



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
Cabinet of Vladimir ŠPIDLA  
Kristin Schreiber  
Head of Cabinet

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**NOTE TO THE ATTENTION OF DIRECTOR GENERAL VAN DER PAS**

**Subject: Creating an Ad Hoc Expert Group for Institutional Care Reform**

*The Commissioner aims to put on the agenda of the next DG-CAB meeting the proposal to create an Ad Hoc Expert Group for Institutional Care Reform.*

The goal is to encourage the Member States to further promote the desirable **development from residential institutional care to more individualised community-based care** (known as "de-institutionalisation"), in relation to all four categories of users who are usually dealt with separately - **(1) persons with disabilities, (2) the elderly, (3) children, (4) persons with mental health problems.**

There are remarkable similarities and common denominators in all four de-institutionalisation processes; there are lessons which they can learn from each other; and there is increasing overlap between these categories of users (more disabled people becoming elderly, an increasing percentage of dependent elderly having mental health problems such as dementia).

The Commissioner has recently expressed **particular concern about potential adverse developments in "new" Member States in the context of availability of major Structural Funds resources.** While the ESF can be of major benefit in increasing the qualification of staff who work in care settings, promoting new skills, and stimulating institutional care reform, there are also indications that Member States are using the Structural Funds (ERDF) to invest - under the heading of "social infrastructure" - into existing outdated institutions (which, as the Commissioner said, could prolong their life by several decades before they start crumbling again). On the one hand, it is obvious that the ultimate decisions lie with the Member States; on the other hand, however, the Commissioner believes that the Commission has an ethical obligation to maximize its efforts in order to achieve positive results - through the Structural Funds, but also through the Open Method of Coordination and other instruments.

To address the issues of institutional care reform in their complexity, the Commissioner intends to create an Ad Hoc Expert Group for Institutional Care Reform which would have the following characteristics:

- It would be convened by Commissioner Špidla (not by the College) and report to him.
- Its main product should be a **stock-taking report in October 2009** which would identify (1) where the Commission can at present support favourable development in institutional care reform; (2) where it should be able to do so if it took initiative; and finally (3) where there are knowledge gaps which need to be addressed by a future study (which could be planned and carried out in 2010).

- The Expert Group should be composed of 6-7 persons providing **expertise** rather than representativeness in formal terms. To minimize running costs, it would include only Brussels-based experts, i.e., European NGO experts based in Brussels (representing the **European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, European Disability Forum, Inclusion Europe, Mental Health Europe, AGE, and Children's High Level Group**). These NGOs have also been contacted and expressed support. It is envisaged that Jan Pfeiffer <sup>1</sup>(Children's High Level Group) could be the Chairman and Luk Zelderloo (European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities) could be the Rapporteur of the Task Force.
- Commission services would act as a secretariat (DG EMPL) and as observers (DG JLS, DG SANCO).

To sum up, the idea is to launch an initiative that

- Would link the four disparate "de-institutionalisation narratives" together and thus increases their weight;
- Would prepare a kind of a road map in this important policy area for the next Commissioner without forcing upon him/her a binding commitment.

The draft letter nominating the members of the Expert Group and the Mandate of the Expert Group will be prepared by the Cabinet, together with the responsible unit.



Kristin SCHREIBER

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<sup>1</sup> The Commissioner met Mr Pfeiffer, a well-known European campaigner for institutional care reform (TIME Magazine's European of the Year 2004), on 19 January 2009, and it was due to this meeting that the idea of an Ad Hoc Expert Group was initiated.