

epr newsletter

April 2006

FULL MEMBERS



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



Editorial

Dear EPR members, we are pleased to present you with the first edition of the Newsletter in 2006.

While the development of the European Union seems to be slowing down and Euro-skepticism is on the rise in most Member States, the impact of European networks in the social sector has without any doubt grown over the last few years. The various representative networks have learned that in order to successfully influence EU policy, the best strategy is to join their efforts. A good example of this increasing impact is the effective lobbying around the Services Directive leading to the exclusion of health and social services from its scope.

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*Funding is popular – record-breaking attendance at the ERA Seminar **A new cycle of EC Funding Opportunities for the disability sector (2007-2013)**, which EPR organised in Brussels on 23 February 2006.*

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With regard to their members, most European networks have understood that membership is in itself no sufficient anymore, but that tangible outcomes and benefits are expected. That is the main reason why in 2004, EPR made the decision to act as a consultant to its own members; the success of the first generation of Centre Action Plans proves that this is the right strategy. We should highlight in this respect that the expertise to respond to the requests of our members is drawn in 80% of the cases from the EPR membership, which truly concretises the initial EPR motto 'learning from each other'.

Due to increased workload and financial pressure, both organisations and people have become very selective in their participation in international activities. However, addressing the right issues and delivering high quality still attracts people, as was proven by the success of the ERA Seminar on Funding Opportunities (see pages 6-7). Nowadays, 'less but better' is a strong guideline for any kind of international cooperation. EPR has also applied this principle to new formats such as 'discussion groups' and 'mentoring', where careful preparation and adequate guidance allows rehabilitation professionals to get a direct benefit from international networking with minimal efforts and time investments.

The environment in which service providers operate is changing faster than ever before, which means that European networks also need to permanently adapt their strategies to address the needs of their members. Within this context, the EPR will organise on 21-24 June a 'Vintage Event' in the mountains nearby Porto. Using a 3-component format - workshop, social activities, and a Board meeting - the Directors of all EPR member organisations will engage in a strategic reflection on the EPR in the changing international environment, and look for ways to ensure a continued synergy among the member organisations.

We hope that this Newsletter gives you a flavor of the variety of activities taking place in the EPR network, and stimulates you to visit weblinks or referred contact person for more information.

We wish all of you much success with your professional activities and are looking forward to seeing many of you at the EPR General Seminar that will take place in Oslo after the summer.

Jan Spooren
EPR General Secretary

Upcoming EPR events May-December 2006*

EQRN Assessors Training
Brussels, 2-3 May

ERA Advisory Committee meeting
Brussels, 3 May

ERA Learning Group: Increasing Initial Job Retention
Dublin, 16-17 May

EQUASS Auditors Training
Brussels, 6-7 June

Board of Directors meeting and "Vintage Event"
Porto (Douro Valley), 21-24 June

Project Group on Benchmarking & Performance Indicators meeting (CAP)
Porto, 10-11 July

ERA Summer School: English Language Course
Dublin, 9-20 August

EQRN Consultant Training
Brussels, 11-12 September

EPR Executive Committee
Brussels, 13 September

EQRN Awarding Committee meeting
Brussels, 13 September (to be confirmed)

EPR Business meetings at the General Seminar:

- EPR Board of Directors meeting
- KMC Administrators meeting
- Discussion Group on Decentralisation and Mainstreaming of Rehabilitation Services (CAP)
- Project Group on Benchmarking & Performance Indicators meeting (CAP)
- ERA Learning Group on Interdisciplinary and interdepartmental strategies to ensure a continuum of services

Oslo, 27 September

EPR General Seminar: Benchmarking as an Optimisation Strategy for Rehabilitation Service Providers
Oslo, 28-29 September

Special Workshop in Clinical and Therapeutic Communication
Porto, 27-28 October

> List of events as known at the moment. Events may be added or removed, and will be announced. Always confirm dates and location with the secretariat prior to attending.

> The contact person for all events at the secretariat is Nadege Jibassia, Tel: +32 2 736 54 44; Email: nadege.jibassia@epr.be

News from the members



Josefsheim Bigge Conference on IT

From 28 to 29 March 2006 a symposium on the theme "IT challenge: Prospects for young people with physical disabilities" took place at Josefsheim Bigge in Olsberg. The Conference focused on the results and experiences of the Leonardo-project "Disabil IT y", which addressed the prevocational training of young people with disabilities into IT vocations. Experts from the project partners, economy, and science gave their comments on this issue in speeches and a podium discussion. Based on work experience, the possibilities and borders of innovative prevocational training and qualification strategies were discussed in three workshops. 120 participants from different countries gave many compliments on this event and on the presented project results.



Contact: m.kuenemund@josefsheim-bigge.de



National Learning Network to run new Home Focus programme

National Learning Network West Cork has been awarded €378,000 funding by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform for an innovative rehabilitative programme called *Home Focus*. This programme will be delivered in the homes of people experiencing mental health difficulties. The goal of the programme is to assist these individuals in leading more independent lives and to access a myriad of different services and opportunities in their community. The service is innovative in two ways. Firstly, the programme is a partnership between National Learning Network West Cork, HSE West Cork Mental Health Services, HSE West Cork Disability Guidance Services, West Cork Community Partnership and WorkStart West Cork. Secondly, the programme will be delivered by a team of three staff, including a Rehabilitative Training Instructor, an Assertive Outreach Nurse (Mental Health), and for the first time in Ireland, a Recovery Support Worker. The programme is scheduled to begin at the end of April and will run for 18 months.

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News from Institute for Rehabilitation Republic of Slovenia

A Centre for the Development of Vocational Rehabilitation was founded in August 2005 after the Employment and Rehabilitation Act for disabled persons was adopted and put into practice. Last year the basic standardisation for all interventions in the process of vocational rehabilitation was prepared and adopted, and it will be further developed this year. The analysis of the state of the professionals has been done as the base to prepare training programmes in a systematic and broader professional scope of practise as it is needed in vocational rehabilitation.

- The Institute is preparing *Project "Safe – Intelligent Home"* with the purpose to equip the demonstration room with modern technological solutions that can accommodate needs of people with a variety of disabilities, including people with sensory disabilities ranging from moderately to severely impaired.
- The Institute published the book *"Basic biomechanical principles of bipedal walking"* This textbook treats the subject of human walking from the perspective of multidisciplinary team for instrumented gait analysis in clinical practice.

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RehabCare celebrates its 10th Anniversary

RehabCare celebrates its 10th Anniversary this year and has planned a major calendar of events to celebrate its successes over the last 10 years and to further establish RehabCare nationally and internationally. Festivities kicked off with a 'Day of Celebration' in Dublin in January supported by An Taoiseach, and Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern. Key projects for the year include the development of a nationwide volunteering programme in Ireland and the establishment of a national awards programme to recognise the achievements of RehabCare Service Users, staff and supporters. In March, RehabCare was awarded the Index of Excellence award by the Excellence Ireland Quality Association (EIQA) in recognition of its dedication to continuous improvement.

Contact: sarahjane.dillon@rehabcare.ie



AVRE starts "Quality Project"

AVRE, together with the Directorate of Labour, have started a Workgroup called "The Quality project". The purpose is to find out if and how to implement a Quality Assurance System for Vocationally Rehabilitation in our Enterprises. We are also going to propose what is good quality in Vocational Rehabilitation Work, factors/indicators for success, and patterns for good cooperation between the Labour Market Authorities and our Enterprises. The final report has to be finished before 1 July 2006. From this workgroup, AVRE is very thankful for the help it received from Guus van Beek and Pluryn Werkenrode Groep. AVRE visited Pluryn in Nijmegen in the end of March and was given excellent information about EQUASS, Borea, and the process Pluryn has been through implementing the EQRM and the benefits they now get from having that Mark. Paal Haavorsen said: "Next time you hear from us in this Newsletter maybe we have decided to implement EQUASS in all our member enterprises in Norway!"

Contact: paal.haavorsen@sbl.no

EPR interview with Martin Künemund, Project Manager, Josefsheim Bigge, Germany

On the occasion of the closing Conference for the Leonardo da Vinci "Disabil IT y" project run by Josefsheim Bigge, Germany, EPR joined the Project Manager Martin Künemund, for an interview.



- **Martin, are you satisfied with the overall results achieved by the project "Disabil IT y"?**

Yes, we are most satisfied with the course of the Leonardo project and the results achieved. We have developed a model for the prevocational training of young people to enable them to have access to vocations in the field of IT and the new media. A flexible modular concept has resulted which ranges from the basic to the specific details of contents for a year's supportive training. In connection with this we have produced a CD-ROM with modules and learning units. The modules have been tested by our project partners and most successfully in all cases. In addition to the CD, we have also issued a manual for instructors, teachers and specialised teachers, in which the pedagogical concept is expanded on in theory and with practical examples.

Our Conference, which rounded off the project and which was extremely well visited, from 28 to 30 March 2006 here at the Josefsheim Bigge, was an overall success. Experts from the field of educational politics, the economy, and science, expounded on the opportunities and prospects for young disabled people on the IT employment market. Over 120 participants in the field of prevocational and vocational training were asked to assess the Conference and judged the presentations, the workshops and panel discussion on the themes of the "Disabil IT y" project as very interesting and informative.

- **Why is attaining sound IT skills is so important for youngsters today?**

Particularly in the case of young people with a disability, the new media open up very good opportunities in both their everyday life and their career. The IT branch is considered to be a promising modern branch with good prospects for the future for both vocational opportunities and working conditions. As reported during the recent computer trade fair, Cebit, the IT branch, is enjoying an upward trend and is searching for skilled workers again. The abundant new IT vocations are particularly attractive for young people with a disability. In order to increase their chances both for training and in the employment market, it is important for us to make them familiar with the use of the media and to ensure that they attain sound abilities and skills. We hope that our concept "Disabil IT y" can contribute to more young people with a disability using their chances in the field of IT.

- **Was it difficult to manage such a diverse international consortium?**

15 partners from six countries (Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Italy, Romania, and Slovenia) participated in the project. The partners all had their particular strong points in the project and each contributed to the results with their particular role. We all readily took on the challenge, with regard to our various cultures and mentalities, of creating a mutual basis for collaboration in the interest of fulfilling a project for the integration of people with disabilities.

- **Were there any linguistic barriers? How did you overcome them?**

As none of our partners are eloquent native speakers, we managed quite well with our "school English". There was only the occasional problem with specialised vocabulary. For example, the supportive approach of psychomotor movements was a focus point of the project, and it became apparent that the partners use varying terminology. There is usually little or no point in looking up terminology concerning disabilities and vocational rehabilitation in dictionaries. *(Perhaps a good idea for a new project would be to draw up a European rehabilitation glossary.)*

- **Do you think the project results will last after the EU funding ends?**

Well, in fact the implementation is only just about to begin. We have worked on developing the curriculum right up to the end of the project. Now the time has come to gradually put this model of pre-vocational training into practice and to

implement it in the normal run. Numerous activities are planned to ensure that the project will endure. In Germany alone, we have handed out over 120 manuals and CD-ROMs to educational institutions interested in the project. And we have received a very positive feedback. There is a large necessity recognised in prevocational training measures in the countries of our participants, too, even though the professional and social support systems are still in structure. One considers our curriculum to have a very good chance of being used on a long-term basis in the national educational systems. Furthermore, our own small "European Union" and good friendships have grown out of our project partnership over the last 2 ½ years. It is indeed a fact that there will be no further funding for the partner meetings and yet the project partners have a vested interest in a long-term collaboration. We hope to hold a partner meeting annually to exchange our experiences on a personal level in the interest of the project having a lasting effect.



German but also "European": students in Bigge

- **What did you learn personally from this project experience?**

Europe is exciting and sometimes good for a surprise. The European Union is growing closer and, by means of such projects, we can play our small role in forming it. If one regards the European co-operation as an opportunity and is receptive to anything new, then such projects open up enormous possibilities of development. I also reaped huge benefit from this experience on a personal level. I have ripened over the past 2½ years from a "German" to a "European by conviction".

- **You participated in the last meeting of EPR coordinators in October 2005. Did you find the "Coordinators Forum" to be a good format for the exchange of ideas and information?**

It was a very interesting and informative seminar in every respect. It not only offered a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences, but also to build up contact with other vocational rehabilitation centres. And then in February of this year, EPR offered us another good event on Funding Opportunities. The consultant EPR had engaged for this event was indeed first-class.

- **With which EPR members does Josefshiem Bigge cooperate most closely?**

In the course of the Leonardo project *Disabil IT y* we found a very competent partner in the "Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre" from Tallinn, Estonia. We have also been cooperating on a new project with the Slovenian Institute for Rehabilitation since the beginning of April 2006. The EPR network is constantly opening up new contacts to further members, such as the rehabilitation institutes in the Netherlands. I am convinced that we will be using this platform far more in the future.

- **How well do you think EPR is known in Josefshiem Bigge in particular? What more can be done to promote the network?**

Obviously all the colleagues here know the EPR as we are currently aiming at gaining the EQRM certification in a few days time. On the other hand, I have to admit that Europe is still very remote for some of my colleagues. They ask themselves what use is the EPR to them in handling their everyday tasks at work. Only those who have worked on a European project and experienced the "European spirit" regard European collaboration to be enrichment rather than an additional burden. By means of exchange programmes across the borders, prejudices were able to be dispersed. Each of us can learn a lot from our European partners on both a professional and private level. The intercultural and linguistic competences definitely also present a further barrier for many a person. This should motivate us to develop these competences we recognise to be so vital.

- **Are there any new EU-funded projects coming up for JB?**

In addition to the new Leonardo project DLAN under the direction of the Slovenian Institute for Rehabilitation, we are also awaiting the decision on a further application for a project from the EPR. The Josefshiem in Bigge is eager for further EU-funded projects in the future in order to participate in the development of innovations and to profit from the results in facing the ever-increasing competition.

- **Thank you for this interview and we look forward to meeting you again in the near future.**

ENSPER meets key EU officials

In February 2006 ENSPER, along with other European Networks of Social Service Providers, held two high level meetings with key officials in the European Commission. ENSPER met with S. Ouaki, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner V. Spidla (DG EMPL) and N. van der Pas, Director General DG EMPL. Jan Spooren (EPR General Secretary) or Martin Ohridski (EPR Public Affairs Officer) represented ENSPER. Some highlights from the meetings are listed below:

- **The role of Social Service Providers for social cohesion in Europe** was discussed, underlining the importance of working in partnerships to ensure the provision of high-quality social services of general interest for all in the future in the EU internal market.
- Social Service Providers also put forward their positions and expectations with regard to two key dossiers – the **Services Directive** and the upcoming **Communication on Social and Health Care Services of General Interest**.
- Finally, Social Service Providers sought to learn more about **planned initiatives of the European Commission in relation to social service provision** and how they can input into them

Detailed minutes from these two meetings can be requested by sending an email to martin.ohridski@epr.be

ENSPER position paper on State Aid

As many of you are aware, the European Commission is currently reforming the **EC Regulation No 2204/2002 of 12 December 2002 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the EC Treaty to State aid for employment** and is preparing a proposal for the New State Aid Regulation.

ENSPER has been dealing with this issue, with the aim to ensure that the best possible regulatory framework for social enterprises providing sheltered work and employment is assured under the new regime, which will go into effect on 1 January 2007. Meanwhile, ENSPER has maintained close contacts with DG Competition of the European Commission to put forward the views and expectations of service providers. A formal **position paper was recently submitted to DG Competition**. Members will be kept duly informed about future developments and actions undertaken in this dossier.

To request the ENSPER position paper on State Aid or for further information on this issue send an email to publicaffairs@workability-europe.org



On 23 February 2006 EPR organised an ERA Seminar entitled **A New Cycle of EC Funding Opportunities for the Disability Sector (2007-2013)** which took place in Brussels.

The European Commission is currently preparing a new generation of funding opportunities that will cover the period 2007-2013. They will replace the 2000-2006 cycle of funding programmes, and will offer to the disability sector another wide range of opportunities to finance training, development, and dissemination activities at both the national and European levels.

In this respect, the Seminar was a timely occasion to acquire an insight into the new streams of funding that will soon be available for the disability sector, and to understand how an organisation might benefit from them.

The Seminar was very well attended, attracting 32 persons from 14 European countries – an all-time record for an ERA Seminar. Participants came from the EPR network as well as from member organisations of Workability Europe to whom the Seminar was also open.



At the Commission

The programme started in the premises of the European Commission with a general presentation on the role and functioning of the EU institutions. This was followed by presentations given by officials from DG Employment Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities on the PROGRESS programme, ESF, and other interesting upcoming funding opportunities for the disability sector.

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"This is how you do it" (Jan Dröge)

The afternoon session of the Seminar took place in the Eurovillage Hotel. After a networking lunch, Jan Dröge – a top consultant in the field – balanced professional expertise with theoretical and practical approaches, allowing participants to become familiar with:

- The objectives and scope of the main upcoming funding opportunities including the specific actions and activities they can fund
- The application procedures for each funding programme as well as the framework for implementation and reporting
- Evaluating budgets and financial reports
- Strategies to transform a project idea into a decision, to submit a project proposal, and tools for proposal writing
- Best practice in partner search and partnership-building

Martin Ohridski, EPR/WE Public Affairs Officer, facilitated the event. A detailed Training Pack, Certificates of Attendance, and follow-up information were distributed to all participants.

Judging from the evaluation forms collected, the Funding Seminar was very well received, scoring 8 out of 10. Some of the comments returned included the following:

- "Overall I am very pleased with knowledge gained; I found the afternoon session particularly useful."
- "The Seminar was very professionally organised. It was nice to meet new people and new organisations."
- "The trainer was great! Clear, humorous, kept interest alive, I got good practical suggestions and he alerted us to pitfalls we didn't know."
- "I found the practical exercises a little too demanding given the short time we got to work together but the feedback we got from the trainer during our presentations was much appreciated."



Projects require team work

For more information on the Seminar or to request the training materials contact Martin Ohridski at martin.ohridski@epr.be

Public Relations

EPR Annual Report 2005 published

The EPR Board of Directors approved the EPR Annual Report 2005 at its meeting in March. This year's edition is a further improvement on last year's version. The Annual Report summarises the main initiatives and developments in the EPR in 2005 in 30 reader-friendly pages featuring plenty of pictures and images. A description and directory of EPR's member organisations is also included.

The Annual Report will be distributed at major European events and at meeting in the coming months. In addition, a large number of copies have been sent by EPR to all its major European partners and stakeholders. 15 copies have been sent to all EPR Full members and 5 copies to all Associate members for members' own dissemination purposes. Should any member wish to print further copies of the Annual Report, it can request the CD-ROM from the secretariat by sending an email to nadege.jibassia@epr.be

Members can download and print the pdf document of the Annual Report at:

<http://www.epr.be/members/download/Annual%20Report%202005.pdf>
<http://www.epr.be/members/download/Annual%20Report%202005.pdf>



The experience we have had with EQRM-applications thus far has revealed that even for very advanced and 'leading' service-providers, it seems to be difficult to achieve the Mark of Excellence known as *European Quality in Rehabilitation Mark*.

The investment in term of efforts is enormous, and to a certain extent costs are also substantial and there is a certain risk to fail. This means that the majority of the organisations for rehabilitation service provision in Europe (and certainly in the New EU Member States or candidate countries) may have difficulties applying for the EQRM.

The EQRM Awarding Committee expressed the view that it might be preferable to make the EQRM system more accessible by introducing a 'ladder' system which would allow organisations to step in at a lower level. In order to increase the accessibility, the entrance at a lower level could be done on the basis of more specific and prescriptive criteria and specific questions that would require less effort in terms of self-assessment and also less efforts and costs in terms of external verification.

Thus, following the recommendation made by the EQRM Awarding Committee to lower the threshold for organisations in starting up a process of quality development and by developing the level of Excellence, the European Quality Assurance for Social Services (EQUASS) has been developed by a Project Group.

EQUASS is based on a multi-stakeholder approach which means that the demands of all key stakeholders (service users, social partners, employers and employees, service providers, funders, and policy makers) have been reflected in the EQUASS criteria. Like the EQRM, EQUASS is also based on Nine Principles of Excellence which can be considered as key values in rehabilitation service provision. These Principles of Excellence are closely related to the conclusions and recommendations of the last European Day of People with Disabilities in December 2005.



The progress of the EQUASS project

The progress in the development of EQUASS is on track as planned. The following actions have been implemented:

- The criteria have been defined and an expert / stakeholder validation has been carried out.
- The audit system (application form, check list on performance, audit procedure and system for verification) has been developed and described.
- The University of Maastricht in the Netherlands will carry out an independent evaluation of the EQUASS pilots.
- Three pilots have been identified and they have confirmed their participation: Slovenia, Italy and Norway. One pilot in Portugal needs to be confirmed.
- Four independent local auditors (EPR and non-EPR experts) have been identified for auditing the pilots on the EQUASS criteria.
- The pilots received information about the EQUASS system and the procedure of testing this system. They sent in the application form and the results of the internal audit.
- The auditors have been trained in auditing the organisation, and the audit (verification of documentation and interviews at the site) has been prepared.

Next steps

The audits on the pilots will take place in the period of April to June 2006. In July 2006 all information about the evaluation of the EQUASS system will be discussed and a final report will be composed. The evaluation of the EQUASS system will be discussed in the EQRM Awarding Committee in September 2006. It is planned to launch the EQUASS system at the EPR General Seminar on 28-29 September 2006 in Oslo.



Guus van Beek leading a meeting of the EQUASS Project Group in Brussels in April 2006

Projects



Opti-Work meets in Malta

The EPR secretariat, in collaboration with the travel agency Marianna Co Ltd (Malta), organised the second National Contact Centres (NCCs) training on 24 and 25 March 2006 in Malta. The Eden Foundation – EPR's member organisation in Malta – hosted the meeting.

The representatives of the 15 NCCs, the Project Manager, the Work Package leaders, and the EPR secretariat, gathered at this meeting to train the NCCs experts on the use of the new tools and on the activities of the project second phase.



with employers (Work Package 4). The next session ended with a presentation of the Eden Foundation by Mohammed Salem and Godwin Scerri, who described the activities of the centre.

On Saturday morning, the NCCs experts were trained by Nathalie Janssen, leader of the Work Package 5, on the



satisfactory for the 21 participants. They were all delighted to conclude this intensive meeting with an attractive social programme, the highlight of which was an unforgettable boat trip around the Maltese harbour.



The meeting started in the morning on 24 March with an update on the general state of affairs of the project, presented by Brigitte van Lierop (Project Manager), and an overview of the future steps, presented by Jan Spooren and Nadège Jibassia (EPR secretariat).

Afterwards, the participants went on with a deeper discussion led by Richard Wynne, responsible for the Work Package 4, who explained to the NCCs experts how to conduct the interviews



documents and methodology to carry out the interviews with disabled workers and job seekers (Work Package 5).

Donal McAnaney, leader of Work Package 1, and responsible for the tools development, and Brigitte van Lierop have greatly contributed to briefing the NCCs experts on the two work packages and to improving the newly developed tools according to the experts' feedback.

The training was professionally productive and

The SD Net Job project, in which EPR and the Rehab Group are partners, continues to work on the upgrade of the online dissemination tool at www.socialdialogue.net, which aims to give a wider and deeper view of innovative labour market solutions by social partners, practitioners, NGOs and policy-makers.

At this stage, the EPR and Rehab Group have been consulted to design new information templates with additional functionalities and are now working on the insertion of new projects in the database. This aside, Ivor Ambrose, project manager and Nadège Jibassia from the EPR were invited by the ESF art. 6 office to a one-day seminar for the promoters of the Transfer & Dissemination (DIS) projects, on 31 March 2006 in Brussels. The aim was to showcase the project to an outside audience composed of MEPs and other project promoters.



Knowledge Management Centre

The EPR members continue to build up the Knowledge Management Centre (KMC) by inserting documents and information about their services into the database.

Since the last KMC meeting on 24 November 2005, Heliomare (The Netherlands), the National Learning Network (Ireland), CRPG (Portugal), CRM (France), and ODC (Italy) have actively updated the database: 21 new templates have been inserted into the KMC, 15 templates on services delivered by the members, and 6 templates with documents from the centres. The topics of these new items include: Acquired Brain Injury, Adjustment and Accommodation, Information and Advice, skills training, Independent living, Quality, and many others.

The next KMC meeting will take place on **27 September 2006** in Oslo from 17.00h 19.00h for a new evaluation of the database use.

EPR General Seminar 2006

As you have been informed, the EPR General Seminar 2006 will be hosted by the Norwegian Association for Vocational Rehabilitation Enterprises (www.attforingsbedriftene.no), and will be held in Oslo, Norway on 28 and 29 September. The theme of the General Seminar this year is *Benchmarking as an Optimisation Strategy for Rehabilitation Service Providers*.

On 27 September there will be a number of business meetings including:

- EPR Board of Directors meeting
- KMC Administrators meeting
- Discussion Group on Decentralisation and Mainstreaming of Rehabilitation Services (CAP)
- Project Group on Benchmarking & Performance Indicators meeting (CAP)
- ERA Learning Group on Interdisciplinary and interdepartmental strategies to ensure a continuum of services

The first day of the General Seminar will feature benchmarking in the EPR context, exchanges with Norwegian best practices, as well as site visits to local rehabilitation centres.

The second day will present benchmarking from the point of view of commercial service providers and offer perspectives from outside the rehabilitation sector. Workshop sessions on distance learning, vocational assessment, personal skills training and cross-departmental cooperation will also take place.

On 2 May, EPR coordinators will receive from the secretariat the letter of invitation for the General Seminar, together with the Programme and all information about registering. **The deadline for registrations will be 16 June.**

The Draft Programme of the General Seminar is available on the EPR website at <http://www.epr.be/members/gs2006.htm>

The contact person in the Association for Vocational Rehabilitation Enterprises for the General Seminar is:

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EPR website: what's new?

- Complete descriptions of full and associate member organisations are now available at: <http://www.epr.be/About/members.htm> Included in each description is a history and summary of the organisation, as well as contact information for the organisation, its Directors, and the delegated EPR coordinator (including his/her photo).
- EPR Annual Report 2005: <http://www.epr.be/members/download/Annual%20Report%202005.pdf>
- The February and March editions of the Public Affairs e-bulletins: http://www.epr.be/members/public_affairs_e-bulletin.htm
- In response to requests by EPR member organisations, and within the framework of the CAPs, EPR has produced and posted documents on the "Identification of Best Practices". These documents can be found at: <http://www.epr.be/members/Best%20practice.htm>
- Following a highly successful meeting in Malta for the Opti-Work project, the resulting documents and pictures have been posted on the website for review and perusal. They can be found at: <http://www.epr.be/members/Projects/optiwork.htm>
- The Draft Programme of the EPR General Seminar 2006: <http://www.epr.be/members/gs2006.htm>



New intern joins EPR secretariat

Sarah De Roeck joined the staff of the EPR secretariat at the beginning of March for a 5-month internship. Ms. De Roeck is an American national who lives in Antwerp, Belgium. She has a strong background in events planning, research and administration, as well as many years' experience in recreational therapy.

In addition to being a native speaker of English, Ms. De Roeck is highly proficient in Dutch and has a very good command of French. While at EPR, Ms. De Roeck will be providing general support to the secretariat, including meeting and event planning, office administration, English-language editing, among many other tasks.

Sarah De Roeck can be contacted at sarah.deroeck@epr.be

Louis van Amelsvoort Award 2006: Call for Nominations

EPR invites member organisations to propose nominees for this year's **Louis van Amelsvoort (LvA) Award for Excellence in European Cooperation**. Nominees for the Louis van Amelsvoort Award should come from Europe and fit one of the following categories: an individual within the EPR; a project group within the EPR; a member centre of the EPR; a transnational project external to the EPR; an institution or person external to the EPR.

Any nomination should relate to outstanding work done in the field of European Cooperation in Rehabilitation.

The LvA Award will be presented at the EPR General Seminar in Oslo in September 2006.

Nominations, including a short motivation letter stating why you think this nominee should receive the LvA Award, should be sent to the EPR secretariat (jan.spooren@epr.be) by **16 June 2006** to enable the next Board of Directors meeting to make their decision regarding the Award.

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