% (3)).

"PwDs are supported adequately in regards to having independent social life" In line with the previous question, respondents do not see independent living in social life as guaranteed either. 33.33% of organizations disagree, 33.33% disagree at all. The organization of the blind and visually impaired, however, agrees that the people they represent can participate in the majority social life.

"PwDs are supported adequately in regards to being active and contributing members of the community": organisations consider that the people they represent do not receive adequate support – 33.33% (2), 33.33% (1), but blind and partially sighted advocacy organisations agree 33.33% (4).

"Public spaces are accessible for PwDs (space accessibility)": Advocacy organisations, unlike service providers, consider that public spaces are not accessible (66.66 %, (2)). In one case, a neutral response was received – 33.33% (3).

"PwDs are able to participate in programs (i.e. community sport activities, cultural activities) that are addressed for the general public": Respondents gave very vivid answers. In addition to a neutral answer, 33.33% (3), one organization thought that those represented by him could participate in my programs for the majority society (33, 33% (4)), while the other organization thought that this could not be done, disagreeing with the statement - 33.33% (2).

"The local community is welcoming and inclusive to PwD (neighbors, community centers and services)? (add this description/explanation: PwD do not face discrimination, racism or violence-related

behaviors)": In contrast to service providers, advocacy organisations consider that local communities are not inclusive, i.e. disagree with the statement – 66.66% (4). One organisation, formed by self-organisation, considers that local communities are inclusive, and agrees with this statement (33.33% (4).

"PwDs are involved in policy making in relation to the support of their rights and life choices": The three advocacy organizations gave completely separate answers to the last question. One evasive response was received by 33.33% (3), one organisation strongly disagreed with the statement (33.33% (5)) and one organisation agreed with 33.33% (4).

In this questionnaire, we would like to make the remark that, apart from the past 10 years, in Hungary, mentally handicapped children and adults who did not live in families received segregated care in large institutions on the outskirts of settlements. Individuals with disabilities, on the other hand, were able to use much more integrated services, either in the field of education or employment. We believe that this significant difference is reflected in the answers to the questions.

B3. Focus Groups

The focus groups focused on identifying challenges and barriers faced by People with Disabilities (PwDs), Local Authorities (LA) and Service Providers, NGOs in creating and maintaining high-quality services, as well as the daily challenges and barriers faced by PwD in living autonomously in local communities. Four focus groups were conducted in total in Hungary, Finland, Poland and Greece with in total 70 (N=70) representatives of all the aforementioned target audiences. The focus groups took place online or in-person, based on the decision of each partner organization. Participants provided informed consent for participating in the focus groups. The questions of the focus groups were designed in an open-ended and non-directive manner in order to stimulate group discussion (*see annex 3 for focus groups questions*). Methodology, matrix transnational analysis and focus group analysis follow in the sections below.

B3.1 Focus group findings - Greece

In total, 20 people participated in the focus group, hosted by the PETAGMA Association. They were representing local authorities from different Municipalities of Attica region (social services, administrative officers/Local-level Authorities), staff members of different Organizations (i.e. NGOs, Day centers, Rehabilitation Units, Assisted Living Facilities) that provide direct support for PwDs and PwDs and representing organizations. The discussion was based on the following themes:

1. What does inclusive community mean to you?

When starting the discussion participants defined an inclusive community as:

"a community that gives multiple opportunities for accessibility and more importantly, life options and options for entertainment, not only the structural accessibility" (PwD advocate) or "I belong, I am a member and I am no different" (PwD advocacy organization representative).

They agreed that a truly accessible and inclusive community that is designed from the scratch with the value of universality, rather than a community is being later modified for specific target group minority or those who are thought to be out of normality or "outliers" (Service Provider). They further reflected on the cultural element of how communities understand and interpret inclusivity and disability (cultural inclusivity). As one stakeholder mentioned:

"when establishing inclusive policies we see in practice that people from the community do not respect PwDs and therefore these policies cannot be truly applied… this shows that inclusivity should be understood on a cultural level" (LA representative).

Participants concluded that regarding limitations PwDs face in daily life, the barriers on a physical or individual level are less important than societal barriers. When discussing the inclusion of PwDs into social and cultural life, the primary barriers often result from social stereotypes and prejudices. In particular, environmental and societal limitations are creating what we see as "dis-ability" and are the true barriers that hinder accessibility and equal community participation. Finally, the definition of an inclusive community was expanded to a community that "*acknowledges the individual characteristics and strengths of each person and provides opportunities that foster their growth and development*" (Service Provider) and "*acknowledges that all individuals within a community are interconnected with each other*" (Service Provider).

2. What are the daily challenges PwD face in respect to inclusion?

All PwDs face significant limitations in "participation" to all aspects of daily life i.e. participation in sports, entertainment, education, independent living. The societal barrier in participation that people with disabilities face in all developmental life stages has the strongest segregating effect on communities.

"There are significant human rights violations that are not formally established or protected by the state, (i.e. education settings)" (PwD). The issue of community attitudes was also mentioned strongly by PwDs and PwDs representing organizations as an everyday life challenge:

"What bothers me the most is the superficial approach of people who always assume I need help in all cases", "I do not want to be the hero, I do not want to thank you for noticing me, I want to be present and respected".

Participants further agreed on the great need to improve structural accessibility (building infrastructure, public spaces) in order for PwDs to have quality of life. At the same time participants mentioned that most safety measures (national, transport, housing, natural disaster safety measures)

are not designed or taking into account PwDs. Moreover, there is a significant lack of National Policies on the supported decision-making processes and services in regards to legal representation and informed decision making, issues with legal rights and accessibility in legal processes and information (as according to article 12 of the Convention). Continuing this thread of thought, PwDs representatives mentioned that the right for expression and choice of PwDs and especially those with Intellectual Disabilities is daily violated:

"People assume, service providers and organizations assume that they should be asked because they do not understand anyway. This is unacceptable, it is a fundamental human right. Therefore we see the social stigma, society preassumes that these people are vulnerable and incapable of doing things" (PwD). "The most important thing is to transfer the power to PwDs" (Service Provider). Prejudices within the Service Providing organizations also exist: "viewing PwDs as children as inadequate or those who should be overprotected" (Service Provider, PwD representative).

3. How can we work towards community development? What does it mean? (i.e. partnerships with local communities and organisations?)

Participants mentioned that when building inclusive communities one should have in mind the following factors:

"They can be achieved only at the local level. In greater contacts, as in big cities or on a national level, inclusion can be found as a general principle, a policy, a directive. However, the collaboration of National and Local Governments and the civil society are major key players in building sustainable and inclusive local communities" (Service Provider).

Language shift brings a Power shift: "*Using an inclusive language is both informative and a mind changer*" Focusing on the strengths and not weaknesses can foster social change. PwDs should be seen by all segments of society as active citizens and contributing members of society and not passive service users. language that all can understand and a language with no negative connotations" (PwD). "*Raising awareness programs for Local Authorities, Public Services and stakeholders, school educational programs and initiatives that engage different segments of the community is the key to inclusive community development"*. Finally, Art can be used as a medium to create bridges for dialogue and exchange, to depict values and to foster community cohesion and wellbeing.

4. Solutions/ ideas/suggestions that could address the above challenges?

"The collaboration between the State and the Parenting organizations for the support of PwDs is the most successful example of the collaboration between the Public and Private Sector. Collaboration is needed for Inclusivity, it is beneficial and financially profitable for the community; Exclusion Policies are those that have significant social and financial costs" (Service Provider)

"*Inclusive communities must have employment, volunteering and entertainment options for PwDs. People should have access to money and access to trade something with the community. This is Power.* " (PwD).
"In addition to that, when PwDs can participate in social life, have access to bars, nightlife, they can be seen. This is changing society's attitudes towards disability" (PwD).

Conclusion

While progress has been noted in the policy frameworks for PwDs in Greece, the findings showcase that significant challenges still exist in important aspects of community life: public space (structural) accessibility and language inclusivity, opportunities for employment, opportunities for participation in shared community resources (for all citizens) and having social life. Importantly, the possibility for "active participation" in all community aspects remains significantly challenged: PwDs do not have equal opportunities to participate and to contribute to their local communities. As shown, PwDs have limited participation and influence in the decision-making processes of their lives; in terms of everyday life choices when living independently or within a service providing organization but also in terms of State policy-making. A holistic, intersectoral approach involving all stakeholders —local authorities, NGOs, and PwD advocates and advocacy organizations— seems to be the key in building inclusive communities.

B3.2 Focus group findings - Poland

The focus group meeting was attended by 15 people from among NGOs, local government units, organisations presenting PwD and people with disabilities in person. The first post that kicked off the meeting was the phrase 'Nothing about us without us' uttered by one of the self-advocates (persons with disabilities and representatives). After a brief presentation of the project and introducing themselves, the participants discussed the results of the surveys and moved on to answer the following questions:

1. What does an inclusive community mean to you?

'There is a lack of openness and tolerance for other people in our community. For us to become an inclusive community, we would have to start being empathetic and non- judgmental (NGOs).' 'To me inclusive means open, involved - also in finding solutions, e.g. ones that enable people with disabilities to participate in society (local government units- LA).' 'Such a community is accessible to everyone, it does not exclude anyone for any reason - it is diverse in many ways (NGO).' 'In building it is also important to learn from our own mistakes, but also to learn from each other. (PwD)'

2. What daily challenges do people with disabilities face in terms of inclusion?

"It is important for people with disabilities to build self-confidence and self-awareness so that they also look for resources in themselves, as this is the basis for independent coping in everyday life (NGOs)'. Overcoming the fear of rejection by those around them is also an important aspect - often people with disabilities withdraw from life out of fear of non- acceptance 'and do not give themselves a chance to be included in society (NGOs)'. 'It is also necessary for the voice of people with disabilities to resound and be heard, because without demanding their rights, no change will be achieved (NGO).' Another challenge is the de-subjectification of people with disabilities. Both the family environment, the neighbourhood and representatives of wider institutions (e.g. doctors, officials) often do not treat people with disabilities as equal partners in discussions, decision-making - including self-determination. 'A great deal depends on the environment in which a person with a disability functions on a daily basis. In the Foundation we are treated as full participants in society, whereas, for example, at the doctor' s office, we are denied our full rights simply because we have a declared disability (PwD)'. 'We are often controlled by our families, although we are already adults who are responsible for ourselves PwD)'. 'Inclusion is also often prevented by architectural, communication, attitudinal, stereotypical and prejudicial barriers (NGO)'. ' I understood how difficult it must be, for example, for people who use a wheelchair, when I had to walk through the city with a suitcase on wheels. This was a test of the accessibility of public spaces. Then I experienced a fraction of the inadequacy of spaces that PwDs face on a daily basis (Local Governments Units). Institutional assistance issues are also an external challenge. Above all, too few assistant hours mean that people with disabilities cannot integrate into society as they would like. 'I often have to choose between an assistantship when I go to the doctor and one when I want to go to the cinema. I choose to go to the doctor;s appointment, and there are not enough assisted hours for me (PwD) to include in social life or travel anymore.' Another barrier is the fear of losing the benefits coming from the institution '(...) if I try to go to work, I will lose almost all the benefits, because I will be earning money, and if after a few days it turns out that, for example, I cannot do this job, because I feel bad in it, because it worsens my health, then I will be left destitute, because I will not have a paycheck, but I will not have benefits either (PwD and representatives)'. A huge problem is over-institutionalisation - a topic that has been raised many times. People with disabilities are often 'condemned to be incapacitated, even though they could function freely outside the institution - all it would take would be appropriate support from an assistant or a supported decision-making (NGO) coach'. 'Many system solutions are created for the norm, while they should be created for the person. It is a very important task to find system solutions that are proposed by people with special needs with the support of specialists. Then it will be possible to create solutions that are good for society and that can be used by everyone regardless of disabilities or limitations (NGOs).'

3. How can we work for community development? What does this mean? (i.e. partnerships with local communities and organisations?)

'The basis should be education from the earliest years - in schools, homes, organisations running activities, TV etc. Talking about disability, how to facilitate PwD inclusion in society (NGOs)'. 'Our attitudes are to set an example - we are not to be indifferent or reactive when something is wrong. (PwD). It is also important to educate about disabilities that cannot be seen but make everyday life

difficult ‘It is difficult to exercise the rights that people with disabilities have when they are invisible (LA)’. ‘There also needs to be changes in the law that are influenced by people with disabilities as well as NGOs and LA. Those that will enable people with disabilities to be involved in issues that affect them’ (NGOs). It is also important to emphasise that change happens in society ‘Most social change happens in the streets and not in offices’.

4. Solutions/ ideas/suggestions that could address the above challenges?

‘There needs to be more representation of people with disabilities, their visibility, so that they are not treated like a small group whose demands are not relevant’ (NGO). ‘Building resistance groups, as it were, that will draw the attention of people who do not treat people with disabilities with respect and will express loud opposition when they witness such situations’ (NGO). ‘Inter-subjective and inter-sectoral cooperation and exchange of experiences is necessary so that it is possible, for example, to employ people with disabilities, because at the moment it is difficult because of a lot of paperwork and the cost of such an employee.’ (NGO). ‘It would be useful to have a buffer so that PwD are not afraid to go to work and lose benefits, because they know that for e.g. 3 months they can work and have benefits’ (NGO).

Conclusion

People with disabilities and their representative organisations and associations explicitly say that the laws that affect them are not for their needs. Legislation and laws are made by non- disabled people and often no consideration is given to consulting the people affected. The LA, on the other hand, as an entity, follows the guidelines received by the legislators and sees no need for change.

B3.3 Focus group findings - Finland

In total 15 people participated in the group hosted by Tukena Foundation. They were representing municipalities (Päijätsote, Hämeenkyrö), service providers (Honkalampi Foundation), organizations (Inclusion Finland), advocacy organizations of disabled people (Me Itse ry – ”We Do It Ourselves Association”) and also people with disabilities themselves from the experts-by-experience group coordinated by Tukena Foundation. The discussion was based on the following themes:

1. What does inclusive community mean to you?

Inclusion in the Community was recognized as an important discussion topic that sparked a wide range of thoughts and excellent conversation. There was a desire to clarify and concretize the term "inclusion," as participants questioned, "What does it mean, or what is meant by it?" (PwD advocate). The discussion reached a consensus that "a truly inclusive community is not an institutionalized, top-down imposed place" (PwD advocate). Instead, it actively considers how every community member is included equally, and the community reflects on how individuals can become connected to it. In an inclusive community, efforts are made to ensure that everyone is involved, regardless of their support needs, and that each person is an equal member.

A functioning and inclusive community recognizes "what is needed to make it easy to join or to ensure that the community can also accommodate" (PwD advocate). It is important that the community clearly communicates how it operates. "The community must be barrier-free and accessible, also in terms of attitudes" (NGO). At the same time, the community ensures that even the quieter voices are heard. "Interaction is needed so that even those who do not speak are heard" (PwD advocate). Professionals must listen carefully and focus on truly hearing. They ”must have enough time but also must give enough time" (LA representative). Special attention should be given to "interaction skills and supporting communication" (LA representative). "An inclusive community is a good place to be; you are heard, listened to, and understood" (PwD advocate).

2. What are the daily challenges PwD face in respect to inclusion?

Barriers to the realization of inclusion are resources, personal challenges, different environments around the people, lack of money, and time-related issues. Participants also considered whether the realization of inclusion is an attitude issue: "giving or not giving time" (NGO). "A professional has the opportunity to choose their attitude and how they act and consider others" (LA representative). It also sparked discussion that not all places consider that not everyone communicates verbally. It is important to also use methods that support speech or understanding, recognize gestures and facial expressions as well.

3. How can we work towards community development? What does it mean?

To develop a more inclusive community, "more attention needs to be paid to how people can enter and become attached to the community" (PwD advocate). Entry into the community can be facilitated through various arrangements, such as personal budgeting or personal assistance. Support is needed for making choices that promote well-being. "Support to understand what you are choosing" (PwD advocate). Also more attention should be given to "how things are progressed" (PwD advocate). It is worth attending and participating for example in meetings where decisions are made. From a professional perspective, promoting inclusion requires "investment in education, considering inclusion and support for community integration in the basic structure of professional qualifications" (NGO). "Peer coaches and peer mentors play a significant role in amplifying the voice of those who need more support" (LA representative).

4. Solutions / ideas / suggestions that could address the above mentioned challenges?

As a solution, it is proposed to share knowledge and develop skills in how to support people in making their own choices. Support is needed to access ordinary communities. The goal should be to move away from separate systems where activities are created exclusively for those who need support. It is also important to move away from "a ready-made model dictated by the service system or group-based activities" (NGO). There is a need for more experience and options so that those needing support have more peer groups. Personal assistance should be more easily accessible. Professionals' training should include exercises in emotional skills and reflection. "Have I considered, been able to consider everything necessary?" (NGO). It is beneficial to concretize the term "inclusion" with practical examples, as it is often used in a superficial way. From a societal perspective, digital opportunities can also be better utilized to promote inclusion. "For example, in a fast-food restaurant, even non-verbal

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customers can place an order at a self-service kiosk" (PwD advocate). It is also important to pay attention to giving/receiving support and scheduling it."Our service users often point out that they don't receive support for life outside of daytime activities" (LA representative).

Conclusion

In summary, achieving a truly inclusive community requires a comprehensive approach that considers physical, attitudinal, and systemic barriers while promoting active participation and representation for all members, especially those with disabilities. Challenges to inclusion for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) include resource constraints, environmental barriers, and time issues, as well as a need for better recognition of non-verbal communication. To enhance inclusion, communities should focus on facilitating entry and integration through personal assistance, education, and support. Moving away from segregated models, investing in training for professionals, and using digital tools can also help. The way for a more inclusive communities would be to promote self-determination and broaden support beyond structured activities, fostering an environment where everyone is heard, valued, and understood.

B3.4 Focus group findings - Hungary

A total of 20 people participated in the group organized by IRMÁK Nonprofit Kft. Representatives of different municipalities of Pest County and Komárom – Esztergom County were present (local, county-level authorities), staff of service providers of the Municipality of Albertirsa (nursery, kindergarten, basic social services), employees of various organizations (i.e. NGOs, day care, support service, supported housing, advocacy organizations) who provide direct support to persons with disabilities or to service providers provides professional support.

1. What does inclusive community mean to you?

The understanding of an inclusive community has been defined in several areas (education, social and child protection care, employment). Everyone approached what an inclusive community means from their own point of view.

In the field of education, this was formulated in such a way that an educational institution is inclusive if everyone has the opportunity to equal education, regardless of their social status. There were those who took this idea further, making access to equal education independent not only of social status, but also of skills and abilities.

In the field of social services, they focused on supported housing as a social specialist care and basic services.

We can speak of an inclusive community in the case of subsidized housing if the appearance of subsidized housing is accepted by the narrower and wider living environment already during the implementation. In Hungary, before the redemptions, institutions for people with disabilities were mostly located on the outskirts of settlements. Subsidized housing houses are already located towards the center of the settlement. The first implementations often met with great resistance. Today, in the

case of several subsidized housings, a good neighbourly relationship has developed, which can be considered as the antechamber of the host community.

The community welcoming in the field of employment was defined by those present as an inclusive workplace if, when organizing work processes, based on their abilities, it determines the tasks that can be performed by people with disabilities and creates conditions adapted to special needs – accessibility.

2. What are the daily challenges PwD face in respect to inclusion?

The negative attitude of a large part of society due to lack of knowledge. The vast majority of communities still lack sufficient information in the area of disability. Because of this, they are misunderstood, in many cases viewed with fear. They cannot assess their needs, instead of providing assistance, they close themselves off from them. They cannot distinguish between psychiatric illness and disability.

A smaller part of society, also due to a lack of knowledge, falls into the trap of overcare. They feel sorry for the mentally handicapped, they do not help them to live more independently if they do not serve all their needs by completely suppressing their independence.

The dual attitude that appeared and was formulated at the social level was also formulated among those present.

They said that segregated care management has been in the forefront of education, employment and social services, so there are very large backlogs in all areas. As a result of the segregated performance of tasks, a more inclusive community has already developed in the area of care of a given service provider – educational institution, sheltered workplace, subsidized housing – and the community has also responded to other needs arising from disability, such as a pedestrian crossing with a voice, a sign interpreter at a cultural event, etc.

The list of problems was as follows: buildings are not accessible – access, furniture, lack of toilets; Communication obstacles – small print, difficult to understand text – how many pictograms, lack of specialists.

3. How can we work towards community development? What does it mean? (i.e. partnerships with local communities and organisations?)

Those present unanimously stated that sensitization should begin at the earliest possible age. For this, partnerships must be established already in kindergarten and primary school care, if an institution is not integrated. From there, you can build on partnerships with other communities. If we manage to get our disabled people accepted from an early age, then the door opens for future partnerships. It is easier to establish contacts with municipalities, associations, sports clubs, cultural centres, etc.

The implementation of integrated education (kindergarten, school) should also promote inclusive workplaces.

The abolition of large institutions and the realization of subsidized housing is a significant step in the field of social services. Those present expressed that this way the care of people with disabilities has become more understandable and public, since the beneficiaries use the same services, everything is the majority society: they shop in the same shop, go to the same doctor, travel on the same public transport, and participate in the same cultural events.

4. Solutions / ideas / suggestions that could address the above mentioned challenges

The idea of the importance of supported housing has been taken further than this topic. It was formulated that this form of social service is the most conducive to the development of an inclusive society. It gives more, as not only has the quality of care improved, but it is also a significant step forward to promote social inclusion. It can be learned and mastered that there is no need to be afraid of people with disabilities, no need to feel sorry for them for their condition. You agree that inclusion is not an easy learning process for the majority of society, but by becoming someone's neighbor, they become personal.

They also stated that it would be important to include people with disabilities in communities at local events. Be active participants in these events, such as exhibitors, lecturers or facilitators.

Conclusion

Summing up, those present said that until an inclusive community can be realized in the field of education and employment, it is difficult to raise it to a social level. As long as generations grow up segregated, inclusion will be a problem. In the fields of education, employment and social benefits, needs-based care and service provision are considered important. Needs-based care does not exclude, but responds to missing skills and competences.

B4. Focus Group Matrix Analysis

B4.1 Methodology

For the purposes of the transnational research, mixed-methods (qualitative, quantitative and triangulation) were applied in order to generate comprehensive research findings among the 4 participating countries with 70 participating members (N=70). More specifically, qualitative thematic analysis and quantitative statistical methods (word frequencies) were used as well as data-visualization techniques (wordcould). This approach allowed the objective prioritization of qualitative data; therefore thematic categories emerged.

B4.2 Transnational Analysis

Table 1 below shows the matrix analysis of the themes that emerged in response to the focus group questions in all rouf partner countries, with 70 participants. The focus group findings suggest the elements that comprise today's definition in inclusive community: accessibility, universality, participation, community attitudes, cultural inclusivity, integration, equal opportunities. It seems that even though the fundamental rights of PwDs -i.e. independent living- in the involved countries are protected, **true community inclusion remains in question.**

Focus group question	Theme emerged
1. **What does inclusive community mean to you?**	Accessibility / Universality / Participation Community attitudes / Cultural inclusivity / Equal opportunities
2. **What are the daily challenges PwDs face in respect to inclusion?**	Structural obstacles and accessibility issues / Stereotypes / Prejudices / Accessibility barriers / Legal representation / Over-protection/institutionalized culture/ Social stigma Attitudinal barriers
3. **How can we work towards community development? What does it mean? (i.e., partnerships with local communities and organizations?)**	Partnerships/ Collaboration / Local government roles / Education and awareness training Inclusive policies / Peer support / strengths based/ community resources
4. **Solutions / ideas / suggestions that could address the above-mentioned challenges?**	Supported housing/ Employment opportunities / Sensitization / Digital accessibility / Personal budgeting Advocacy / Language inclusivity / Small-scale initiatives

Table 1: *Matrix thematic table*

Based on the findings of the transnational research, a definition for community inclusion is interlinked with the values of participation, co-production, citizenship, and opportunities to engage with community resources.

"Inclusive communities can be achieved only at the local level. In greater contacts, as in big cities or on a national level, inclusion can be found as a general principle, a policy, a directive. However, the collaboration of National and Local Governments and the civil society are major key players in building sustainable and inclusive local communities" (Service Provider).

In order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the themes that emerged during the focus groups, word frequencies were further used. Word frequencies are visual representations of text data where words are displayed in varying sizes based on their frequency or importance in the focus groups.


representative
advocate
social
accessibility
subsidized
barriers
education
housing
participants
cultural
abilities
involved
policies
inclusion
life
status
needs defined
opportunities
accessible
societal
employment
discussion
heard
learn
care
located
speak
member
mean
limitations
options
special
needed
skills
already
level
means
time
case
creating
concretize
enable
range
hungary
applied
mentioned
reflects
outskirts
settlement
hearing
relationship
accepted
desire
finding
clarify
value
make
instead
outliers
normality
minority
opportunity
building
quot;the
quot;interaction
quot;inclusion.&quot
accommodate&quot
communities
empathetic
listened
actively
thoughts
primary
participation
carefully
gives
meant
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mostly
heard&quot
provides
attitudes&quot
workplace
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diverse
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specialist
workplace
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education
partnerships
barriers
support
realization
rights
institution
decision-making
inclusion
public
accessibility
representatives
assume
face
fear
basis
service
organizations
legal
benefits
sports
housing
social
integrated
mentioned
example
limitations
resources
created
established
representative
environment
human
institutions
challenges
choose
possible
independent
safety
disability
system
school
need
provider
regards
families
huge
large
facial
quot;giving
children
create
participate
implementation
act
cases
coach
community
norm
superficial
rejection
formally
abolition
subsidized
denied
manage
aspects
overprotected
exist
time-related
understand
suitcase
disabled
build
supported
change
treated
topic
according
thread
difficult
methods
outside
protected
doctors
speech
disaster
transport
structural
left
measures
policies
institutional
communication
everyone
travel
gestures
associations
include
wider
earning
violated
discussion
entertainment
foundation
primary
providers
needs
used
field
providing
overcoming
condemned
recognize
especially
shop
processes
earliest
others&quot
lack
designed
decision
quality
cultural
doctor
attitudinal
stages
assistant
spaces
solutions
withdraw
within
inadequate
viewing
necessary
equal
issues
communities
opens
agreed
controlled
preassumes
prejudices
everything
responsible
experienced
local
full
asked
bothers
mean
centres
sensitization
neighbourhood
city
respond
events
self-confidence
services
appointment
article
great
promote
everyday
inadequacy
external
either
understood
representing
specialists
contacts
function
representation
find
cinema
verbally
job
fraction
adults
setting
huge
families
regards
large
living
functions
considered
accepted
integrate
moreover
communicates
building
doctors
losing
municipalities
included
inclusive
vulnerable
discussions
health
turns
including
understandable
informed
beneficiaries
walk
incapable
environments
places
understanding
natural
destitute
fundamental
unacceptable
time&quot
officials
different
continuing
raised
demanding
opportunity
office
time
prevented
freely
governments
hero
money
development
account
without
lose
partners
care
housing
social
professional
unanimously
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problem
making
aspect
well
infrastructure
self-determination
unimaginable
de-subjectification
expression
self-awareness
intellectual
transfer
voice
workplaces
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casting
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exist
time-related
understand
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Image 3: ***How can we work towards community development? What does it mean? (i.e. partnerships with local communities and organisations?)***

Keywords: can, local, society, language, shift, understand, change, public, education, school, early, national, services, attention, personal, professional, changer, bridges, organizations.

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Image 4: **Solutions / ideas / suggestions that could address the above mentioned challenges.**

Keywords: support, access, collaboration, community, activities, social, services, propote, options, need, inter-sectorial, group, systems.

B4.3 Community Development / Training Suggestions

Following the linguistic metrics approach and triangulation process, the themes that emerged consistently and repeatedly within the context of the transnational research have been prioritized through a statistical frequency analysis and are shown in the Table 2 below. This allowed the objective categorization and prioritization of the themes. For the purposes of this project, a selection and grouping of the most urgent issues raised when it comes to inclusive communities and community development. The following list is aimed to inform the **WP3- Development of Training Curricula**:

- Accessibility and its forms/levels (15)/ How to foster cultural inclusivity (6)/ language accessibility (5): What is accessibility?
- Facilitating participation (12)/ Advocacy (7) Peer support (6)/Legal representation: participation levels, active/passive, supported, citizenship
- How to create/support employment opportunities (12)
- Community awareness on Disability (10): This could be informed by the following issues raised by the analysis and as seen in the table i.e. stereotypes, attitudinal barriers, social stigma, advocacy & disability rights)
- Creating partnerships/networks or support (9), opportunities for community engagement/community resources

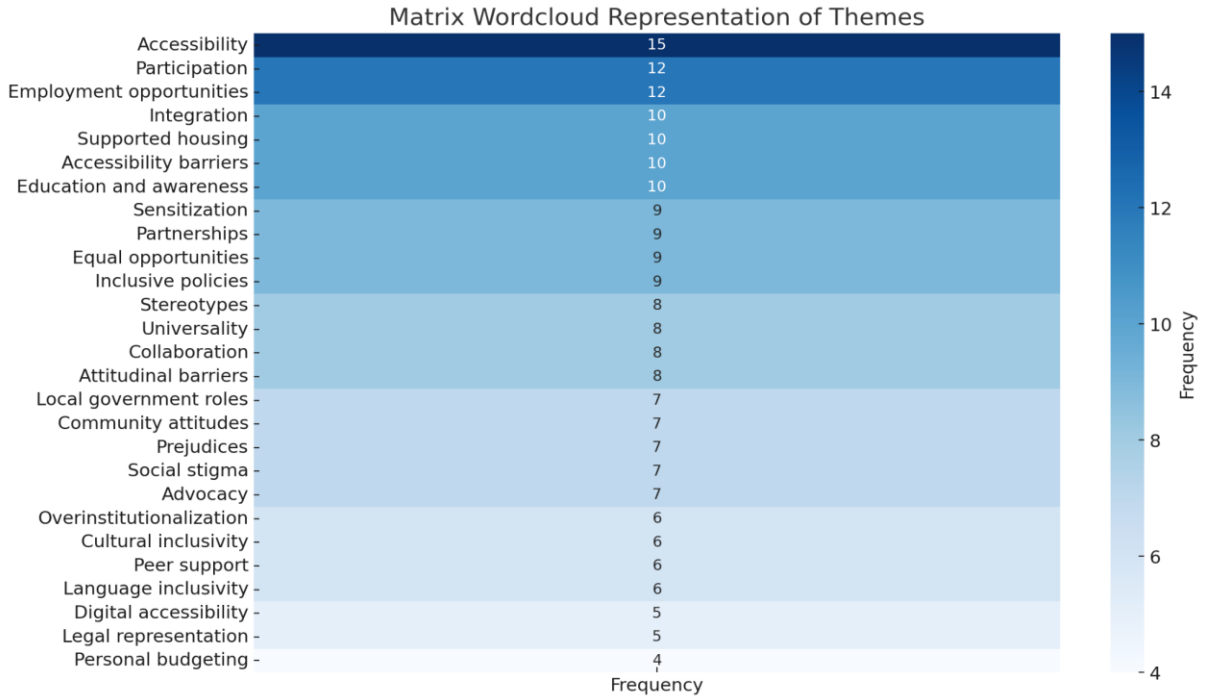

Table 2: *Matrix Wordcloud Themes representation*

Conclusive remarks

In conclusion, while significant steps have been made in creating legislations aimed at supporting the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities (PwDs), several critical gaps remain that hinder the realization of inclusive communities. Existing laws, such as those inspired by the UNCRPD, emphasize the right of PwDs to participate fully in society, but the implementation of these laws is inconsistent across different regions and sectors. For instance, although the legal framework acknowledges the importance of accessibility and participation, the outcomes of the National field research conducted in Poland, Greece, Finland and Hungary reveal significant barriers still exist in both physical and social aspects of communities. Although the research results add significantly to our understanding as to

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what are the challenges and opportunities that are being encountered at different levels, the findings are not representative for the general population.

Survey findings across the different countries, point to considerable challenges regarding accessibility and participation for PwDs. For example, public spaces often remain inaccessible to PwDs, which prevents them from fully engaging in community activities. For instance, in Greece, around 70% of respondents highlighted serious accessibility issues in public spaces, which were mirrored in other regions as well. Additionally, linguistic barriers, such as the absence of easy-to-read formats, further exacerbate the exclusion of PwDs. These issues indicate that, while progress has been made in legislating for inclusion, much more needs to be done to address practical, on-the-ground obstacles to ensure genuine inclusivity. Participation, a key aspect of inclusive communities, is also lagging. PwDs often face difficulties in participating in activities not specifically designed for them. In surveys conducted in Poland for example, the majority of respondents disagreed that PwDs were able to participate in community activities aimed at the general public. Even where opportunities exist, the structures to support PwDs in making their voices heard in decision-making processes are insufficient. For instance, only a small proportion of respondents agreed that PwDs are adequately involved in the design of local community activities. This underlines the need for more robust co-production mechanisms, where PwDs are not only beneficiaries but active agents in shaping the services and policies that impact their lives.

The focus groups shed light on the importance of community development in fostering inclusive environments for PwDs. Participants emphasized that inclusion should not be a top-down process but one that actively involves PwDs from the start, reflecting their lived experiences and needs. The co-production model, which calls for collaboration between PwDs, local authorities, service providers, and other stakeholders, emerged as a critical strategy for fostering inclusive communities. This participatory approach ensures that policies and services are designed to be truly inclusive rather than retrofitting them to accommodate PwDs. Moreover, the focus groups highlighted that community development must extend beyond physical accessibility to include cultural and attitudinal shifts. It was noted that communities should be barrier-free not only in terms of infrastructure but also in attitudes towards disability. This points to the necessity of continuous education and awareness-raising initiatives to combat ableism and promote empathy among community members.

Emphasis should be placed on the distinction between “service delivery” and “community development”, which can inform the training and policy development of the ICALL project. On the one hand, “service delivery” is summed up in whatever is being delivered through services, structures and agents, where efficacy, evidence and management are the driven values. On the other hand, “community development” is grounded on developing the existing potential and an “unpaid” caring economy, strongly bound in reciprocity, trust, solidarity, relationships and resources of the community. The “community development” approach should enhance the creation of connections and take advantage of challenges as a motivation to become more visible. Within this approach, “services” or “systems” can then be seen as a network of conversations which should be influenced to the direction of community development.

In conclusion, while legislation provides a solid foundation for the rights of PwDs, the practical realization of these rights through community development remains inadequate. The National Field research indicates that significant physical, linguistic, and social barriers persist, undermining the ability of PwDs to participate fully in society. Moving forward, there is a critical need for co-production strategies that involve PwDs in decision-making processes and a stronger emphasis on building communities that are not only physically accessible but also attitudinally inclusive. Investments in adaptive technologies, education and public awareness are essential to bridge the gap between legislation and lived experience, ensuring that all members of society can thrive equally.

Annexes

Annex 1 - Further reading:

- In order to support the European Commission in the drafting of Guidance on Independent Living and Inclusion in the Community, the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Family- and Community-based Care has issued its own "Guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community".
- In addition, the EEG has developed an "EU Funds Checklist to promote independent living and deinstitutionalisation", to help Managing Authorities in charge of EU funds adhere to the rules and priorities as set out in the Common Provisions Regulation.
- In order to support the European Commission in the drafting of Guidance on Deinstitutionalisation, EASPD provided input in the form of a position paper: Independent Living and Inclusion in the Community for Persons with Disabilities.
- EASPD also provided input for the EU Framework on Social Services of Excellence for Persons with Disabilities.
- As a key element preventing deinstitutionalisation of children with disabilities and fostering their inclusion, EASPD has issued a position paper on Family-Centered Early Childhood Intervention.
- To support the EU in implementing its ambitions regarding inclusive education, EASPD has published a declaration on Inclusive Education: Towards Inclusive Education and Beyond.

Annex 2- Survey Questions

Survey for Local Authorities (Municipalities, Local Governments, Secretariats, other local-level structures responsible for coordinating and implementing social cohesion, diversity, leisure, cultural and inclusion activities):

Demographic qs:
name of organization,
position of respondent,

Would you like to be further contacted about the focus group of this study? if yes, email:

The following questions should be scored on a scale 0 to 5, (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree. Open-text answers should not be used.

1. Public spaces accessible for PwD (space accessibility).
2. PwD participate in community activities (i.e. community sport activities, cultural activities) that are primarily addressed for the general public.
3. i. We develop employment policies/strategies promoting the integration of persons with disabilities into the labour market.
   ii. These are linked to policies/strategies enabling persons with disabilities to acquire the necessary skills and capacities for the labour market.
   iii. We actually employ PwDs. (Scored in Yes or No format).
4. When designing local community activities we take into consideration accessible communication strategies to inform PwD (i.e. easy to ready formats).

5. Our municipality/secretariat supports multi-actor cooperation and networking (i.e liaison between community centers, direct support organizations, families, PwDs) in order to foster the inclusion of PwDs in different aspects of community life (employment, education, culture, social services, local democracy).

Survey for NGOs/direct service providers:
Close ended questions, likert point scale 1=disagree to 5= completely agree, Yes or No answers

Demographic questions:
name of organization
position in the organization
number of beneficiaries
Would you like to be further contacted about the focus group of this study? if yes, email:

The following questions should be scored on a scale 0 to 5, (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree. Open-text answers should not be used.

1. In our local community are there issues with physical/space accessibility that hinder the access to community resources for PwDs.
2. In your local community there are issues with language accessibility that hinder the access to community resources for PwDs.
3. We are involved in policy making in relation to the support of PwDs.

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4. The local community is welcoming and inclusive to PwD that you support (neighbors, community centers and services) community attitudes.
5. Our beneficiaries participate in programs that are primarily addressed to the general public.
6. We support the development/sustainability of informal networks (excluding paid staff) around the people you support.
7. We support our beneficiaries to have a voice/are involved in the decision making of your organization.
8. The people we support have a voice/are involved in the decision making in respect to their everyday life.
9. The people we support contribute to the local communities (i.e. volunteering, house roles).

Survey questions for PwDs representative organizations/advocacy organizations:

Demographic qs:

name of organization,

position of respondent,
Would you like to be further contacted about the focus group of this study? if yes, email:

The following questions should be scored on a scale 0 to 5, (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree. Open-text answers should not be used.

1. PwDs are supported adequately in regards to independent living.
1. PwDs are supported adequately in regards to having independent social life.
2. PwDs are supported adequately in regards to being active and contributing members of the community.
3. Public spaces are accessible for PwDs (space accessibility).
4. PwDs are able to participate in programs (i.e. community sport activities, cultural activities) that are addressed for the general public.
5. The local community is welcoming and inclusive to PwD (neighbors, community centers and services)? (add this description/explanation: PwD do not face discrimination, racism or violence-related behaviors).
6. PwDs are involved in policy making in relation to the support of their rights and life choices.

Annex 3- Focus groups questions:

Focus groups questions

1. What does inclusive community mean to you?
2. What are the daily challenges PwD face in respect to inclusion?
3. How can we work towards community development? What does it mean? (i.e. partnerships with local communities and organisations?)
4. Solutions / ideas / suggestions that could address the above mentioned challenges?

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