

Independent Living for Persons with Disabilities: Policies, Practices, and Pathways Forward - presentation of EPR Study

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Study objectives and overview

Objectives

- Examine policies, legislation & practices promoting independent living of persons with disabilities.
- Explore the barriers & challenges to independent living and solutions to deal with them; highlight what is possible
- To be a useful resource for stakeholders

Methodology

Review of documents, speeches, presentations... systematic review of practices from EPR member organisations
(link to 2025 EPR Prize)

Independent Living

- Older than UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
- **UNCRPD Article 19** – Living independently and being included in the community
- **UNCRPD General Comment 5 on Article 19**
Independent Living means that individuals with disabilities are provided with all necessary means to exercise choice and control over their lives.
- **European Commission Guidance on Independent Living**
Persons with disabilities are supported towards autonomy and participation & are empowered to make the same choices and have same control over their day-to-day as everyone else in society.

Essential Elements of an Enabling Framework

National Strategy
and Action Plans

Monitoring,
Evaluation,
Enforcement

Funding

Decision-making &
Self-Advocacy

Personal
Assistance &
Peer Support

Quality Support
Services

Accessible
Mainstream
Services &
Environment

Workforce and
Informal Carers

Training &
Awareness
Raising

EU Funds for Independent Living: European Commission Guidance

- Published 11/2024
- **Recommendations to Member States on using EU funding** to accelerate transition from institutional care to community-based services & independent living in 6 key areas.
- How EU funds (e.g. ESF+, ERDF) can finance accessible social housing, community-based services, personal assistance, staff training, strategic national plans towards deinstitutionalisation.
- **Self-assessment tool** on alignment of funded projects with independent living approaches.



Recent Commitments to Independent Living Made by EU Governments

17 October 2025 -
“Council Conclusions on the
Social Inclusion of Persons
with disabilities through the
promotion of Independent
Living”

Social inclusion of persons with disabilities (in public session)

Ministers approved conclusions on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities through the **promotion of independent living**.



“

The Danish EU Presidency is working for a stronger Europe — and a stronger Europe depends on strong, caring and inclusive societies that support all citizens, including persons with disabilities. We are deeply committed to inclusion of persons with disabilities through the promotion of independent living and combatting discrimination. We have come a long way, but we still have work to do. The discussions and results achieved today are important steps towards improving the lives of persons with disabilities – and together we will continue this important work.

— Sophie Hæstorp Andersen, Danish Minister for Social Affairs and Housing

Examples of National Strategies and Programmes Promoting and Supporting Independent Living

Spain's National Strategy for Care in the Community



To support independent living of persons with disabilities, older people, children, people experiencing homelessness & those with mental health issues.

Core elements

- Prevention of institutionalisation dynamics
- Participation & awareness
- Transforming care & support models
- Developing services for transition to living in the community
- Enabling conditions for DI

Examples of National Strategies and Programmes Promoting and Supporting Independent Living

Malta's Deinstitutionalisation and Independent Living Strategy

To transform disability-related services and processes:

- Fostering respect, autonomy and flexibility
- Moving away from traditional systems

Core elements

- Phased implementation approach and co-design
- Self-directed support
- Personal budgets by 2030
- Legal capacity
- Evaluation and continuous improvement

EPR Member Practices

The logo for Chance B Gruppe, featuring the text "CHANCE B" in white above "GRUPPE" in white, both on a solid blue rectangular background.

CHANCE B
GRUPPE

Chance B Model

The logo for Fundación Intras, with "FUNDACIÓN" in small blue capital letters above "Intras" in a large, bold, blue sans-serif font.

FUNDACIÓN
Intras

**Ecosystem of Supports for Independent Living
Based on the ACIP Model**

The logo for Fundación Rey Ardid, featuring a stylized blue icon of five overlapping circles to the left of the text "fundación" in small blue letters and "rey ardid" in a larger, bold, blue sans-serif font.

 fundación
rey ardid

**Independent Living Apartments for People with
Mental Health Conditions**

The logo for RehabGroup, with "Rehab" in a dark teal font and "Group" in a lighter teal font.

RehabGroup

Parnell Place Transformation

The logo for EPR, consisting of the lowercase letters "epr" in a yellow font followed by a stylized blue and yellow starburst icon.

epr 

EPR Member Practices



Espai Pausa



PéVA, Pédagogie de la Vie Autonome



Women in ON Mode

EPR Member Practices



The Other Side of Technology



Tea Evening with the Career Counsellor



CEVET Project - Customised Employment for Vocational Education and Training

Practice Success Factors



Person-Centred Approach



Promoting Empowerment & Agency



Co-Production, Person-Centred Plans/Life Projects



Multidisciplinary & Skilled Teams



Comprehensive & Integrated Services



External Stakeholder Collaboration



Engagement with Policy Makers

The EQUASS Framework: Essential Elements for Organisations to Facilitate Independent Living

Framework tailored to the social sector designed to assure quality services and facilitate continuous improvement.
From childrens' services to support for older people.

Sections: "Leadership and Governance", "Quality Management and Improvement", "Workforce Management and Development", "Rights and Dignity" and "Empowerment and Person-Centredness".

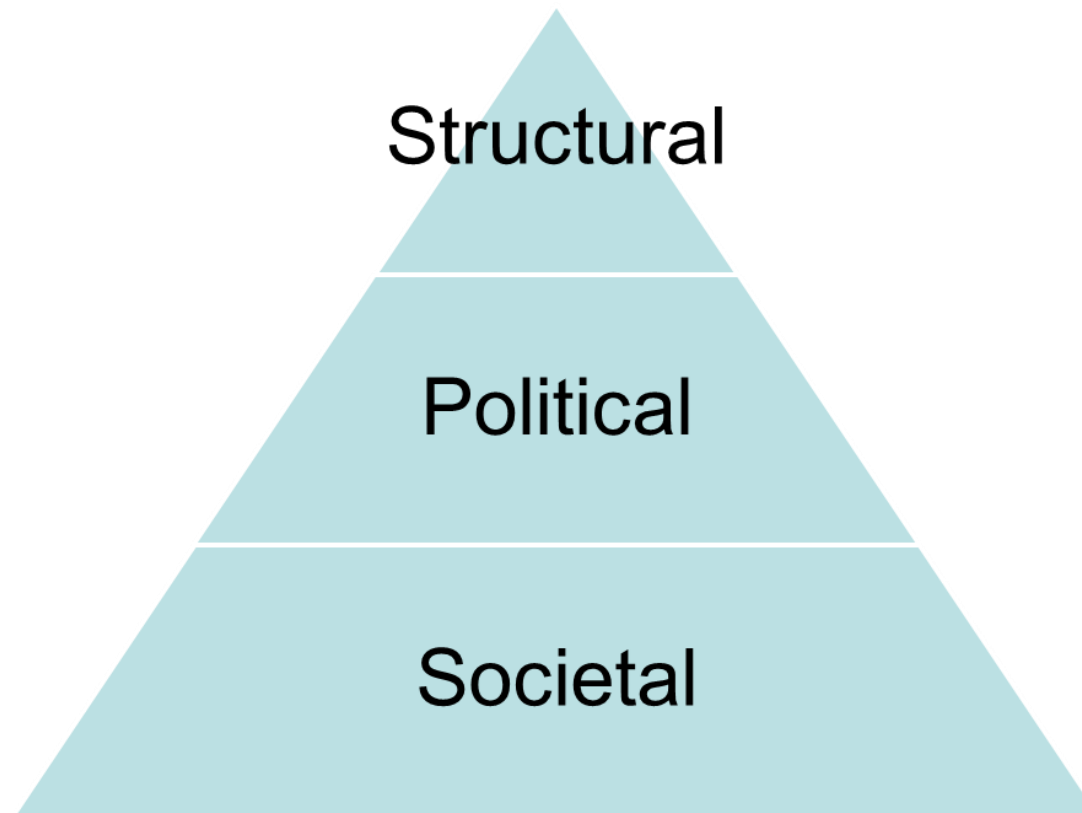
Organisations seeking EQUASS certification undergo an audit process to demonstrate compliance with each criterion's requirements. These requirements address **essential elements for services committed to enabling and promoting independent living.**

EQUASS: Essential Elements for Organisations also Include...

- Rights Awareness
- Co-production
- Supported Decision-Making
- Quality of Life Orientation
- Autonomy & Self-Advocacy
- Social Inclusion
- Human rights-based approach
- Coordinated and Continuous Support
- Safeguarding & Privacy
- Accessible Services & Environments
- Workforce Training
- Addressing Rights Concerns



Underlying challenges and barriers to Independent Living



Recommendations - EU level

- Ensure respect of the CRPD among the MFF's Horizontal Principles
- Preserve earmarked funds for social objectives
- Establish stringent EU fund allocation oversight
- Strengthen monitoring of the partnership principle
- Develop inclusive monitoring indicators
- Facilitate EU-wide innovation and capacity-building initiatives
- Fund implementation of key EU disability initiatives (including the Framework for Social Services of Excellence for Persons with Disabilities)
- Ensure implementation of independent living policies and practices feature strongly in the updated Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities

Recommendations - National/Regional/Local level

Funding and Contracting:

- Long-term funding commitments
- Unified funding mechanisms
- Flexible budgets
- Funding to implement quality assurance frameworks
- Prioritise quality in competitive public tendering processes
- Reward quality certification in public contracts

Systems Integration and Coordination:

- Formal mechanisms enabling integrated support at highest level
- Frameworks to facilitate coordinated service provision
- Data-sharing agreements

Recommendations - National/Regional/Local level

Transitions

- Earmark funding for services supporting independent living
- Use EU funds for transitions to community-based services
- Carefully consider individuals with severe or complex disabilities
- Ensure support to service providers if funding model changes
- Provide support to the community
- Implement regulations to ensure accessible and affordable housing

Workforce

- Ensure attractive wages and working conditions
- Support professional development on independent living and related concepts
- Recognition of peer support roles

Conclusions

- The knowledge is there, the understanding is not?
- Challenges are often systemic
- Breaking the cycle requires change across multiple levels: cultural, political, financial, organisational, and professional.
- Need to build an environment that sustains commitment
- Broad collaboration between sectors is needed, including at EU level, building alliances
- Showcasing what is possible and what has been achieved is key