

# EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

## ANNUAL REPORT 2001

### *I. Organisational development*

#### **I.1. Secretariat**

- *Staff*

The staffing structure of the EPVR secretariat was completed with the recruitment of Bénédicte Dubois as administrative officer (on a 80% basis). The secretariat consisted during 2001 of Jan Spooren (General Secretary), Mairead O'Leary (Assistant General Secretary) and Bénédicte Dubois (Administrative officer).

- *Office*

From 1 March 2001, the EPVR office moved from Rue Franklin to Rue de Spa 15, B-1000 Brussels. The offices are at the same time very representative and functional, and are located in the heart of the European quarter in Brussels. The facilities include an attractive meeting room (up to 30 persons) that is accessible for wheelchair users. The Steering Committee approved an investment budget of 50.000 Euro for the small renovation works, the purchase of furniture and technical equipment.

Besides a more intensive use for EPVR activities, the EPVR offices and meeting room are at the disposal of all members whenever they have business in Brussels or need a workplace for their staff passing by in Brussels. The EPVR concluded in September a contract with the EU Group of IPWH to provide them a postbox address and office facilities in the EPVR premises. On an occasional basis, the meeting room is also let to partner organizations.

- *Logistics and services*

Not to overburden the members, and in order to bring all vital services under direct control of the secretariat, the strategic option was taken to centralize all these services in Brussels. The epvr website was transferred from Heidelberg to Brussels during the summer. The financial management and IT support were during 2001 still provided by the SRL, but the transfer to Brussels (from 2002) was already prepared.

- *Contact with members*

As the new General Secretary only started his assignment in November 2000, he spent a considerable amount of time during the first half of 2001 to visit all full members of the EPVR. This was the most effective way to get familiar with the centers, their activities and their staff, which is an absolute condition for serving their interests properly. For reasons of efficiency, these center visits were in most cases linked to an EPVR activity taking place at the center concerned.

## **I.2. EPVR Strategy**

The final conclusions of the Strategy Task Force (meetings during 2000) were compiled in an EPVR Handbook that was distributed at the General Seminar in May. At the same time, a Future Development Task Force was established to continue a brainstorming on the activities and structures of the EPVR. One representative per full member was invited to this Task Force that organized a first meeting in Heidelberg (8<sup>th</sup> October 2001) and a second meeting in Brussels (3 December 2001). A last meeting was scheduled in January 2002 and a proposal would be submitted to the Steering Committee in February 2002.

## **I.3. Membership**

- *Types of membership*

At its meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> September, the Steering Committee has adopted some measures to clarify the situation of the membership and to offer better 'value for money' to all members. It was agreed that there will only be two types of membership, Full Membership and Associate Membership whereby the service package for associated members would be improved. Associate members will receive the same services and rights as full members with the exception of participation in the Steering Committee, and the annual fee is fixed at 5.000 Euro (instead of 4.000 until now), starting from 2002

- *New members*

A small delegation of the Steering Committee visited during January Fundacion ONCE to meet with the senior management, discuss their motivation to become a member and get an idea of the expertise and experience available. On the basis of a positive report from this delegation, the Steering Committee (29 January 2001) formally approved the application of Fundacion ONCE to become a full member of the EPVR.

## **I.4. General seminar**

On 4-5 May, the general seminar was organized in Heidelberg on the theme 'Communication & Participation in the Vocational Rehabilitation'. The seminar took place in the new and splendid conference center of the SRH, and everybody agreed that the organization was marvelous. Also the new concept with most emphasis on workshops in addition to some key-note speeches and an information market was perceived very well by the participants. Consequently, it was decided to maintain this format also for the 2002 edition of the general seminar.

## **I.5. Knowledge management and dissemination**

On 26<sup>th</sup> March 2001, the EPVR organised a seminar for the centre co-ordinators and HR managers of its member centres at the SRL in Hoensbroek. This seminar was built on the results of the Information Day held in Heidelberg in September 2000. The main objective of the seminar was to find out if and how the EPVR could serve as an instrument for the staff development of the member centres. The seminar was an important step in achieving the EPVR strategy of maximising the return on investment and offering value for money to members.

Based on the discussions during that meeting, concrete solutions were offered with respect to raise interest/awareness on the EPVR, disseminate results/documents and use the know-how acquired. Some actions are to be implemented on the level of EPVR structures (secretariat, task forces, project groups) and will become obligatory upon decision of the steering committee. Most actions are to take place at centre level and relate to internal human resources and communication policies. As the overall goal of this paper and the preceding meetings is to increase the return on investment for the EPVR member centers, these actions should have only the status of recommendations. The actual implementation of these recommendations is a responsibility for each individual centre if it wants to increase the benefits and the value for money received through EPVR membership.

## ***II. Professional development***

### **II.1. European Rehabilitation Academy**

At its meeting of 3 May 2001, the Steering Committee agreed on the principle to set up a European Rehabilitation Academy within the EPVR. The FTEP Task Force developed the organisational structure and formulated the main assets of the Academy in a document that was adopted by the Steering Committee at its meeting of 14 September 2001. A complete blueprint for the Academy, its activities and its structures as well as the nominations for the Academy Council were approved on 27<sup>th</sup> November by the Steering Committee. The European Rehabilitation Academy would be launched officially on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002 and the Academy Council would assume its responsibilities and competencies from that date. The objectives for 2002 are to integrate current EPVR staff development activities in the Academy, design new initiatives and optimise organisational and administrative mechanisms. As a consequence, 2002 should be considered as a starting up phase and bridging year that should result in a European Rehabilitation Academy that is fully operational from 2003.

### **II.2. Further Education and Training Programme (FTEP)**

- *Seminars*

During 2001, following seminars were organized in the framework of the Further Training and Education Programme 2000-2001:

- Disability management (25-26 January, Hoensbroek)
- TBI (23-24 February, Birmingham)
- Case management (7-8 June, Porto)

- *Evaluation of 2000-2001 programme*

The FTEP Task Force made an in-depth and comprehensive evaluation of the FTEP programme 2000-2001. The main conclusion was that the two year pilot programme of 1999-2001 the FTEP series has continued to improve as far as both quality and organisation are concerned. The concept of small, focused and interactive ‘training’ seminars has proven to be a successful formula. Nevertheless, the fact that some seminars had to be cancelled over the last three years shows that an interesting subject, a focused programme and targeted public relations are certainly conditions for success. Especially the seminars organised in 2001 indicate that a FTEP seminar should in principle be break-even or even a little profitable (excluding indirect costs). All FTEP seminars had an international character in terms of speakers, participants, contents and language (English). The decentralised approach where the FTEP seminars are organised in the various EPVR centres has shown to be successful in terms of image building, networking, international character and cost-efficiency.

- *FTEP 2002*

Based on the positive evaluation of the FTEP programme 2000-2001, it was decided to offer a new series of seminars during 2002. The Steering Committee approved following seminars to be organised in the framework of the FTEP 2002:

- Case management (Verona)
- TBI (Strasbourg)

- Client involvement in service delivery (Porto)
- Assistive technology (Dublin)
- International Funding Opportunities
- Distance learning

### **II.3. Higher Management and Development Course (HMDC)**

- *HMDC 1*

The final part of the HMDC 1 was implemented during the first half of 2001. The participants gathered during January for a meeting in Maastricht to present and discuss the draft version of their projects. The final event of the HMDC 1 took place in Oulu and Rovaniemi in June. Participants presented the final results of their projects and the EPVR certificates were awarded.

- *HMDC 2*

Based on the experiences of the HMDC 1, the programme and procedures were slightly adapted and a HMDC 2 was designed. A large public relations campaign had been mounted sending out over 2000 brochures. However, the response had been poor with very little feedback. The main criticisms heard from candidates, former participants and sending centers were that the HMDC was too expensive and time-consuming when not obtaining an academic Masters qualification. As a minimum of twenty candidates was needed for the financial viability of an HMDC 2, the Steering Committee decided at its September meeting to cancel the HMDC 2 programme and to entrust the Academy Council with the task to reformulate the course into a summer school format.

### **II.4. English language course**

The English Language Course was run by Alpha College in Dublin during July and August 2001. Nine participants from three countries – Finland, Italy and Spain attended the courses.

### ***III. Research and development***

#### **III.1. Management**

- *Work plans*

All project groups drafted a detailed and concrete work plan, including a time schedules and an allocation of tasks and responsibilities. Such work plans should ensure that the group members also perform tasks between the meetings and the work actually leads to results. We could conclude that most project groups learnt during 2001 to work in a more result-oriented and effective way. This result was not only due to an improved management and methodology, but also due to the fact that the group members got more experience in international cooperation.

- *Participation of secretariat in meetings of project groups*

The EPVR secretariat has during 2001 participated in nearly all project group meetings. On the one hand, it provided the opportunity to give feedback to the project groups from the Steering Committee and to coordinate the activities with other EPVR initiatives. On the other hand, the EPVR secretariat played the role of outsider between the experts which included questioning acquired results, obliging the group to remain focused, and linking back the activities to the objectives.

#### **III.2. Reporting**

- *Project group compendium*

From 2001, a project group compendium is distributed on a quarterly basis to the members of the Steering Committee and all experts involved in the various project groups. It contains per project group the work plan, contact details of the members and an interim report (drafted by the chairman). First of all, it is an instrument to inform the Steering Committee in a standardized way on the activities and progress, which should enable it to fulfill its monitoring function. Secondly, the compendium provides mutual information to all experts in the project groups and facilitates as such synergies.

- *Presentation to the Steering Committee*

During 2001, the Steering Committee preserved an increasing part of its meeting time to presentations of project groups. The chairman or another key member of the group was invited in case this group had finalized an important work or if the group asked from an approval to undertake ambitious (and thus costly) new activities. This way of reporting seemed to be very useful and productive as it enabled the members of the Steering Committee to ask questions and go directly into a debate with the experts.

### III.3. Brief description per project group

- *System for Information on Vocational Rehabilitation*

The former project group on new populations and methodologies presented its revised objectives and programme of work to the Steering Committee in January. The SIVOR (System of Information on Vocational Rehabilitation) taskforce would gather information on all innovative projects within EPVR member centres and prepare briefing documents in generic template format. The document is a good tool for disseminating innovation and could be used as a reference tool in other centres when seeking to develop new methodologies and programmes in a centre. By December, the group distributed a draft version outlining eighteen innovative projects from various member centres of the EPVR. The group will finalise its work during the first months of 2002 and distribute a publication of SIVOR at the general seminar 2002. The key question to decide on the future activities of the group is whether the SIVOR document is actually used and of benefit for the staff in the member centres.

- *Research Advisory Group*

The Research Advisory Group had for main task the completion of two research projects the DELPHI study on the delivery of future vocational rehabilitation services and the RETURN project (implemented outside by the universities linked to the EPVR). As the Research Advisory Group also acted as the Academic Council to the HMDC, its members were asked to take a seat in the new Council of the European Rehabilitation Academy. Consequently, the Research Advisory Group will be dissolved in its current format from 2002, and a final report on its activities will be submitted to the Steering Committee.

- *ICT project group*

The first half of 2001, the group was concentrating its efforts on concrete goals e.g. Redesign of the EPVR website. At the general seminar in Heidelberg, the group members presented the newly designed EPVR website and facilitated two workshops on the use of ICTs in rehabilitation and training centres. During the second half of the year the group would focus on conducting a feasibility study for establishing a Virtual Learning Centre. However, it turned out that not all the members of the group had the right profile (rather IT specialists than distance learning specialists) and were not enough available to complete this very ambitious task successfully. The Steering Committee concluded that a Virtual Learning Centre is about knowledge management, linked to the Academy. Consequently, it decided to disband the ICT project group and to ask the Academy Council to have a broader discussion on distance learning and knowledge management.

- *TBI*

The TBI group struggled during the first half of 2001 with the objectives and scope of their work. At a meeting in Brussels in July, they finally concluded that the Protocol as Predictive tool was not a feasible objective as staff in the centers were not motivated to invest a lot of time without getting a direct benefit at centre level. The group decided to 'translate' the Protocol into a software package that could be used at centre level as an instrument for electronic case management as well as for reporting and (internal) communication purposes.

As the project group had many participants, and as some members were interested in developing TBI quality standards, the project group divided itself for some months in two subgroups of which one was concentrating on the Protocol, and the other one on standards. The group found a common understanding on a revised Protocol, and as the EPVR stopped its discussions with CARF (American Accreditation System) on a possible cooperation, the subgroup on standards was quickly dissolved. The group intends to finalise its work during the first months of 2002 and present the final product at the general seminar in Porto.

- *Women in Vocational Rehabilitation*

The project group on women in vocational rehabilitation presented in April an interim report on the findings of the questionnaire that was distributed to all EPVR centers. The only difficulty was with the fact that not all members had returned data concerning their centre. Secondly, the group prepared a workshop as part of the programme of the General Seminar. The final report including general conclusions and recommendations on barriers for women in vocational rehabilitation was drafted by the end of 2001 and would be presented to the Steering Committee at its first meeting in 2002. The ILO has also expressed an interest in the findings of their work. It was apparent that very little information existed about the subject, in particular when the members of the group were undertaking a literature review. The group is looking at the possibility of piloting a pre-training initiative.

- *Mental Health*

This group developed during 2001 a system and methodology to measure health and social gain. It identified some indicators and drafted a questionnaire to be filled out by the client. The project group has identified a WHO (World Health Organisation) tool, which they studied but finally did not take over in their own tool. The group presented the first results of their work at the general seminar in Heidelberg and used the feedback obtained to refine their methodology. Once the Self-Evaluation of Well-being questionnaire was finalized, the group designed project proposal to test the system during one year in 5 EPVR centers. This business plan was approved and the group will implement the pilot project during 2002.

- *Quality*

After many years of work and huge time investments, the project on Quality and Accreditation finalized a European Quality in Rehabilitation Mark (EQRM). The group spent the second half of 2001 to prepare a business plan to test the system in two pilot sites. As it concerns a very ambitious project that also requires additional investments, the Steering Committee spent much time on this issue, e.g. a workshop at its meeting in Cordoba and a long presentation and discussion during the Dublin meeting. At the meeting in Dublin, it was finally decided to implement the pilot project and to test the system in Merikoski (Oulu) and CRPG (Gaia). The business plan was approved and a budget of 30.000 Euro preserved for 2002.

- *Employment Access*

The Employment Access project group worked during 2001 on the development of a document entitled “*Work Experience in Vocational Rehabilitation – a Guide to Best Practise*”. The guide had been proofed by staff of member centres throughout the EPVR, colleagues in the sector and employers. The guide would form part of the induction training



for staff in various centers. It was decided that the guide should be available on the EPVR website (only for members) and that it could possibly be used as material as part of a training course through the Academy. It was also agreed that EPVR member centers were entitled to translate the document into their local language in order to enable a greater dissemination amongst their staff.

- *International projects*

After their first meeting in Linz (November 2000), the International projects group started to work on a directory of funding initiatives as well as an analysis of the interest and capacity of member centres to become involved in applying for and implementing projects. The result of that work was a strategy document that was disseminated at the Steering Committee meeting in Heidelberg. The document briefly outlined the role of the project group within the EPVR as a whole and its role in relation to the individual member centres. The aim of the group is twofold: to deliver a service to the EPVR in developing project proposals (1) and to give direct assistance to member centres by compiling a summarised directory of current funding opportunities and to act as a helpdesk to individual staff of the different centers (2). The project group could in the future also maintain a close watch on policy developments within funding agencies. In this way, they would link in with European Corporate Affairs for the EPVR and identify where the priorities of international agencies and donors lie. As the scope of work of this group is a little atypical for a regular project group, its role, status and activities will be revised in the light of the new EPVR Handbook in 2002.

#### **III.4. Project applications of the EPVR**

- *Anti-discrimination programme*

Under the Anti-discrimination programme, the EPVR submitted a proposal related to the budget for 'Support for European level non-governmental organisations devoted to the fight against discrimination'. The proposal was rejected on the grounds that The European Commission wanted to preserve the grants exclusively for organizations that directly represent discriminated people/service-users. The EPVR proposal emphasized the involvement of the service-users, and demonstrated that it is the mission of the EPVR and its member centres to improve the situation of disabled people, but it was nevertheless declared non-eligible for funding under this programme.

- *Preparatory measures to combat and prevent social exclusion*

Under this Call for proposals, the EPVR submitted a proposal entitled 'Equal access to vocational rehabilitation services'. The project intended to develop innovative approaches that would facilitate the access to vocational rehabilitation services for groups of disabled people that are faced with additional disadvantages. On 5 November, the EPVR received a letter from the European Commission that its project proposal was not selected for funding. No feedback or reasons for the rejection were given.

- *LABOR – Knowledge centre for employment improving measures and training for people with learning disabilities*

The EPVR was invited by the EASPD (the lead organization) to fulfill the role of European umbrella organization in this project that aims at collecting data on existing vocational training and measures aimed at the integration into employment of people with learning disabilities in the EU Member States + Cyprus and Hungary. The project was approved under the Leonardo Programme and will start during 2002. The role and tasks of the EPVR are to be defined at an inception meeting.

### **III.5. Consultancy activities of the secretariat**

- *Development of Social Protection Policy in Kazakhstan*

The General Secretary of the EPVR as legal short-term expert involved in this project for a period of 20 working days (including two mission to Kazakhstan). A first task was to draft a new law disability benefits and incapacity for work compensations. Secondly, the legal expert had to revise the old law on employment injuries and occupational diseases in cooperation with local legal experts from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

- *Feasibility study on CARE entering into the tendering business with the European Commission*

CARE International is a huge NGO mainly dealing with projects in the field of humanitarian aid. The European Office of Care International has asked the General Secretary of the EPVR to carry out an audit of their different branches in Europe. The assessment was to indicate how far they were prepared to enter the business of competitive tendering for EU projects. The assignment included 14 working days part of which were subcontracted to a free-lance expert.

## ***IV. Public Affairs***

### **IV.1. European Corporate Affairs**

- *Information on funding opportunities*

During the second half of 2001, the project group on international affairs developed and updated an overview of funding opportunities that will be from 2002 onwards be offered to all EPVR members via the EPVR website. All funding programmes from various international donors are screened and the ones that are relevant are briefly described in a 1 page standard format. This format contains deadlines, objectives, eligibility criteria and other crucial information, as well as a reference to the website where the complete documents can be consulted.

- *Facilitating contacts and partnerships*

The EPVR secretariat has invested quite some time in building up a database of relevant people and organisations in the field of rehabilitation. Addresses were gathered via the EPVR members as well as via pro-active website research and contacting organisations. At the end of 2001, the database contained 800 entries, and most of them include more detailed information on the basis of various indicators (field of experience, project record, service provider/service user, ...). On that basis, the secretariat assisted staff of member centres that were looking for the right partners (especially in the Equal programme).

- *Assistance in project applications*

Only in a few cases, staff from member centres addressed to the EPVR secretariat with questions on procedures or methodologies concerning project applications. The limited number of requests for assistance is probably due to the lack of knowledge within the EPVR centres about this facility. On the other hand, it became clear during 2001 that the secretariat would with the current staffing and task package anyway be able to respond to a limited number of requests.

### **IV.2. Sectoral representation**

- *Cooperation with International Public Authorities*

During 2001, the General Secretary started to contact in a systematic way the most important international public authorities to present the EPVR and its activities and to obtain information on recent policy developments. A major counterpart with whom close relations were established is the Disability Unit in DG Employment and Social Affairs, but also meetings with the ILO, the WHO, the European Social Insurance Partners and the Disability Intergroup were organised. Involving these stakeholders in the EQRM project of the EPVR turned out to be a good strategy to raise their interest in the EPVR.

- *Cooperation with other international NGOs*

The EPVR has consulted on a regular basis with EASPD<sup>1</sup>, EDF<sup>2</sup> and IPWH<sup>3</sup>. Cooperation with the latter resulted in a contract on the basis of which IPWH makes use of the EPVR office as post box office. EPVR people participated several times in activities/seminars of the other organisations, while EASPD and EDF accepted various invitations from the EPVR. Besides, the EPVR was invited by Rehabilitation International to participate in the Committee that is preparing the 8<sup>th</sup> Regional Conference in Aachen (11-15 November 2002). This Committee gathered for the first time on 2 October 2001 in Dusseldorf, and the general secretary of the EPVR participated.

The EPVR and EASPD launched the initiative to bring all (10) European networks of service providers to disabled people together in an attempt to give the service providers one voice in the debate with the policy makers and service-users at European level. Under the provisional name Providers' European Network (PEN<sup>4</sup>), these ten networks organised a first plenary meeting on 9 September. A second plenary meeting was scheduled for 11 January 2001 and would result in a common memorandum and a position paper.

### **IV.3. International partnerships**

- *Euro-American Platform*

The board of the Euro-American Platform (partnership of EPVR and NCSOCRC<sup>5</sup>) had a first meeting on 16 February in Verona, and a second one on 12 October in Washington. The Board allocated quite some time to understanding the structures and activities of the two partner networks. In addition, some concrete cooperation was initiated via American experts providing training in FTEP seminars, and an American centre hosting an Italian staff member for an internship on case management. The Board also drafted a more concrete work plan for 2002.

- *Eastern Europe*

Upon request of the ILO and the European Commission, the EPVR provided advise and technical expertise for a conference on Vocational Rehabilitation and Training in the EU Accession Countries that was organised by the SRH in Heidelberg (26-29 May). 22 high level experts and officials gathered during two days with experts from the European Commission, the ILO and the EPVR to address the issue of the employment and training of disabled persons in the candidate countries. The proceedings of this report were published in an official ILO-EC Report (ISBN 92-2-112785-0).

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<sup>1</sup> European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities

<sup>2</sup> European Disability Forum

<sup>3</sup> International Organisation for the Provision of Work for People with Disabilities and who are Occupationally Handicapped

<sup>4</sup> Providers' European Network

<sup>5</sup> National Consortium of State Operated Comprehensive Rehabilitation Centres