



Disability
Leaders of
Tomorrow

(D-LoT)





Summary

The “*Disability Leaders of Tomorrow (D-LoT)*” project aims at building the capacity of the disability service providers in Central and Eastern Europe. It will implement an innovative mentoring training programme that will be based on an e-learning platform (*D-LoT Platform*) and other face-to-face training activities. In order to scale up the training programme, mentees will replicate it (*Pass it On projects*) and a network of disability service provision trainers will be established (*D-LoT Alumni Network*).

Purpose, needs and challenges

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) embodies a ‘paradigm shift’, from the charitable and the medical approaches to disability to one which is firmly rooted in human rights. Implementing this **paradigm shift** is a major undertaking requiring the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, the recognition and valorisation of specialised and mainstream service providers as a key component for a successful implementation. Since the UN CRPD was adopted in 2006, EASPD has been working on facilitating innovation of the service provision in the disability sector in accordance with the convention’s principles and values.

Specialised service providers (SP) have the unique role of providing persons with disabilities (PwD) with the individualised, flexible and inclusive support they might need to overcome the disabling barriers of their environment. **Adequate high-quality services** enable full citizenship and inclusion in society of all PwD. For this reason, EASPD continuously encourages and promotes the role of service providers as human rights enablers (as an essential component for the correct implementation of UN CRPD). EASPD believes that building a fully inclusive society depends on the efforts of everyone and all stakeholders should work together, i.e. service providers, PwD and their representative organisations, authorities and all other relevant actors in society.

Capacity building is a crucial element when talking about the implementation of the UN CRPD: only through strong organisations with active leadership the adoption of the social model of disability and subsequently the application of major changes in the way services are delivered will be possible. A more fundamental challenge however is to do not only with availability of funding but with bringing innovation to the sector- models of good practice are available but the shift is not yet happening. The transformation requires **new understanding, new managerial skills, and expertise** in community based services that could fuel the real change.

In order to address these needs, EASPD has been continuously working on establishing sustainable and effective cooperation between the organisations in the field as well as between the different stakeholders¹. This work has provided us with the opportunity to collect information and opinions of experts from around Europe on the key needs of the sector. After a series of discussions, particularly at the EASPD Standing Committee on Enlargement – which follows issues related to the specific reality of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries - and during our annual Provider Forums and Conferences, we identified a **very profound need to support the paradigm shift in very practical terms**. While working with authorities, legislators and the representatives of the sector is important, the real change happens on the ground- where the services to PwD are provided on a daily basis.

¹ For more information about EASPD initiatives, please check annex 1- Information about the organisation



Those professionals report that in order to make tangible improvements in the social service provision sector they need **ongoing, customised and very practical support** on how to implement the UN CRPD principles in their specific environment and daily practice. While there are organisations and persons who are 'drivers' of change in their regions and countries, many organisations, especially in remote regions or smaller towns and villages, stay isolated from the developments in the sector, both at national and international level. Professionals at high-level positions often have expertise in the provision of the specialised services, but sometimes lack the managerial and diplomatic skills necessary for ensuring sustainable improvement of their organisations and of the sector as a whole. Furthermore, it is often the case that managers in the service provision sector have a solid experience under the medical approach which represents an extra challenge that needs to be addressed. It is crucial to support the **managerial personnel** in bringing and coordinating real and sustainable change in the service delivery, as they have the position to implement it in practice and the expertise to support the political and legislative developments in their countries.

Furthermore, we have established that the need of such support **is most immediate in countries from Eastern and Central Europe**. These countries are challenged to accomplish the goals of the paradigm shift, while facing serious barriers related to a combination of political and economic instability, in a shorter amount of time, as these reforms have started much later than in most of Western Europe. In CEE countries we encounter that the good practices from Western countries are often found impossible to implement due to economic, political and, sometimes, cultural barriers. Thus there is a clear need of supporting their implementation **on the ground and in the specific reality of the country**.

All the above needs should be put in context with the fact that the **European population is ageing** and, in the future, the increasing numbers of people that will need health care or social care for a longer period of time will be a key driver of the growing demand for social services, which can be an opportunity for the **creation of new jobs**. However, the sector suffers from a negative image and perceptions of poor working conditions, which can lead to recruitment challenges. There is a clear **draining of resources** that needs to be addressed and better management is instrumental for overcoming these challenges and fulfilling the potential of the sector making it appealing both to the users and the staff.

These trends have been very recently confirmed by the research paper "*Strengthening the workforce for people with disabilities: Initial mapping across Europe*"², developed by the EOHR (EASPD Observatory on Human Resources created in 2014) and conducted by Prof. Dr. Jane Lethbridge, from the Public Services International Research Unit at University of Greenwich. This research has identified similar trends across Europe that must be addressed to secure a high quality, motivated and trained workforce in order to deliver first-rate services, fully adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities. Whilst in Western European countries, new systems of training are being introduced in Central and Eastern Europe attempts have been made to improve the level of credentials needed to qualify for employment in the sector. Although there was **widespread acknowledgement that training was needed** for all groups within the workforce (middle managers was reported as the groups which most require training), access to training is not always easy. The impact of austerity policies is felt in changes taking place in training and education, which are limiting the scope for placements, or making fewer training places available paid for by government, placing more emphasis on

² Lethbridge J., "*Strengthening the workforce for people with disabilities: Initial mapping across Europe*", January 2015. http://www.easpd.eu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/PressReleases/eohr_report_0.pdf



individual funding. This affects the processes of nurturing skills and expertise in organisations and between organisations.

Amongst the recommendations for the sector, this research specifically points to the need of:

1. Training at EU level: **minimum skills** for working with people with disabilities should be validated across Europe, including involving users in training.
2. **Share experiences and innovative practices** on recruitment and induction across Europe to improve standards of care services.
3. Establish a **“culture of learning”** to have a trans-national consensus on the skills needed to work with people with disabilities.
4. Development of the European Care Certificate and supporting **e-learning initiatives**.

Aim, objectives and innovative character

D-LoT’s main **aim** is to build the capacity of the disability service providers in Central and Eastern Europe in order to improve the availability and quality of services and consequently, the quality of life of persons with disabilities and their families. Taking into account the above mentioned needs and challenges, the D-LoT activities are designed to achieve the following **objectives**:

- ✓ Increase the knowledge about UN CRPD and the innovation process in disability service provision by delivering a tailored e-learning and face-to-face training with ongoing practical support;
- ✓ Increase the capacity of service providers and the sector for implementing models of good practice and sustainable development by delivering an *in-country* mentoring scheme. The scheme will include job shadowing and implementation of specific projects to pass on the acquired knowledge;
- ✓ Improve the knowledge exchange and cooperation among disability organisations at local, national and European level by establishing a cross-border network of peer-to-peer disability service provision trainers.

D-LoT is **an innovative training concept** in the disability sector in Europe because it is a tailored programme for service providers and for managerial positions. While training on UN CRPD is indeed available, the majority of training schemes are more focused on general concepts, advocacy tools and or/monitoring frameworks specifically addressed to Disability Persons Organisations (DPOs). D-LoT’s approach goes beyond this specific target and beyond covering one strictly defined theme. It offers a comprehensive training scheme for service providers for PwD, which combines online and face-to-face training activities, a mentoring scheme and a practical exercise to implement and disseminate the learning outcomes needed on the ground.

In addition, D-LoT is taking place after a decade from the adoption of the UN CRPD and addresses a situation that is different from a few years ago. Now we have a larger number of models exhibiting good practice with tested results which makes it easier to move from theory to practice. However we need to take into account the impact of the economic crisis which is hindering the real implementation and scalability of such models. An evolving economic and social environment requires customised approaches and solutions designed with the input and views of those working in the field at local level. This is exactly what D-LoT intends to do by establishing a capacity building programme that allows for a strong interaction and active participation of the Disability Leaders of Tomorrow.



Project management

The project is coordinated by EASPD, which will take care of the general management, the financial management, the coordination of partners, as well as the dissemination and exploitation of the project's results. The project will be the backbone of 2015-2017 EASPD training activities in CEE. It will be executed in close cooperation with EASPD members.

The project will be led by a **Steering Committee (SC)**, consisting of the core members of the EASPD Standing Committee on Enlargement, and the Secretary General of EASPD. They are experts on a range of topics related to the service provision for persons with disabilities with knowledge both in European and specific CEE developments.

In terms of the **scientific management** of the project, the SC will work in close cooperation with:

1. EASPD Interest Group on Workforce Development and Human Resources, which will design the educational framework of the e-learning platform (creation and quality assurance of training materials);
2. EASPD Standing Committees on Employment and Education; EASPD Interest Groups on Independent Living, Person-Centred Technology and Early Intervention, which will design the content of the webinars and will oversee the content of the thematic sections of the Knowledge Centre to be built under the e-learning platform.

Members of the Steering Committee:

- Luk Zelderloo, EASPD Secretary General, Belgium
- Akos Pordan, General Director, Hand in Hand Foundation, Hungary (EASPD Board member)
- Vasilka Dimolska, Secretary General, PORAKA, Macedonia (EASPD Board member)
- Georgi Georgiev, President, NASO, Bulgaria (EASPD Board member)
- Andreia Moraru, Director, Alpha Transilvania Foundation, Romania (EASPD Board member)
- Violeta Andjelkovic, Social Service Coordinator, COD, Serbia

The SC will be assisted by a **Project Management Team (PMT)** will implement day-to-day activities, with responsibility for the completion and quality assurance of each task.

Members of Project Management Team:

- Project Manager: Carmen Arroyo de Sande
- Project Administration: Stefana Cankova and Adriana Popa
- Finances and Accountancy: Hélène Konopski



Project activities

1. Kick-off meeting and connected activities

The whole group (SC, PMT, mentor and mentees) will meet for the first time with the occasion of *2015 EASPD Annual General Assembly and Conference II* that will take place on 21 -23 October in Salzburg and will be focused on education.

Kick-off meeting

The kick-off meeting (an afternoon session on Wednesday 21st October) will be dedicated to:

- Presenting the e-learning platform and training of participants (both mentors and mentees) on how to use it;
- Presenting all activities and the timeline of the capacity building programme;
- A structured networking session will be organised so participants can get to know each other and exchange views on how they will accomplish the programme

Workshop on Creative Thinking and Social Entrepreneurship

The following day to the kick-off meeting, both mentors and mentees will receive a joint training: a workshop on Creative Thinking and Social Entrepreneurship (one day session), offered by ACCIO, an expertise centre for entrepreneurship from Artevelde University College Ghent (Belgium). This workshop will develop their knowledge and skills in regards to the application of conceptual creative thinking. Participants will explore creative ways of finding solutions by viewing problems as opportunities with a focus on social profit organisations.

In addition, mentors and mentees will participate in other sessions and networking activities to be organised as part of the programme of the 2015 EASPD International Conference on Education.

2. e-Learning Platform

An important deliverable will be the creation of an e-learning platform for disability service providers.

On-line training course

D-LoT online training course will be based on learning outcomes for managers on the disability service provision sector. These learning outcomes will be the base of the **core 10 modules on change management and the disability provision sector** that each mentee will have to accomplish in the e-learning platform.



Knowledge Centre

D-LoT Platform will also count with thematic sections with useful materials and resources. The Knowledge Centre will be structured following the key themes for disability service providers, which follows the activities carried out by EASPD, its Standing Committees and Interest Groups.

3. Thematic Webinars

In order to complement the training modules that each mentee will have to accomplish through the e-learning platform, **four webinars** will be organised. Each of them will be dedicated to key topics for the disability service providers:

- 1) Right to Employment
- 2) Inclusive Education and Early Intervention
- 3) Independent Living
- 4) Accessibility and Person Centred Technologies

Users' involvement, quality of services and funding of services will be also addressed in the webinars as horizontal topics. At these webinars, both mentors and mentees will have the opportunity to learn and discuss about recent developments on international and European policies, to find out about funding opportunities and to get to know the latest trends in the sector (models of good practice and innovative approaches from all over Europe). After the presentations, a live discussion will be opened to address the practical implementation at organisational and local level.

In order to take part in the webinars, mentees will be obliged to have accomplished 80% of the training modules, so that it is ensured that they have acquired the knowledge needed to be able to actively participate in the webinars. The webinars will take place between **March and June 2016**.

4. Job Shadowing

Each mentee will spend at least 1 week (it can be more time, if both mentor and mentee reach an agreement, providing that they remain under the available budget for this activity) at the mentors' premises, following a job shadowing approach. The job shadowing programmes elaborated within the D-LoT project will be tailored around the specific expertise of the welcoming organisation, the mentor and the needs of the mentee. They will be developed after the start of the project in two steps: firstly with the application procedure and secondly, they will be tailored in accordance with the specific interests and queries communicated by the mentees. This will be a first-hand experience, which will provide a good overview and in-depth understanding of the services provided by the organisation, as well as the operating values and principles.

The job shadowing placements will take place between **July and October 2016**.



5. Pass It On Projects

Upon completion of the training programme, the 15 mentees will submit their *Pass it On* proposals, which will consist on strategic implementation plans where they describe how they will pass on the acquired knowledge.

The proposals have to be elaborated in parallel to the job shadowing and will have to be submitted by **31st October 2016**. The proposal will be developed with the support of the respective mentor. To be able to have a real impact at local level, each mentee (the organisation they represent) is entitled to receive a grant to implement his/her proposal (15 grants). This financial support will be given in the form of “**challenge grants**”: challenge grants are capacity-building grants, intended to help organisations secure long-term support for their programs.

The training activities that mentees have to put in place as part of the *Pass it On* projects will have to be organised between **January and March 2017**. The project will contain the four mandatory elements of the proposals and particularly, mentees will have to ensure that:

- They implement at least one internal training activity for a minimum of 2 staff members (number of staff will depend on the size of the organisation).
- They implement at least one external training activity for a minimum of 15 persons from 10 different local organisations. The selection procedure and requirements for the new group mentees will be as the ones applied for the first group.

Thus, **at the end of the project we expect to have at least 255 trained mentees** (because each of the 15 mentees will have to train a minimum of 17 persons) with the potential to implement the innovations needed to advance UN CRPD implementation and make the real change happen.

6. Closing Ceremony

A **closing event will be organised in May 2017**, coupled with EASPD Annual Conference (date to be confirmed), where the initial 15 mentors and 15 mentees will meet again and the *D-LoT Capacity Building Programme Certificates* will be handled. A morning session of this conference will be dedicated to the exchange of views on the implementation of the *Pass it On* projects, the state of play of the disability service provision before and after their participation in the *D-LoT Capacity Building Programme* and will present practical recommendations for the way forward.



Expected results

D-LoT project will directly benefit not only the mentees but also the mentors. They will have the opportunity to be even more recognised as **leading experts in the region**, to take part in training activities and to receive and put in place **new knowledge and approaches** thanks to the connections with other mentors and also with the mentees, who will offer new, fresh and creative thinking.

D-LoT project will also help improve the **quality of training** on disability service provision and will increase the **number of experts able to provide this kind of training**.

The mentees will benefit from the participation in an innovative and tailored capacity building programme and it is envisaged that the improvement of their **leadership and management skills** will lead to **more resilient and efficient organisations** able to lead the **innovation on disability service provision service provision** in line with UN CRPD framework.

In addition, the *Pass it On* projects will replicate that impact in other local organisations. This is expected to lead to an increasing of the **quality of the services** (more responsive services, individual support) provided and consequently to a better **quality of life** of persons with disabilities and their families. Finally, society as a whole will benefit from this systemic change happening in the group of countries from the same region as more efficient way of disability service delivery can help to **reduce the increasing costs of the care provision**, while **activating the job creation potential of the care sector**.

All those new connections between organisations are expected to build the capacity of the sector as such, by helping disability service providers to be **better organised** and have a **stronger voice** towards public authorities when requiring an **adequate legal framework** in line with UN CRPD and **adequate funding** to provide services to those in need. This will also help the sector to **establish better cooperation** with those public authorities and other stakeholders in order to make real the individualised, flexible and inclusive support persons with disabilities need to overcome the disabling barriers of their environment.

