**CYPRUS**

1. **General section on Independent Living**

**1.1. Overall implementation of Article 19**

Implementation of this article is found to be inadequate.

**1.2. Choice of living arrangements**

Disabled adults cannot freely choose their living arrangements. There are still segregated settings (social care institutions, psychiatric hospitals, group homes and other) for disabled adults (incl. older people with disabilities) and children. Adults with serious mobility disabilities, i.e. tetraplegics, have been living included in the society and have control of their life.

**1.3. Deinstitutionalisation strategy**

The county has a deinstitutionalisation strategy and progress has been made in the last 5 years on this topic. This affects mainly people with mental disabilities.

Segregated settings are, according to the responder, still the norm for those with mental disabilities and high support needs, both in terms of living arrangements and education. The existing deinstitutionalisation strategy is in fact relocating people to small group homes, in the cities.

We received no information on whether or not EU funds are still used to invest in institutional care settings in Cyprus.

**1.4. Access to mainstream services**

Access to health care is deemed adequate. Improvements are required in all other areas, including education (primary, secondary and tertiary), housing, public transport and culture, as well as access to employment in the open labour market. There is a law protecting disabled people in the labour market, but its implementation is inadequate.

**1.5. Access to personal assistance**

Cyprus has a personal assistance system (PA-system) in place to help facilitate inclusion of disabled individuals in the community. The details of the PA-system will be provided in the following pages.

1. **General information about the PA scheme/policy**

**2.1. Personal assistance scheme: general information and corresponding legislation**

Access to personal assistance (PA) in Cyprus, in general, requires improvement. The provision of PA is recognised as a right. The scheme is available on national level and codified as an item of service in a more general legislation. Disabled people in rural or remote areas, as well as those in residential care, have access to the scheme.

There are no limitations on what PA can be used for. There are no waiting lists and the overall number of PA users has increased in the last 5 years. There have not been changes to the legislation/policy that affected access to PA in the last 5 years.

**2.2. Funding of Personal Assistance**

In Cyprus the PA-scheme is funded on a project basis. The funds are being provided from the state budget or co-funded by the EU, through the European Structural and Investment Funds.

PA is paid through direct payments, such as personal budgets. Theoretically the funding allows users to employ assistance from the open labour market, as well as to hire services not directly related to personal care. However, in practice, the PA budget is generally not sufficient to cover the user´s needs.

The scheme is limited by a cost ceiling per user, but users whose needs are over this limit are not being directed to residential care. The PA finding also covers additional employment costs, such as employer’s contributions, payroll work and other administrative costs. Receiving personal assistance does not restrict the user´s eligibility for any other benefits, support and/or services. Family members are also allowed to be paid as PAs.

**2.3. Eligibility and needs assessment procedures**

Children and adults with physical disabilities, in this case only those with symptoms of paraplegia or tetraplegia, including those over 65 years of age are eligible for PA in Cyprus. The budget does not decrease after 65 years of age.

Access to the PA scheme requires medical certification of the applicant as a prerequisite for applying. The scheme is provided irrespective of individual or family income, family or marital situation or insurance status. The applicant's level of social activity, including involvement in paid work, volunteering and/or education does not affect the eligibility. PA is available irrespective of whether the person lives in their own home or residential care. The scheme is also accessible to refugees and asylum seekers.

The eligibility assessment is led by the user through self-assessment. The person can also request support from peers and professionals.

The needs assessment is led by professionals such as doctors, social workers and psychologists. It is unclear if applicants have access to adequate information and peer support prior and during the assessments, or if the assessors receive any training on the Independent Living Philosophy or the social model of disability.

The assessment is conducted in the form of a structured interview, using lists of pre-defined activities and/or needs. The support a person receives can be increased if they face certain medical issues such as using a respirator.

In general, the assessment procedure is straightforward and transparent. It covers the needs for assistance in all areas of life, including family, intimacy education, employment and leisure to a certain extent. Whether the assessment is permanent or it needs to be repeated is dependent on the persons age, type of impairment and other factors.

Following their assessment, the applicants are ranked through a point-based system and only those beyond a certain cut-off line receive assistance. The outcome of the needs assessment is expressed in needs categories or desired outcomes (for example, dressing, cooking, shopping, socialising, studying, etc.). The number of assistance hours per user is limited and often does not allow to cover all support needs in practice

A disabled person can appeal (file a complaint against) the outcome of their procedures. The appeal procedure is effective, straightforward and transparent. It does not entail additional expenses for the user, however, legal aid or other types of support during this process are not available.

**2.4. Characteristics of PA provision and recruitment**

The users are sufficiently informed about their choice of providers, and can freely choose who provides their PA. Assistance can either be provided by non-governmental organisations, including disabled people’s organisations (DPOs) or the person can choose to employ a PA directly.

A person can freely select and hire their assistance. It is possible to hire more than one assistant, depending on the funding available. The user can also keep their assistance when moving within the country, as well as when moving to another country. The quality of provision however, is not monitored.

The personal assistance provided through the state funded PA-scheme is based on a personal budget not on hours. The PA system provided through the Cyprus Paraplegics Organisation is based on a fixed number of PA hours per day or week. Within these frameworks the user is free to choose when the assistance is provided, without any restrictions.

The provision of assistance is not bound to a particular setting, so the users can freely decide where and how to access assistance. The users do not need to account for their use of assistance. The availability of contingency if assistants become unavailable depends on the provider.

Not all users are provided with training how to manage their PA. When they are, the training is carried out by NGOs, DPOs or user cooperatives. This training includes recruitment and management of personal assistants, the Independent Living philosophy and/or the social model of disability and relationships management (e.g., conflicts, communication, confidentiality, emotions, etc.).

Supported decision making is not available for those who need it to manage their assistance and it is not clear if people with cognitive impairments are allowed to manage their own assistance. Peer support is available only in some cases.

**2.5. Working conditions of assistants**

Personal assistance is recognised as a profession. No specific qualifications are necessary for people to work as PAs. It is unclear whether assistants receive training on providing personal assistance and what this training entails. The wages of personal assistants are protected by minimum wage regulations and competitive in comparison with similar occupations. Personal assistants are entitled to benefits such as social security and paid leave (annual, sick and parental).