



EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR REHABILITATION

The network of service providers to people with disabilities committed to excellence and innovation through mutual learning

NEWSLETTER

Editorial: Through the Looking Glass: imagination and innovation

Special Focus:

- News from members
- Upcoming events
- Focus on AFID
- Annual Conference
- Implementation UNCRPD
- New EQUASS System

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Dear EPR Members,

We recently came back from our successful Annual Conference where our theme was inspired by a book

where a little girl with a vivid imagination dreams about an alternate reality, "Through the Looking Glass". We need to imagine the future reality, to know what needs and expectations may be, and imagine responses to those needs and expectations. We had a focus on young people, their challenges and opportunities – they are the future – how can we best work with them?

Participants learnt about innovative practices and trends in innovation, from within and outside of the rehabilitation sector, from among our members and other from actors. In the evaluations we were pleased to read that imaginations were stimulated!

We had many opportunities to discuss, network and process what we heard. New connections were formed and discoveries

about common interests were made. At the end of the World Café session members presented their reflections on the conference and how they translated them into proposals for the future work of EPR.

We are also conducting individual needs assessment consultations with every member to find out development and innovation priorities. This will feed into the development of next year's work programme, as well as our new strategic plan, the development of which will start next year.

Innovation has always been one of EPR's key values. We already have ideas of how we can further develop the innovation dimension of the EPR network, but look to you for further inspiration. We look forward to taking it to another level with you next year and beyond!

With best wishes,
 Laura Jones
 EPR Secretary General



Calendar of EPR activities & events

- ◇ **Training sessions on EU developments:** During coordinators meeting 24 November.
- ◇ **Development of Employers' Charters:** Upon request, online
- ◇ **Job coaching/supported employment training online:** 25 –27 –28 October, online
- ◇ **Training seminars on EU Funding Opportunities:** Second session 25 October 14:00 - 15:30, online
- ◇ **National awareness raising event on mental health services in rural areas:** Spain, November (date TBC).
- ◇ **Study visit to Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi (medical rehabilitation):** 17 –18 November, Milan.
- ◇ **Public Affairs event: Co-production for quality of services and quality of life:** 23 November, 14:00—18:00 , Brussels, EPR Office
- ◇ **Centre Coordinators meeting 2:** 24 November, Brussels
- ◇ **General Assembly:** 24 November, Brussels
- ◇ **Building partnership strategies with employers:** 8-9 December, Paris

Please consult the [EPR website](http://www.epr.eu) for the most up-to-date information: www.epr.eu. Further information about the individual activities and invitations will be circulated amongst members as soon as they are available.

These will include a description of the learning objectives and draft agenda.

For more information about any of the above events please contact the secretariat:

Tel. +32 2 736 54 44 - epr@epr.eu

News from the members

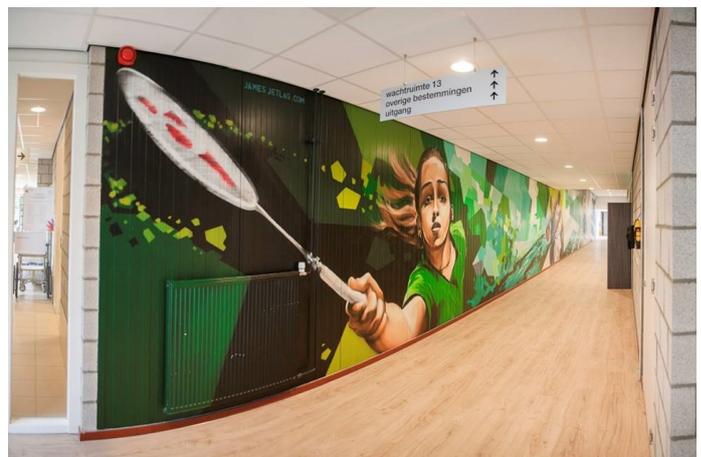
Adelante celebrate the re-opening of the centre in Hoensbroek

After nearly three years of intensive building, a new environment has been created for Adelante and especially for their patients/clients to move ahead the coming years. All buildings are ready for the future. Friday, 16th September the closure of 'Adelante under construction' was celebrated with a festive reopening.

In the Hoensbroek, location many square meters of office space have given way to multifunctional work stations close to the client. The internal and external infrastructure has been improved and there is a comprehensive routing applied with 'separated' ways for clients and suppliers. There are new lifts and the bedding house is renewed. Natural light flows everywhere and the new restaurant has lovely views of the park. The impressive center piece is the 'treatment square'. Here, Adelante clients work hard on their recovery and return to society. The new spaces around the 'treatment square' are designed to support the treatment process. For each treatment phase there are special spaces with associated equipment. They are constructed from diagnosis-related environments to diagnosis-transcending environments. Clients learn skills along three phases towards the stage where they apply their skills without thinking and keep using them in the long run.

At the end of last year, the same approach was applied to Adelante location Valkenburg (children's department) as well. Thanks to thorough alterations there are, among other

things, central and modern learning areas where rehabilitation and education are now fully integrated.



Photos above: Interiors Adelante, location Hoensbroek

Left: side: Reopening celebration on 16th September.

Astangu VRC

Celebrating 20 years of providing and developing social services in Estonia

Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation centre started providing services in 1996, so year 2016 marks 20 years of activity working together with different people from Estonia and abroad. The big focus of our activities in the social field has stayed quite the same during this time – our aim is to create the best sustainable solutions for each person and the society as a whole in co-operation with different parties. The methods we use to reach our targets and work with people have evolved greatly during these years and for this we want to say a big THANK YOU to our international partners all over Europe (including you who are reading this text!).

As we have not had the pleasure to celebrate our birthday with all of you, we want to invite you on a short cruise through our celebrations. On March 1st we organised a birthday party with all Astangu people (service users, staff members, former staff members) and celebrated with the game of Family Feud (if interested, look it up, it might be on TV where you live) between service users and staff members. We had asked our service users several questions about Astangu and were looking for the most popular answers during the live gameshow. One of the questions was “What have the persons gained from Astangu?” and the most popular answers included good friends and independence. During the breaks there were performances by Estonian popular singers and folkdance by Astangu’s folkdance group.

On the same day we also opened a timeline in our building that shows the landmarks of our 20 years with photos and interesting facts.



Astangu people having a friendly competition against each other

Our celebrations continued with an international conference on March 31st . The title of the conference was “Working with the person and for the person“ and the focus was



supporting people with disabilities on their way (back) to the labour market, moving between services and co-operation between different parties. The topics and speakers included ensuring a person-centred approach [Mr Zsolt Bugarszki (HU), lecturer of social policy]; my future on the labour market [service users Mario and Jaan]; effective strategies for supporting persons in finding suitable employment [Mr Guus van Beek (NL), European Quality in Social Services]; the core and content of return to work programmes in the UK [Mrs Kathy Melling (US), BASE representative] and roles at work: are you a giver or taker and what kind of effect does it have? [Mr Kaido Pajumaa (EST), team coach]. Over 150 people working in the social field from all over Estonia participated in the conference.

The celebrations included also a festive summer day for the staff members in August with the experience of creating funny short movies together to see each other from all sorts of different angles.

In October there will be a big reunion for the alumni of Astangu.

This was an insight how we have and will continue to celebrate our 20 years of activity in 2016. Thank you once more to people all over the world that we have had the pleasure to work with!

FAGERH COS-CRPF participated in the Abilympics 2016

COS-CRPF, member organisation of the French network Fagerh, participated in the world's largest skill competition featuring persons with disabilities with its clients: Abilympics. The name Abilympics comes from the idea of organising a competition to promote the skills of persons with disabilities. It combines Abilities with the idea of the Olympics. The concept was developed in Japan in 1972 based on the model of the skills competition named WorldSkills and on the Paralympic Games. That year, the first national final of the Abilympics was held in Tokyo under the banner "Acquiring professional skills leads to a bright future". The International Abilympics Federation (IAF) was officially created during the 3rd International Abilympics in Hong-Kong in 1991. The International Abilympics are held every four years.

This year, the 9th International skills competition for persons with disabilities took place in Bordeaux in France in March. Through a varied and complementary program, this event aims at:

- Increasing the number of countries involved in the competition as well as the number of participants.
- Showing both the general public and employers the skills of persons with disabilities in a large variety of professional activities.
- Changing people's perception towards disability: during the two days of competitions will be organised various skills demonstrations, round tables and conferences, as well as cultural, sports and educational activities.

Abilympics France has been part of the IAF since 2013 and organises regional and national competition to select the best candidates who will compete at international level.

COS-CRPF participants had the chance to go through the entire selection process and to meet the President of the French Republic, François Hollande, in July .

COS-CRPF and the EPR member FAGERH strongly believe in this opportunity and hope that other European countries will be part of the IAF. "It is important to keep raising the standard of achievement within the existing community, to encourage people with physical or mental differences to set higher goals and expectations" said Viktoria Modesta, the French artist invited to open the ceremony.

For more information about 2016 competition, consult <http://abilympics.events/en/abilympics-home/>



Nos quatre sites en
Seine-et-Maine
sont certifiés ISO 9001 : 2008



New CEO for Heliomare



Patricia Esveld, CEO Heliomare

In July 2016 Heliomare welcomed Patricia Esveld as the new director replacing Cees Raaijmakers who retired after a long career in Heliomare (36 years).

Patrica has been working in healthcare for the last 25 years and has a background in Business administration. Before she came at Heliomare she was CEO of Hilverzorg, an organisation for nursing, care and homecare. She is also board member of ActiZ an organisation for employers in healthcare. Previously she owned a consultant firm 'It Cares' active in the healthcare sector. During that period she provided consultant services to Heliomare and similar organisations but also to the minister of health, wellbeing and sport and the Dutch health insurance. Moreover she was involved in the development of the electronic child file project that aimed to provide digital information in one single file for each child throughout the Netherlands.

She works to help professionals in handling their professional responsibilities by making smart choices, using innovative solutions and technology. The aim is to improve the quality of services Heliomare provides to its clients. resulting in making the difference for their clients

Heliolympics news

National sport organisations, national Olympic committee as well as national sport federation will be visiting the Heliolympics to discover talents The Heliolympics will take place from 22nd September till 6th October.

For more information and/or subscription, consult our website www.heliolympics.nl

Pictures are available on [Heliolympics youtube channel](#)



Bas Vink ex Heliomare client and ex Paralympics tennis player



Congratulations to ONCE Foundation, awarded with the Finance for All Award in its first edition



The Jury of the Finance for All Award unanimously decided to give the First Finance for All Award to the project “Inclusive Finances”, an initiative by the ONCE Foundation to promote financial education for people with intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties.

Sabina Lobato, Director of Grants and Employment Programs at ONCE Foundation, received the award from Iñigo Fernandez de Mesa, Secretary of State of Economy and Competitiveness, Elvira Rodriguez, president of the National Stock Market Commission (Spanish acronym CNMV), and Luis María Linde, governor of the Bank of Spain, during the main event of the Financial Education Day organised by the Bank of Spain and CNMV.

“Inclusive Finances” aims at improving the financial education of people with intellectual and learning disabilities through customized training adapted to their needs, thus avoiding exclusion and promoting equal opportunities.

The project started in 2012 with a pilot online course on Finance and Personal Economy adapted to people with intellectual disabilities. In 2013, given the need shown by students for in-person support in some cases, a new version was developed for blended-learning (that is, combining distance learning with in-person sessions).

The high demand for the course and its success led the ONCE Foundation to develop in 2014 a more advanced training resource based on ICT. The final goal is to increase the capacity of users to manage their personal finances in an autonomous way by teaching them basic concepts, improving their capacity to use money responsibly and helping them to

acquire financial skills related to employment.

“Inclusive Finances” was created with a multi-stakeholder approach. It has been funded by Citi and developed with the participation of the Aprocor Foundation and the collaboration of the National Stock Market Commission (CNMV) and the Bank of Spain.

Additionally, the disability movement was involved throughout the whole process, providing their expertise from the design phase, and later as participants in the different pilots, evaluating the resource and making concrete recommendations for improvement.

“Inclusive Finances” is a free resource hosted by the [ONCE Foundation website](#) and available for any entity working with people with intellectual disabilities, autism or learning difficulties. There are now 68 registered entities around the country with 848 registered users.

The Jury of the award stated that this initiative stands out for "its exceptional degree of social commitment and dedication to financial education through high quality content."

This is the third prize awarded to “Inclusive Finances”, which has already been recognized as an innovative practice at the Learning Technology Exhibition “SIMO Educación 2014” and the Zero Project Conference in 2016.



Swallows in Greece: Workshop “Panagia Eleousa” contribution



On 21 March 2016, the Education Centre of “PANAGIA ELEOUSA” in Messolonghi city and more precisely the department of ceramics were contacted by the Greek Ornithological Society and the Messolonghi Lagoon Management Agency to realise clay nests for swallows (bird). Birdwatchers representatives and officials of Messolonghi Lagoon Management Agency visited the Panagia Eleousa and supported the video presentation entitled “Swallows of Greece” and the photo exhibition about birds of the National Park. Service users worked under the supervision and guidance of the trainers. The nests were placed in the Nautical Center of our organisation located in the port of Messolonghi.

“PANAGIA ELEOUSA” hopes to renovate this cooperation in the next future in order to promote and stimulate relationships with nature that contribute to the personal development of people with intellectual and related disabilities and improve their quality of life.

Theotokos Foundation

Early Intervention Program “Mitis” selected in the Zero Project’s study

In 2015 the Zero Project in collaboration with the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) conducted an Europe-wide study concerning innovative practices in Early Childhood Education.

“Theotokos Foundation’s” Early Intervention Program “Mitis” was chosen among 32 nominations as one of the Best Practices in Central and Eastern Europe.

The main goal of the programme is to support a step by step inclusion of as many children as possible in mainstream kindergartens and elementary schools. Parents are actively involved in their child’s daily programme, and they regularly exchange information about their child’s activities, progress and any other concerns. The target group is children two to six years old with diagnoses such as developmental delay, immaturity, language disorder, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, autistic spectrum disorder, and/ or other learning difficulties.

At the EASPD Annual Conference on Early Childhood Intervention, which took place in April in Chisinau, Moldova, Mrs. Aphrodite Korogiannaki, Developmental Psychologist MSc and member of the Theotokos Foundation transdisciplinary team facilitated a two hour interactive workshop on “Mitis” programme

You can see all the results of Zero Project’s study and the analysis of Innovative Practices in Early Childhood Intervention on [Zero project website](#).

On page 39 you can read the article about Theotokos Foundation’s Early Intervention Program titled “Step by step into inclusive kindergarten and school”



Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos, President of the Greek Republic, visited Workshop “PANAGIA ELEOUSA”

On 24th April 2016, in the framework of the 190th Anniversary of the Exodus in Messolonghi city, Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos, President of the Greek Republic, visited Panagia Eleousa Headquarters in Messolonghi. Mrs. Dionysia Samanta, President of the Workshop “PANAGIA ELEOUSA”, accompanied by two service users with intellectual disability, received the President of the Republic, and the representatives of the Greek State, and welcomed him with flowers. The President met also Board members of the Workshop, members of the Auditing Committee, members of the Association of the Workshop and employees.

The President of the Greek Republic had a tour in the training workshops and in the premises of “PANAGIA ELEOUSA” where he expressed his enthusiasm for the quality of the handmade products of the service users. Service users in the Assisted Living Facility, dressed in traditional costumes, welcomed the President with a warm and prolonged applause and a dynamic, synchronized greeting, "Welcome Mr. President".

The President responded with paternal words, full of love. He thanked for the reception and congratulated young service users for their contribution, praising their wonderful

handmade products. He emphasized the importance of the work made by the Workshop “PANAGIA ELEOUSA”, which proves the solidarity of Greek people even in difficult times. In addition, he stressed the obligation of the State to support the work of humanitarian importance.

Mrs. Dionysia Samanta, thanked the President for the honorary visit, highlighted the positive feeling experienced by all people attended the visit and pointed out the importance of the visit as symbol of the support of the State to service providers in their mission of serving people with disabilities and other disadvantages to build better lives.



EPR new member

Welcome to Berufsöderungswerk Köln gGmbH (Germany)

Berufsöderungswerk Köln gGmbH is a non-profit organisation working in the field of vocational rehabilitation of adults who, for health reasons, cannot perform their jobs anymore. Berufsöderungswerk offers a variety of services:

- Vocational assessment with career orientation and a diagnostic check up regarding clients' vocational and personal abilities
- Pre-training to prepare for vocational education
- Vocational education in 35 fields, each certified by the German Chamber of Commerce and Craft
- Placement services to provide a direct re-integration into the workforce

In the past 45 years more than 25.000 people have been supported by Berufsöderungswerk. About 1.200 people start their vocational rehabilitation each year in their facilities. These people come from the Rhine-Ruhr region as well as from other parts of Germany and are supervised and cared for by more than 300 employees.

We will learn more about Berufsöderungswerk during the year to come. We wish them a fruitful cooperation within EPR!

Member Focus

AFID Diferença, Portugal

To talk about AFID Diferença Foundation is to talk about following dreams, fulfilling needs and going after better living conditions for the ones who can provide for themselves. Thus, AFID, was born from the will power of a group of families, citizens and volunteers and was built based on a vision to provide a quality and active life for people with disabilities and other target groups in an inclusive society.

Dedicating most of the work to rehabilitation initiatives, education, training and socio-professional integration of people with disabilities, the Foundation also promotes a set of activities to support the community, social inclusion and provides services in the areas of assistance and social solidarity, as well as child, senior care and environmental. AFID Diferença Foundation is the first Institution in the area of social intervention, in Portugal, certified by the norm ISO 9001, by the Brand of the Institute of Social Security, Level A, and by EQUASS, Level Excellence.

Currently, AFID Diferença Foundation, as a whole, serves over 1.500 people in the areas of childhood (AFIDKids), People with Disability (AFIDReab) and Elderly (AFIDSenior) with a set of certified services and social responses, namely: Residential Home for the Disabled which provides a

residential and social support for families of young people and adults with disabilities who are unable to provide them with the basic care; Occupational Activities Centre developed to promote skills maintenance of people with disability, facilitating their social inclusion; Home Care Service which provides individual home care services in personal and environmental hygiene, meals, laundry and medical support.; Nursery & Pre-School in three facilities which provide health, education, a good development, well-being and a secure environment. To the children; Vocational Training which promotes coaching towards employment in the open labour market for people with disability and training in laundry, gardening, cleaning home services, wood restoration and maintenance and now with a new training program of Family Assistant and Community Support; Residential Home for the Elderly provides a residential and social support for the elderly ; Inclusion Resources Centre which works directly in schools as an early intervention team to provide multidisciplinary therapy; Healthcare and Rehabilitation Centre in the scope of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation to acute, semi-acute and chronic patients and employs daily over 190 staff members.

Always aiming to be a “voice” of awareness fighting against the prejudice that stubbornly persists in societies even today regarding people who suffer from disability AFID





Diferença Foundation is frequently developing new projects and finding new ways to promote Social Inclusion.

Therefore, AFID recently has two new rehabilitation projects. One, a Support Unit for Child Development, for rehabilitation care for children from 0 to 10 years, who, because of illness, disability or physical disability, temporary or permanent, need care. This Unit conducts intensive and multidisciplinary treatment programs tailored to the needs of each child combining several therapies such as physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, the Peditasuit method, psychology, speech therapy and occupational therapy, with the end goal of overcoming the children's motor and cognitive difficulties, and facilitating learning, communication, social interaction, among other things. And the other project, with the main objective of building the capacity of and integration young adults with intellectual disabilities, a Hydroponics greenhouse where, through the use of water instead of land, the necessary conditions are created to grow vegetables correctly, with the proper nutrients and without added fertilizer. Conceived as an activity for about ten young people from the Foundation AFID difference, this project aims to promote their social skills, sense of responsibility and autonomy as individuals, in parallel with the fruit and vegetable production activity also reinforcing their commitment with the environment.

In the coming years AFID Diferença Foundation will continue to broaden their horizons through benchmarking experiences, which until now has always advocated and carried out many national and international benchmarking meetings in order to share experiences, best practices and mutual learning with the ultimate goal of continuous improvement towards a better quality of life for their clients.



Professional Development Activities

Strategic Workshop for Directors: Anticipating and engaging with future trends



This year, the EPR 2016 Strategic Workshop for Directors was hosted by Danish EPR member, Mariehjemmene Foundation, and took place at the Disabled People's Organisations House of Denmark, hailed as the world's most accessible office building.

Mega-trends of the future were presented by Thomas Geuken, and focused on the development of future styles of management and organisational structures, as well as the future of service delivery as a result of evolving demands of service users. Participants learned that while we can anticipate future technologies and demographic shifts, it is how societies and mentalities evolve that is the most difficult to predict.

Among the key megatrends, EPR members identified the following ones as having potentially the most impact. New generations of young people are joining the labour force, and have different expectations and ambitions than previous generations about how work is organised.

Employers will need to adjust to this new concept of work, more collaborative and participative, and give freedom and flexibility for millennials to develop their competences, while supporting and nurturing their talents. Meanwhile, services users will expect services providers to provide more a network or "hub" of resources and support, rather than a one-stop-shop of disability support services. The quality of that network is where the trust in value of the service will be found.

This engaging presentation set the foundation for a reflective exercise where participants discussed how these trends would reflect on their organisations and the nature of rehabilitation services. The exercise concluded with a plan for each participant for developing new initiatives anticipating these trends and supporting their centres in embracing future developments.



National-awareness raising event in Romania on Quality in Social Services

The EPR event on quality in social services, provided with support of the EaSI programme of the European Commission, took place on 8th June 2016 in Arad, west of Romania, and was attended by 40 persons. The event was hosted by EPR partner ASPIS Association, a non-government actor in services to adults with disabilities and vulnerable populations in Arad and Vladimirescu.

Participants came from various organisations in Arad County, NGOs providing disability services, disability

advocates, as well as local representatives and professionals of the DG for Social Assistance and Child Protection, a national government funded programme of social services.

The morning session was focused on introducing the relevant European Frameworks for Quality in Social Services, as well as concrete tools for implementing the values behind them. The presenters also presented EPR's own initiative for an internal and external assessment for Quality in Social Services.

The afternoon session focused on governance in social services, and how the annual planning process related not only to the mission and activities of the service providers, but to the values and ambitions of a service provider. These overarching ambitions are to provide high-quality services that empower service users, give them a space to participate, in order to improve quality of life, inclusion in society and reach the individual, person centred goals that each service user seeks to accomplish.

The full report is available at this [link](#).



National-awareness raising event in Latvia on employment of people with disabilities

On 17 June 2016, over 60 people met in the Parliament in Riga at the Latvian national awareness raising event on employment of people with disabilities. The event, co-organised with EPR member SIVA and the Parliament Committee for Employment and Social Affairs, saw key stakeholders present their challenges, actions and recommendations to support the employment of people with disabilities. Speakers included representatives of people with disabilities, employers and the state. EPR Lithuanian member VRC presented their work and Laura Jones presented EPR, recommendations from the Platform and key tools to support employment of people with disabilities.

The event featured a round table discussion where participants highlighted the intrinsic value of work for all people, and the importance of empowering all to be able to share their talents with society. The necessity of seeing all people as equal should be the starting point of discussions and actions. It was stressed that in the right position, a person even with more severe intellectual disability can be highly productive. Representatives of students in Riga proposed that students with disabilities be heard in such

discussions and suggested more scholarships for such students.

The event was well-received and successfully brought the topic of employment of people with disabilities higher up the Latvian political agenda, including the supported employment model.

More detailed information on each intervention is available in the [report](#). Presentations are available on [EPR website](#).



EPR Annual Conference 2016



**"Evolving societies,
evolving services: through
the looking-glass"**

The EPR Annual Conference 2016 was hosted by AFID Foundation, in Lisbon, Portugal on 21- 22 September. Over 120 delegates, including speakers from Portugal, France, Spain, Greece, Ireland, and the Netherlands attended the event. The Conference featured the presence of AFID's partners Ana Sofia Antunes, Secretary of State of the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities; João Afonso, Social Rights Department Lisbon Municipal and Graça Rebocho, from the Fundação Portugal Telecom.

One new associate member organisation from Germany (Berufsförderungswerk Köln gGmbH) joined EPR professionals at this conference.

The conference offered a unique opportunity to imagine and plan the future of European rehabilitation institutions and thus contribute to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in Portugal and across Europe.

On the first day, participants took part in a joint reflection on what the future may be like in 20-30 years' time and brainstormed on the relationship between innovation and funding, and on specific challenges. Rehabilitation services are constantly re-inventing themselves to best respond to the needs of their clients, which evolve with society, while always following the ultimate aim to create equal opportunities and facilitate independent participation of all individuals in society. They have to anticipate and understand upcoming changes in order to ensure the relevance and sustainability of their services.

On the second day, the conference proposed an insight into initiatives from EPR members from Greece, France, the Netherlands and Ireland, and a stand-up comedy performed by Zé-Pedro Cobra to reflect on the two days learnings.

The Conference was partly sponsored by the Lisbon Municipality, Fundação PT, National Rehabilitation Institute, Red Cross Portugal and co-funded by the European Union Programme for Employment and social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020).

The event was well perceived by participants as showed in the evaluation forms distributed during the event. The conference scored a mark of 4.2/5. EPR would like to thank all participants and the host organisation AFID Foundation and its staff who have worked hard to make this event relevant and successful.

Summary reports, presentations and pictures are available on [EPR website](#).



EPR Innovation Prize

From Dublin to Athens, the EPR Innovation Prize flew to South-Europe

Every year EPR Centre Coordinators are called to score the candidate practices of the Innovation Prize Contest and every year the Prize flies around Europe. This year, the Prize has been awarded to Theotokos Foundation in Greece for the project “Serious Games”.

The practice is about developing and using Serious Games as an interdisciplinary educational tool. Its aim is to promote the development of communication and social skills in individuals with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Intellectual Disability (ID). Serious games have been designed in order to provide not only a useful and common tool for all therapists, teachers and parents, but also an attractive, motivating and pleasant game for students as well. Full description of the practice is available on EPR website in the [“Innovation Prize” section](#).

Chrissi Kotretsou, Speech and Language Therapist at Theotokos Foundation, presented “Serious Games” at the Awarding Ceremony which took place on 21st September 2016 during the EPR Annual Conference in Lisbon.

The practice was selected amongst 14 candidates as the most innovative one.



Public Affairs

The yearly appointment with the UNCRPD: 7th work forum on its implementation

The Work Forum on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN Convention) met in Brussels on 10 June 2016 for its 7th edition and to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Convention.

The Forum brought together the key actors in the implementation and monitoring process – the so called focal points, coordination mechanisms, monitoring mechanisms, disabled persons organisations (DPOs) as well as civil society organisations (CSOs) and other relevant international bodies. Its main aim is to ensuring that the UN Convention is fully implemented.

In the opening Manuela Geleng, Acting Director Social Affairs, European Commission, DG Employment, Social

Affairs and Inclusion, invited the audience to reflect on the importance and the added value of this annual event. *“It also encourages us to keep the momentum, each on their respective competences, in the implementation and monitoring of the UN Convention and to renew our commitment so that European citizens with disabilities can enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms wherever they are in Europe”*, she said.

The Forum promotes mutual learning between the EU and its Member States, through the sharing of practical experiences on its practical implementation and monitoring and to promote solutions to common challenges.

This year, the Work Forum focused on Human Rights approach to disability in implementation strategies with the intervention of representatives from Member States (Portugal, Spain and Finland); the implementation of the UN

CRPD through strategies at EU and national level and social protection and adequate standard of living. The panel debate on strategies facilitated by Catherine Naughton, Director of European Disability Forum, welcomed MEP Helga Stevens, who presented the European Parliament report on implementation of the UN CRPD with special regard to the Concluding Observations of the UN CRPD Committee; Emmanuelle Grange, Head of Unit Disability and Inclusion, European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, presented the first results of the consultation on the European Disability Strategy. Wolfram Giese, German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs presented their National CRPD strategy while Marily Christofi, Greek national Confederation of Disabled People focused on the involvement of disabled people's organisations (DPOs) in developing, implementing and monitoring strategy.

The third panel focused on article 28 CRPD on social protection with Karina De Beule, Vlaams Agentschap voor Personen met een handicap Roy Sainsbury, presenting the ANED study on "Member States' reforms to social protection to align with the UNCRPD".



8th Disability High Level Group Report on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Commission and the Disability High-Level Group (DHLG) published a joint report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in September. These DHLG reports include information on progress made in the setting up of the governance structures and on the elaboration and implementation of national strategies and actions to effectively put in practice the UNCRPD. Each year, a chapter is devoted to specific thematic areas, such as accessibility (in 2009 and 2012), or the interface between the implementation of the Convention and the Europe 2020 headline targets for education, employment and poverty (in 2011 and 2015) and development cooperation (in 2013).

This year's thematic chapter focusses on participation of persons with disabilities in employment, including information from two non-governmental organisations.

EPR made its contribution by reporting on activities organised to support the implementation of the UNCRPD. The full report is available on [European Commission website](#).

The 2016 Country-Specific Recommendations: What opportunities for VET, health and social service providers?

In June 2016, EPR Secretariat published an information note on this year Country-Specific Recommendations and their key recommendations in the field of employment, education and training and in the field of social protection and services. These recommendations need to be translated into policies and services by national governments which have to ensure the effective implementation of the reforms announced in their National Reform Programmes.

This document aims to help EPR member organisations to explore the potential of the 2016 recommendations given to their governments and engage with public authorities to improve the service provision, showing how they can support governments to respond to the recommendations, and reminding them of their obligations. Read the [information note](#) and discover the work that EPR does in relation to the European Semester on [EPR website](#)



Briefing paper: “What opportunities for social services in the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 Programming period?”

EPR gave its important contribution to the Social Service Europe briefing paper on the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) that are the largest regional investment programmes in Europe with great potential for supporting actions working towards social and labour inclusion, fighting poverty and encouraging social innovation.

The briefing focuses on the European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived priorities, outlining the priorities and aims of these funds and the main elements that can support investment in social and labour market inclusion.

The briefing aims to help social service providers working at local level to explore the opportunities provided by the ESIF for their work, including providing inspiration for projects. It also aims to help managing authorities to better understand the opportunities that the ESIF offer in the field of social services, and the impact that using the ESIF for such services can have.

The document showcases examples of good practices of projects funded by the EU Structural Funds (in the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 periods) and provides general guidelines on the effective use of EU Structural Funds. It also showcases examples of successful cooperation between NGOs and public authorities in managing funds.

We would encourage you to work with the relevant people in the national or regional governments in the implementation of the Programmes and use this briefing in your advocacy work at national/local level to promote the use of EU funds for your services. Social Services Europe will promote the document and its messages at EU level among key stakeholders with the same aim, seeking to promote investment in initiatives in the fields of social and labour market inclusion.

Read the paper [here](#)

Projects

PESSIS 3 project on promoting employers' social dialogue in social services Steps forward in the development of the European social dialogue

PESSIS 3 Promoting employers' social services in social dialogue

The PESSIS 3 project started in January 2016 represents the third step of a longer term process aiming at establishing a representative platform for employers in the social services sector at European level. Project partners at national and European level are working hard to achieve this objective. Partner from Spain, Ireland and Czech Republic organised two rounds of capacity-building meetings (in February and June) with the aim of establishing a strong relationship with national employers and discussing their participation in European Social Dialogue.

On 11 May and 4 October, national employers' representatives from Austria, Belgium, France and Germany, trade unions representatives and all project partners met to develop and agree on a Joint Declaration on supporting social services and a Sectoral Agreement on a European social dialogue in social services. The two documents and the intentions expressed in it will be discussed publicly next year in a hearing at the European Parliament (March 2017).

By then, the European report drawing together the mapping of social dialogue in the social services sectors from each of the 17 national reports published so far, will be updated with 5 additional country-studies: Portugal, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and the United Kingdom.

More information about the project is available [here](#)

The new EQUASS 2018 system

Introduction

The European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) is an initiative of the European Platform for Rehabilitation. The new EQUASS 2018 will provide comprehensive services in the area of development, promotion, training, recognition and certification of quality in the social sector. The EQUASS 2018 recognition- and certification programmes comply with the European requirements for quality in the provision of Social Services and Vocational Education and Training services.

The EQUASS Framework

The new EQUASS 2018 system is based on 10 Principles for Quality. The principles for Quality are derived from consultation of stakeholders, reports of research and impact studies of the EQUASS 2012 system. Each Principle for Quality is broken down into specific quality criteria.

The 10 Principles for Quality express the core values of delivering quality services in the social sector. The Quality principles are strongly interrelated with each other. This is expressed in the figure below.

EQUASS 2018 recognition will be given to those social service providers who can show successful implementation

of EQUASS 2018 criteria. For assessing the performance of the social service providers, an assessment grid has been developed. This grid can be considered as reference guidelines for implementation and assessing the performance of social service providers on the criteria. The assessment grid has two angles:

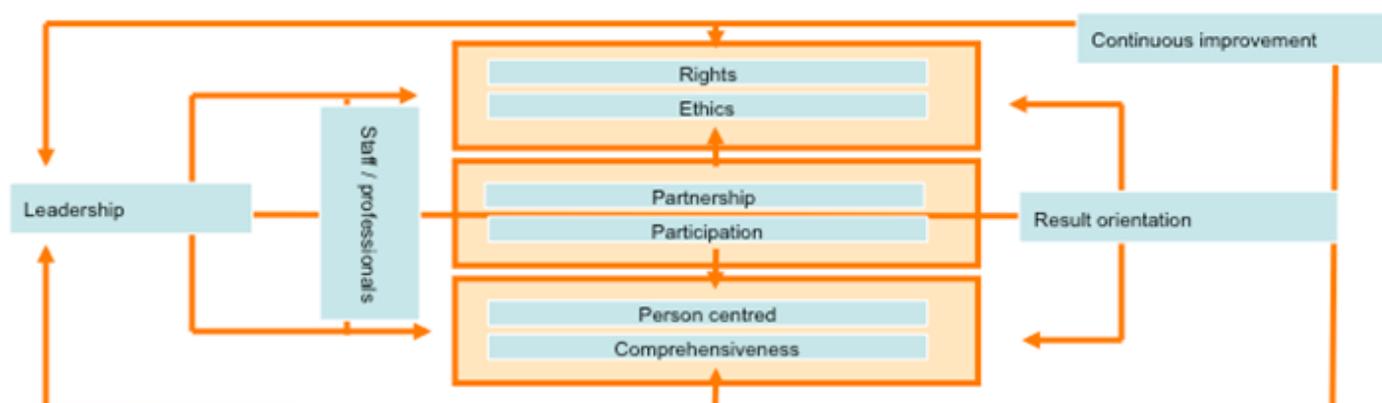
- “Implementation of approaches”: Assessing to what extent social service providers have implemented clear and sound approaches, systems and methods.
- “Results”: Assessing to what extent social service providers have identified relevant results for the criteria and whether they are comparing their results with other social service providers in the sector.

The EQUASS 2018 recognitions / certifications ensure satisfactory performance on all EQUASS Principles for Quality. It also ensures satisfactory performance on the key elements of any operational Quality Management System.

Brief overview of major changes in the new EQUASS 2018

1. The Principles, criteria and indicators of the new EQUASS 2018 system are formulated in a more understandable and accessible language for those who are implementing and assessing the EQUASS requirements. A glossary of terms is added to the core documents in order to create a common understanding of the key concepts that are used in the new EQUASS 2018 system.

EQUASS Quality Principles



2. The new EQUASS 2018 system is more supportive for the social service provider towards organisational learning, continuous improvement, continuous development and growth (= increasing capabilities). Although compliance with the criteria is still a fundamental requirement, mechanisms for learning, development and growth will have a more dominant place in the implementation and assessment of the system.
3. The new EQUASS 2018 system will have one coherent and consistent method of assessment for all its recognition and certification programs. One coherent and consistent system of assessment encourages Social Service Providers to grow to the next stage of performance and facilitates the enrolment in the excellence level in a more natural way.
4. The new EQUASS 2018 system is more flexible in meeting the certification requirements related to the specific branches in the social sector and to the specific national contexts. The new EQUASS 2018 system therefore is less prescriptive in meeting specific indicators so they have more freedom and choices to adapt the system towards their specific situation and context.
5. The new EQUASS 2018 system emphasises the implementation of their approaches and their systems. Having systems in place and policy formulated is not enough for certification. During the assessment the auditor pays more attention on how these systems, policies and approach are put into practice while respecting the EQUASS principles and criteria.
6. The new EQUASS 2018 system increases the demands of measuring and recording results based on relevant and valid indicators. Benchmarking and bench learning of approaches and results is encouraged in all certification programs.
7. The new EQUASS 2018 system requires less documentation and therefore the EQUASS 2018 system is less bureaucratic and more user friendly for service providers with few employees. The new EQUASS 2018 system therefore is more user-friendly in its application, in its procedures and in its processes.
8. The new EQUASS 2018 system does not substantially increase the demands compared with the 2012 system. The emphasis of the EQUASS 2018 system is: to put into practice what is expressed in the policies, systems, methods and the key concepts.
9. The new EQUASS 2018 system complies with the requirements in the European frameworks for quality in the social sector and the Vocational Education and Training sector.
10. The new EQUASS 2018 audit reports pay more attention to implementation of measures to improve of the practice of the social service provider, to register tangible results and to organisational learning and development. The audit report in the new EQUASS 2018 system increase the added value for organisational development, learning and improvement of the social service provider.
11. All EQUASS 2018 recognition / certification will be given for a period of 3 years. The certified social service provider must report its progress on improvement and development on annual basis to the EQUASS organisation. This progress report will be reviewed by the auditor and validated by an expert of the EQUASS organisation.

The VET Learning Community (TVLC) Project



EPR is participating in the TVLC project, a 2,5 year project led by Rea College Pluryn and funded by the Erasmus+ programme - KA2 - Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices / Strategic Partnerships for vocational education and training.

Other project partners from the EPR Membership includes: Valakupiu Rehabilitation Centre (LT) and Astangu Rehabilitation Centre (EE).

The project has two objectives:

- Improve the overall quality performance and quality culture (performance of Quality Culture assessment tool) of specialised and regular VET providers by systematic benchmarking and bench learning.
- Contribute to inclusive education by creating sustainable partnerships between specialised VET providers and regular VET providers for the benefits of all learners.

This project will officially begin in November of 2016, with a kick-off meeting in Nijmegen. Persons interested in the project can contact Birgit Grimbergen at bgrimbergen@pluryn.nl and Angélique Wibier at awibier@pluryn.nl.

News from the Secretariat

Bye Claude and good luck in your career!



After 8 years of enthusiastic engagement with the EPR Secretariat Claude Delfosse leaves the platform to pursue her career elsewhere. Over the years, Claude proved to be a very organised and highly capable Project Coordinator.

Her outstanding commitment in developing and promoting mutual learning exchanges among EPR members strengthened the cooperation within the network. Besides

organising all professional development activities and coordinating EPR projects, she initiated, together with Donal McAnaney, the benchmarking activity on outcome measurement in vocational rehabilitation and led the group over the years. The Secretariat thanks Claude for her determination and loyalty in working for EPR and for bringing her spirit and talent to the EPR team. All her colleagues wish her the best luck in fulfilling her career goals. Starting from 24 October, Mirko Miceli will join the Secretariat as Membership Officer and will be responsible for planning and organising professional development activities. Mirko can be contacted at mmiceli@epr.eu

Welcome to Loredana Alen to the EPR Office



Loredana Alen joined the EPR Secretariat at the beginning of June 2016 as the new EQUASS assistant.

She is a Belgian and Italian national, speaking Flemish, English, Italian, French, basic German and is currently learning Spanish. Loredana is a graduated social worker and got her master's

degree in criminology at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. She also obtained an advanced bachelor's degree in advanced business management, majoring in European law.

Before joining our staff Loredana worked as an intern parole officer at the Belgian Federal Department of Justice and as a research assistant at Protection International, an international human rights NGO. She started her professional career as a research assistant at the court of appeal in Brussels followed by a brief experience as a social legal advisor for students at the Free University of Brussels (VUB).

AS well as being part of the EQUASS unit, Loredana also supports other EPR activities when needed. Loredana can be contacted at lalen@epr.eu and through the general EPR telephone numbers.

EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR REHABILITATION

*The network of service providers to people with disabilities
committed to excellence and innovation through mutual learning*

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