

epr newsletter

December 2005

FULL MEMBERS



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



Editorial

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

I would like to use this editorial to look back to the past months and also to give some inspiration for the coming year.

2005 has been very intensive and fruitful for the European Platform for Rehabilitation. The most important Public Affairs event closing this year, the Discussion Forum organised in the framework of the European Network of Service Providers in Employment and Rehabilitation (ENSPER) in Brussels on 6 December 2005, proved again the strength and the enthusiasm of our network.

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HM The Queen next to J. Muscat, President of Eden Foundation

HM The Queen Elizabeth II visits the Eden Foundation, Malta

On the occasion of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, as Head of the Commonwealth, visited Malta from 24-26 November 2005. On 26 November, Queen Elizabeth II visited The Eden Foundation to inaugurate the new extension building. HM The Queen is shown here unveiling the plaque commemorating the opening of the Specialised Education Centre. All the staff, benefactors and friends of Eden were very excited about this unique event in the short centre history and around 500 persons came as guests for the occasion.

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Richard Howitt, MEP and President of the European Parliament Disability Intergroup addressed his welcome to the selected target audience, gathering together EU officials, members of the European Parliament, representatives of the European Disability Forum, the three organisations constituting ENSPER, and other European networks in the social sector. The event was an appropriate venue for the presentation of the Luis Van Amelsvoort Award, given this year to Stefan Trömel, Advisor to the European Disability Forum.

I would also like to draw your attention to the main EPR challenge for the coming year: the quality of our services and of our human resources. We have always considered quality a strategic element for the development of the whole rehabilitation system and one of the core elements of our cooperation: quality improves all the aspects of our work, it is vital to satisfy users and human resources.

For all these reasons, we believe in the EQRМ, the only European-wide quality system customised for the sector of vocational training and rehabilitation services to people with disabilities. The European Quality in Rehabilitation Mark is already attracting new applicants for 2006 which have applied for full assessments and Initiation Programmes next year, including some non-EPR centres. The added-value of the EQRМ is recognised in many European countries and by the European Commission itself that is considering EQRМ as a potential model for a European quality framework for social services. Moreover, during the last Board of Directors Meeting we decided to continue pursuing in 2006 the theme of the accreditation system and competencies framework for professionals to support the HR policies/practices in the sector.

If such developments are a great source of motivation and optimism for the improvement of the whole rehabilitation sector, we cannot hide some concerns related to "country of origin principle" as written in the Services (Bolkestein) Directive. The move towards liberalisation in service provision can be indeed considered as an opportunity rather than a threat but the specificity of rehabilitation and social services should be respected and a high degree of quality services to clients/users has to be assured. This underlines the growing need of common high quality standards in rehabilitation services, to face the risks that service providers from especially the new Member States would enter the 'old' EU Member States, being subject to the quality standards and accreditation requirements of their own country.

I wish all of you and your organisations a very happy Christmas and a prosperous 2006, during which we will continue to strive to improve our fundamental values of promoting the right of every person with disability to access the highest quality rehabilitation services that create equal opportunities and independent participation.

Stefano Schena
President EPR

Upcoming EPR events January-August 2006*

- OPTI- Work: Work Package Leaders meeting
Brussels, 12-13 January
- OPTI-Work: Project Coordination Committee meeting
Amsterdam, 22-23 February
- ERA Seminar:
A new Cycle of EC Funding Opportunities for the Disability Sector (2007 – 2013)
Brussels, 23 February
- Board of Directors meeting
Brussels, 7 March
- OPTI-Work: National Contact Centres meeting
Malta, 23-26 March
- ERA Learning Group: Increasing Initial Job Retention
Dublin, 16-17 May
- Board of Directors meeting
Porto, 22-23 June
- ERA Summer School:
English Language Course
Dublin, 9-20 August
- Justification of rehabilitation services (CAP)
Neuwied, date to be confirmed

* List of events as known at the moment. Other events may be added and will be advised. Always double-check dates and location with the secretariat prior to attending.

News from the members



CRPG integrates the work group of the study “Modelling of policies and practices for social inclusion of people with disabilities in Portugal”

CRPG is the leading organisation of the study “Modelling of policies and practices for social inclusion of people with disabilities in Portugal”. This project started in October 2005 and it will finish in December 2007. Its main goals are: a) to extract knowledge from assessment studies done in the disability area in Portugal in the recent years, to produce the guidelines that will orientate the definition of the operational interventions in the disability field for the next board of national strategic reference (2007-2013); b) to assess the effectiveness of the current policies and practices and c) modelling the referred policies and practices, framed by the new conceptual and managerial approaches, on Portugal.

This project, given its amplitude and complexity, is being done in partnership with a Portuguese university – Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa (ISCTE) and with the governmental agencies responsible for the policies for people with disabilities. The European Platform for Rehabilitation will also collaborate, giving support on identifying similar studies, at European or otherwise international level, relevant for the study; identifying relevant information concerning similar studies within the modelling activity and identifying and identifying European experts to involve in thematic workshops.

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Latest news from Opera Don Calabria

Cooperation with Volkswagen Autogerma: Together for the “Centre of Mobility”

The Don Calabria Centre promotes the integration of the persons with disability in all the increasing needs of independence in their daily life. The specific field of mobility represents one very important element for the expectations of autonomy of the person with disability. To such purpose, the Don Calabria Centre promotes, in collaboration with the Volkswagen, the project called "Centre of Mobility". The professionals of the medical department of the Don Calabria Centre assess the abilities of disabled persons and together with experts and pilots of the Volkswagen School of Sure Guide; they study the necessary adaptations to the vehicles. The project has been launched on 22 November 2005, when a group of 10 enthusiastic and very excited people with disabilities drove the cars in the first drive test that took place in an area purposely prepared.

Isapa 2005, Verona – Italy

The 15th International Symposium on Adapted Physical Activity on the theme “A.P.A.: a discipline, a profession, an attitude” was held in the fascinating “Grand Guardia Palace” (5-9 July 2005). More than 350 people attended the event that gathered professional on Adapted Physical Activity not only from all over the Europe, but also from the USA (14% of participants), Canada, Brazil (10%) and few people from Africa. 6 keynote lectures, 122 oral presentations, 70 posters, 11 workshops, 6 mini symposia took place in a very intensive programme with a total of 223 presentation on different themes like: Adapted physical activity on childhood and golden age, education of A.P.A. professionals; disability sport; social, technological and economic aspects of adapted physical activity.

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Theotokos Foundation coorganises 1st Cyprus-Hellenic Conference of Mental Disabilities

On 4-5 November 2005 the 1st Cyprus-Hellenic Conference of Mental Disabilities titled “*Fellow-travelers in Life*” took successfully place in Nicosia, Cyprus. It was organised by the Cyprian “Christos Stelios Ioannou Foundation” and “Saint Christopher’s Home” together with the Greek institutions “Theotokos Foundation”, “Estia” - Special vocational training centre and “Hermes” - Association of parents, guardians and friends of people with special needs. The Conference’s purpose is to educate the personnel of the institutions and all kind of professionals dealing with Special Education, as well as to strengthen the ties among the Greek and Cypriot institutions. Thus, the coming Conferences will be organised annually in Cyprus and Greece in turn and the next Conference will take place in the theatre of Theotokos Foundation in Greece in 2006 or 2007.

More general subjects have been discussed during the 1st Conference which was also a kind of introduction for the coming more specialised Conferences. The topics presented by the professionals of Theotokos Foundation were for example “New Values and Changes in the Quality of Services”, “Programs for children with developmental disabilities from 3 to 6 years old in order to be included in common schools”, “Programs for groups of children with pervasive developmental disorder (PDD) for inclusion in special schools”, “Preparation for work” as well as the workshop “Designing and implementing a Sex Education program for young adults with learning disabilities.”

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AVRE submits project proposal for Collective Research

The Association for Vocational Rehabilitation Enterprises (AVRE) in Norway has, together with Åstvedt AS, initiated a sector wide Collective Research project proposal within the 6th Research Framework Programme was submitted in November 2005 and the evaluation of the proposal will take place within 3 months. The objective is to research and enhance the relevance of EQRN (the Principles of Excellence and the system) across vocational rehabilitation models and modes, national contexts and target groups.

Action research methodology will be used to test the implementation process of the Principles in 13 test sites across Europe. The aim is to enhance the level of quality in the vocational rehabilitation sector, which in return is expected to increase the job reintegration rate and thereby contribute towards the EU goals for employment of people with disability. Partners in the project are AVRE, EPR, EUSE, iRv, Rehab Group, Work Research Institute, CognIT, National Association for Deaf People, The Eden Foundation, Indico Produkter AS, The Theotokos Foundation, Oprostite strani trenutno niso na vo, CRPG, and Designtrykkeriet AS. In addition, several 3rd parties will serve as test sites and mentors under AVRE, EPR, and EUSE.

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Usability of gait analysis in the alignment of trans-tibial prostheses: a clinical study

The rehabilitation centre of Heliomare is investigating the usability of gait analysis of people with amputation. The purpose of the current study was to analyse which systematic effects of prosthetic misalignment could be observed by using the SYBAR-system, which is a system for instrumented gait analysis. The alignment of the prosthesis of five well-trained unilateral transtibial amputees was changed 15 degrees in magnitude into different positions. Only few effects of these alignments were observed in the temporal and spatial characteristics of gait, the magnitude and timing of the ground reaction force and the external joint moments during walking. Only the pattern of the ground reaction force in mediolateral direction and the joint moment around the ankle in the frontal plane during terminal stance, showed a systematic effect, when the alignment was set into varus and valgus or exorotation. These findings can be used for the process of prosthetic alignment. The results of this study will be published in *Prosthetics and Orthotics International*.

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THE EDEN FOUNDATION

Latest news from the Eden Foundation / Malta

Over the last three months several seminars and conferences took place in the Eden Foundation or in which staff from our Maltese member were involved. The Eden Foundation has invited **Mr Karl Borg**, member of the Maltese Association of the Deaf, to present a sign language course entitled "Conductive Education and Multi-Sensory Program" (22 June – 28 September) which caters for children with Cerebral Palsy and other conditions requiring intense communication training. **Ms Doreen Mercieca**, coordinator of the Eden Foundation's STEP (Structured Training Education) Program for children with the autistic spectrum has been invited to the International Conference on Autism (Prague, 5-6 November) to make a presentation on the "Establishment of Specialised Pre-School Facilities". Further, the Eden Foundation has been represented by **Ms Rosette Gatt**, coordinator of PACES (Parents & Child Education Program), for the 4th International Conference on Developmental Issues in Down Syndrome (University of Portsmouth/ UK, 15-18 September) and **Mr Melvin Attard** and **Ms Yanika Ellul** attended the seminar "In Search for the Motivation" (Poland, 22-27 August) as well as the National Autistic Society International Conference "Facing the Challenge-Meeting in Challenge" (London, 22- 24 September).

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Continuation of the project on youngsters with specific learning difficulties

The National Learning Network (NLN) has been aware for a long time that there is a gap in service provision for adolescents and adults over the age of 16 years who have specific learning difficulties (SPLD). SPLD include Dyslexia, Dyspraxia (also known as Developmental Coordination Disorder), Asperger's Syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). An agreement was made between NLN, the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and the Dyscovery Centre, Cardiff, who have international recognition for their work in this area, to explore how individuals with specific learning difficulties could be provided with services, which would identify their needs and offer support and remediation.

A successful application was made in June 2004 for Interreg funding to address the needs of people with specific learning difficulties under a range of objectives. The project will be completed in January 2006 and besides hosting events in both Wales and Ireland a project report and a project evaluation will also be published. Materials and information are available by application to the BUA Centre www.buacentre.com or on the project website www.pactsproject.com.

Specialised article: professional in focus

Interview with Conny van de Heuvel

Psychologist, Vocational assessment department in SRL



- **What is the nature of your work?**

I am a psychologist, and I work in the Vocational Assessment Department of SRL. I am specialised in trying to clarify abilities and possibilities people have with regard to work.

- **Do you work with specific age groups or type of disability?**

Age groups – yes. The age group at which work starts to be relevant is 15-16 years old and these are the youngest people we have here. However, we also have clients in the 50-55 age brackets. Most persons you see here are between 20 and 40 years old.

- **What education does a psychologist need to pursue this profession?**

My specific profession requires a University degree in Psychology or Mental Health.

- **What are the most important qualities a psychologist should have?**

Depends on where you work and what specific orientation you have as a psychologist. There are different kinds of psychologists. For instance, in the orientation I have now the most important qualities. I have to be able to communicate and to analyse, to look over the edges of my own corner and to see all connections, this is very important. As for the organisation and for society, we here have to translate everything in terms of work.

- **Is there demand for psychologists in today's labour market?**

There is demand for psychologists. The most demanded posts require additional education for Health Psychologist.

- **Are you a member of any specialist organisation bringing together psychologists?**

Yes, I am a member of Dutch Psychological Association. And I am also a member of MBM.

- **How do you assess progress of a client?**

We have client assessment reports that contain all information. But our work here is not so much about tracking progress in the long run because our clients usually stay for short period of time. Assessment starts with the analysis of the answers in the assessment test undertaken by clients who are entering the service. We then continue to follow clients' progress by collecting information from other sources until the final drafting of conclusions and advice.

- **Has innovation and technological advance in your profession made it easier?**

Yes. I think that when I look back at the times before the computer I can definitely say that back then it took a lot more work to take tests and especially to score them. So, the computers make possible to make tests easier, cheaper, finding more psychological tests, and less manual work.

- **Do you have any exchanges with colleagues outside the Netherlands?**

I used to, but at this moment I am more active with the other members of EPR.

- **Are there advantages and disadvantages in multidisciplinary cooperation?**

Definitely, there are advantages and it is not just a matter of advantages but of necessity. I think for the assessment department we have various disciplines: Medical professionals, physiotherapists, specialists for vocational assessment, or vocational advice. You need to be able to combine different knowledge, different ways of looking at things and different roles in a team. I work with teachers, case managers, councillors, trainers, rehabilitation and medical personnel. More people make it possible to achieve a higher degree of specialisation and to support more disciplines.

ENSPER shines spotlight on Social Services

On 6 December 2005, the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR), Workability Europe (WE) and Rehabilitation International (RI) organised in the framework of their cooperation in the European Network of Service Providers in Employment and Rehabilitation (ENSPER) an evening event on the topic “Social services in a competitive European market: threat or opportunity?”

The event took place in the Hotel Silken Berlaymont in Brussels and was organised as a Discussion Forum over dinner. The evening brought together a diverse audience of nearly 60 participants coming from service providers, organisations of disabled people, policy-makers, public authorities, consultancies and social NGOs.

The evening opened with a reception and a welcome address from Richard Howitt, MEP (UK/PSE), President of the EP Disability Intergroup. Mr Howitt said, “The Draft Services Directive has been one of the most complex and contentious issues that we have had to deal with in the European Parliament. The organisations that ENSPER brings together are important to this debate and to the disability movement in Europe – we as MEPs do listen to your contributions to this debate so that a legislative framework that best promotes the interests of disabled people can be achieved.”

The keynote speaker, Stefan Trömel (Advisor to the European Disability Forum) set the context of the discussion on social services and highlighted the issues at stake focusing in particular on the viewpoint of organisations of disabled people. Mr Trömel stated that what people with disabilities want is full access to mainstream (social) services and disability specific services which promote independent living, autonomy and freedom of choice. Mr Trömel also underlined that “these must be quality services designed with the full involvement of organisations of people with disabilities.”



The panelists set the tone for the debate

The keynote speech was followed by reactions from Hans Vrind (President, Workability Europe), Simon Wilson, (Director, Platform of European Social NGOs), Patrick de Bucquois, (Vice President, CEDAG) who each offered their perspective. Ray Fletcher, President of ENSPER, moderated the debate. The overriding messages conveyed by the panellists were that the Service Directive was here to stay but that civil society has an important role to play in ensuring that service provision is above all human rights driven and not solely profit driven. The panellists also stressed the necessity to implement quality standards in all areas of service provision.

The second part of the evening featured the presentation of the Louis Van Amelsvoort Award to Stefan Trömel by Stefano Schena (President EPR). Each year the EPR presents the *Louis Van Amelsvoort Award for Excellence in European Co-operation in the disability sector*. The Award is named after the ex-General Secretary of the then-called EPVR who had played a key role in setting up the network until his untimely death in 2000.



Vigdis RAVNØY and Ingjerd MORLAND NETTESTAD (centre and right) from Åstvedt hold high the EQRM certificate

EQRM Awards

This was followed by the granting of the EQRM Awards 2005 by Frank Flannery (Chairman EQRM Awarding Committee) to Åstvedt, Norway and the National Learning Network Castlebar and Bray in Ireland.

The content part of the evening concluded with a presentation of the new EQRM Quality Assurance System by Guus van Beek (Manager EQRM).

Jan Spooren, General Secretary of EPR, said the following about the Discussion Forum: “This was the first time we organise an event using this plenary-dinner formula and overall we are very pleased how it went. I thought we succeeded to combine a few things in a limited timeframe by having a debate on a topical issue, giving awards, presenting our new initiatives in the area of quality and at the same time giving everyone the opportunity to enjoy networking in a nice atmosphere.”



Jan Spooren and Martin Ohridski represented EPR at the central European event of the year in the disability sector – the European

Day of People with Disabilities. The Conference which took place on 1 & 2 December 2005 in Brussels was organised around the theme *Living Together in Society* and brought together over 200 disabled people, government representatives, service providers and EU officials from all over Europe. This year's EDPD was probably the most interesting and relevant European Day Conference ever for service providers. The Conference tackled a number of critical issues relating to service provision such as: ensuring quality in service provision; partnerships between organisation of and for disabled people; enhancing the analytical capacity of policy-makers and the expertise of service providers; providing comprehensive training and professionalising service provision so that it remains a 'good business'. Presentations by the European Commission on social services and aging further put service provision in the spotlight.

"The European Commission wants to be very active in the field of inclusion of disabled people in society and to further push for mainstreaming of disability", stated the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Vladimir Spidla. This objective makes integral part of the priorities 2006-2007 of the EU disability action plan running from 2004-2010 and presented by the Commission in a new Communication.

The plan also focuses on providing access for quality support and care services for disabled people, fostering accessibility for all and ensuring disabled persons' independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the community. The Structural Funds, the Social Fund, the research programme and the directive on goods and services are all EU tools to fund and find alternatives to institutions.

For more information on the EDPD 2005 and **The Communication from the Commission: Situation of disabled people in the enlarged European Union: the European Action Plan 2006-2007** visit

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/emplweb/events/event_en.cfm?id=245



Work continues to progress well with the iRV-led project 6th Framework Programme called 'Optimising strategies for integrating people with disabilities into work' (acronym: Opti-Work). The Project Consortium Committee met on the 13, 14 and 15 October 2005 in Athens to conclude the first phase and discuss the next steps. At this meeting the Project Coordination Committee formally approved the work of the National Contact Centres (NCCs) for work package 1 and 2 (National System Profiles and Framework Analysis Tool) and expressed its great satisfaction with the quality and punctuality of the outputs.

In the second part of this year, the NCC has accomplished another tremendous piece of work in the framework of the work package 3 (Development of the Economic Impact Model). The 15 NCCs has organised in their respective countries stakeholder focus groups gathering delegates from national representative organisations. The purpose of the discussion was to get different perspectives and opinions on how your country is meeting the challenge of getting people with disabilities into employment.

The EPR will organise a second training for the NCCs (to prepare work packages 4 and 5) on 24-25 March 2006 in Malta.

SDnet

SDnet, a project led by EWORXs, Greece dealing with **Innovative measures financed under Article 6 of the ESF**, in which EPR is a partner, had its kick-off meeting on 14 October 2005 in Athens.

The Web-based information-exchange-service which is currently hosted at the URL www.socialdialogue.net (known as "SDnet") was set up as part of the SDV-NetJob project 2001-2003. The site has been maintained independently by the promoter, EWORX, since January 2004 and now has over 650 pages of content. SDnet has already proven its value to the user community. It is proposed that the existing Web-service will be continued and extended by adding content in the two main "alternative" EU languages, namely French and German. (The site now carries English, Danish and Greek content). Furthermore, surveys will be made of existing on-line content via 'data-mining', and the results will be analysed and re-purposed for the site users by expert researchers in the fields of labour market, vocational training and disability. Content will also be gathered from the Web sites of past and current ESF Article 6. projects and the results will be stored in a database, so that users will be able to retrieve content by means of keyword and semantic search tools.

The main role of the EPR is to advise on the design and format of the website, making use of our experience with the knowledge management centre. We will also involve the EPR network in the dissemination.



Three ERA Seminars took place over the last couple of months.

The ERA Seminar on “**Challenging Behaviour**” took place in Canterbury on 3-4 November 2005. This Seminar aimed to give awareness on analysing challenging behaviour as well as ideas for communication techniques. The six participants coming from SRL, Chaseley Trust and Rehab UK expressed high satisfaction with the Seminar which was held by Mr McGill. The participants especially appreciated the good balance the trainer had found between presentation and exercises as well as the attention he paid to them and their questions.

The most attended ERA Seminar ever with 19 participants (13 from EPR) was the **ERA Seminar “The use of ICF in rehabilitation services planning and national disability statistics”** which took place in Dublin on 1-2 December 2005. All participants remained very pleased with the practical organisation, content and teaching and confirmed that they have received detailed clarification and overview of/ on ICF as well as a framework for intervention and outcome measures. The teaching qualities of Donal McAnaney were especially praised.

The first part of the “**Increasing Initial Job Retention**” ERA Seminar took place in Dublin on 15–16 November 2005. This first meeting has been well attended by 7 participants coming from 3 centres of the EPR (CRM/ France, NLN/ Ireland, Institute for Rehabilitation/ Slovenia). General satisfaction has been expressed, underlining especially the involvement of the participants in the learning process. After the second and last seminar, which will take place in Dublin on 16-17 May 2006, a general evaluation will be done.

EPR General Seminar 2006

It has now been confirmed that the next EPR General Seminar in 2006 will be hosted by the Norwegian Association for Vocational Rehabilitation Centres (AVRE, www.attforingsbedriftene.no) and will take place in Oslo on 28-29 September 2006 under the theme “**Benchmarking as a survival strategy for rehabilitation service providers**”. Members will be kept updated about this event in the following editions of the EPR newsletter and website.

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Self-evaluation of well-being (SEW) completes final report

People with mental health problems are a growing target group in the member organisations of the European Platform for Rehabilitation but no reliable methodology or instrument existed neither to measure the level of mental health nor the positive impact of vocational rehabilitation programmes on people with mental health problems.

Hence, an EPR project team developed in co-operation with the University of Strasbourg a report titled “**Self-evaluation of well-being (SEW): measuring mental health in vocational rehabilitation**”.

The purpose of this study is to develop a valid sensitive and reliable tool to measure psychological well-being in rehabilitation context. Psychologists working in different European countries set out ideas on the basis of their experience and collected data for the people involved; then the researchers in social psychology analysed this data and guided the practitioners approach by developing a tool based on scientific indicators. Factor analysis allowed to reorganise the initial questionnaire and to define four factors important to appreciate psychological well-being in this context: cognitive and social abilities, communication skills about their own difficulties, knowledge of their health, and emotional coping. The final tool appears to be sensitive to evolution during the rehabilitation process on two factors: communication skills and emotional coping.

The final report of the project team is now available and can be downloaded from the EPR website. The report contains information on the research methodology and test results. In annexes, it contains the complete SEW questionnaire as well as user-manual which enables every rehabilitation professional to make use of this instrument.

- See the Final Report at <http://www.epr.be/Projects/mh.htm>



EUROPEAN QUALITY IN REHABILITATION

The European Quality in Rehabilitation Mark (EQRM) stands for a comprehensive approach in identifying excellence and best practice in the rehabilitation sector. The multi-perspective approach is one of the main characteristics of the EQRM system. A conceptual framework of nine Principles of Excellence is the basis of this system.

Since the launch of the EQRM in December 2002, 15 organisations from 6 EU countries have been awarded with this prestigious recognition of excellence by the European stakeholders: *Centro de Reabilitação Profissional de Gaia* in Portugal (2003); *National Learning Network* centres in Ireland: Tallaght (2003), Wexford (2004), Sligo (2004), Limerick (2004), Bray (2005) and Castlebar (2005); the *RehabCare* Resource Centres in Ireland: Sligo (2004), Dundalk (2004), Limerick (2004) and Dundlanoghaire (2004); the *Cedar Foundation* in Northern Ireland (2003); the Department of Traumatic Brain Injuries of the *Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse* in France (2004); the department Vocational Rehabilitation of the *Pluryn Werkenrode Groep* in the Netherlands (2004) and *Åstvedt* in Norway (2005). The EQRM is valid for three years and therefore the first renewals of the EQRM will be carried out in 2006.

The three years experience with EQRM applications has revealed that even for very advanced and 'leading' service providers, it is a challenge to achieve this Mark of Excellence. The investments in term of efforts are substantial and there is a certain risk to fail. This means that the majority of the organisations for rehabilitation service provision in Europe may face even bigger challenges for aiming this prestigious recognition by the stakeholders.

The EQRM Awarding Committee expressed its 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 another level. Since October 2005 an EPR working group, under chairmanship of the EQRM Executive manager, is developing a Quality Assurance System based on the nine Principles of Excellence. This Quality Assurance System contains clear defined directives for certification by the EQRM Awarding Committee. Certification will be based on an external audit and guarantees quality of service provision for all the customers: service users, suppliers and funders. The Quality Assurance System will be operational in 2006.

The forecast for 2006 is based on the number of registrations received in 2005. It means that 9 EQRM external assessments are planned and 7 Initiation Programmes will be carried out. This perspective will give a substantial contribution to the success of the European Quality in Rehabilitation Mark.

Interview with the EQRM nominees

EPR got together with representatives from the two centres - Michael Crowley (National Learning Network, NLN) and Vigdis Ravnøy & Ingerd Morland Nettetstad (Åstvedt)¹ - which were awarded the EQRM on 6 December 2005 in Brussels to ask them a few questions following their success.

How hard was it to get the EQRM?

In difference to Norway, a national quality system has been introduced in 1997 and NLN has already achieved the EFQM in 2002. According to M. Crowley (Quality Officer, NLN) has for these reasons already a culture of quality and that gave them a good ground and support for achieving the EQRM. The gap between the national quality system and the EQRM were finally not so big.

It is different for centres in other European countries which do not have the same standards. In the case of Norway no national quality system exists, but V. Ravnøy (President of Board of Directors, Åstvedt) and I. Morland Nettetstad (Business Developer, Åstvedt) confirmed "the quick scan gave [them] a good start to achieve in one and a half years the EQRM". V. Ravnøy also underlined delighted that Åstvedt is now the first Norwegian and Scandinavian centre awarded a European Quality Mark



Guus van Beek (middle) presents the EQRM Award to a delegation from NLN

specific for rehabilitation services.

How will you use the EQRM at national level?

NLN and Åstvedt

will now use their award to promote the EQRM in their country. As in Norway no quality mark for the rehabilitation sector exists, Norwegian centres have already visited Åstvedt during the EQRM process to learn more about this quality system.

Are you interested in exchanging best practices with other centres awarded with the EQRM?

M. Crowley as well as V. Ravnøy and I. Morland Nettetstad confirmed affirmative. "To improve ourselves, we have to learn from each other and exchange different practices and approaches". Further V. Ravnøy and I. Morland Nettetstad explained that they had already such exchanges with Pluryn Werkenrode.

Someone once said: "Quality is a journey and not a destination". Do you agree?

Believing in continuous improvement, M. Crowley agrees with this motto and joins V. Ravnøy and I. Morland Nettetstad who are "already looking forward to 2008 and 2011 and ...!"

¹ The Interview has been shortened for the newsletter.

EPR Coordinators Meeting

The annual meeting of EPR coordinators took place on 21 October 2005 in the EPR offices in Brussels. 12 persons from 11 EPR members plus the secretariat were represented.



All together in plenary

This year's coordinators meeting followed a slightly different format than usually.

During the first part of the meeting the EPR coordinators gave their feedback and recommendations on the standard package of services and opportunities (newsletter, Public Affairs e-bulletin, website, KMC, brochure, funding alerts) EPR offers to all its members. The EPR coordinators also evaluated the last General Seminar in Dublin and made first preparations for the General Seminar 2006 in Oslo.

During the second part of the meeting for the first time a **coordinators forum** was organised which gave representatives from the different centres the possibility to have bilateral face-to-face discussions.



One on one: the best way to learn about your counterpart

The general feedback from the coordinators on this year's meeting indicated that they found the

coordinators forum especially useful and suggested to use this format again in the future.

The full minutes from the meeting detailing discussion points and decisions reached are available from nadege.jibassia@epr.be

Knowledge Management Centre

The Knowledge Management Centre, KMC, arrives at the end of its pilot phase and so the KMC administrators met on 24 November 2005 in Brussels to discuss the technical operativeness and actual use of the EPR database. The KMC administrators recommended continuing the KMC even though not too much information has been introduced for the moment. This recommendation was confirmed by the Board of Directors in its December meeting. There has also been a proposal to introduce in 2006 an award for the most active centre participating in the KMC.

Until November 2005, 203 templates have been inserted in the KMC and between July and November 122 visits have been registered. Statistics revealed that Heliomare and Rehab Group have been particularly active in inserting templates while staff from CRPG and Heliomare have been the most frequent visitors to the database.

To make the KMC a real tool for European cooperation, the KMC administrators also decided to expand topics and to introduce not only information on services and methodologies but for instance also CVs from specialists, documents from EPR working-groups and calls for partners.

Furthermore, in the framework of the Euro-American Platform, EPR gave KMC access to the American association NCSOCRC (National Consortium of State Operated Comprehensive Rehabilitation Centres) and asked them in exchange to insert information. This reinforcement of Euro-American cooperation will also help to promote the KMC across the Atlantic.

The last KMC meeting in 2005 resulted in the drafting of an evaluation report. Nearly one year after the KMC official launch among the EPR members, the administrators have drawn conclusions on its strengths, weaknesses and administrators' recommendations.

The KMC evaluation report will be available in the beginning of 2006.

EPR website: what's new?

Download the latest documents available on the EPR website:

- Summary Report of this year's Public Affairs event organised by the Network of Service Providers in Employment and Rehabilitation (ENSPER) as well as pictures from the event. www.epr.be/members/PA%20event.htm
- Final Report of the Discussion Group "Vocational Assessment Systems" www.epr.be/members/Membershome.htm
- Report "Self-evaluation of well-being (SEW): Measuring mental health in vocational rehabilitation" as well as a scientific article written by E. Louvet and O. Rohmer (English and French version) www.epr.be/members/Projects/mh.htm
- December 2005 edition of the EPR newsletter <http://www.epr.be/members/Membershome.htm>
- Last four editions of the EPR Public Affairs e-bulletin http://www.epr.be/members/public_affairs_e-bulletin.htm

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