

TPOLOGY OF SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN ROMANIA

RĂBONȚU CECILIA IRINA,

PROF. PH.D, “CONSTANTIN BRÂNCUȘI” UNIVERSITY OF TÂRGU JIU

e-mail: cecilia.rabontu@gmail.com

VASILESCU MARIA

LECT. PH.D, “CONSTANTIN BRÂNCUȘI” UNIVERSITY OF TÂRGU JIU

e-mail: maria_vasilescu1983@yahoo.com

Abstract

Services are becoming increasingly important in the current period, both for businesses and for the general population. When it comes to services aimed at the population, we found it necessary to analyze the services provided to persons with disabilities, which are becoming more and more diverse and essential for this growing segment of the population.

At the end of 2024, a total of 960,428 persons were officially registered in this category in Romania. Whether they are under family care, institutionalized, or non-institutionalized, persons with disabilities require a wide range of services, such as: healthcare services, adapted educational services, public services, transportation, telecommunications, tourism services, and more.

In this paper, we aim to present the types of services that are necessary and adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.

Keywords: *services, persons with disabilities, Romania*

Classification JEL: *L84, O14*

1. Introduction

Persons with disabilities have existed throughout history, across all cultural, temporal, and geographical contexts. Societal attitudes toward this disadvantaged group have evolved significantly over time, shifting from marginalization and social exclusion to greater acceptance and efforts toward community integration [9].

According to current legislation, individuals with disabilities are entitled to access the physical, informational, and communication environments, in accordance with their specific needs. This accessibility is a fundamental prerequisite for exercising their rights and fulfilling their responsibilities within society.

As increasingly recognized in contemporary discourse, accessibility is not only a legal right, but also a key factor in promoting the social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities. It constitutes a distinct domain of policy and intervention.

Whether discussing adapted healthcare services, home-based or institutional care, inclusive education, access to public information, tourism, ICT systems - including internet services- administrative assistance, consultancy, or other support services, it is essential to adopt a holistic societal approach. Ensuring the inclusion and accessibility of persons with disabilities requires raising awareness and educating all members of society.

At the European Union level, there are established accessibility requirements applicable to products and services, aimed particularly at eliminating and preventing barriers to the free movement of certain goods and services that are accessible to persons with disabilities.

One might be tempted to assume that persons with disabilities require only specialized or social services. However, beyond these, every individual, regardless of status, has the right to access all categories of services, insofar as they are financially, physically, or intellectually accessible to them.

In this regard, it is important to recognize that persons with disabilities can benefit from a broad spectrum of services, provided these are adapted to their specific needs and circumstances. For instance, telecommunications services can be fully accessed by individuals with mobility impairments under standard subscription terms, while those with visual or hearing impairments may require certain adaptations or encounter specific limitations.

Social services, as a core component of national social protection systems, undoubtedly play a key role in addressing situations of social difficulty or vulnerability. In contemporary society, there is a growing need not only for public or privately provided social services, but for services of the highest possible quality—services that are continuously improved and tailored to the evolving needs of their beneficiaries [1].

Persons with disabilities are those individuals for whom the social environment, being inadequately adapted to their physical, sensory, psychological, intellectual, and/or multiple impairments, either completely prevents or significantly limits their equal access to social life. As a result, they require protective measures to support their integration and social inclusion. This necessitates a multidimensional approach that combines accessibility, specialized support, and community-based solutions. The role of social services extends beyond care provision, encompassing empowerment, advocacy, and the creation of inclusive environments. Ensuring adequate funding, qualified personnel, and intersectoral collaboration is fundamental to delivering effective and equitable services.

Persons with disabilities differ from one another in terms of their specific needs, abilities, and interests—just as all individuals differ from each other [7].

2. Statistical Data on Persons with Disabilities in Romania

Disability is often perceived as an individual’s defect or limitation. However, according to the *Diagnosis of the Situation of Persons with Disabilities in Romania* [13], disability is better understood as the relationship between certain individual characteristics (e.g., a person having mobility difficulties) and the way society responds to those characteristics (e.g., the extent to which the state ensures that persons with mobility impairments have equal access to all services).

In Romania, the number of persons with disabilities has evolved significantly over time. From 74,053 individuals in 1992, the figure rose to 402,275 in 2000, then to 697,169 in 2010, and reached 960,428 persons with disabilities in 2024. This steady and substantial increase highlights the growing size of this population group and underscores the increasing necessity and relevance of services tailored to their needs.

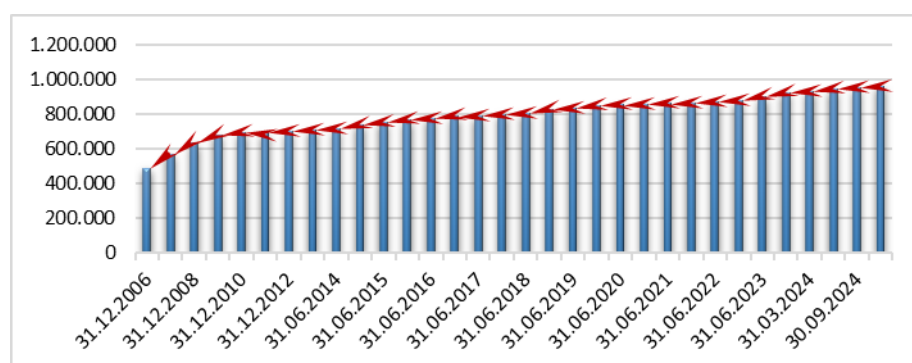


Figure 1 Trends in the Number of Persons with Disabilities in Romania, December 2006 to December 2024

Source: <https://anpd.gov.ro/web/transparenta/statistici/>

In 2021, persons with disabilities in Romania accounted for 25% of the population aged over 16 years, of which 6% had severe disabilities. Regarding age structure, the majority of persons with disabilities were over 65 years old (51%), 29% were aged between 50 and 65 years, and 20% were between 16 and 49 years old.

According to the same source, the most common difficulties faced by persons in this category in Romania are: 38% experience severe mobility difficulties and are unable to move independently; 21% have severe visual impairments; 14% have significant difficulties with memory and concentration; and 13% face severe challenges in self-care. Additionally, relevant statistics indicate that 853,465 individuals hold certificates classifying their degree of disability, and 457,730 receive disability pensions.

The large number of people in this category, along with their age distribution and types of disabilities, highlights the wide range of services needed to support these individuals.

3. Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Being independent, often regarded by many as a default state, is frequently a privilege for persons with disabilities. Independent living encompasses the ability of persons with disabilities to make autonomous choices and decisions regarding their own lives, thereby enjoying the same degree of autonomy as persons without disabilities. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) explicitly reaffirms the right of persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.

This entails that persons with disabilities should have the opportunity to reside in their own homes, on an equal basis with others, and to access equally all services, including transportation, information and communication technologies, as well as public facilities and services.

Persons with disabilities possess rights that primarily ensure their accessibility to the surrounding environment[6]. This encompasses three key categories of accessibility: physical environment, information, and communication. More specifically, these include:

Table 1

Accessibility of Persons with Disability – Key Categories

Access to the Physical Environment	Access to Information	Access to communication
The ability to walk along the street and cross safely.	The ability to understand news.	The ability to comprehend spoken language.
The ability to use urban furniture (benches, public seating, etc.).	The ability to understand instructions for product use.	The ability to respond, which may involve, for example, the use of sign language interpreters.
The ability to enter and exit buildings.	The ability to understand descriptions of objects or actions.	The use of pictograms or other methods of message transmission.

Source: authors own elaboration

It must be understood that persons with disabilities have the same rights to access information and communication as individuals without disabilities. These two fundamental elements enable access to goods and services across all areas of activity, including the field of information and communications, for example, through applications available on various adapted devices.

As is well known, an increasing number of basic services are now being offered and accessed online. These include product payments, commercial, banking, financial, and consultancy services

in various fields, among others, opportunities that provide additional chances for inclusion for persons with disabilities.

However, considering the challenges that individuals with disabilities face in different areas of life, navigating the Internet may become impossible without appropriate support, be it from other individuals, assistive tools, or alternative communication methods. These may include sign language interpretation, Braille, or assistive technologies such as text recognition and screen reading with synthesized speech, pictograms, and other accessibility tools.

Minimum requirements must be identified regarding the communicational and informational accessibility of public services (including their websites), and these issues must be addressed through direct consultation with the end beneficiaries. There is a pressing need for the development of dedicated legislation governing the profession of sign language interpreters. Additionally, the creation of a comprehensive guide is necessary to outline the principles for drafting public documents in Easy-to-Read and Easy-to-Understand formats.

4. Typology of Services for Persons with Disabilities

The typology of services designed for persons with disabilities is highly diversified, comprising a wide range of intangible goods and supports that significantly contribute to improving their quality of life.

An individual with a disability may require various types of services depending on the nature and severity of the disability, as well as on personal life goals such as achieving independence, accessing education, social inclusion, and professional development.

In addition to the general services available to the population at large, persons with disabilities may require the following specialized categories of services:

- **Medical and Rehabilitation Services**, including specialized medical consultations in fields relevant to specific disabilities, physiotherapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, neuro-psycho-motor rehabilitation, and access to medical devices (e.g., prosthetics, orthotics, wheelchairs, hearing aids, and other assistive equipment).
- **Social Services**, which encompass personal assistance or escort services, support provided by day care centers, rehabilitation and recovery centers, residential care facilities, in-home care services, support for independent living, as well as community integration and socialization activities.
- **Educational Services**, referring to inclusive education (integration into mainstream schools with specialized support), services offered by special education schools, support from special education teachers, educational counseling, and the adaptation of teaching and learning materials.
- **Employment and Vocational Integration Services**, including career guidance and counseling, vocational training and retraining programs, workplace adaptation, and supported employment services.
- **Psychological Support and Counseling Services**, including individual and group psychotherapy, family counseling, and services addressing stress management and experiences of discrimination.
- **Accessibility and Mobility Services**, which involve adapting housing environments (e.g., installation of ramps, elevators, and accessible bathrooms), accessible transportation, and ensuring the accessibility of public spaces and information through means such as sign language interpretation, Braille, and accessible digital formats.

5. Authorized Institutions Providing Services to Persons with Disabilities in Romania

In Romania, several institutions are legally mandated to provide services to persons with disabilities, including the General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC), established in every county, which is responsible for comprehensive evaluations, classification of disability degrees, provision of personal assistance or escort services, and operation of both day and residential care centers; the County Agency for Payments and Social Inspection (AJPIS)- it manages the disbursement of disability-related allowances and social benefits (such as disability allowances and complementary personal budgets); Local Social Assistance Services, functioning under the authority of local municipalities, offer various benefits including transportation subsidies, tax and fee exemptions, access to social housing, and the employment of personal assistants for individuals with severe disabilities, and the Health Insurance House (Casa de Asigurări de Sănătate), which reimburses the cost of medical devices (such as wheelchairs, prosthetics, and hearing aids) and facilitates access to rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities.

There is also a wide range of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide various benefits and services, such as integration programs and support for independent living, therapies tailored to different types of disabilities, counseling services, and day center activities.

Within certain organizations, there are educational, recreational, and support activities for individuals who are unable to care for themselves. In addition, there are NGOs or even private companies that offer home care services through caregivers, therapists, or personal assistants, as well as psychological counseling and speech therapy services (provided in special education schools or private practices).

To provide a comprehensive overview, the table below presents the relationship between specific needs and the corresponding services [3] that contribute to addressing the special needs of persons with disabilities.

Table 2

Service Provision by Type of Need for Persons with Disabilities

NEED	SERVICE
Medical rehabilitation	Physiotherapy, speech therapy, medical treatment, prosthetics
Daily care	Personal assistant / caregiver, home care
Financial support	Disability allowance, complementary personal budget
Social integration	Day centers, educational and recreational activities
Education	Support teachers, special schools, adapted educational materials
Professional integration	Career counseling, vocational training, supported employment
Psychological support	Counseling, psychotherapy, support groups
Mobility & accessibility	Adapted transport, home adaptations

Source: authors own elaboration

It is important to note that, in addition to services specifically designed for persons with disabilities, there are also **general services** that they use, either in adapted or non-adapted formats, such as telecommunications, television, internet, radio, entertainment, commercial services, courier services, financial and banking services, tourism, marketing, religious, political, library, and consultancy services, among others.

6. Development Perspectives for Services for Persons with Disabilities in Romania

In terms of emerging trends, it is increasingly evident that digitalization is reshaping access to services. This includes online platforms for appointments, telemedicine, online learning, applications for monitoring medical or social needs, and digital platforms for information on rights and benefits.

There is also a critical need for more inclusion programs within mainstream schools and universities, encouraging individuals with disabilities to participate in cultural, sports, and community activities. To achieve true inclusion, it is essential to implement anti-discrimination and awareness campaigns, expand accessible public spaces and adapted transportation, develop adapted housing and independent living solutions, establish additional rehabilitation centers, increase the availability of key professionals, such as physiotherapists, psychologists, and speech therapists—in regional centers, and promote tele-rehabilitation and innovative assistive technologies. Furthermore, the following interventions are of paramount importance:

- Specialized training and reskilling programs;
- Support for supported employment and workplace mentoring;
- Stronger collaboration between companies, NGOs, and public institutions to promote professional inclusion;
- Community-based psychological and emotional support, through expanded counseling and psychotherapy services, creation of support groups and community networks;
- Involvement of families and volunteers in support programs.

Starting June 28, 2025, under applicable EU regulations, mainstream hardware systems intended for consumers, as well as operating systems for such hardware, will need to be adapted for use by persons with disabilities. This includes: consumer terminal equipment with interactive computing capabilities used for electronic communications services, terminals used to access audiovisual media services, e-readers, self-service payment terminals.

In addition, accessibility must be ensured for the following self-service terminals used in service provision: ATMs, ticket vending machines, check-in kiosks, interactive information terminals, except those installed as integrated components in vehicles, aircraft, ships, or rolling stock, electronic communications services (excluding M2M transmission services), services providing access to audiovisual media, consumer banking services, e-books and dedicated software, e-commerce services.

Other relevant areas include: passenger transport services (air, rail, maritime, and bus), excluding urban, suburban, and regional transport services, websites and mobile device-integrated services, including mobile apps, electronic ticketing systems, provision of transport service information, including real-time travel updates, emergency communications to the European emergency number 112.

CONCLUSION

Services play a crucial role in the lives of persons with disabilities, as they contribute to meeting a wide range of needs, some of which are vital, while others pertain to leisure, social inclusion, or the overall improvement of quality of life. Equal opportunities must be ensured for persons with disabilities, who are entitled to enjoy and benefit from all available services, regardless of their nature.

In contemporary society, the recognition and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities represent not only a legal and moral imperative but also a benchmark for the degree of inclusivity and social progress. Accessibility, be it physical, informational, or communicational, is essential for ensuring full participation in all aspects of life and for reducing the persistent barriers that hinder equal opportunities. As this analysis demonstrates, the needs of persons with disabilities are diverse and require a multidimensional response through integrated services tailored to individual circumstances.

Romania, like many EU member states, has made significant strides in expanding the legal framework and diversifying the typology of services offered to persons with disabilities. However, statistical data reveal an increasing number of individuals in this category, underscoring the urgent

need for quality, accessible, and continuously updated services. Social services, in particular, are central not only in responding to vulnerability but also in empowering individuals, facilitating independence, and fostering community integration.

True inclusion demands more than the existence of legal rights, it requires practical implementation, adequate resources, intersectoral collaboration, and a societal shift in mindset. This includes accessible infrastructure, inclusive education, adapted employment policies, and digital innovation. Moreover, ensuring access to general services, such as telecommunications, e-commerce, banking, and public information, is just as crucial as the provision of specialized support.

Looking ahead, aligning national efforts with European standards and harnessing the opportunities provided by digitalization and assistive technologies are essential. At the same time, active participation of beneficiaries in shaping policies and services is vital. Only through a holistic, rights-based, and person-centered approach can we build an inclusive society where persons with disabilities can live independently, exercise their rights, and contribute fully to community life.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Lapoșina, Emilia; Moraru, Alina, *Managementul asigurării calității serviciilor sociale*, In: *Asistența psihosocială în contextul noilor realități pe timp de pandemie*. 2021. p. 230-238.
- [2]. Bălan, Valeria; Creangă Davidescu, Elena, *Contexte actuale privind protecția socială a persoanelor cu dizabilități*. In: *Mecanisme naționale și internaționale de protecție a drepturilor omului în contextul valorilor europene*, 2022, p. 196-199.
- [3]. Ferst, Marklea da Cunha, Julia Ismar Silva de Souza, and Helen Rita Menezes Coutinho. *Accessibility in accommodation establishments: The use of innovative processes to meet the needs of tourists with disabilities*, *Turismo: Visão e Ação* 22 (2020): 446-462.
- [4]. Gherdan, Alina Emilia Maria, et al., *Sustainable Tourism Development in Mountain Regions: A Case Study of Peștera Village*, Brasov County, Applying the Analytic Hierarchy Process, *Sustainability* (2071-1050), 2025
- [5]. Gotișan, Nicolae, *Paradigme de clasificare a sistemului de servicii sociale*, in *Moldoscopie*, 2023.
- [6]. Nagy, Benedek, Gergely, Norbert, Székely, Edina, *Study on hotel infrastructure accessibility in Romania*, *Acta Turistica* , no. 37 2025.
- [7]. Neagoe, Anna Maria, *Dreptul persoanelor cu dizabilități la viață independentă și integrare în comunitate*, *Drepturile omului* 3, 2014, pp. 25-32.
- [8]. Pavlencu, Mariana, *Accesul persoanelor cu dizabilități la bunuri, servicii publice, educație și învățământ*. In: *The contemporary issues of the socio-humanistic sciences*. 2020, p. 253-260.
- [9]. Pavlencu, Mariana, *Incluziunea persoanelor cu dizabilități*, In: *State, security and human rights*, 2020, p. 206-219.
- [10]. Pavlencu, Mariana; Costisanu, Vitalie, *Integrarea în societate a persoanelor cu dizabilități prin prisma serviciilor sociale*, *Anale științifice ale Academiei „Ștefan cel Mare” a MAI al RM: Științe juridice*, 2015, 2.XV: 90-94.
- [11]. Rabontu Cecilia, Vasilescu Maria, *Typology of Services for People with Disabilities*, *Proceedings of the International Conference “Information Society and Sustainable Development*, pp.177-180, 2025.
- [12]. Zaslavskaya, O. V., and A. S. Malafiy, *Psychological and pedagogical readiness of a guide to work with disabled people*, *The Education and science journal* 21.10 (2020): 167-188.
- [13]. Zubenschi, Ecaterina, Șleahțișchi Mihail, *Managementul calității serviciilor sociale*, Editura Universitatea Pedagogică de Stat Ion Creangă, Chișinău, 2020.
- [14]. <https://anpd.gov.ro/strategia2022-2027/download/Diagnoza%20situa%C8%9Biei%20persoanelor%20cu%20dizabilit%C4%83%C8%9Bi%20%C3%AEEn%20Rom%C3%A2nia.pdf>

- [15]. <https://anpd.gov.ro/web/accesibilitate/cadru-general>
[16]. <https://anpd.gov.ro/web/transparenta/statistici/>
[17]. https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/136-160.pdf