

How to improve people with disabilities' independent living and inclusion in the community?

Relevant articles of the CRPD: 19, 23, 26

Country: Croatia

Region: South East Europe

Good practices available in: English (full report available in Albanian and Serbian)

The Association for Promoting Inclusion's Programme of Independent Living Homes in Zagreb, Croatia

Description of the practice and the process involved

The Association for Promoting Inclusion (API) is working in **partnership** with the Centre of Social work on this programme. The aim is to **re-integrate person with intellectual disabilities currently in residential care into the community.**

The process of the re-integration follows the following methodology, developed after several years of experience and users' feedback:

API team members **together with professionals** of the institution in question **identified people who were willing** to attempt this change process and way of living. Clients may choose their **preferred type of housing.**

Each house or apartment houses **one to five clients. Caregivers**, employed for a **trial period of 3 months** are **identified, trained and closely supervised**, and if **both parties are satisfied a contract is signed.**

A support team within API, consisting of a **special educator, psychologist, social worker and nurse** designs the **individual support plan** together with the client. The team also helps the clients and caretakers to **implement the plans, creating a social network.**

The key steps of the API programme Homes for Independent living are:

- **Community-based housing** in apartments in **accordance with the choices** of clients (1-5 persons share an apartment) with the **degree of needed support** provided,
- **Providing assistance and improving the competence of clients in day-to-day activities and situations** (handling money responsibly, keeping the apartment tidy, taking care of their clothes and laundry, acquiring and preparing food, taking care of their appearance and their health, use of the public transportation system, development of positive relationships among the Clients sharing the same apartment),

- **Increasing the level of competence of the clients** by enabling them to **take part in the life of the local community** (building a circle of support, involvement in work, cultural, recreational, sport or religious activities offered by the local community, inclusion in work activities in the private and state sector).

The factors that made this practice possible

API's strategy for the recognition of this project was to propose that **the funding provided to residential institutions followed the client to the new residential facility**. This means that after the Centre for Social Work approves the **de-institutionalisation of the client**, the API Home for Independent Living signs a **contract with the Ministry of Work and Social Welfare that covers the living expenses of the client**.

These are expenses related to rent, support from the expert team, living costs of clients and their per diem etc which is equal to approximately **720 EUR per person per month, a saving of 200 EUR per month** on the cost of state residential institutions. API still has some **additional costs** since this fee does not fully cover the expenses for the clients in the apartments. The most important criteria from the Ministry in the negotiation process seem to be that this type of community based housing programme should be **less expensive than traditional residential institutions**.

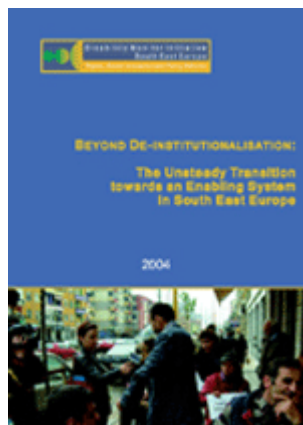
Average staff ratio:

- 1 special educator for 20 clients,
- 3 caretakers for 20 clients (may depend on the need of the clients),
- Psychologist, social worker and nurse during team meetings once/month.

The effects / impact of the practice

81 adults with intellectual disability living in residential institutions have been re-integrated into their communities and are living in rented apartments that form the 'Homes for Independent Living'. **In Zagreb, there are 50 clients in 22 apartments, 27 clients live in 7 apartments in Osijek and 4 clients share an apartment in Bjelovar.**

A **strong lobbying and advocacy process** was directed towards the Ministry of Work and Social Welfare in order to **ensure the programme was included as an alternative in the Social Welfare system**, and that it was **financially sustainable**. In **April 2000** the Ministry for Social Welfare recognised the first 'Home for Independent Living' in Croatia as an **official alternative to residential institutions**.



Background and context

Full project report: [Beyond De-Institutionalisation: The Unsteady Transition towards an Enabling System in South East Europe \(DMI SEE, 2004\)](#)

Criteria for the good practices: see page 21 of the full report. **Recommendations from the good practices:** see page 91 of the full report. **Links to further resources:**

[Full text on article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community](#)

[Full text on article 23 – Respect for home and the family](#)

[Full text on article 26 – Habilitation and rehabilitation](#)