

EVALUATION REPORT

Innovating European Lawyers to Advance the Rights of Children with Disabilities

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Belgium



Bulgaria



Czech Republic and
Slovakia



Ireland



Lithuania



Poland



Romania



Coordinator



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Table of contents

I. INTRODUCTION	3
1. Background	3
2. Evaluation objectives and methodology	3
II. PROJECT OUTPUTS	5
1. Workstream 1: Development of training package	5
2. Workstream 2: Training seminars	7
3. Workstream 3: National Legal Innovation Strategies (NLIS)	12
4. Workstream 4: Best practice report	13
III. PROJECT RESULTS	14
1. Result 1: 130 lawyers across eight countries have strengthened knowledge about how to use legal arguments and mechanisms to secure the rights of child clients with mental disabilities, and enhanced skills in how to represent such children	14
2. Result 2: Each country has a NLIS drawing on the lessons learned in the training and which offers a blueprint for action when the project finishes	15
3. Result 3: Percolation of learnings to all Member States via assertive outreach, disseminating the outputs to relevant stakeholders.	16
4. Unplanned results and added value	16
IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	18

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

'Innovating European lawyers to advance rights of children with disabilities' was an 18-month project, co-funded by the European Commission, under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship/Justice Programme (2014-2020) Action grants to promote and protect the rights of the child by supporting transnational projects aiming to build capacity for professionals in child protection systems and judicial professionals representing children in judicial proceedings.

The project sought to enhance the knowledge and skills of lawyers, representing children with mental disabilities in judicial proceeding, to ensure that the rights of children with mental disabilities are protected. It combined national and international level activities, including design and delivery of trainings, development of national legal innovation strategies and dissemination of good practices.

The project was implemented in partnership between eight organisations from different EU Member States: Mental Disability Advocacy Centre (MDAC, leading organisation, Hungary), Bulgarian Centre for Non-profit Law (Bulgaria), DLA Piper (Belgium), Forum for Human Rights (the Czech Republic and Slovakia), Children's Rights Alliance (Ireland), Mental Health Perspectives (Lithuania), Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland), Centre for Legal Resources (Romania)

2. Evaluation objectives and methodology

The main goal of the evaluation is to assess the implementation of the project, focusing on the achievement of its outputs and results. As the formulation of the project objectives generally reiterates the formulation of the results (see the table below), their achievement is not discussed separately. It is assumed that the objectives are reached when the planned results are achieved.

Results ¹	Objectives
130 lawyers across eight countries have strengthened knowledge about how to use legal arguments and mechanisms to secure the rights of child clients with mental disabilities, and enhanced skills in how to represent such children.	To enhance the knowledge and skills of lawyers representing children with mental disabilities in judicial proceedings in eight Member States.
Each country has an NLIS drawing on the lessons learned in the training and which offers a blueprint for action when the project finishes	
Percolation of learnings to <u>all</u> Member States via assertive outreach, disseminating the outputs to relevant stakeholders.	To share training materials and lessons learned with lawyers across the EU to enable them to roll out similar training.

¹ Project Proposal, Part 1, 1.1. Summary of the project

The information needed to assess the implementation of the project was collected using the following methods:

- Desk research: project-related documentation, such as project proposal, training materials and plan, evaluation forms from trainings, national strategies, partners' reports, social media and other relevant documents, proposed by the organisation, were reviewed and analysed.
- Semi-structured interviews: a total of 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted via Skype or telephone. This included:
 - 8 interviews with project partners – the project coordinator from each partner was interviewed.
 - 5 interviews with participants in the national seminars – from Belgium, Bulgaria, Ireland, Lithuania and Slovakia. Partners and/or participants from other countries were also approached but interviews could not be arranged.
 - 2 interviews with participants in the training of trainers: from Bulgaria and Belgium. The project coordinators from Belgium, Romania, Ireland and the Czech Republic/Slovakia have also participated in the training, so the conclusions concerning the training are based on contributions from 6 people.

II. PROJECT OUTPUTS

This chapter discusses the implementation of the project in terms of outputs. It compares the produced with the planned outputs, to identify the areas in which the project has been successful and in which it has encountered challenges, together with the contributing factors. Additional, unplanned outputs, special achievements and lessons learned are also discussed.

The discussion of the outputs is based on the indicators defined in the project Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. They are organised around four of the Workstreams, presented in Annex A of the Project Proposal, which include activities directly related to the objectives of the project:

- Workstream 1: Development of Training Package
- Workstream 2: Training Seminars
- Workstream 3: National Legal Innovation Strategies
- Workstream 4: International Best Practice Report

Workstream 0: 'Management and Coordination of the Project' is not covered, as it is not an aim of the evaluation to assess the project management.

1. Workstream 1: Development of training package

Based on the outputs described in Workstream 1: Development of training package, the following output indicators were identified in the M&E framework:

Indicator	Target
Training package produced.	1 package
Pilot test of the package carried out.	1 three-days seminar for 6 lawyers + experts and MDAC staff
Number of translations of the training package made	8 (French, Dutch, Lithuanian, Romanian, Slovakian, Czech, Polish and Bulgarian)
Partners' satisfaction with the quality of the training package	80 %
Participants' satisfaction with the quality of the pilot training	80%

The evaluation showed that all targets were met and some, for example, concerning the satisfaction with the quality of the training pack and the pilot training, were outperformed. The following aspects deserve special attention.

1.1. Training Pack

Useful resource on human rights and children with mental disabilities

The final version of the training pack is a unique resource on issues related to the rights of children with mental disabilities. All partners appreciated it and found it very useful:

'I am very happy with the training pack. I think it is amazing.' (*interview with a partner*)

'It is a great instrument.' (*interview with a partner*)

'It is very good, very productive and useful both for the participants and the trainers.' (*interview with a partner*)

Requests for the electronic version of the pack have been received after the training by some of the partners.

What makes the pack a unique resource is that it is very comprehensive, covering topics related to human rights and rights of persons with disabilities, skills to represent children, reasonable and procedural accommodations, remedies and avenues and strategic litigation. At the same time, it is concise (28 pages long), which makes it easy to use. As one of the partners noted, 'materials on the topic [of human rights and disabilities] are too many and it is difficult to navigate'. The training pack makes this navigation easier. In general, the pack is a good example on how specialised information could be presented in a user-friendly way, maintaining a good balance between the amount of detail and the length of the text.

A potential downside of the Pack is that it does not contain information about the national contexts (for example, how international standards are applied at national level), which is important for local stakeholders. This has allowed to keep the Pack concise and easy to use but it has also meant that to make the training more useful and relevant to participants' needs, trainers need to engage with gathering and presenting additional country-specific information. This has not been an issue in this project, as during the train-the-trainers seminar, trainers were explicitly encouraged to focus on the local context and most of them prepared additional materials for the national seminars (see 1.4., Training materials and presentations). However, it might be useful to include in the training plan specific instructions for trainers who were not involved in the project, highlighting the importance of presenting the national context.

Translations

Having the Pack translated in different languages is of huge importance for ensuring sustainability of project results and their long-term impact. Many of the partners shared that there were no such resources in their national languages. The translations of the Pack have made it accessible to a wider circle of stakeholders. More people than the ones directly involved in project activities will be able to benefit from the project by gaining access to practical information and tools.

Work process

The approach to developing the Training Pack was very democratic, which contributed to the quality of the materials. MDAC developed the initial draft and then all partners had an

opportunity to comment and feed in. The feedback received after the pilot training was also considered (see 1.2., Good practice).

1.2. Pilot testing

Good practice

In general, the pilot training contributed significantly to the quality of the project outputs. It allowed the partners to see what the impact of the training would be and whether it would contribute to reaching the project objectives. At the same time, it gave them an opportunity to revise and improve the training pack, based on participants' feedback about what went well, what could be improved and how. Very useful suggestions for improvement were given in the evaluation forms and the discussion, following the pilot. A few of the partners pointed out that while the initial version of the pack was 'not satisfactory', the final product was very good.

It should be noted that there were some challenges in the preparation and delivery of the training, mostly related to communication between the trainers from the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and MDAC. This, however, did not affect negatively the overall success of the training and the participants' satisfaction. Evaluation forms clearly show that the training, as designed, has fulfilled its goal to build participants' capacity and skills on issues related to human rights of children with mental disabilities and their representation in court. The knowledge and skills of all participants have improved as a result of the training (see Chapter II, Result 1 for more details). In addition, their overall assessment of the training is 4.29 (on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'very poor' and 5 means 'excellent').

Changes

The pilot training took place in Warsaw instead of in Prague, as initially planned. This was due to a change of project partners. The AK Mataisko law firm (Czech Republic and Slovakia) which was supposed to work on the organisation of the training together with MDAC, withdrew from the project soon after its start. In order not to slow down the implementation of the activities, while waiting for the new partner to be approved by the European Commission, the responsibility for organising and delivering the pilot training was transferred to the Polish partner. This change did not affect negatively the preparation and execution of this activity – the pilot training was timely implemented and the relevant indicators were met. The implementation of the project as a whole was also not hindered by the withdrawal of AK Mataisko. The new Czech partner – Forum for Human Rights (FORUM) – joined the project soon after its start and was actively involved in all activities.

2. Workstream 2: Training seminars

The following indicators and targets were identified for Workstream 2: Training seminars:

Indicator	Target
Train-the trainers seminar carried out.	1 two-day seminar in Budapest for 8 national experts (1 from each partner)
Satisfaction of participants with the quality of the train-the-trainers seminar	80%
Number of national training seminars	8 two-days seminars for 15-20 lawyers each
Number of participants in the national trainings	130
Satisfaction with the quality of the national seminars.	80%

All targets were reached and most of them were outperformed, including related to the number of participants in trainings and their satisfaction. The following aspects deserve closer attention.

1.3. Train the trainers seminar

Participants

More than the initially planned number of participants took place in the seminar as some of the partners (MDAC, the Children’s Rights Alliance, DLA Piper, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and FORUM) were represented by two people. This was a very positive development as more people had an opportunity to improve their capacity to deliver trainings on human rights and children with disabilities. In the long run, this can have a positive impact on partners’ work at national level and can eventually contribute to better protection of the rights of children with mental disabilities.

Participants’ satisfaction

Participants’ overall assessment of the training is very positive – the average score is 4.6 (on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means ‘very poor’ and 5 means ‘excellent’). People were very satisfied with the design and delivery of the training and with the quality of the training materials (see the table below).

Train-the-trainers seminar - summary of participants’ evaluation forms

Item	Score
The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	4.5
The content of the training reflected my expectations.	4.8
The content of the training was well-designed.	4.7
The presentations were clear and well organised.	4.3
Participation and discussion were encouraged.	4.3
The timing/length of the sessions was appropriate.	4.0
I will be able to apply what I have learned in my work.	4.7
The training materials distributed were helpful.	4.8
The training objectives were met.	4.5

The training seminar was also very successful in achieving its goals to provide national trainers with knowledge and skills to conduct a training on the rights of children with mental disabilities. All interviewed participants said that they felt well prepared and confident in their abilities to lead the national seminars.

Training design

The training content is well structured, covering topics related to both rights of children with mental disabilities and methods for training delivery. This has allowed the participants to gain knowledge related to the content of the national seminars but also skills to deliver an interactive training. While some of the interviewed participants noted that the training could have benefited from more focus on training techniques in relation to the training pack, the overall assessment of the seminar is very positive.

“I was very impressed. There was a lot of information that we found very helpful, in particular [...] providing us with techniques on how to make sure that the training sessions that we were going to run were interactive and dynamic and fruitful, productive and useful as possible. And also, the general content on human rights [...] I was quite satisfied.”

With regard to the training approach, two aspects are particularly important – interactivity and focus on national context. Legal professionals who have not been trained for trainers (as opposed to lecturers) are generally not familiar with interactive approaches. The seminar not only presented but also used interactive training techniques, which allowed the participants to experience the advantages of using such techniques in adult trainings.

“The training did not only consist of presentation but also sought to involve participants, including when it comes to formulating the content of the different rights and searching solutions to ensure the access to these rights... This approach was new to me. As a trainer, I have experience with other trainings and I can say that the interactivity, the involvement of participants was one of the most valuable things in the training seminar.” (*interview with training participant*).

Although the training pack itself does not reflect the national specifics, the participants in the training of trainers were encouraged to focus on their contexts and to reflect on the situation in their countries. This has helped them prepare for the national seminars – “The seminar itself gave us a key so that in the national seminars to reflect the national context.” (*interview with a training participant*)

Training team

The training team consisted of people with practical experience in the areas they were teaching, such as strategic litigation, training techniques, and communication with children with mental disabilities. This contributed to making the training very practical and useful.

“It was very interesting to hear her [the trainer’s] experience. I don’t have such experience...and for me it was very interesting to hear from her how she works these children, what communication approaches she uses in order to find out

what their wishes are; and how they could be approached in order to receive the information needed. This was particularly useful." *(interview with a training participant)*

"The session on training techniques was very interesting and helpful. We don't have such previous experience." *(interview with a training participant)*

1.4. National seminars

Participants

The target, in terms of number of participants, was exceeded – 149 people took part in the trainings, instead of the planned 130, which is an average of 18 people per training. A key factor for the good attendance rate was the extensive dissemination (see below, dissemination).

It should be noted that for most partners it was a big challenge to attract practicing lawyers. This was explained with the length of the training (2 days), which made it difficult for lawyers to find the time to attend.

In addition to lawyers, the trainings were attended by law students, representatives of civil society organisations, representatives of national human rights institutions, social service practitioners, academics, parents of children with disabilities, and representatives of ministries. Having a diverse group of participants turned out to be an important advantage as it facilitated networking and cross-sectoral cooperation which is one of the key outcomes from the project (see Chapter 2, Unintended results). It also contributed to better learning.

"It was a very good idea by the organisers to involve mums of children with disabilities. We got so much practical, you know, day-to-day issues, which they are dealing with, which we never think about." *(interview with a training participant)*

"It was good to have mothers of children with disabilities, not only lawyers – it gave practical details." *(interview with a partner)*

"Very good decision to invite mothers of children with disability among the participants. Their experiences gave another meaning to the theoretical discussions." *(post-training evaluation)*

Participants' satisfaction

Participants' overall assessment of the seminars is very positive – an average of 4.7 points, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'strongly disagree' and 5 – 'strongly agree'. Some of the interviewees were really excited about the training and its relevance to their work.

"Haven't seen for a long time such enjoyable and productive two days... Really, really, sincerely appreciate every second spent on this training. [...] When I was going, I got mainly the goal... maybe somebody will give me tips how to speak

with these children and prepare them for the process and the transition [from institution to adoption]. So, the goal was this, but I got much, much more [...] I have read the CRPD before but haven't really studied it." (*interview with a training participant*)

As the table below shows, people were satisfied with all key aspects of the training – content, clarity and structure of presentations, materials distributed and opportunities for discussions. The design and the implementation of the training were also adequate to the needs of the participants.

National training seminars - summary of participants' evaluation forms

Item	Score
The objectives of the training were clearly defined	4.6
The content of the training reflected my expectations	4.7
The content of the training was well designed	4.7
The presentations were clear and well organised	4.7
Participation and discussion were encouraged	4.8
The timing/length of the sessions was appropriate	4.3
The information provided and skills practiced will assist me in representing CWMD	4.6
I will be able to apply what I have learned in my work	4.6
The training materials distributed were helpful	4.7
The objectives of the training were met	4.7
Overall, how would you assess the training?	4.7

Dissemination

All partners made significant efforts to reach out to all relevant stakeholders, using a variety of channels for dissemination of information, including mainstream media. For example, one of the partners did a radio interview to promote the training. It was also agreed with one national Bar association that credit points will be given to participants in the seminar that will count towards their required training credits. These efforts led to a very good attendance rate.

Training materials and presentations

Most partners invested time and energy to prepare and/or select additional training materials containing information about the rights of children with mental disabilities in their countries. These materials complemented the general training pack with the country specifics. Some of the partners also cooperated with other institutions and organisations, involving them with presentations in the training.

3. Workstream 3: National Legal Innovation Strategies (NLIS)

Indicator	Target
Number of strategy meetings	8
Number of participants in the strategy meetings	80
Number of strategies	8 strategies in 9 languages

All targets were met and some, related to the number of strategy meetings and the number of participants, were exceeded. This was because in one of the countries two strategy meetings took place, instead of the planned one meeting. The goal of the second meeting was on the one hand, to gather information to update the NLIS, due to the dynamic developments in the thematic area of the strategy, and on the other, to stimulate and support the positive policy developments.

The following aspects deserve additional attention.

Process

All interviewed partners and participants in the strategy meetings were very positive about the national strategy days, which had been the first step in the process of strategy development. These meetings were useful both as a basis for the development of the strategy, as they gave insights about the situation in the countries, and as capacity building and networking events.

“It was useful to understand what was happening at the moment; there is a new law – to find what are the problems.” *(interview with a project partner)*

“The participants developed their legal arguments, which was good for them and could be used to create legal change... the chat between the participants was very valuable.” *(interview with a project partner)*

At the same time, it should be noted that the work on the strategies was challenging for most of the partners and it took them a lot of time and efforts to draft the strategies after the strategy days.

Participants

Similar to training seminars, in most countries the strategy days were attended by other stakeholders as well as lawyers. There were a number of benefits in having a diverse group of participants. First of all, gathering together people with different experience contributed to a fuller picture of the situation in the countries, which helped with the development of the strategy. Second, it stimulated and supported policy changes. For example, in one of the countries the strategy day was attended by representatives from the relevant ministry, who were encouraged to express, for the first time, the ministry’s commitment to inclusive education. Soon after the event, the ministry started working on a concept and action plan on inclusive education. Third, it stimulated cooperation between NGOs and legal

professionals in the implementation of the strategies – NGOs will help connect people who may benefit from legal aid with lawyers.

4. Workstream 4: Best practice report

Indicator	Target
International symposium carried out	1
Number of participants in the international event	At least 10
Best practice report	1 report; 10 pages
Number of Member States to which the report is disseminated	All member states

All targets related to this Workstream were met as planned. It should be noted that there were also unplanned outputs produced. With the approval of the European Commission, MDAC has combined the resources of two of its EU co-funded projects to organise an international conference, in addition to the symposium. The event, entitled “Ensuring the rights of children with mental disabilities through capacity building and monitoring” took place in the European Parliament and was attended by members of the European Parliament and representatives of non-governmental organisations. The programme included presentations of the two MDAC projects, with the involvement of project partners, experts and experts by experience. The event contributed to greater visibility of the project and supported the dissemination of its main outputs.

III. PROJECT RESULTS

This chapter looks at the implementation of the project, comparing the planned with the achieved results. A number of unplanned results are also identified.

1. Result 1: 130 lawyers across eight countries have strengthened knowledge about how to use legal arguments and mechanisms to secure the rights of child clients with mental disabilities, and enhanced skills in how to represent such children

In terms of number of people, this result has been achieved and exceeded – a total of 171 people participated in trainings. This figure includes people who took part in the national seminars (149 people), the pilot training (10 people) and the train-the-trainers seminar (12 people). Although the initial target concerns the participants in national seminars, people who took part in other trainings are also considered here because pre- and post-training evaluation forms clearly show that their knowledge and skills have improved because of the training.

As pointed out earlier, not all training participants were lawyers, which means that the number of lawyers with improved knowledge and skills is less than the initially planned. However, this is not considered to be a shortcoming as having a diverse group of stakeholders has turned out to be essential for the overall success of the project (see section 4).

The table below provides a summary of the impact of the trainings, in terms of knowledge and skills, based on the responses in the pre- and post-evaluation forms.

Improvement of participants' knowledge and skills in percentage

Questions	National seminars ²	Pilot training ³	TOT ⁴
I am familiar with the human rights violations which children with mental disabilities experience	28.36%	47.06%	18.42%
I have an understanding of the rights of CWMD as set out in international, regional and domestic law	38.74%	25.00%	23.08%
I am familiar with international, regional and domestic texts setting out these rights	34.89%	36.84%	23.08%
I understand the remedies available to CWMD who have their human rights violated	39.44%	20.00%	32.35%
I understand the avenues of redress available to CWMD who have their human rights violated	47.25%	22.22%	46.88%
I feel confident in my skills to work with CWMD	29.17%	70.00%	79.17%
I feel confident in my ability to work with a CWMD who has or is experiencing trauma	38.23%	70.00%	90.48%
I understand the procedural accommodations that may be available for CWMD during legal proceedings	55.52%	50.00%	35.48%

² Number of participants – 123. No evaluation forms were distributed in Belgium.

³ Number of participants – 10; number of evaluation forms – 6.

⁴ Based on 10 entry and 6 exit forms.

I am aware of the principles, methods and steps of strategic litigation	59.21%	20.00%	23.53%
I am familiar with the work of MDAC and could tell someone what MDAC does	80.45%	33.33%	23.68%
Average	45.12%	39.45%	35.45%

As the table shows, there was an increase in participants' knowledge in all areas, included in the questionnaire. The most significant change for the people who took part in the national seminars is their improved knowledge in relation to strategic litigation (nearly 60% change) and procedural accommodations for children with mental disabilities during legal proceedings (55%). With regard to the pilot training and the training of trainers, the evaluations show an impressive increase in participants' confidence to work with children with mental disabilities, including children who have or are experiencing trauma. This could be explained on the one hand, with the rich practical expertise of the trainer who led this session during the two trainings, on the other, with the very basic knowledge in this area (for some countries the entry scores were 1.7 – 1.8)

The interviews, which were conducted a few months after the trainings, give an idea about the potential long-term impact of the training.

"I now have a big case in which I use the arguments I have learned during the training.... All the arguments show that it is 100% discrimination of a child with a disability. And I use all the techniques I have learned about how to interview children. [...] If I hadn't participated in this workshop, I would have not been prepared for this case. I am making, just from the workshop, six arguments [to appeal the court decision], ...I never felt so much knowledgeable. [...] It is the first case of this kind in my country. It really is like a miracle, because I know arguments, which I learned in that workshop... So many points now work for my case."

2. Result 2: Each country has a NLIS drawing on the lessons learned in the training and which offers a blueprint for action when the project finishes

As discussed in the previous chapter, each country involved in the project has a NLIS. The strategies were informed by the discussions that took place during the national training seminars and the strategy days. Participants have shared their views about the main issues related to the protection of the rights of children with mental disabilities in their countries and have decided jointly the issue on which to focus the strategy.

When it comes to the potential use of the NLIS as a blueprint for action after the project, this will vary from country to country, depending on partner's interests, focus and priorities and the thematic focus of the strategy. Overall, the strategies can be useful as bases for development of future legal actions and advocacy. For example, the guidance concerning case selection and the litigation plan can be used by lawyers and legal professionals to ensure protection of children's rights through legal actions. They can also support the development of a strategic litigation campaign. At the same time, the thorough analysis of the national situation and the proposed advocacy and awareness raising activities can be used by policy-makers, NGOs and legal professionals to inform, advocate or lobby for

changes in policies, legislation or practices. One of the partners has already used the information from the strategy to prepare and submit an opinion on the proposed changes in the national legislation, concerning the detention of children in adult in-patient psychiatric units.

3. Result 3: Percolation of learnings to all Member States via assertive outreach, disseminating the outputs to relevant stakeholders

It is difficult to establish the degree to which relevant stakeholders from Member States that were not directly involved in the project, have gained new knowledge. However, the information about dissemination shows that key stakeholders in Member States and at the EU level have had access to the main project outputs – the Training Pack and the Best Practice Report. The dissemination lists include a significant number and diverse stakeholders – policy-makers, local, regional, national and EU institutions, non-governmental organisations and networks, lawyers and Bar associations, and international human rights institutions.

4. Unplanned results and added value

During the evaluation, a number of unplanned results were identified, with a positive impact on the achievement of project's objectives and long-term goal.

1.1. Increased awareness and commitment to protect the rights of people with disabilities

Participants in all trainings – pilot, train-the-trainers, and national seminars – have indicated in their evaluation forms that the seminars have changed their way of thinking. Many have achieved a better understanding of disability from a human rights perspective, that is, what it means in practice to have access to certain rights and how the rights of people with disabilities are violated. This has had an impact on their views on issues related to people with disabilities and contributed to increased engagement with the rights of people with disabilities, confidence and motivation to take actions.

"It [the training] challenged my ideas about people with disabilities... In my country it is embedded in culture that people with disabilities receive better education in special schools... I didn't have a strong opinion. Now I am a strong defender of inclusive education." *(interview with a training participant)*

"I understood that segregation is not a right approach for the development of children with disability." *(post-training evaluation form)*

"It gave me knowledge about the behaviour of children with disabilities and changed my view to the communication with the child." *(post-training evaluation form)*

"After this workshop, you are much more keen to pick up any other information... Before that I was following but I didn't match – 'Oh, that goes with that one, that article goes with this one'. [...] I learned about the case of participation of disabled people in elections and I already noticed in our

newspapers that this is going further. I have published information in our newsletter and I am following the news." *(interview with a training participant)*

1.2. Networking and collaboration between stakeholders

The trainings and the strategy events gathered together people with diverse expertise and in different positions, allowing them to exchange experience and get familiar with each other's work. For many partners and participants these contacts were one of the main benefits from the project with a direct impact on their work on protecting the rights of children with mental disabilities. For example, some of the participants shared that they have already been in touch with other participants and/or partners in relation to specific cases and were able to receive helpful advice and information.

"I met new people and I approached some of them after the training. I am a sole practitioner, which means that I need to find friends to advise me as I am not from a big law firm. Now I know where to call when I have a question. [...] I was able to reach the president of ... [disability NGO, who attended the training] and asked him to prepare a position on my case." *(interview with a training participant)*

"We liaised with ... [two project partners] in relation to a mental health case. They have been really helpful in getting us information, which we used in court. We won the case." *(interview with a training participant)*

The diversity of the group also stimulated collaboration between organisations, both project partners and participants, in the form of joint projects. Some of the organisations have already started working together on projects addressing issues of special interest to them, such as inclusive education.

1.3. Improved capacity of partners

The project has built partners' capacity to design and deliver interactive trainings. They will be able to use the knowledge and experience gained during the project in their future work, which will increase the impact of their work.

"For me the added value was the cooperation with the MDAC in the organisation of the trainings. Although we started from scratch, there were so much information and observation we learned thanks to the cooperation with the trainers. Actually, right now we are using it in our different trainings." *(interview with project partner)*

"It did build the capacity of ... [the interviewed organisation] both in terms of human rights of people with disabilities and training techniques. [...] We did not have much experience, so this was very helpful." *(interview with project partner)*

"It [the training manual] is an inspiration for our trainings, it has a great structure. We have problems sometimes with giving too much information during the trainings." *(interview with project partner)*

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall the project was a success. It achieved its main objectives – on the level of results as well as outputs. The participants in the project improved their knowledge and skills to represent children with mental disabilities. Stakeholders from all Member States gained access to a unique collection of training materials on human rights and children with mental disabilities, which they can use to advance the rights of children with disabilities.

The project also made steps toward the achievement of its long-term goal, which is ‘to ensure that children with mental disabilities are no longer denied protection of European and international law’. It improved lawyers’ knowledge of issues related to human rights and disabilities (for example, provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and avenues for redress), which allowed them to be better prepared to identify cases of discrimination of children with disabilities and build better arguments. It also increased participants’ awareness of disability issues as human rights issues and their commitment to protect the rights of people with disabilities. At the same time, it built lawyers’ skills to communicate with children with mental disabilities, which can help ensure that the voices of these children are heard in the legal proceedings and that their best interests are protected.

The project has also stimulated cooperation between stakeholders. Different stakeholders started pooling their resources (know-how, contacts, and financial resources) and working together to promote and protect the rights of children with mental disabilities.

The implementation of the project has shown that the involvement of a diverse group of stakeholders in trainings and strategy development can lead to better outcomes in terms of knowledge and skills and commitment. It can also stimulate policy change and help ensure sustainability of results. It is important to plan the involvement of key stakeholders in future capacity-building projects, even with a generally legal focus, and to include activities encouraging networking. It is also crucial to involve organisations of people with disabilities and parents in both design and delivery of capacity-building events.