

Small steps towards inclusion, amid the Greek economical crisis



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About our organisation (Estia)

- **Founded in 1982 for people with intellectual disability**
- **Main activities:**
 - **Day Center**
 - **Vocational Training Center**
 - **Supported Living Houses**
- **Size (number of service users & staff)**
- **Networks (ESAMEA, POSGKAMEA, ARFIE, EASPD, Caravan 2000, etc.)**

Financial crisis in Greece

- **30% unemployment in general population**
- **60% unemployment in young people**
- **Reduction of income by 30-40%**
- **Increase of living cost**

Financial crisis & social care

- Reduction of the governmental funding of social care, by 25-30%
- Merging of social care organisations/units
- Reduction of financial support in special education
- Social care organisations trying to survive (focusing within & on quantity rather than quality)

Financial crisis & service users and their families

- Majority of service users have lost their jobs
- Most of their families have at least a member who is unemployed
- Reduction of income:
 - Salary
 - Pension
 - Disability benefit

Financial crisis & Estia

- Despite the general financial crisis, Estia has recently:
 - Created 2 supported living houses and started building a new one
 - Increased the number of service users
 - Increased its number of staff
 - Increased its budget
 - Increased the donations received



What has contributed to Estia's current financial situation

- Coincidence
- European funding
- Change of mentality & creation of a new working team that can bring and put into action new ideas



Estia - New activities

- Networking with the community (municipality)
- Development of volunteer group
- Participation in European programmes
- Collaboration with universities
- Participation in European networks
- New strategic partners in Greece and abroad
- Efforts to meet the (new) needs of its service users and their families
- Participation in policy-making groups

Reflections

- How long is this period of uncertainty going to last? How much longer will we not be able to plan long-term?
- Laws & policies – are they aiming at social inclusion or at keeping the service users in organisations?
- Government supporting organisations and not individuals
- Service users are not participating in planning and decision making
- People are crammed into organisations without somewhere to go afterwards
- The focus is on quantity rather than quality

What is needed

- Turning point – change from institutions to service providers – institutionalization vs personalization
- Improve the flow of service users through:
 - Employment
 - Supported employment
 - Social enterprises
 - Voluntary work / work placements
 - Creation of small units for elderly people with intellectual disability
 - Offering flexibility – being able to select part of the services (e.g. specific activities or area of support)
 - “Triage” service – informing and guiding parents regarding service selection

What is needed:

- A process for identifying the needs, wishes and skills of people with intellectual disability
- Variation in services provided by the organisations, in order to be able to cover a range of needs
- Continuity in policies / service planning between different domains (education, vocational training etc.)

Next steps - ideas

- **Employability:**
 - Social enterprises
 - NVQ created by employers
 - Organized/structured service for voluntary work/ work placement
 - Staff training in this area
- **Supported living**
 - Different options depending on individual needs
- **Advocacy**
- **Inclusive communities – active participant**

3 main questions

- Are the changes needed depending on overcoming the financial crisis or are they a matter of mentality change?
- Is financial crisis going to take social care a step back or a step forward?
- Collaboration with European organisations can play a role in the changes needed in Greece ?

Thank you for your attention



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