



**EUROPEAN PLATFORM  
FOR REHABILITATION**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2003**

## **Table of contents**

### **I. Organisational development**

- I.1. EPR structures
- I.2. EPR Strategy
- I.3. Membership
- I.4. General Seminar

### **II. Professional development / European Rehabilitation Academy**

- II.1. Academy Council
- II.2. Implementation of 2003 Programme

### **III. Service development**

- III.3. Project Teams
- III.4. Projects of the EPR
- III.5. Consultancy activities of the secretariat

### **IV. Public Affairs**

- IV.1. European Corporate Affaires
- IV.2. Sectoral representation

## I. Organisational development

### I.1. EPR structures

- *Board of Directors*

The Board of Directors met four times during 2002:

Köln	14-15 February
Mulhouse	13 May
Verona	11 September
Rome	4-5 December

The Executive Committee met four times in Brussels for a half-day meeting (30 January / 2 April / 9 July / 14 October) to follow up the daily management of the EPR and to prepare the Board meetings.

- *Centre coordinators*

The centre coordinators met only once during 2003 on 4-5 April in Brussels. At this meeting as well as at some Board meetings, the role and profile of centre coordinators in the new structure of EPR was discussed, and a final proposal will be submitted to the Board of Directors at the first meeting in 2004.

- *Health and Social Care Forum*

The Health and Social Care Forum has been established on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2002 for a period of 2 years aiming at initiating/facilitating activities in the fields of medical rehabilitation and social care.

The Forum had a good participation in terms of centres represented, and members of a high level. Moreover, during the short time-span of one year, it has found the right chemistry between the members which resulted in a good team-spirit and efficient co-operation.

Name	Centre	Name	Centre
Angela Kerins	Rehabcare	Giulio Fanton	ODC
Sarah-Jane Dillon	RehabCare	Wilbert Bakx	SRL
Wolfgang Dings	JG	Jörg Porath	SRH
Pierre North	CRM	Eric Demandt	Pluryn-Werkenrode

The most important task for the HSCF in 2003 was a mapping exercise on health and social services. The aim of this exercise was to develop an instrument, which enables people to identify (and locate) best practice in these new fields of the EPR centres. Such mapping would be a basis for more intensive co-operation the health and social care activities of the EPR network. At the same time, an analysis of the information would enable the HSCF to formulate advice for new activities on health and social care to other EPR structures (Board of Directors, Academy ...)

## I.2. EPR Strategy

Following the adoption of its new strategy in 2002, the EPR focused during 2003 on how to concretize outputs from its membership. A first brainstorming on this issue with both full and associated members was organized at the Board meeting in Verona. Further discussions took place during the Board meeting in Rome. The intention was to take enough time and a step-wise approach to introduce this new strategy into the EPR in order to receive inputs from the members on the one hand, and to create ownership and understanding on the other hand. A final strategy paper should be approved in May 2004.

## I.3. Membership

- *New members*
  - Heliomare, the Netherlands (Associate member – approved on 14 February)
  - Astangu, Estonia (Associate member – approved on 14 February)
  - Directorate of Labour in Norway (Associate member approved on 14 February)
  
- *Revised membership status*
  - Heli (Finland) asked to change its membership status from 2004 onwards from full to associate member, which was approved by the Board of Directors on 11 September.
  - Stensta (associate member - Sweden) was a consortium of various service providers that dissolved during 2003. Consequently, the organisation will no longer be a member from 2004 onwards, and none of the previous Stensta partners expressed the intention to take over the EPR membership.
  
- *Contact with members*

As a close contact between members and the secretariat is of crucial importance, the EPR work plan 2003 envisaged that the General Secretary would visit all full members. The list below demonstrates that this objective was achieved with the exception of ONCE, which did not respond to the various attempts of the EPR secretariat to arrange a centre visit. In addition to the General Secretary, the Academy Coordinator and the EQRM manager visited some centres to provide services and to maximise the benefits of their membership.

<i>Centre</i>	<i>Date</i>
CRM	20-21 January / 3 October
SRL	30 January /23 June 17 September /3 November
NTDI	31 March
JG (Bigge) JG (Headquarters Köln)	23 May / 6 October
Rehab Group UK (Momentum)	29-30 May
ODC	6-7 June
Heli (headquarters in Helsinki)	12 June
CRPG	20 October
Rehab Care	22 October
SRH (Heidelberg + Neckergemünd)	3-4 July

#### **I.4. General Seminar**

Our annual General Seminar, which was held in the brand new centre of Opera Don Calabria in Verona on 12-13 September 2003, proved to be a runaway success, a view which was shared by both the participants and the organisers. About 130 professionals of the EPR member organisations and some invited social guests attended the event. The theme of this seminar was "Service providers as promoters of excellence; a European approach". Keynote speeches on this topic were given by Mr. Lelli and Dr. McAnaney regarding staff development, and Wallis Goelen (Disability unit of the European Commission), Mr. Galan (Veneto Region) and Mr. Vazquez, Mayor of Zamora (Spain) on policy development. One afternoon was facilitated by the Health and Social Care Forum around the theme 'client centred and holistic services', with Prof. Ricciardi as a key-note speaker.

The General Seminar introduced for the first time the concept of 'Open Space' discussions which was very much appreciated by the participants. The Louis Van Amelsvoort Award for outstanding work done in the field of European Co-operation in Rehabilitation was delivered for the first time. The winner was Don Mazzi for his life-time contribution and pioneering work in the field of rehabilitation at a European level.

## II. Professional development / European Rehabilitation Academy

### II.1. Academy Council

The following people were nominated as members of the Academy Council for a two-year term (2003-2004) by the Board of Directors:

Name	Centre
Stefano Schena <sup>1</sup>	ODC
Jeronimo De Sousa	CRPG
André Lefèvre	CRM
Frans Nijhuis	SRL
Gustav Rückeman	SRH
Fernando Siu	ONCE
Mary Kelly	NTDI
Donal McAnaney	Rehab Group
Riita Uitto	Heli
Jeremy Ward <sup>2</sup>	Rehab Care
Jan Spooren <sup>3</sup>	EPR secretariat

The Academy Council had meetings on the following dates:

- Köln, 14 February
- Brussels, 28 April
- Verona, 11 September
- Brussels, 13 October

In addition, the chairman of the Academy organized two meetings with the General Secretary and Academy Coordinator in Verona.

### II.2. Implementation of 2003 Programme

The complete programme for 2003 has already been presented inside the EPR and to the wider market of rehabilitation professionals in Europe before the end of 2002. However, as it became rapidly clear that the number of registrations was far below the expectations, the Academy Council decided to change the strategy, and to focus during 2003 more on developmental activities than on the ongoing operational activities of 2003.

In the Further Training and Education Programme, the seminars on work experience (Oulu, 27-28 March) and Mental Health (Dublin, 25-26 September) were cancelled due to a lack of participants. The three seminars which actually took place are listed below.

---

<sup>1</sup> Chairman of Academy Council

<sup>2</sup> Joined the Academy Council in September 2003

<sup>3</sup> Non-voting member

Seminar	Location / date	Participants
EQRМ	Athens, 24-25 January	23
TBI	Glasgow, 29-30 May	25
Management	Hoensbroek, 20-21 November	12

The evaluation from the participants indicated a general high satisfaction about both the quality and the organization. Another important conclusion is that the hosting centres (Theotokos Foundation / Momentum) were satisfied, and used the seminar for PR purposes in the own country and to strengthen their links with the EPR member organizations.

The two modules of the summer school which had to take place in Heidelberg were cancelled. From the three learning groups offered, the one on 'Client involvement' and the one on 'Getting into the media' were organised (4 participants each) while the learning group on 'programme evaluation' did not take place.

As far as the English language courses in Dublin are concerned, there were 5 participants for the July session and 3 participants for the August session. As the added values of networking with rehabilitation professionals and focussing on rehabilitation vocabulary can apparently not be guaranteed by a regular language school (Alfa College), the suggestion is to subcontract the organization of language courses to Rehab Group.

### III.3. Training needs assessment

With the assistance of external HR consultants, the ERA offered for free a web-based workshop to the full members of the EPR. The aim of the workshop was to guide contact persons in the EPR member organizations through the implementation of a centre based staff development plan. This fundamental service should enable centres to benefit maximally from the new demand-driven approach of the ERA.

In addition to the on-line workshop, the Academy coordinator and general secretary visited some (full) EPR members to explain the new approach of the ERA to key staff, and to identify with them which elements of the staff development could possibly be implemented via the ERA. Upon request, these discussions took place in JG, ODC, Rehab Care, CRM and CRPG. The powerpoint presentation used during these centre visits was also distributed to the associate members with the request to discuss internally how they could make use of the offer of the ERA.

A final step of the assessment of training needs was the development of an 'order form' for ERA services where EPR member organizations were asked to express interests in topics on a list that was drafted on the basis of the first needs assessment as described above. Based on the answers, the items for the programme 2004 were selected and the training activities will be worked out in detail during next year.

### **III.4. Accreditation system**

An accreditation group (subgroup of Academy Council) defined three profiles of rehabilitation professionals (manager, counsellor and trainer) and the required professional competencies for each profile. By the end of 2003, these profiles and related competencies will be tested/validated in various centres via interviews of professionals.

The EPR submitted a project application within the Leonardo da Vinci programme to obtain financial support to develop a European accreditation system for rehabilitation professionals. If this application is successful, the accreditation system could be developed in a much faster and more comprehensive way. Members of the Academy Council contributed to major work of drafting the project proposal.

### **III.5. Knowledge Management Centre (KMC)**

The ERA developed the concept of an EPR knowledge management centre as a tool to identify and exchange good practice within the EPR network. Although the KMC will cover a broader scope than only staff development, the IT system, format and methodology was developed by the ERA. The results of this exercise are taken as a basis to develop an operational KMC in 2004.



## **III. Service development**

### **III.1. Service development committee and strategy**

Dorothy Gunne (NTDI) and Sergio Fabela (CRPG) drafted a strategic document on how to improve the working procedures of the project teams, and how to increase the actual use of results of service development within the EPR. The document was adopted by the Board at its meeting of 13 May and constituted the basis for the strategy on how to maximise outputs of EPR membership (see I.2.). In order to avoid overlaps between the service development committee on the one hand, and the European Rehabilitation Academy and new approach towards members on the other hand, it was decided not to set up such a committee for the moment.

### **III.2. European Quality in Rehabilitation Mark**

In general, we can say that the implementation of the EQRМ business plan 2003 was successful from an operational and financial point of view. Most of the objectives in terms of public relations, recognition, capacity building and applications were achieved. Moreover, the EQRМ management team reacted in a flexible way in cases where some assumptions in the business plan did not correspond to the reality. The most important adaptation was the introduction of the EQRМ Initiation Programme to overcome the hesitation of organisations to invest a lot of time and money in an initiative without guarantees on the outcomes.

Three organisations applied for the label ‘European Quality in Rehabilitation Mark’ and went successful through an external assessment, confirmed by the EQRМ Awarding Committee:

1. National Training and Development Institute Tallaght (NTDI) in Ireland
2. Cedar Foundation in Northern Ireland.
3. Centro de Reabilitacao Profissional de Gaia (CRPG) in Portugal

These organisations were officially awarded the EQRМ at an Awarding event that took place on the 5<sup>th</sup> December in Rome.

The EQRМ Initiation Programme has been successfully executed by the following centres:

1. National Training and Development Institute (NTDI) in Ireland
2. Cedar Foundation in Northern Ireland.
3. Centro de Reabilitacao Profissional de Gaia (CRPG) in Portugal
4. Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse (CRM) in France

These centres have been awarded with the label ‘Committed to EQRМ’. The label is valid for 18 months. As indicated above, three of these organisations applied for the full mark after they went through the initiation programme.

### III.3. Project Teams

- *Developing instruments to increase initial job retention*

The first meeting of the project team took place on the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> September in Verona. It was decided to concentrate on the first phase of this project, which consists in developing instruments to enhance the ownership of the service-user on the job.

The team defined 12 topics/issues on which basis specific training modules for service-users could be developed. The group had also a first brainstorming on which elements could be included in each module. The various topics were allocated to individual team members with the request to come up with a draft module by the end of 2003. Secondly, they designed a standard format to report on the available curricula at centre level, and everybody was expected to report on the curricula he/she was allocated.

Here follows the list of experts involved in this initiative. Every expert is expected to create a small local team around this project with in his/her own centre regarding deployment and sustainability.

Name	Centre
Adrian Stewart <sup>4</sup>	NTDI
Sergio Fabela	CRPG
Piret Mandre	Astangu
Harry Guillame	SRL
Alberta Babbi	ODC
Annerieke Diepeveen	Theotokos Foundation
Roger Loras	Directorate of Labour (Norway)

- *Women in vocational rehabilitation*

This project team designed modules for pre-vocational training (incl. curricula and materials) which would lead to higher participation rates and success rates of women in vocational training programmes. A second intention was to pilot these modules in each centre which was actually done in CRPG and SRL. Both SRH and NTDI faced problems with their funders to pilot the modules, while ODC decided to participate initially as an observer in the project team with the objective to learn from the others. All centres implemented an outreach strategy and compared the results.

The next meeting is therefore planned for April 2004 when there are centre reports of first experience with the programme (interim report). The meeting for the final report is scheduled for September/October 2004 after the feedback-meetings.

---

<sup>4</sup> Chairman

Name	Centre
Ulrike Schneider <sup>5</sup>	SRH
Ada Ehrmann	SRH
Gerrie Helwig	SRL
Alexandra Lorga	CRPG
Cecilia Maffazioli	ODC
Jane Forman	NTDI

The project team had the following meetings:

- Brussels, 16-17 January
- Maastricht, 8-9 May
- Heidelberg, 3-4 July.

Ulrike Schneider (SRH) presented the work of this project team at a seminar on 'Education and job opportunities for women with disabilities'. This seminar was organised by Opera Don Calabria in Venice on 17 November.

- *System of Information on Vocational Rehabilitation (SIVOR)*

After the local reporters in each centre had sent the projects in the standard format, the Core Team analysed these projects with the view on identifying innovative practices. To do so, they had a meeting on 28 March in Brussels. The selected projects as well as an analysis were presented in the publication SIVOR 2003 that was distributed to the main European stakeholders in the sector as well as to the EPR member organisations. For the dissemination towards the members, books were only sent on request, but there seemed to be a massive interest. The publication can also be downloaded from the website.

The following experts were members of the core team:

Name	Centre
Giuseppe Sarti <sup>6</sup>	ODC
John Conway	NTDI
Filipe Silva	CRPG
Paulien Van Kronenburg	SRL
Eileen Thompson	Cedar Foundation

- *Mental Health – Self evaluation of well-being (SEW)*

During a meeting in Mulhouse (20-21 January 2003) the expert team discussed the results of the first test with the experts from the University of Strasbourg. The first test did not provide the expected result, namely to measure progress in health and well-being, and the statistical experts from the university pointed out the potential causes for the negative result. The EPR expert team revised the SEW questionnaire and methodology, based on the comments of the University of Strasbourg and performed another round of tests during the first half of 2003.

---

<sup>5</sup> Chairman

<sup>6</sup> Chairman

The analysis of the second round of questionnaires revealed that the SEW methodology indeed did measure progress in health and social gains. The results were integrated in a final report which will be presented to the Board of Directors in the beginning of 2004.

The following experts were member of the SEW project team:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Centre</b>
Viviane Spiertz (chairman)	SRL
Sandra Guerreiro	CRPG
Rory Lynch	Momentum
G�rard Koubi	CRM
Andrew Honeyman	NTDI

- *Study on rehabilitation in the candidate countries*

The work of this project team consists in an inventory of the rehabilitation services situation in the candidate countries. It has resulted in an impressive report (over 200 pages). In a standardized table format, the report provides (per country):

- a general background on the country
- a selection of the main disability legislation
- a presentation of administrative structures for service provision to people with disabilities
- a description of the rehabilitation services
- an overview of the major service providers (including contact persons)
- an overview of service-users organizations

The report was distributed to the Board of Directors (13 May) and can be downloaded from the protected section of the website (only accessible for members). The report on rehabilitation in the candidate countries can be very useful for EPR member centres when they look for project partners in these countries, or when they prepare the launch of business in Central and Eastern Europe. For the EPR, the survey is also an important instrument in the light of developing more activities in these countries, and to identify potential members.

Following experts participated in drafting the study:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Centre</b>
Anton Endrich (chairman)	SRH
Giuseppe Sarti	ODC
Bert Engelen	SRL
David Muldoon	NTDI
Taina Pajunen	Heli
Cveto Ursic	Institute for Rehabilitation
Viveca Granberg	Stensta

### III.4. Projects of the EPR

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

The first step was to collect data on existing vocational training and measures aimed at the integration into employment of people with learning disabilities in the EU Member States + Cyprus and Hungary. This information was analysed, categorised and made available via an interactive web page. The results of the first step were tested and validated by key actors.

The EPR participated during 2003 in this Leonardo project as partner of a consortium headed by EASPD. The role of the EPR was to participate in the scientific committee, to draft a country report for Germany and Finland and to participate to the dissemination of the project results. For the country reports, the EPR has concluded subcontracts with SRH and HELI, while the EPR secretariat has taken up the seat in the scientific committee. On 16-17 October 2003, Jan Spooren spoke on a Labor conference in Lisbon on the subject 'initial job retention'.

- *Train the trainers in vocational rehabilitation*

The EPR is member of a supervisory committee in a Leonardo project 'Train the trainers in vocational rehabilitation'. The consortium is led by the AMB, the Norwegian association of service providers to people with disabilities. The project aims at developing training modules for rehabilitation professionals, and starts from concrete problems these professionals face in their daily activities. The training formats are a mixture of web-based learning and contact learning and all modules are translated into national languages. The project partners have already agreed to use the European Rehabilitation Academy as an instrument to disseminate the training modules developed.

Meetings of this Supervisory Committee took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> April and 14<sup>th</sup> October in Brussels. Direct spin-off effects are the inclusion of one training module developed under this project in the ERA programme 2004, and the AMB application for EPR membership.

- *Development of a European accreditation system for professionals in the field of vocational training/rehabilitation of people with disabilities (D+)*

The EPR is promoter of this project proposal which was submitted under the Leonardo Programme, and which includes not less than 21 partners from all over Europe. The pre-proposal was submitted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2003 and was selected. The final proposal will be submitted in February 2004.

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

- *Development of a strategy for CARE to enter into the tendering business with the European Commission*

The EPR provided technical assistance for the development of social insurance legislation in Kazakhstan. This assistance was related to the social insurance law itself and to the law on work accidents and professional diseases. Further on, recommendations needed to be made on the adaptation of other laws (tax, labour laws, and other legislation) needed to facilitate the introduction of social insurance. In the light of this assignment, Jan Spooren made a two-week trip to Astana (Kazakhstan) in April.

The EPR also subcontracted Prof. Van den Heuvel (IRV) to provide advice on issues regarding the assessment of disability and the management of claims: Prof. Van den Heuvel made recommendations for determination of eligibility criteria, procedures for the recognition of disability, and the processes of claims assessment and subsequent monitoring of claims in the fields of disability, loss of breadwinner, and unemployment in social insurance. Prof. Van den Heuvel went on a two weeks mission to Kazakhstan in July.

- *Reinforce the local dimension of the European Employment Strategy: Feasibility study of local and regional employment indicators*

The EPR has tested the pilot indicators and a methodology to develop local employment policies in Belgium (region Limburg) and the Netherlands (region Ijssel en Rijn). These indicators were developed by a trans-national research team. The testing comprised interviews with various key players in the field of local employment in the regions concerned and the drafting of a report. Secondly, the EPR experts tested in these regions new methodologies on how to define local employment policies. The results from all European countries were discussed at a European seminar in Brussels on the 4<sup>th</sup> June.

- *Assistance in developing tender proposals*

CARE Austria and Bernard Brunhes International applied to the EPR secretariat for advice on strategy, procedures and concepts for the development of tender proposals. They contracted with the EPR secretariat to give it the role of a kind of help-desk to which their staff members involved in EU tendering could ask their questions.

## IV. Public Affairs

### IV.1. European Corporate Affaires

- *Information on funding opportunities*

The EPR revised and updated its 'Funding Opportunities' section on the website and provides now a comprehensive description of relevant funding opportunities in the European Commission to complement this information, the system of 'Funding alerts' was introduced during the last quarter of 2003. Funding alerts are e-mails on upcoming funding opportunities that are very specific and disseminated to the centre coordinators as soon as the information is available.

- *Information on policy developments*

In December, the EPR launched its first public affairs newsletter. On the one hand, the newsletter intends to inform the members about the activities of the EPR in this field while on the other hand, it tries to update the members on recent policy development in the field of disability at European level. Secondly, the secretariat selected the main policy issues at stake, and analyzed them in a paper that will be used as a basis for discussions about an EPR public affairs strategy.

- *Facilitating contacts and partnerships*

During 2003, the EPR made increasingly use of its contact network and database (3.500 contacts throughout Europe) to assist EPR members in their search for international partners. Due to its increased profile, the EPR was also frequently approached by external organisations that were looking for leading service providers in Europe. In some cases, the EPR secretariat linked such external organisations to a specific member while in other cases, a 'call for partnership' was sent to all EPR members.

- *Assistance in project applications*

Only in a few cases, staff from member centres addressed to the EPR secretariat with questions on procedures or methodologies concerning project applications. The limited number of requests for assistance is probably due to the lack of knowledge within the EPR centres about this topic.

## IV.2. Sectoral representation

- *European Commission – Disability Unit*

The EPR General Secretary had meetings with the Disability Unit (mainly with Mrs. Wallis Goelen, head of unit) at least on a quarterly basis. The aim of such meetings is to exchange information and to identify ways of more concrete co-operation as mentioned in the following paragraphs.

In a speech delivered at the General Seminar in Verona, Wallis Goelen (*Head of Unit of Integration of People with Disabilities within DG Employment & Social Affairs of the Commission*) referred to EPR as a partner and praised the EQRM as a ‘welcome and important contribution to increase the quality of rehabilitation services throughout Europe’. This was a very encouraging message as the Commission is undoubtedly the most important player at European level.

Even more encouragingly, in its *Communication on Equal opportunities for people with disabilities: A European Action Plan* [COM, 2003 650 final] the Commission makes explicit reference to EPR to be invited to meetings of the *Disability High Level Group* (an expert group gathering Member States governmental disability experts). This is the first time that the name of EPR appears in an official document of the Commission (p. 25) and means that EPR is recognized as a stakeholder that counts.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> December, Jan Spooren spoke at the EYPD Closing Conference in Rome. The EPR General Secretary made an intervention on ‘disability & the family’. His invitation to what can be called the biggest disability stage of the decade, is a further significant acknowledgment by the Commission of the EPR as a service provider partner in the long process towards improving the welfare of disabled people.

- *European Commission – Equal Programme*

EPR is a member of the ETG on Employability, which has chosen ‘Building on Diversity’ as its initial theme. One of the five Working Groups that it has created is considering issues related to ‘People with Disabilities’. EPR is in that group and is helping EQUAL to develop and to mainstream its outcomes on disability issues at European level. As a member of the ETG, EPR is in a very good position to obtain inside information on funding opportunities under EQUAL and to provide this information to its members. As representative of service providers to people with disabilities in Europe, the EPR participated in a European Equal conference that was organised in Birmingham on the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> June.

- *European Disability Forum*

In the past months, EPR has continued to build on its good relationship with the European Disability Forum (the European umbrella organisation representing more than 37 million disabled people in Europe). Meetings between EPR and EDF to discuss co-operation are held on a regular basis. As a result, for example, the EDF has joined as a partner in the Leonardo project, and Bas Treffers (EDF Vice-President and member of the EQRM Awarding Committee) presented the EQRM awards to nominated centres. We consider our relationship



with the EDF as key due to the Forum's undisputed leadership of service-user organisations in Europe.

- *Council of Europe*

In September, EPR applied for 'consultative status' with the Council of Europe, the pan-European organisation for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. When NGOs are granted this status, the Council may 'consult' the organisations, in writing or by means of a hearing, on questions of mutual interest. In practice, this means that these organisations may address memoranda to the General Secretary; are invited to public sittings of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe; are invited to the general information meetings held annually by the Secretariat; are invited to sectoral meetings organised by the Secretariat.

Consultative status with the Council of Europe would advance EPR's Public Affairs to a prestigious European forum. The EPR could use this forum to create valuable contacts, obtain first-hand information, participate in new initiatives, provide advice and take action. It was very positive to hear Thorsten Afflerbach in Rome (*Council of Europe, Head of Social Affairs and Health Directorate General III*) state that the Council regards EQRN 'as the much needed quality standard the Council itself had wanted to develop'.

- *Provider's European Network (PEN)*

The EPR continued its efforts to create a 'single voice' for all service providers to people with disabilities at the European level. It intensified its co-operation with Workability Europe and RI, Work & Employment Commission, and negotiated with EASPD to create a 'Provider's European Network as a 'super umbrella' of various existing European networks. During discussions in August, it became clear that EASPD did not want to join a new structure (such as PEN), and preferred a loose co-operation on some concrete topics. Consequently, EPR, WIE and RI accepted this invitation for ad hoc co-operation, but at the same time decided to go ahead without EASPD in creating a new structure to represent all service providers in Europe.

- *Participation in other European events*

The General Secretary participated as a speaker in the conference the RI Commission Work & Employment organised in Stratford on Avon (UK) on the theme "Developing Choices - Expanding Opportunities".

Within the framework of the EYPD, The EPR participated as observer in the European Parliament of Disabled People (10-11 November) and attended a European seminar on Business & Disability. Finally, it participated in some working meetings of the Disability Intergroup in the European Parliament.

### **IV.3. Euro-American Platform**

The activities of the Euro-American Platform were in 2003 limited to the participation of Prof. Don Dew in the EPR General seminar in Verona. Don Dew is professor of the Washington University and coordinator of the National Consortium of State Operated Comprehensive Rehabilitation Centres (NCSCRC), our partner in the Euro-American Platform. During a meeting linked to the General Seminar, it was agreed to integrate the NCSCRC in the Knowledge Management Centre that would be set up by the EPR, and to stimulate/facilitate in this way the co-operation and exchange of expertise between individual staff members.