

Worlds apart? A4i project launched to support collaboration between investors and social care providers

The [Alliance for Inclusive Investment in Social Care and Support \(a4i\)](#) project was launched in Brussels on the 4th and 5th February 2019. Funded by the Erasmus+ programme, the a4i project aims to build up the capacity of social services, investors and authorities to know why, when and how to use private investment for projects in the field of social care and support.

Social care and support providers have significant investment needs. Europe has an investment gap for social infrastructure alone estimated at [€150 billion a year](#) for the next decade. Whilst increasing public investment will be required to meet this gap, it is equally important to better understand **why, when and how private investment could be used** to help accelerate inclusive investment into quality community-based care and support services.

The aim of the [Alliance for Inclusive Investment in Social Care and Support \(a4i\)](#) project is to create a new breed of decision makers amongst service providers, investors and authorities, to have the **skills and confidence to secure financing** from both public and private sources.

Coordinated by the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD), the project partnership brings together representatives of higher education institutions, private investors and social services from **Belgium, Spain and Czech Republic**; including Health ClusterNET, the Human Rights Institute of Carlos III University, Fundacion ONCE, University Mondragon, Laboral Kutxa, the Association of Social Service Providers in the Czech Republic, the CEVRO Institut, Česká spořitelna, UNIPSO, Université de Liège and CREDAL. This joint initiative is a **first step towards creating concrete collaboration between the three sectors, especially at European level**.

Opening the project, Mr Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of EASPD, highlighted what is the challenge of this project: *“Private investors and social service providers usually see each other as coming from different planets: one from Mars, the other from Venus. The a4i project will allow us to communicate and develop knowledge on how to work together. This could mark an important step in helping Europe meet its social investment needs; crucial for a more inclusive Europe”*.

By the end of the project in 2021, the a4i project will result in **a programme for both academic settings and adult training for investors and social care providers, developed through real-life piloting in Belgium, the Czech Republic and Spain**. The project will also develop a State of Play of Social Investment in Europe, as well as European Guidelines on Quality Investment Principles to ensure investment is made into quality projects, in line with international human rights principles. The project consortium will also be supported by an Advisory Board.

The project partners will next meet in Bucharest on the 16th and 17th May 2019 during EASPD's Annual Conference "[Investing in Social Services, Investing in People](#)".

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