

In-house social services programme “I Believe in the Unbelievable”

Organisation(s):	Vilnius City Municipality	
Country:	Lithuania	
Contact:	policy@esn-eu.org	
Theme: <i>Choose at least one option</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ageing & Care <input type="checkbox"/> Asylum & Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Young People <input type="checkbox"/> Support for Children & Families <input type="checkbox"/> Community Care <input type="checkbox"/> Integrated Care & Support <input type="checkbox"/> Co-Production <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Housing & Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Artificial Intelligence <input type="checkbox"/> Digitalisation <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Labour Market Inclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Social Inclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Technology <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce and Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Social Benefits <input type="checkbox"/> EU Funding <input type="checkbox"/> Social Service’s Resilience <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Person-Centred Care <input type="checkbox"/> Research & Use of Evidence <input type="checkbox"/> Management & Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify:
Principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights: <i>Check the 20 principles here.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Education, training, life-long learning <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Gender equality <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Equal opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Active support to employment <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Secure and adaptable employment <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Fair Wages <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Transparent employment conditions <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Social dialogue <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Work-life balance <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Healthy, safe work environment	<input type="checkbox"/> 11. Childcare and child support <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Social protection <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Unemployment benefits <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Minimum income <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Old age income and pensions <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Health care <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Long-term care <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Housing and assistance to homeless <input type="checkbox"/> 20. Access to essential services
Current status of the practice:	<input type="checkbox"/> Concept and Design Phase <input type="checkbox"/> Testing or pilot phase <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary practice that has terminated <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary practice that is ongoing and has a termination date <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Established and ongoing practice <input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Up and Transformation Phase <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	
Summary: <i>Please summarise the practice in maximum 3 sentences. This</i>	The “I Believe in the Unbelievable” project tackles stigma and social exclusion experienced by individuals with intellectual disabilities by focusing on their empowerment and integration into the community.	

<p><i>will be the disclaimer of your project on our website.</i></p>	
<p><u>Context/ Social issues addressed</u> <i>Please explain the problem you attempt to solve with your practice.</i></p>	<p>The project addresses negative societal attitudes that often lead to discrimination, low self-esteem, and internalised stigma. By empowering people in all areas of their lives, they are actively involved in assessing and planning their needs for services. These measures ensure better quality and more successful integration into the society.</p>
<p><u>Objectives:</u> <i>Please provide a maximum of three objectives in bullet points.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The projects aim to address the social exclusion of people with intellectual disabilities through person-centred support and by promoting their active involvement in the community through public education
<p><u>Activities:</u> <i>Please describe the activities put in place to achieve the objectives (maximum 300 words).</i></p>	<p>The project is centred on empowering individuals by addressing their unique needs and preferences, supporting their integration into the community, and promoting independence and dignity. It is implemented through a structured approach involving several key phases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Firstly, the service users, the Residents' Council and/or the human rights activists of the Independent Living Home submit individual or group proposals for the realisation of their dreams and wishes. 2. A plan is drawn up with the service users to achieve the goals (fulfil the dreams/ wishes/ preferences), discussing the steps in the plan and the actions to be taken to pursue the result. Say a person expresses a wish (to save up money to go on a trip, get a job, join a sports club, sign up for a course to learn English, care for stray animals at a local community animal shelter, go to the cinema, a concert, a sporting event, meet art or sports celebrities, etc.). He then draws up a plan together with a staff member, analyses it and monitors the implementation of the plan. Throughout the goal-pursuit phase, measures are put in place to empower and motivate the person to achieve the goal. 3. The tools include understandable communication and techniques, visual material, wishes and dreams illustrations, job responsibilities reminders, and money-saving plans. For example, if a person is starting to attend a gym, a video is made with a staff member's assistance showing the sequence, timing and correct way of doing the exercises. 4. Employees of the institution carry out educational activities to promote the social inclusion of service users in the community and to encourage the growth of civil society. They lecture employers, schools, shopping malls and other communities on the importance of support for and full-fledged inclusion of vulnerable people. They also share information about individuals' rights, challenges and experiences of working, travelling and participating in social life, also providing information on the principles of appropriate and ethical communication, algorithms for behaviour having noticed that a vulnerable person needs help, and models of societal behaviour that help vulnerable people feel and be empowered, independent and dignified. <p>In 2017, experts from the World Health Organisation conducted a study assessing conditions of living and human rights in three Lithuanian institutions. One of the institutions was the Valakampiai Social Services Facility. The study results revealed that the Facility ensured the best living conditions and human rights compared to the other institutions.</p>

Outcomes:

Please explain what the results were/are so far and how you evaluated this.

Our project has been evaluated using several methods to obtain comprehensive and accurate feedback.

Focus group interviews: We use focus group interviews with the participation of service users and service staff. During these sessions, visual material (e.g., travel photos and videos) is reviewed, impressions and opinions are discussed, recommendations are shared, and areas for improvement are identified. A staff member records the data together with the people using services. The process occurs after each planned activity or goal has been achieved and before implementing planned activities. The method helps assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the measures.

Feedback from people using services: At the beginning of the project, we tried to use a questionnaire, but it did not work. Service users shared that they had difficulties understanding and answering the questions and often ignored the surveys. Instead, during focus group interviews, service users openly shared their impressions and opinions. They appreciate the opportunity to discuss their travelling, to watch photos and videos, and to express their views in front of everyone. Service users appreciate that staff ask how they feel and allow them to talk about what they liked or disliked and make suggestions for future activities.

EQUASS certification: as an EQUASS-certified organisation (Valakampiai Social Services Facility for Independent Living was awarded the EQUASS Assurance Quality Certificate in May 2022), each year, we identify the results of the services provided based on clear indicators. We evaluate 12 outcome areas such as staff learning and development; ensuring rights of the service user; partnership; service user involvement in service planning, delivery and evaluation; empowerment; improving quality of life; involvement in drafting personalised plans; continuity of services; usefulness of services; satisfaction of service users and other stakeholders; operational efficiency; and comparison of service provision results. These evaluation methods allow us to continuously improve our services and improve their quality, ensuring that they meet the needs and expectations of our service users.

During the project implementation period, some service users fulfilled their dreams: they found employment, started attending a sports club, learned English, visited Lithuanian towns and travelled to Spain, Egypt, Turkey, Poland, Estonia, etc. The quantitative and qualitative data collected during the implementation of our project provide a comprehensive picture of its impact on service users.

The quantitative data shows that in January 2023, service users' satisfaction with their quality of life increased, especially in self-fulfilment, where a 20% improvement was achieved. Of the 44 goals for quality of life, 28 were fully achieved, 10 were partially achieved, and 6 were not achieved. Service users' satisfaction with their participation in the project was over 80%.

Qualitative data collected during the focus group interviews showed that the project helped service users to feel more confident and self-assured. They appreciate the opportunity to participate in goal planning and active communication with staff, which has strengthened their self-representation skills. Moreover, 95% of the participants said that the project has made them feel happy through the ability to save money and achieve their goals and that they feel a sense of dignity in their achievements, which they can share with others. This leads to their more successful integration into the community. These data clearly show that the project has positively impacted participants, enabling them to improve their quality of life, boost their self-esteem and overcome inherent fears, such as the fear of flying or judgement of the social environment. This confirms the importance and impact of our efforts in the community.

<p><u>Links to supporting documents:</u> <i>e.g. website or report of the practice</i></p>	<p>https://www.valakampusn.lt/en/</p>
<p><u>Comments and tips</u> <i>i.e. for people willing to use your Practice</i></p>	