

Deinstitutionalization (DI) is the process of planning transformation, downsizing and/or closure of residential institutions, while establishing a diverse range of community-based services, including prevention, in order to eliminate the need for institutional care. Deinstitutionalization cannot be simply understood as the closure of institutions, as stated by the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional Care to Community-based Care.

Deinstitutionalisation, as a process, is tightly linked with the Right to live independently and being included in the community, recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in its article 19. SUPPORT aims to provide individualised and global support for people with disabilities in its transition from institutional to community settings. In the European context, the Right to Equal Recognition before the Law, Freedom from Exploitation and Abuse are considered priority areas in the Council of Europe (CoE) Disability Strategy 2017-2023.

In 2003, SUPPORT was born sponsored by the Catalan Mental Health Public Service Provider (IAS) in the Girona region and has contributed to accelerate the inclusion process by reducing the number of long-term users on the former psychiatric hospital from about 500 individuals in 2003 to 24 individuals in 2018. SUPPORT also provides community-based alternatives and support to reduce new admissions and improve the quality of life of users in community environments.

In Girona, the use of long-term residential institutions for people with psychosocial disabilities is no longer considered an option. From SUPPORT and the Public Mental Health Network we use all available mechanism to include persons with disabilities in community environments and to enable them exercise choice and control over their lives and over decisions which affect them.

Currently, the situation can be improved by redirecting resources from institutions to deliver support services in the community; find solutions to manage and overcome the chronic deficit on social housing, and improve financial outcomes or irregular financial situations of persons with disabilities which hinder the access to community-based services and facilities.

Key Actions

Our service offers a diverse range of activities **to promote social inclusion in the community:**

Actions

- Detect, prevent and mitigate the risk from every form of exploitation, violence and abuse suffered by people with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities in institutional settings.
- Promote community-based alternatives to residential institutions by allocating and coordinating residential resources available on the regular or social housing sector avoiding social segregation.
- Activate support resources available through the public network of social services or the health-care sector.
- Offer direct, dynamic, adaptable and global support to persons with disabilities through individual support plans.
- Provide individualised assessment and guidance to families and relatives of persons with disabilities on alternatives to institutional care settings.
- Sensitise professionals and the network of service providers in order to promote inclusion of people with disabilities in the community.
- Mediate between social agents, stakeholders, neighbours and social services with the objective to mitigate the risk of initial aversion suffered from people with disabilities to develop an autonomous and independent life in the community.
- Become a change facilitator that encourages inclusion in the community of people with disabilities.
- Promote and develop projects as well as other activities to accomplish SUPPORT's goals.