

# AGING OF PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES : A MAJOR CONCERN IN THE YEARS TO COME

Life expectancy of the EU population is steadily increasing and people with disabilities are no exception to this rule.

In a period of fiscal consolidation within the EU, how to provide quality of support services as well as solutions to needs and expectations of aging people with disabilities has become a major challenge.

*Since services need to meet the needs of aging people with disabilities the question is: how to approach each situation by providing a coherent and proactive framework ?*

## The expression of the people's desire

The best way to “get it right” when providing services, is to match an adequate supply of services which meet the expectation and demands of the user. However, this is not always the case since the social policies implemented in the different countries and their quality depend on the financial resources allocated for this purpose. Therefore, we need to do a compromise between the desires and feasibility from an economic point of view, taking as much as possible into account the client's life project and its adaptation to the environmental circumstances. Empowerment of the person with disability and his/her participatory approach shall be promoted in all circumstances by the service provider regardless of the nature and the degree of disability.

## Needs assessment

As for everyone else, the individual needs of persons with disabilities are transversely spotted around medical care needs which increase with the aging of the person. However, the evolution of the different clinical profiles has also lead to take into account the environmental and relational factors as to achieve life balance. It becomes necessary here to mention the loss of autonomy and the dependence of the person, when considering what quality services do actually mean.

This population of aging persons with intellectual disabilities considered also a “pioneer” generation should not undergo a process of more dependence and more “handicapping”. **It shall be avoided that this double difficulty (disability and age) adds double obstacles such as social and professional**

# AGING OF PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES : A MAJOR CONCERN IN THE YEARS TO COME

**“disability”**. For this reason, the aging of people with intellectual disabilities represents today a major challenge within the services provided since finding appropriate solutions that will soften the sudden changes in their lifestyle and avoid any exclusions is needed.

*Therefore policy makers shall seek to provide a flexibility framework able to manage and arrange the different passages, instead of proposing solutions relying on household disruptions.*

How to efficiently reply to a multifactorial panel of needs of an aging person with ID through resource planning combined with other necessary devices ?

## Public policy

- Even if comparative studies reveal a great heterogeneity of the care systems in Europe, several converging trends can be observed :
- The trend to favor home support as long as possible (seen the percentage of public expenditure in this direction)
- Increased attention to the family caregivers
- Development of financial benefits mechanisms to encourage the choice of the user
- The competition between care services and support services...

European public policies tend to support the aging person with disability in different ways such as:

- The Malaga Ministerial Declaration (7 & 8 May 2003)
- The Graz Declaration (June 2006)
- The Declaration of St. Petersburg which has launched Persons with Disabilities Action Plan 2006-2015. Among the five transverse axes of the European Action Plan, aging of people with disability takes primary attention.

# AGING OF PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES : A MAJOR CONCERN IN THE YEARS TO COME

This community legal framework has been globally strengthened by the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in New York December 13, 2006.

## On national level

The Council of Europe has issued on July 10<sup>th</sup> 2009, a Recommendation to its 47 Member States on aging and disability in the XXI century. According to the Committee of Ministers: "The desire of aging persons with disabilities and elderly with disabilities to live their lives with the greatest degree of freedom and autonomy possible in the human and physical environment, shall be facilitated by the services".

The family instead plays an important role in the majority of countries. In Italy, it was the family who has coordinated the interventions at home, while this role in other EU countries such as Germany, Denmark, UK and Sweden is the so-called care manager.

Finally, there are also increasingly diversified living areas, ranging from home to medical establishment: private habitats within a community where the advantage is the maintenance of a social life.

## E-learning and training of support staff working with aging people with ID.

The solutions within and out of the institutional framework-viewed as a diverse range of services and multidisciplinary management of people within their environment-need to be adopted to the interaction of the services.

ARFIE (Association for Research and Training on Integration in Europe) in the last fifteen years has considered the provision of services to aging people with ID, as one of the major challenges to be faced. Therefore, ARFIE held several studies and seminars to solicit innovative solutions in services provision that could match aging people with ID needs and expectations. The European partnership's aim is to address the needs of aging persons with ID by providing training and support to the staff and caregivers working with the users, contributing to the users' quality of life.

# AGING OF PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES : A MAJOR CONCERN IN THE YEARS TO COME

Filling the gap between research and services provision on this issue has been considered as a core objective. The pedagogical innovation to address social workers and health professionals geographically dispersed, has highlighted the need of accessibility and challenged the conventional thinking that the face to face is the most effective way of transmission of knowledge. Nonetheless, many adaptations have been necessary within the different training modules, but a wide coherence has emerged without having a negative impact at the quality and developments of the products.

Beyond the general knowledge in gerontology, the training of professionals on how to offer services maintaining links with the environmental management and prevention has emerged as of fundamental relevance.

Six modules and topics have been chosen as a part of the e-learning platform of the AGID project :

- Aging Processes of People with ID
- Pathological Aging in People with ID
- Person Centered Planning
- Care Management - Organization of supporting of aging people with ID
- Social Network and Communication
- Emotional Regulation for Professional Carers

These modules have been articulated around the somatic and psychological processes of aging as to achieve successful training of the staff, thus quality service provision when supporting aging people with ID within their life projects and environment.



**Lifelong  
Learning  
Programme**

**Patrice Morel**  
Les Genêts d'Or - France