

BEYOND DE-INSTITUTIONALISATION:

The Unsteady Transition towards an
Enabling System
in South East Europe

2004

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THE DISABILITY MONITOR INITIATIVE

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Christophe Smets - Demonstration on Accessibility in Tirana, Albania

FOREWORD

THE DISABILITY MONITOR INITIATIVE FOR SOUTH EAST EUROPE

For decades the disability movement, despite its diversity, has been unifying its voice to promote a global shift of paradigm: moving from a charity and medical approach to consider disability as a human rights issue. Acknowledging this change, for the past three years, the UN has been defining a convention that aims to ensure that people with disabilities fully enjoy their rights as anyone else in society. People with disabilities from around the world are present in this process represented by their organisations and their personal testimonies which universally conclude that discrimination, poverty, exclusion are still the main characteristics for the 500 million people with disabilities living around the globe.

In the frame of this global movement some initiatives are emerging at national and international levels to monitor the situation of people with disabilities. Most recently, the International Disability Rights Monitor launched a regional report on the Americas in 2004¹.

In South East Europe, the legacy of an overprotective medical approach to disability in addition to the difficult transition to a market economy including the collapse of the social welfare system and 15 years of civil conflict, have contributed to the exclusion and marginalisation of people with disabilities such that they are over represented amongst the most vulnerable populations in the region.

All the countries in the region face similar challenges regarding transition and disability issues. They also share a common perspective in terms of the European Union accession process. As a result, there is a strong political momentum for reforms in all sectors.

With the new disability paradigm arising, there are new roles and responsibilities for stakeholders from the public, private and non-profit sector. The new political, economical and social context beginning to take shape in the region gives people with disabilities and their allies the unique opportunity to participate in building an enabling society rather than a disabling one.

The Disability Monitor Initiative for South East Europe aims at supporting local stakeholders to face these new challenges. Its objective is to monitor how local organisations, authorities, governments, and international agencies develop and support social innovation and policy reforms that promote and enable the full participation of people with disabilities.

This first report addresses the unsteady transition towards an enabling system aimed at facilitating the full participation of people with disabilities. During the past decade, many initiatives have taken place in the region to develop community-based services and, for instance, an inclusive approach to education.

However, there are rarely comprehensive strategies and policies put in place that go beyond a humanitarian approach to de-institutionalisation to the building of a rights-based enabling system. Local stakeholders who are initiating this change are struggling to make community-based services sustainable while current social service institutions are still very far from fulfilling their mission towards people with disabilities.

Because each local initiative and reform effort uses many of resources, and because these resources are difficult to find within the transitional context of South East Europe, stakeholders have an obligation to share experiences and learn from one another. With the Disability Monitor Initiative, Handicap International proposes a tool in which field professionals and activists talk to decision and policy makers thus facilitating the sharing of knowledge and best practices. The Disability Monitor Initiative would like to serve as a vector for building networks and influencing the change process as well.

This first report is a base for further research and the Handicap International South East Europe team is aware that some very interesting initiatives or relevant sectors might not be covered. Any comments, additions, or propositions are most welcome and can be sent to disabilitymonitor@hi-see.org.

Finally Handicap International would like to thank the whole team for its work as well as all the local organisations, institutions, and individuals that contributed with their meaningful experiences and knowledge. We would also like to thank the U.S. State Department via the International Trust Fund as well as the UK Department for International Development for their financial support.

The time for change has come and we hope that this initiative will help to support all stakeholders in their efforts to achieve a sustainable move towards a society for all.

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¹ This report is produced by the Center for International Rehabilitation, Chicago. www.disability.ws

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act
- ADS - Association of Disabled Students
- API - Association for Promoting Inclusion
- ASCHF-R - Support Association for the Physically Disabled Children from Romania
- BiH - Country of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- CBR - Community-Based Rehabilitation
- CBS - Community-Based Services
- CIL - Centre for Independent Living
- CIR - Centre for International Rehabilitation
- CoE R (92) 6 - Council of Europe Recommendation No. (92) 6 on a coherent policy for people with disabilities
- CSW - Centre for Social Work
- DCP - Disability Creation Process model
- DFID - Department for International Development
- DPI - Disabled People International
- DPO - Disabled People Organisation
- EDF - European Disability Forum
- EU - European Union
- FYROM - Country of the Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia
- ICF - International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) (published by the World Health Organisation)
- ICIDH - International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (the former World Health Organisation classification model)
- IC Lotos - Information Centre Lotos
- ICACBR - International Centre for the Advancement of Community-Based Rehabilitation
- ILO - International Labour Organisation
- INGO - International Non-Governmental Organisation
- IPPLG - Inter-Party Parliamentary Lobby Group
- ISO - International Organisational Standards
- ISPO - International Society of Prosthetics and Orthotics
- MQE - Measurement of the Quality of Environment
- NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation
- OSCE - Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
- PHC - Primary Health Care
- PMR - Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- PORAKA - Republic Centre for Supporting People with Intellectual Disabilities
- PRSP - Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

SEE - South East Europe (NOTE: In this report, the region of South East Europe consists of the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and the UN administered province of Kosovo)

SAA - Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union

SAP - Stabilisation and Association Process with the European Union

SCF - Save the Children Fund

Share-SEE - Self Help and Advocacy for Rights and Equal opportunities in South East Europe, a project that enhances the disability movement in South East Europe

SIF - Social Innovation Fund

SITAP - Social Insurance Technical Assistance Project

SFRY - Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

SLSP - Survey on the Living Standard of the Population

UN - United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

WHO - World Health Organisation