



EUROPEAN EXPERT GROUP ON TRANSITION FROM INSTITUTIONAL TO COMMUNITY-BASED CARE

Brussels 16 July 2020

To the Attention of Mr Christopher Todd, Head of Unit of Better implementation, closure and Programme Implementation III, Poland, REGIO.DDG.F.3

Subject: Use of ERDF funding in Poland to build a large-scale institution for 100 residents with mental health problems

Dear Mr Todd,

The European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care (EEG) is a broad coalition gathering stakeholders representing people with care or support needs and their families, including children, people with disabilities, homeless people, and people experiencing mental health problems; as well as service providers, public authorities and UNICEF.

The Group has as its mission the promotion of person-centred, quality and empowering models of services and formal and informal care that fully respect the human rights of all people with care or support needs. The Group supports national efforts to implement the necessary reforms, in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

We would like to express our concern about the use of ERDF funds to build a new institution, in the framework of the project "Innovative social welfare home for people with mental disorders as part of the transformation of the support system for people with mental disorders from institutional to community-based", in the city of Łódź, Poland.

This [project](#) was awarded to the organisation "Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Niepełnosprawnych" for the reconstruction and extension of an existing building (a former school), into an "Innovative Social Welfare Centre" (Innowacyjny Dom Pomocy Społecznej, IDPS) for persons with mental health problems. The project identifies this action "as an element of the transformation of the support system for people with mental disorders from institutional to community-based design, located in Łódź". According to the [project description](#), the project will be covering the design of technical facilities and the creation of 40 places for residents in Stage I and of additional 60 places in Stage II, for a total of 100. "Residents of the entire region will be staying there", [declared](#) a member of the Management Board of the Łódź Voivodeship, Joanna Skrzydlewska, "I hope three years are enough for this project to be completed. A hundred people will live in the house, who are to return to normal life after treatment and therapy."

Despite the fact that the project claims to aim at the deinstitutionalisation of social services and care, building a large congregated setting for persons coming from the whole region is not what



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the EEG considers a community-based service, and goes against the principles expressed in the EEG Common European [Guidelines](#) and [Toolkit](#) on the transition from institutional to community-based care. This is also an infringement of article 19 of the UNCRPD, of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, of the Common Provision Regulations (CPR) for the current funding period. According to Article 4(6) of the CPR, ESF and ERDF have to be used in a manner which is compliant with the EU social inclusion policies (...) and ERDF should not be used to renovate or build new institutions.

Institutions should never be a solution for people with support needs. We also witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic that in congregated settings, the virus spreads more than in other circumstances, such as among people living in the community. Moreover, most of the residential settings were not prepared and equipped to deal with the spread of infection. The pandemic should serve as a catalyst to end institutional care across Europe.

We ask you therefore to look into this matter and take the necessary steps to ensure that the funding is redirected towards independent living, community-based and person-centred support, in compliance with the UNCRPD, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the CPR. The EEG [checklist](#) can be a useful tool to support desk officers to check the consistency of the measures with the legal and policy frameworks.

Thank you for your kind attention.

The EEG is ready to work in partnership with the European Commission and the Polish authorities to redress this situation.

Kind Regards,

EEG Co-chairs

Irene Bertana (COFACE Families Europe)

Aaron Greenberg (UNICEF)

Irina Papancheva (Lumos)