



Staff Guide for professionals based on project results

# Introduction to the I-DECIDE Methodology for Supported Decision-Making



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# 1 // Introduction to the I-DECIDE methodology and objectives

I-DECIDE is a European project funded under the Erasmus + framework that offers an innovative approach to the way in which professionals in the social sector (or working in services aimed at persons with disabilities) offer support to this group to empower and enable them to make their own decisions. I-DECIDE emphasises on the support needs of persons with intellectual disabilities or persons who experience other types of disability with similar support needs.

I-DECIDE starts from the premise that supported decision making can help all persons to exercise as much control as possible over their lives regardless of the legal framework or legal context and the restrictions these may place on individuals. Supported decision-making is a general principle or approach that can be applied at different levels or spheres of a person's life, from high-level decisions such as getting married, having a child or living independently, to lower-level decisions such as choosing how to spend their money or whether to change their doctor.

The ability to decide on matters affecting our lives is a Right that should be enjoyed by every individual, including persons with disabilities, as recognized by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Throughout history and even now, persons with disabilities have been deprived of deciding from the most basic aspects of their daily lives to more or less complex aspects of their personal finances, their health or even their own bodies.

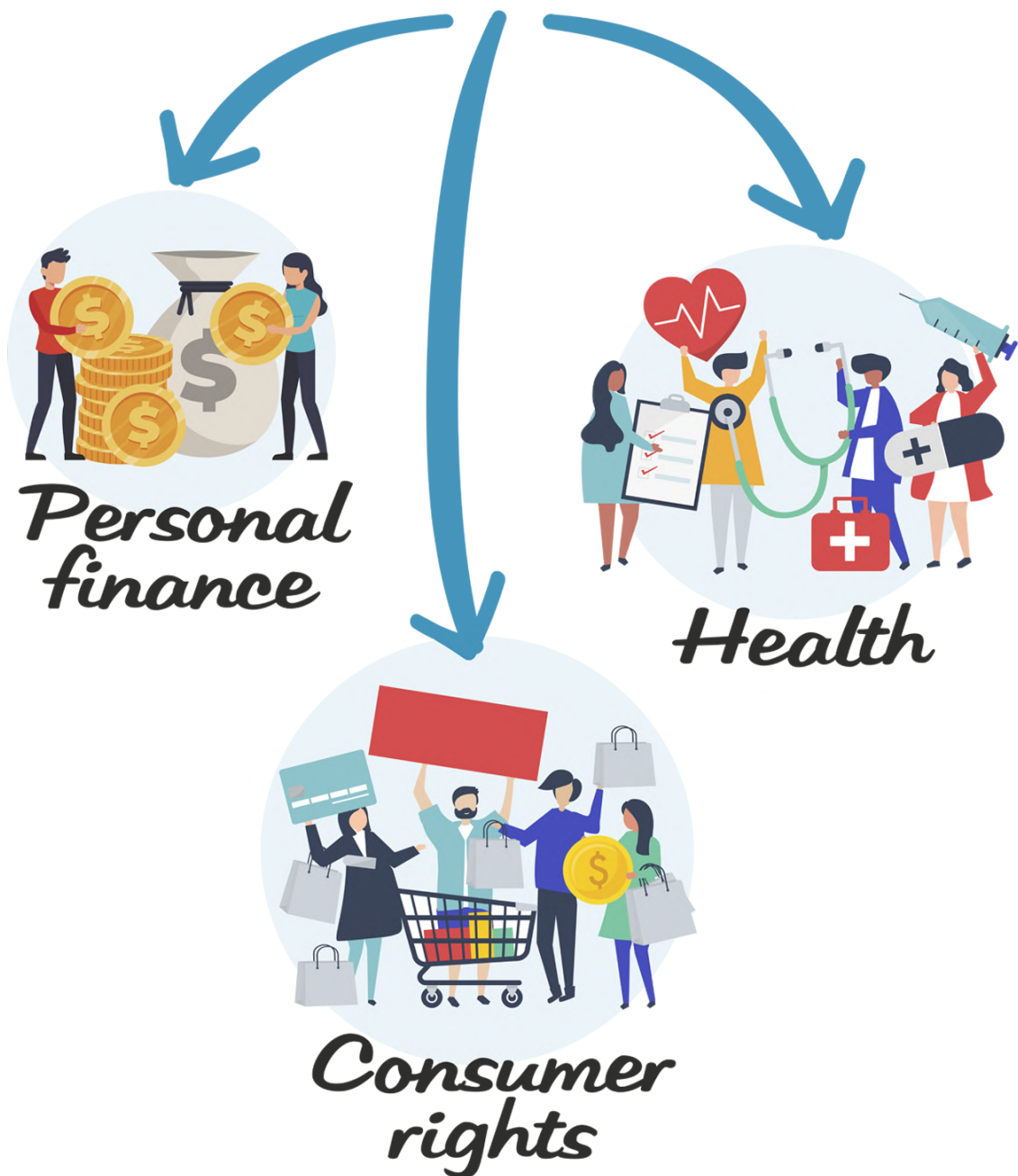
I-DECIDE provides the professional with tools to facilitate the person's expression of their own interests, wishes or preferences and, at the same time, defines a methodology in which the person designs his/her own support plan together with a support professional and a professional who acts as a facilitator.



## 2 // Results from the I-DECIDE Project



Supported Decision Making



## I-DECIDE has produced the following tools:

- A report on existing good practices in supported decision-making
- A document defining the theoretical and methodological basis and the role of the support professional and the role of the facilitator
- A model of a support agreement in accessible format
- A template for assessing support needs in the field of health
- A template for assessing support needs in the field of personal finances
- Support manuals for professionals in three specific areas: consumer rights, personal finances and health
- A training course aimed at professionals who offer support to people with disabilities to increase their practical skills and deepen their knowledge of the I-DECIDE methodology.

This guide is the result of a collaborative work process carried out and tested by the project partners:



Belgium – European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, **EASPD**  
([www.easpd.eu](http://www.easpd.eu))



Finland – **KVPS** ([www.kvps.fi](http://www.kvps.fi))



Greece - **EEA Margarita** ([www.eeamargarita.gr](http://www.eeamargarita.gr))



Spain:

**Support-Girona** ([www.supportgirona.cat](http://www.supportgirona.cat))



**Fundació Campus Arnau d'Escala**  
([www.campusarnau.org](http://www.campusarnau.org))



UK – **Social Care Training** ([www.sctltd.uk](http://www.sctltd.uk))

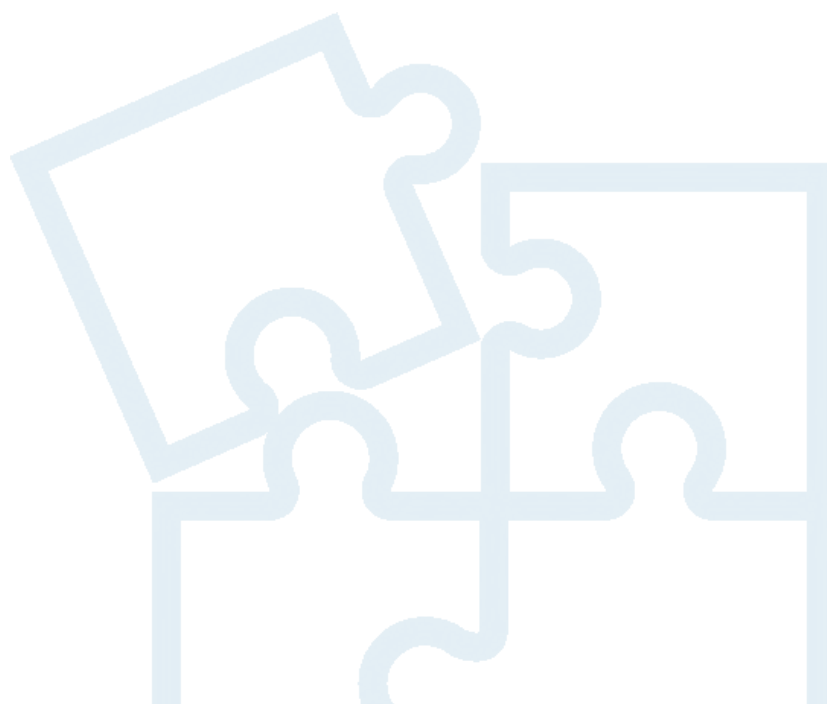
## Challenges of the I-DECIDE Project

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities includes the Right of persons with disabilities to enjoy full legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life. This article is a fundamental pillar of the Convention, a treaty expanding the Rights included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Convention has been ratified worldwide by 181 countries since its signature at New York's United Nations General Assembly on the 13th of December 2006 and came into force as a legally binding instrument in European law on the 22nd of January 2011. Almost all EU Member States have ratified and incorporated the Convention as a legally-binding instrument in their legal framework since 2006.

Specifically, article 12 of the Convention defines Legal Capacity in a way that all persons with disabilities can exercise the right to decide on matters affecting their own lives, including matters in which they have not traditionally been able to do so, such as those relating to their own health, the supervision and management of their personal finances or in relation their property and real estate. In addition, the Convention urges Europe and its Member States to take the necessary steps and make the necessary changes to implement it, as stated in the Convention itself.

### ARTICLE 12 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

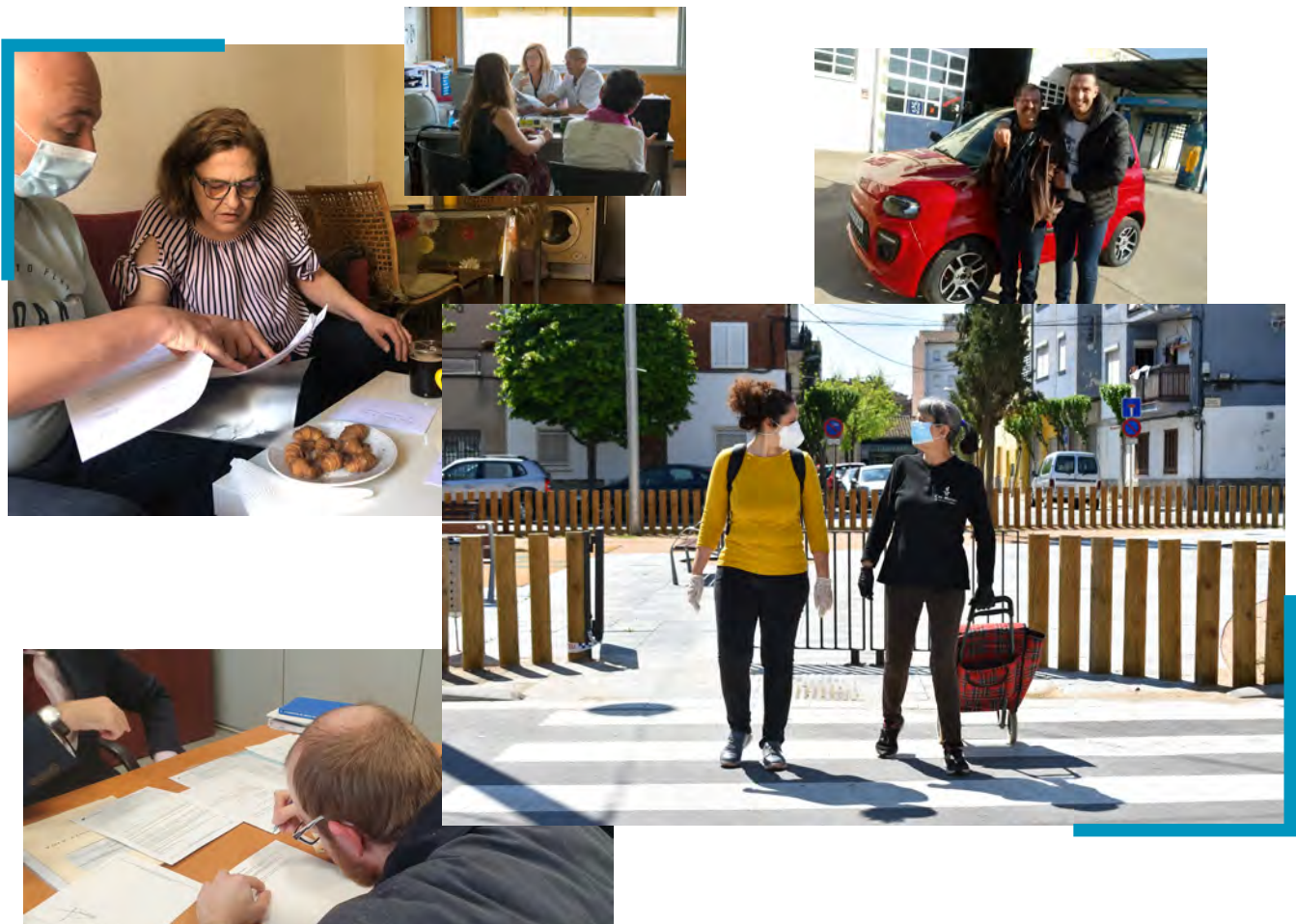
“5. Subject to the provisions of this article, States Parties shall take all appropriate and effective measures to ensure the equal right of persons with disabilities to own or inherit property, to control their own financial affairs and to have equal access to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit, and shall ensure that persons with disabilities are not arbitrarily deprived of their property.”





I-DECIDE offers an innovative approach aligned with the Rights developed by the Convention and provides professionals with a practical methodology, tools and instruments to help them in their daily practice. Helping to define the relationship between the person with a disability and the different support professionals is crucial to design and develop a supported decision-making service and to contribute to making the provisions of the Convention a reality in the European Union and its Member States.

In the Spanish and Catalan context, the legal framework is not aligned with the provisions and the interpretation of the Article 12 of the Convention in the strict sense. In the case of Spain, the Civil Code, even in the 2020 reform proposal, still contemplates representative or substitute decision-making measures allowing a decision to be taken by a third party instead of the person, without articulating supported decision-making mechanisms. In the case of the Catalan Civil Code, the 'assistance' is a voluntary mechanism aligned with the Convention that does not involve a loss or modification of the person's legal capacity. The assistance mechanism is becoming increasingly used and widespread both in legal and social practice.



### 3 // What is supported decision-making or SDM?

SDM is the acronym for Supported Decision-Making. This concept implies a change of legal, social and organisational paradigm in the way of providing support or developing services for persons with disabilities. This change of paradigm materialises -as for example the aforementioned 'assistance' instrument articulated the Catalan Civil Code- in the way legal frameworks guarantee and respect the Rights of persons with disabilities. On a practical and organisational level, any model of social intervention based on supported decision-making requires rethinking the role of professionals in order to overcome paternalistic approaches in which the latter are the ones who decide for the person with a disability. Following the example of the 'assistance', the role of the professional is determined by the person who has voluntarily chosen or appointed an assistant, adopting a directive role as the person with a disability defines the way he or she wants the professional to act, in which spheres and to what extent. This change of roles and the way in which the person being supported becomes the central axis that leads and directs every intervention according to his or her own wishes, will and preferences is one example of how supported decision making can be understood.

## Supported Decision-Making as the basis of the I-DECIDE Project

The definition of supported decision-making depends on the legal or theoretical perspective we are approaching it and admits different shades and shapes, remarks or interpretations. Translating this concept into practice by articulating a system or a methodology that fits in or within existing services increases the layer of complexity.

To articulate this paradigm shift in which service provision and, by extension, the relationship between the professional and the person with support needs must shift towards individualisation and personalisation to increase the person's autonomy and decision-making capacity, we must consider several factors.

We can identify how positive bonding and developing a trustworthy relationship sustained over time between the person and the professional contributes to generate a space of confidence in which the person is able and willing to express to the professional desires, wishes or preferences in relation to his or her own person.

Secondly, it is necessary to provide staff and professionals with practical tools that help channel the wishes and preferences expressed by the person into concrete, adequate and achievable actions, taking into account the context of the person and the resources available by and for the person.



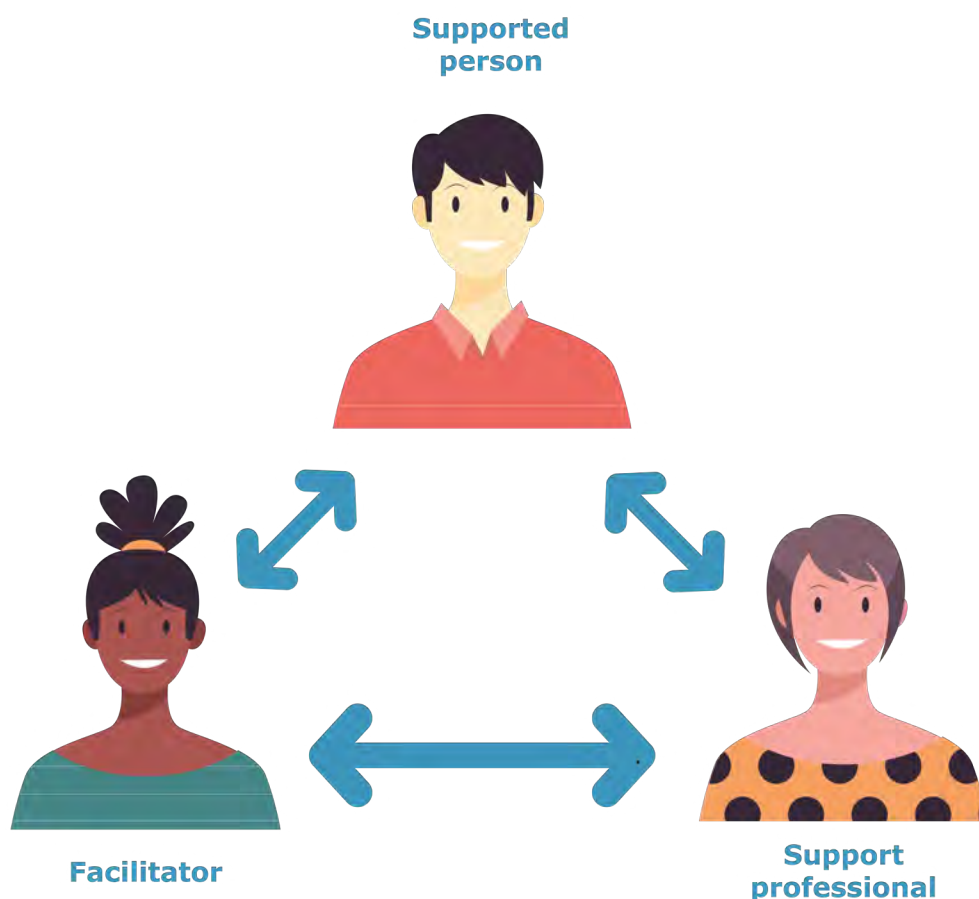


Thirdly, safeguards must be put in place to ensure that the relationship between the individual and the professional is free from undue influence or situation of risk or abuse to the person by third parties, the professional or services.

I-DECIDE has developed a methodology that can be transferred to existing service provision models taking into account the aforementioned factors. The I-DECIDE methodology, use as a basis the support agreement between the person, the professional and the facilitator and is complemented by assessment tools to identify the person's evolution in different areas. I-DECIDE extensively develops this triangular structure in different phases. Each of these phases and the characteristics that define it as a model are explored in detail in the complete materials produced by the project. Below is a brief description of both the model and the tools developed to implement it.

## I-DECIDE Model

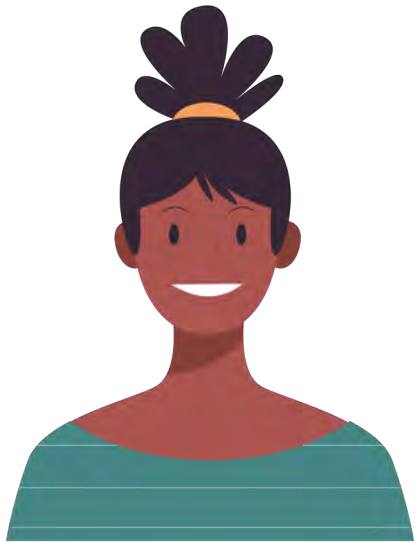
In order to develop an effective support relationship with safeguards for both the person who requires this support and the professional who offers it, I-DECIDE distinguishes three essential roles in the process: the **supported person**, the **support professional** and the **facilitator**. The three parties work in a cooperative manner and the communication and contact between them is frequent and constant. The relationship between them must be fluid, dynamic and based on trust in order to connect the wishes and preferences of the person with support needs with the support professional. They structure their work as follows:



## I-DECIDE Model



**Supported person:** a person who requires support in making decisions and decides to contact a professional to support him or her in making decisions. The supported person should clearly know and understand his or her Rights and should be able to choose which professional he or she wants to be supported by. A relation based on trust should be built to ensure the individual communicates his or her wishes, preferences or interests.



**Facilitator:** a person who works on the support relationship externally. The role of the facilitator is to ensure that the relationship works at all times and will be responsible for advising and guiding the person and the professional when formalising each support agreement. His or her role can be understood as a specialized manager of the relationship between the person and the support professional: the facilitator helps creating it, monitoring it and helps solving any doubts or conflicts that may arise on both sides. Conceptually, the facilitator acts as a double safeguard, as ensures the quality of the relationship between both parties but also to prevent or avoid situations in which the person's rights are not respected.



**Support professional:** this can be anyone in the person's immediate environment, family or social network. Preferably the support professional should have a background on social education or social work as the main task will be to guide and support the person in the decision-making process. The support professional must respect the decisions of the supported person, must have empathy and assertive communication skills and must assume that his or her role is merely to support the person in the process and never decide for the person. The professional will focus on seeking and organizing information, clarifying the person's doubts, proposing alternatives and communicating the relevant information for each specific situation through a support plan that will help the person to materialize his or her decision.

## Reference tools in a supported decision-making framework

To structure the support relationship, I-DECIDE provides professionals and organisations with different tools. Let's see them:

- **Support agreement:** document in which the person asks for support and where there is a formal record of who he or she wants to be the person providing this support. This document, which must be signed by all parties involved, also includes the areas, aspects or fields on which the person requires support.
- **Support plan:** the I-DECIDE support plan model is a simple document that is formalized by the professional together with the person where the actions to be carried out by different parties are detailed in order to materialize or work towards the achievement of a decision, interest or will previously expressed in the support agreement.
- **Assessment tools and satisfaction surveys:** I-DECIDE provides professionals with simple assessment scales allowing the professional, together with the person, to identify specific aspects in which the person may need support. These tools are complementary and can be used flexibly, both before and after the support agreement or plan has been developed. I-DECIDE also has developed satisfaction surveys to collect the person's opinion about the process and the development of the support plan designed to improve the intervention of all professionals involved.



## 4// I-DECIDE Manuals: Consumer Rights, Personal Finances and Health

The manuals developed in the I-DECIDE project are not definitive tools where professionals can find the answer to the whole range of situations that can occur in an individual's life in each of the areas of interest. Instead, the manuals lay out different scenarios, based on real cases and situations, which can orient and guide the professional through different strategies to develop supported decision-making on the basis of a personalised and individualised intervention.

In each particular scenario, the professional must adapt their task taking into consideration the context and the person and should be able to elaborate a joint work plan. The support plan has to be articulated whilst maintaining an optimal balance between the needs, will and preferences of the person and the resources available through the network of social services or other resources of the Welfare State system (health services, work, or education).

### Consumer Rights Manual

The manual dealing with aspects of supported decision-making in the area of rights as a consumer refers to how people with disabilities and the professionals offering them support can help the person as a consumer of products and services from three different perspectives in accordance with the legislation, guarantees, regulations or services offered by the European, national and regional consumer protection framework.

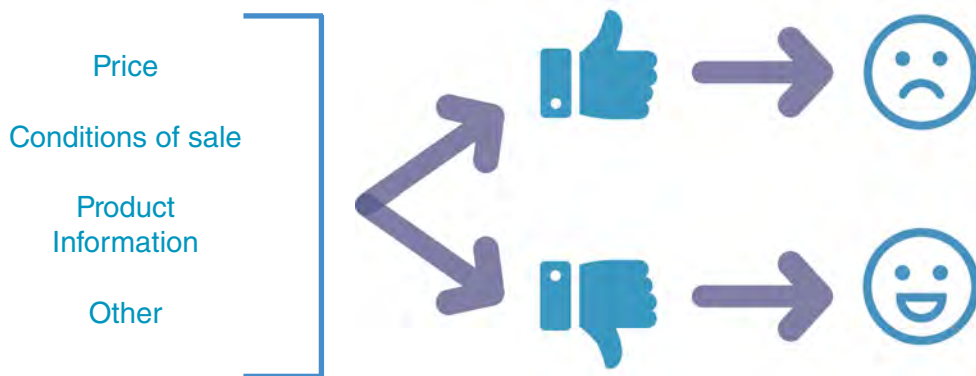
The manual recognises that persons with disabilities have full capacity to exercise their rights and enables them throughout different settings and scenarios in relation to the purchase of products or services:

1. Pre-purchase planning scenario for a product or service
2. Scenario of purchasing a product or service
3. Post-purchase scenario of a product or service.

For each of these scenarios the manual has tools that help the professional provide the adequate support to the person to make an informed decision.



- Let's take a look at some examples:



- Satisfaction card with a product or service** during or immediately after making a purchase.



Dissatisfied

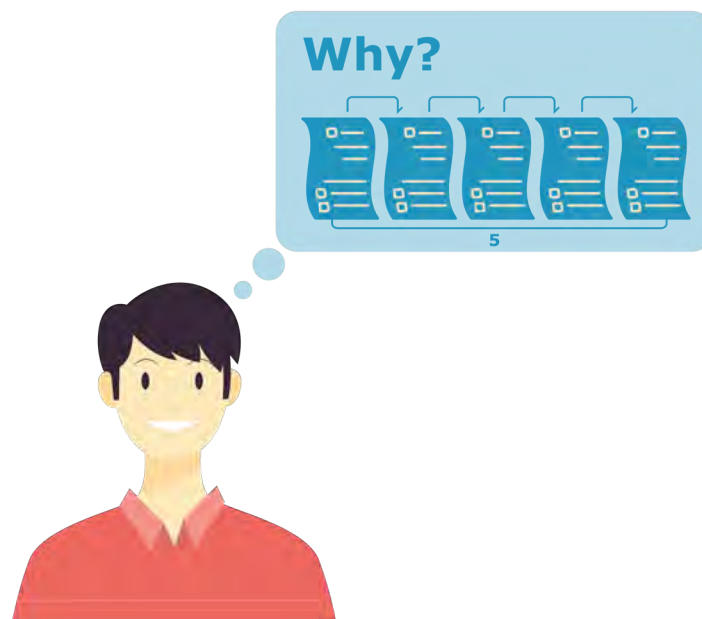


Satisfied



Very Satisfied

- The technique of the five why's** can be used in case the person is dissatisfied with a product or service and asks for support from the professional to be able to return it back or file a complaint. It helps the professional to structure a formal complaint according to the person's own vision.



The consumer rights manual includes a practical approach with common examples to articulate the I-DECIDE methodology as well as specific instruments or tools to do so.

## Personal Finances Manual

Personal finances and aspects related to wealth management of a person with support needs are central elements that can be both a barrier and a facilitating element for the person to enjoy personal, social and financial autonomy. For practical purposes, the manual on personal finances **incorporates cards on different concepts related to the financial sphere. The cards are designed to help the professional increase the knowledge of the person with a disability on an operational and practical level.** As an example, the manual includes card related to banking, money or other topics so persons with disabilities learn the nature and value of money or deepen their knowledge about concepts such as saving, income or different types of expenses.

I-DECIDE believes this knowledge is basic for the person to enjoy the Rights recognised by the Convention as it helps the person to:

- Understand basic financial concepts
- Understand the concept of financial risk
- Calculate your income and expenses
- Know the difference between saving, spending and how to do both independently
- Know what a bank is and the different instruments or services the bank offers (cards, loans, etc.)
- Prioritize basic needs over desires
- Increase personal autonomy when managing financial aspects.

The personal finances manual includes a practical approach with common examples to articulate the I-DECIDE methodology as well as specific instruments or tools to do so.



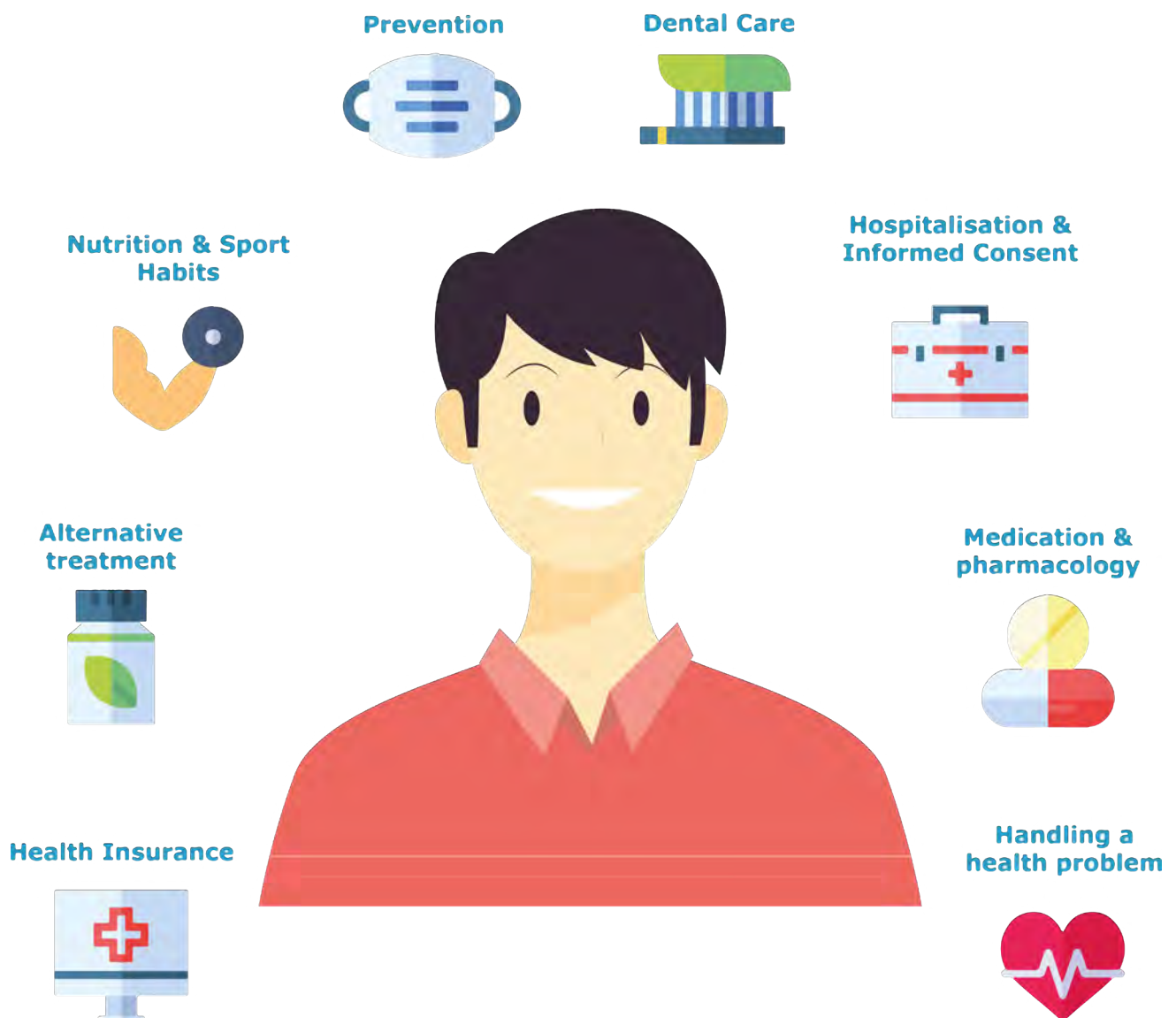


## Health Manual

Health is another area of an individual's life where persons with disabilities require more support on a daily basis, either for simple tasks or simply by the complexity of the decisions they need to make. The concept of 'health' is no longer articulated exclusively through a medical paradigm, nor is it defined as the absence of illness but, according to the WHO definition, "health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".

The health manual [defines those areas or fields of health that the professional should consider when offering support to persons with disabilities](#), offering an approach to strategies and good practices used both at international or national level to ensure that health for persons with disabilities is an effective right.

The health manual includes a practical approach with common examples to articulate the I-DECIDE methodology as well as specific instruments or tools to do so.



## 5// How to integrate I-DECIDE into your organisation or service

“How do I make it work in my organisation?” “Can I act alone or do I need approval from my superiors?”

I-DECIDE comprises an amalgam of processes aimed at changing the way organisations and professionals offer support for people with disabilities. Implementing I-DECIDE within organisations implies a joint effort by both professionals with managerial responsibilities and professionals from different areas of the organisation, irregardless of the degree of professional responsibility or role.

Operating the I-DECIDE with optimal results requires some familiarity with it from professionals from other sectors, family members and people close to the person as well as extensive and transversal knowledge by all members of the organisation to put it into practice. Therefore, it is necessary to provide the necessary training to professionals and organisations to coordinate the changes and adapt the internal processes to effectively implement it.

**The “I-DECIDE” complete project materials are available on the following websites:**

- **Support-Girona**

<http://www.supportgirona.cat/projectes/i-decide/>

- **Fundació Campus Arnau d’Escala**

<http://www.campusarnau.org/projectes/i-decide-supported-decision-making-using-digital-literacy-and-numeracy-skills/>

- **EASPD - European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities**

<http://www.easpd.eu/en/content/i-decide-supported-decision-making-using-digital-literacy-numeracy-skills-0>



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Inclusió social i suport en la presa de decisions  
Social inclusion and supported decision making



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