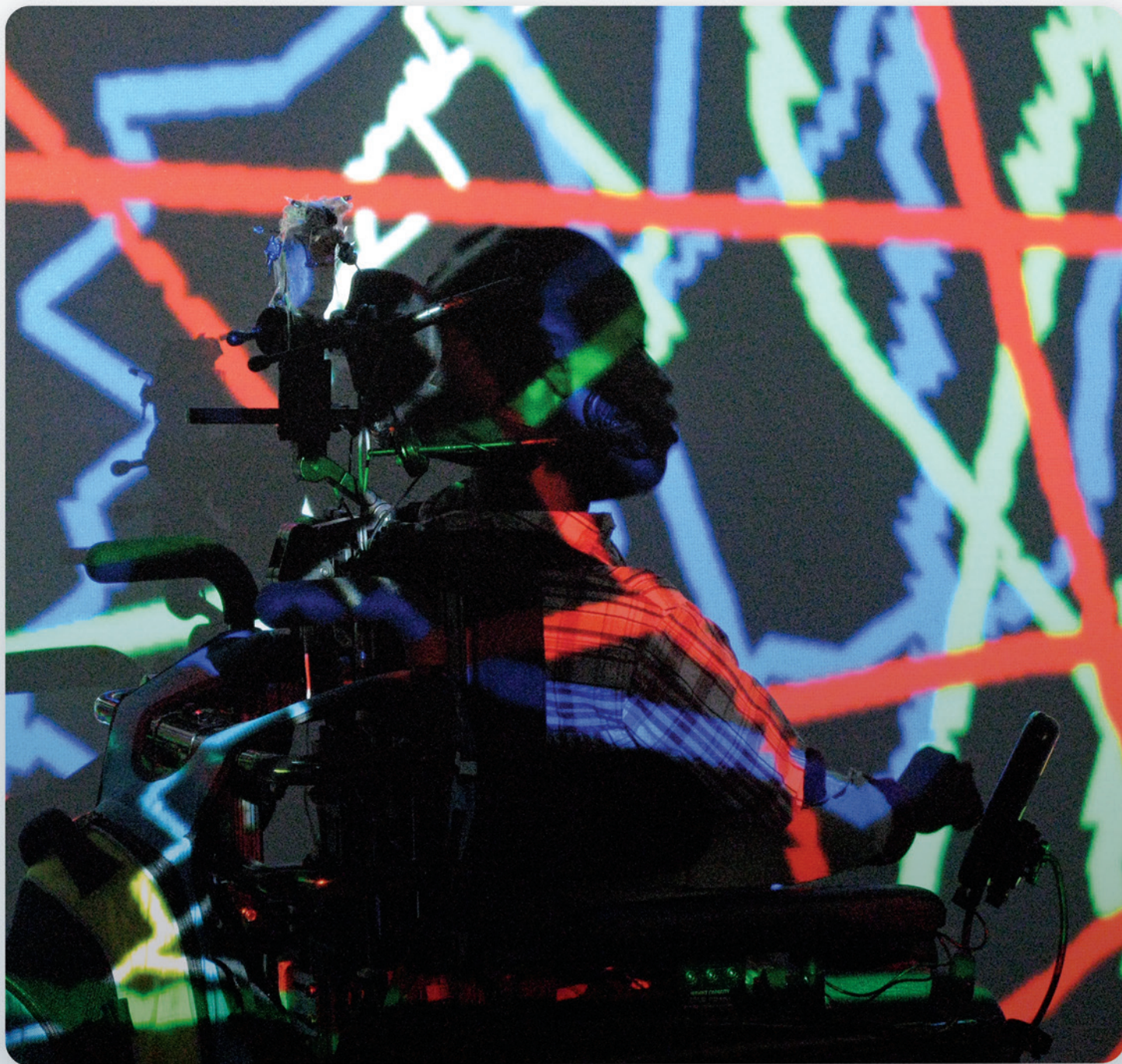


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european platform for rehabilitation



## ANNUALREPORT12





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## A word from the President

I am pleased to present the 2012 Annual Report of the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR). It offers me, as President, the chance to reflect on the activities and outcomes of EPR and its member organisations, partners and sectoral stakeholders. The Annual Report also presents the structure of EPR at European and national level and illustrates the strong belief of EPR in accountability and governance. And an addition this year is the first report on the implementation of the EPR Strategic Plan 2012-2014.

EPR is a unique organisation, because it is driven by its members and the input and work of its members is intrinsic to its success. The added value that EPR member organisations bring to their clients and to government and private customers in each of our countries is growing annually. EPR provides us with a platform for innovation, collaboration and shared learning across organisations and across borders. This collaboration of knowledge helps us to stay at the forefront of advances in rehabilitation and in services to people with disabilities and others who are marginalised. It results in higher quality, personalised and sustainable services, benefiting all the people we serve.

The professional development activities provided to the staff of member organisations and organised in the framework of the Centre Action Plans remained the backbone of EPR's work plan in 2012. It is encouraging that satisfaction rates of member organisations with the CAP actions have increased, and that acquired knowledge is being deployed in member organisations. Detailed in-house needs assessments were conducted with all full-member organisations over the last few months. The conclusions were translated into individual plans that define

the actions and expected outcomes for each member over the next two-year period. In accordance with the 2012-2014 Strategic Plan, EPR continued to increase its use of information and training technology with the design of a new website with interactive functionalities. This will allow the exchange of expertise in on-line thematic communities and the collaboration of thematic groups on-line will enable a greater exchange of ideas and expertise in a timely and cost efficient manner. The new website will be launched in 2013.

The impact of the work of the EPR member organisations is huge. Every day the lives of thousands of people across Europe are improved by the work that is carried out by dedicated, professional staff. The visible difference that is made to people's lives encourages members to develop their activities further, through facilitating mutual learning and providing opportunities for research, innovation and business development. In supporting this development we enhance the disability and social services sector in Europe, and ensure that our collective expertise can offer real benefits in proposing solutions at European level, and in leading and developing change.

This is a challenging time for all social services organisations in Europe. However, our skills, experiences and flexible 'can-do' ethos make it also a time of opportunity, for each one of our organisations and for us collectively as EPR. I am grateful for the many contributions to the activities over the last year, and I am confident that with all your support, EPR will have a highly successful period, achieving the ambitious goals laid out in its strategic plan.

**Angela Kerins**  
EPR President



### Angela Kerins

CEO, RehabCare, Ireland

*Angela Kerins is Chief Executive of the Rehab Group, which operates in more than 250 locations in Ireland, the UK, Poland and the Netherlands, delivering high-quality, person-centred services to more than 80,000 people with disabilities, older people and others who are marginalised, every year.*

*Angela Kerins was the founding Chairperson of the Irish National Disability Authority and was instrumental in establishing the Irish National Disability Strategy. She was appointed as Chairperson of different stakeholders group and also to the Equality Authority, the governments Health, Information and Quality Authority and to the organising committee of the European Year of People with Disabilities. Angela Kerins has also advised other national governments on the development of their national disability strategies. Moreover she was also a patron of the Special Olympics World Games.*

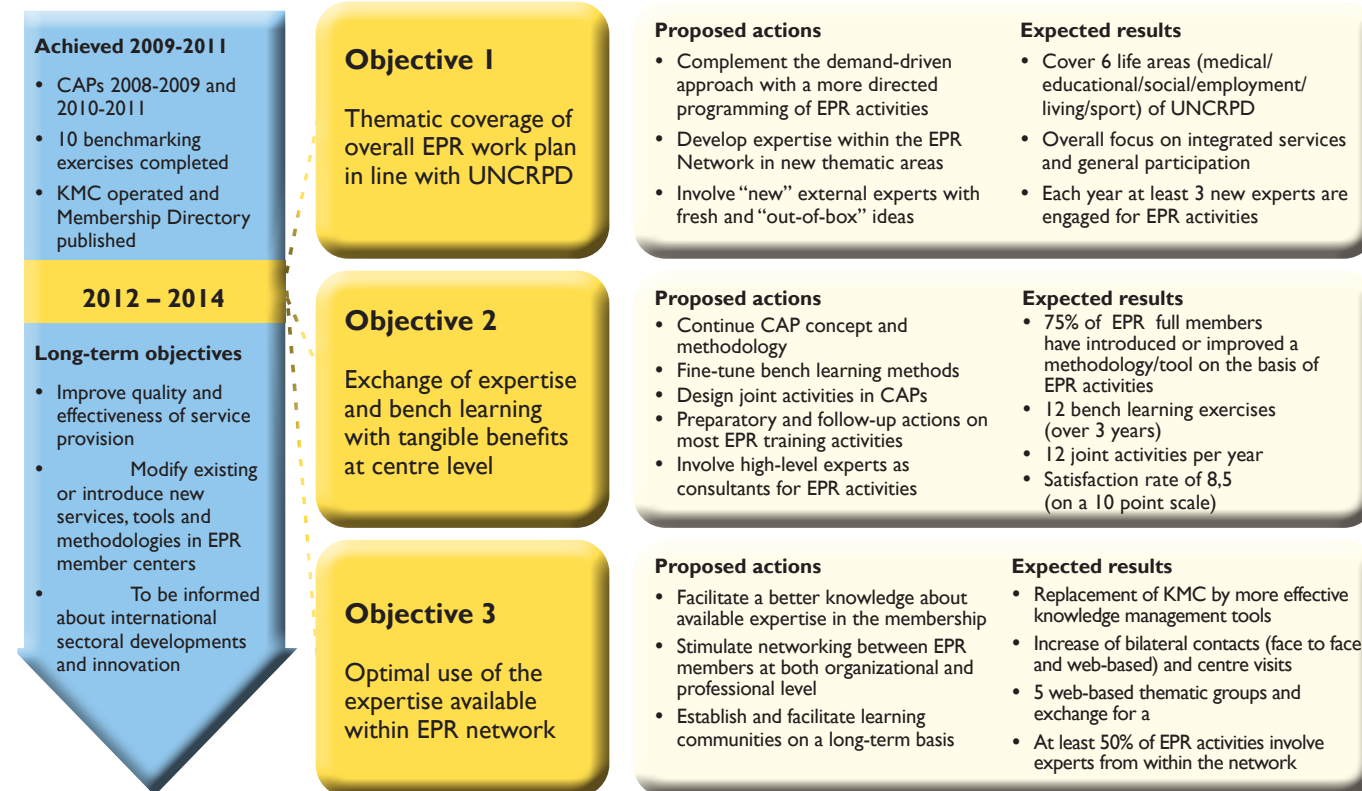
*Angela Kerins is a Permanent Representative to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and advises the Council on a wide range of disability issues. In addition, she is President of the European Platform for Rehabilitation since 2012; she is also a member of the International Women's Forum.*

## I. Strategy & Organisational Development

### Implementation of the EPR Strategic Plan 2012 – 2014

EPR started in 2012 with the implementation of its new three-year strategic plan. Most progress was made on the pathway 'mutual learning' (see figure below), which has been a long-standing EPR core business. The most important achievement in this domain is the greater variation and balanced contents of EPR activities that correspond more to the thematic areas of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Moreover, EPR refined its international benchmarking methods and EPR members engaged in more bilateral co-operation initiatives as a spin-off from regular EPR activities.

#### Pathway I: Focus on mutual learning



Two other strategic pathways on which EPR moved ahead as planned during 2012 were those on public affairs and the member-driven nature of EPR. Regarding the latter, the Secretariat initiated several actions to increase the use of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) for network and training activities. On-line knowledge management and interactive web-based actions will be further enhanced during 2013, both in quantity and quality.

In terms of research and innovation, the R&D Forum concluded that undertaking joint R&D among EPR members poses many challenges. The different thematic scope and unequal levels or intensity of R&D across the EPR membership are the main reasons for this. Additionally EPR made less than expected progress over the last year with joint business development. It became more difficult to acquire project funding, and several members expressed preference for mutual learning. But, as presented in sections VII and VIII of this report, EPR managed to maintain both the volume of its membership and its financial independence.



### EPR Annual Conference 2012

The EPR Annual Conference was co-hosted by the member organisations Durapart and AVRE in the peaceful village of Fevik, on the southern coast of Norway, on 27 and 28 June 2012. As usual, this edition of the EPR Annual Conference proved to be a key event on the EPR calendar of activities. The yearly gathering of more than 100 professionals from all EPR members stimulates the commitment of the network in spreading innovations and honing cooperation.

The conference programme, well received by the participants, focused on the continuity of services in the rehabilitation sector. Inspiring discussions and enlightening reflexions challenged participants to re-think coordinated and integrated approaches to care. Ensuring that people with disabilities have an equal right to participate in society and to access education, employment and health services is at the core of EPR's activities.

The Annual Conference format combines keynote speeches, workshops and satellite meetings, and as such offers an opportunity for participants to involve themselves in debates and round-tables sessions. The 2012 Annual Conference was chaired by EPR president Angela Kerins, Paal Haavorsen from the co-organiser AVRE and by Bjørn Paulsen, Director of Durapart.

The idyllic location as well as the creative social activities resulted in a fruitful atmosphere for informal networking and enhancing the relationships between rehabilitation professionals from around Europe.



*“To promote inclusion in the community, we need to give people the opportunity to have contact with people with disabilities.”*

Peter McKeivitt, General Manager,  
RehabCare, Ireland



## EPR Innovation Prize

For its fourth edition, the Innovation Prize 2012 was awarded to the “Dreams come true”, project developed and implemented in Finland by Luovi Vocational College, Keskuspuisto Vocational College and Kiipula Vocational College in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and with local companies. Anja Kallio-Koski, Director of Adult Education and Hannu Koivula, education Director from Luovi presented the project at the Innovation Prize Awarding Ceremony, held during the EPR Annual Conference.



As described by Anja Kallio-Koski, the ceremony was a unique opportunity to present the project to a large audience of leading rehabilitation professionals and managers. She showed how “Dreams come true” developed innovative ways to support the employment of people with disabilities, providing a common employment model which ensures support and services to employer, employee and working community. She explained how the project intends to make it easier for people with disabilities to find a job and to ensure they can work according to their capabilities. Anja Kallio-Koski demonstrated that by using new indicators such as “social responsibility”, “Dreams come true” was able to move beyond the traditional financial tools currently used to measure the impact of employment strategies and towards an innovative perception of relations with employers.

The positive way in which EPR members participated in the contest on innovation confirmed once again how important it is that the network exchanges information on innovation and best practices and celebrates mutual learning and continuous improvement.

## EPR welcomes its newest members



- **Fagerh** is a French umbrella organisation of 62 associations and 140 vocational rehabilitation centres for adults with work-related disabilities resulting from accident or illness. The mission of these centres is to allow these so called “handicapped workers” to start a new professional life suited to their physical or psychological abilities. Fagerh is very active in promoting professional recovery by enhancing assessment and training services and is investigating new ways to collaborate with other countries in order to contribute to creating a more inclusive Europe.



- **USEL** (Ulster Supported Employment Ltd) is Northern Ireland’s largest provider of Supported Employment Services delivering a range of supports, such as direct supported employment to people with disabilities in a factory in Belfast. USEL, besides providing accredited training designed to suit the needs of the individual and maximise their employment potential, operates as a social enterprise business making and selling commercial products manufactured by its workforce and delivering a wide range of local employment contracts.

## II. Professional Development

The professional development activities of EPR are structured in tailor-made Centre Action Plans that aim to respond to the specific needs of each full member. As organisations in Europe often face similar challenges, bringing their professionals together allows for mutual learning, exchange of experience and ideas and exploration of creative solutions. In 2012, EPR organised 12 joint professional development activities, directly benefitting about 150 professionals within the EPR membership. About half of these activities were hosted by member organisations, reinforcing the concept of a ‘network’, and offered fellow professionals a practical insight into the services. In addition, EPR provided a series of in-house training sessions and tailored consultancy support packages to its members on various strategic and operational issues.

To ensure that these activities benefitted from optimal preparation and follow-up and to facilitate a more steady collaboration of working groups, EPR invested further in Information and Communication Technologies. Meanwhile, particular attention was paid to extending the pool of expert trainers within EPR and also externally.

The average satisfaction rate expressed by participants in professional development activities during 2012 was 8,9 on a 10-point scale. This surpasses the target of 8,5 set in the EPR Strategic Plan.

Overview of professional development activities 2012

Format	Topic		
Training seminar	EU policy on disability and social services	Optimising relationships with employers	Challenging Behaviour
Management seminar	Ethics in rehabilitation	Balanced Scorecard	
Benchmarking groups	Benchmarking on quality with EQUASS	Research & Development	
Benchlearning groups	Outcome measurement in vocational education and training	Outcome measurement in medical rehabilitation	
Learning partnerships	Transition for youngsters with a disability to (semi-) independent living	Services to people with Acquired Brain Injuries	
Action learning groups	Interdisciplinary approach in medical rehabilitation		
In-house seminars & consultancies	Therapeutic Education	Cross-border service delivery	Organisational change management



## EU policy on disability and social service



A training seminar in March provided 15 participants with a general understanding of EU policy in the field of disability and social services, the main actors at EU level and the primary issues at stake. The first session led the participants through the Europe 2020 Strategy for “a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”, the Open Method of Coordination and the EU Disability Strategy 2011-2020. Participants discussed the EU non-discrimination legislation and tested their knowledge through a case study exercise. Other topics covered were EU public procurement rules and articles of the Convention of the United Nations on the Rights of People with disabilities (UNCRPD) with high relevance for social service providers.

## Optimising relationships between service providers and employers

Service providers still struggle to understand the needs of companies and specifics of a business environment so as to facilitate the (re-)integration of their clients on the open labour market. Rehabilitation service providers should be aware of the needs employers may have, such as disability awareness training, knowledge of government support/funding programmes and practical solutions to health, safety and disability employment issues. A training, hosted on 6-7 June by TBGLearning (UK), provided an insight into best practices gathered by the European Union for Supported Employment (EUSE), and an exchange of experiences and practices.



The 20 participants boosted their confidence in talking to employers about people with disabilities, and their ability to see job candidates through the eyes of the employer. They learnt to understand how recruitment processes actually work, and discussed approaches to anticipate objections to hiring disabled people in general. New ideas and methodologies emerged to organise sustainable relations with employers and to customise training depending on regional labour market demands.

## Transition of youngsters with a disability from school to (semi)independent living

On 11-12 September, 13 professionals from seven EPR member organisations met in Luovi, Finland, to discuss their approaches to transition. During two intensive and inspiring days, the participants shared their own concepts and discussed the challenges involved in changing environment for young people with disabilities and professionals. Person Centred Planning seemed to be a promising and adequate way to improve the involvement of the youngsters and their parents in the planning and execution of the transition process. All participants expressed their wish to continue their collaboration and mutual learning in the subsequent months.

## Interdisciplinary Approach in Medical Rehabilitation

The integration - or even collaboration - between different disciplines and different services within a centre offers strong support to the quality and the comprehensiveness of service delivery. At the same time, such strategic planning and practical implementation can be somewhat challenging. EPR Slovenian member URI hosted on 22-23 November the second meeting of a working group on this issue. This activity combined traditional learning formats with a practical implementation phase and progress review, before exchanging conclusions from the experiences of each.

## Ethics in Rehabilitation

This strategic workshop was addressed to the Directors of all EPR members and was hosted on 17-18 October by Fundacion ONCE, in Madrid, Spain. The workshop was animated by Dirk Jarré, a professor at Linz University (Austria), and offered like-minded managers from all over Europe the opportunity to discuss the implications of ethics, dilemmas and challenges in rehabilitation services. Reflections were based on real cases concerning the rights and duties of service users and providers, funding and quality, staff expectations or technologies. On the next day, the group was given a tour of the company Technosite, which provides worldwide expertise in accessible technologies.





## Benchmarking across borders:

### Outcome Measurement in Vocational Rehabilitation (OMVR)

A working group on outcome measurement in vocational rehabilitation, education and training focused on the administration of the outcome measurement tool developed in previous years. The reliability of the tool was validated, and the data gathered in 2011 in each participating centre allowed the group to benchmark the various dimensions of Quality of Life. A Manual for Administration was drafted in order to present the tool to interested partners, and the group started to develop an easy-access version of the tool.



### Benchmarking on services to people with acquired brain injury

This benchmarking group gathered for the second time in Heinrich-Haus (Josefs-Gesellschaft) Neuwied, Germany, on 18-20 April 2012. It was a follow-up meeting to the one held in Helimare, the Netherlands, in October 2011. Participants benchmarked current approaches to people with acquired brain injuries, mainly in relation to the transition from school to work and independent living and the inclusion of families. Heinrich-Haus opened the doors of a medical centre for neurological rehabilitation and of special services in the field of assistive (semi) independent living.

### Benchmarking with EQUASS Excellence

Twenty participants participated in a benchmarking event in September 2012, hosted by Fundação AFID, an EPR member who was awarded the EQUASS Excellence recognition in 2011. Participants discussed the EQUASS Principles Leadership, Result Orientation, Staff and Continuous Improvement. They learned about the challenges, opportunities, limitation and pitfalls of benchmarking by discussing concrete examples coming from the social health care and education sector. Two EPR members – Josefs Gesellschaft (JG Gruppe) and the Association of Vocational Rehabilitation Enterprises (AVRE) – shared their model and indicators of benchmarking and benchlearning.



## III. Research & Innovation

Several EPR members are actively engaged in research and development activities. The diversity of themes and topics they report is impressive and they identify potential synergies cooperation in many areas. It is generally agreed that R&D is a fundamental condition for innovation, and that innovation is in its turn a key success factor for being competitive and sustainable as a rehabilitation service provider. EPR supports research, development and innovation in the membership body via projects and through the Centre Action Plan concept.

### Research & Development Forum

The research and innovation interests and aspirations of several EPR members were integrated into the concept of an R&D Forum. The Forum worked around R&D capacity-building, the assessment of the research function, its management and organisation. The participating centres benchmarked on the research results and interests of their centres and developed proposals for future collaboration. Their achievements were summarised in a joint report and shared with the EPR Board of Directors.



The Thematic Network on Assistive Technologies and Inclusive Solutions for All

2012 was a busy and productive year for the ATIS4All project, with a variety of partners' meeting and phone conferences and participation in key events to strengthen cooperation with other networks on Assistive Technologies, including ETNA (European Thematic Network on Information and Communication Technologies) and Cloud4All (Cloud platforms Lead to Open and Universal access for people with Disabilities and for All).

Partners worked together to develop an open, collaborative web portal which would offer reliable information on ATs, inclusive products and services, and cutting-edge technologies trends. EPR, involved in the project consortium as a representative of the professionals working in the disability sector and for its expertise in the field of research on ATs, contributed by detailing the information architecture, applications, tools and contents developed for the open collaborative portal and by disseminating the cluster work done so far. The portal will be launched in 2013 and will take advantage of existing repositories and other internet resources based on ICT-AT, thanks to the previous work by "EASTIN - European Assistive Technology Information Network. Through the portal, registered members will get information of ICT-based AT products, and will have the possibility to comment and share knowledge through a community by means of different forums and an expert blog. Several organisations working in fields related to ICT-AT and inclusive solutions joined the ATIS4All network as "supporters". They committed to delivering information and disseminating initiatives, best practices and case studies to the wide community.

The ATIS4All Thematic Network on Assistive Technologies is partially funded by the Programme ICT-PSP (Information and Communication Technology – Policy Support Programme) of the European Commission as part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme.

For more information about the project, visit [www.atis4all.eu](http://www.atis4all.eu)



## AEGIS Open Accessibility Everywhere: Groundwork, Infrastructure, Standards

After more than four years of activities and research to expand access to mainstream ICTs for people with disabilities, the AEGIS project officially ended on 31st August 2012. EPR ran a final series of three pilot sessions in Belgium to present and test the latest ICT applications developed within the project.

Following the successful organisation of the final AEGIS conference last November, EPR concluded its dissemination activities by supervising the production of two videos for the project - one outlines the core outcomes of the project, the other focuses on the Open Accessibility Framework (OAF). Both will be available on the AEGIS webpage of the EPR website, [www.epr.eu](http://www.epr.eu).

The AEGIS project consortium now has much to show for its continuous efforts during its final year. It has both developed the Open Accessibility Framework (OAF) – the theoretical underpinning of AEGIS' work – and proven the benefit of that framework in the desktop, web and mobile spaces. A wide array of solutions has been developed in each of the domains: the Accessible Rich Internet Application (ARIA) implemented the framework directly into the open source Firefox web browser and the AEGIS mobile accessibility API "AMIA" was implemented on the lightweight UI toolkit (LWUIT), on LCD UI, and for AWT for JAVA ME environments and several plugins for OpenOffice and LibreOffice.

For more information about the project results visit the project website at [www.aegis-project.eu](http://www.aegis-project.eu).

## Active Inclusion of young people with disabilities and health problems

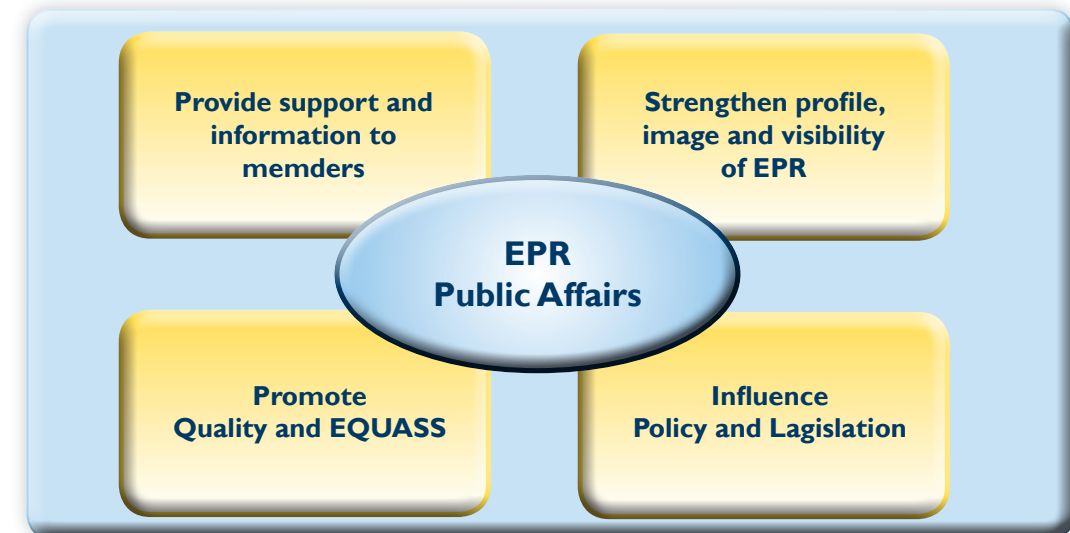
EPR contributed to a research project funded by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). This flagship initiative covered a total of 11 countries and in the process exposed the alarming relevance of the topic. It highlighted the increasing number of young people out of employment, education or training who are relying on disability benefits in many countries. The research brought to light the structural challenges related to accessing social services, income, integration in the labour market and lifelong learning opportunities, and also identified a sample of 44 good active inclusion practices. All national reports, among them those drafted by several EPR members, were published on the Eurofound website: [www.eurofound.europa.eu](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu) (go to the "Social Cohesion" Area of expertise and then click on the link "Active inclusion of young people with disabilities or health problems").

## Social Dialogue: PESSIS project

The aim of the research project PESSIS – Promoting employers' social services organisations in social dialogue – was to provide a detailed understanding of how social dialogue is organised and structured in the social sector in Europe. It focused on identifying barriers to increased cooperation among employers and highlighting examples of good practices. 11 national studies contributed to an overall European perspective of social dialogue in the social services sector. Each report conveys a picture of how social dialogue is organised at local, regional and national levels, answering questions on what types of social dialogue and collective agreements exist, what labour issues are dealt with, who is involved and how well the sector is presented. Three EPR members - Luovi Vocational College (Finland), University Rehabilitation Institute (Slovenia) and Workshop "Panagia Eleousa" (Greece) – were involved in the mapping exercise at national level. Conclusions and recommendations are summarised in the European Synthesis Report available on PESSIS project website, [www.socialserviceseurope.eu](http://www.socialserviceseurope.eu). The project, funded by the EU Programme on Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue, ran from December 2011 to September 2012 under the EASPD lead and in collaboration with a broad partnership of European and national organisations representing social and health services providers.

## IV. Public Affairs

### Objectives of Public Affairs



### The role of quality in the draft Directive on Public Procurement for social services

On 6 December 2012, EPR organised a Public Affairs Event in the premises of the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels. Directors and managers from EPR member organisations throughout Europe sat at the table with member networks of 'Social Services Europe', as well as with a wide range of user organisations, funders and policy-makers, to discuss the role of quality in the draft Directive on Public Procurement (COM) 2011/896.

The animated discussion, facilitated by EPR Secretary General Jan Spooren and EPR President Angela Kerins, aimed to review the potential relationship between quality and procurement in the light of this major EU initiative. Mrs Concetta Cultrera, Head of the Social Protection and Social Services Unit of the European Commission, and Mrs Birgit Sippel, Member of the European Parliament (DE), clarified some pending and vague issues related to the application of the public procurement rules in the field of social services, and raised new perspectives in ensuring the respect of quality dimension.

In this process it is crucial to consider that certification of quality is a powerful instrument to avoid the downsides which procurement mechanisms could have in the social services sector. Market-based mechanisms should be complemented by corrective measures such as licensing, price control and quality assurance in order to ensure that the most vulnerable and challenging client groups can access the services they need.





As a concrete example of the prominence of the quality dimension of social services, Mr Guus van Beeck, EPR/ EQUASS expert, took the floor to shed light on how the EQUASS system has been used to measure and assess compliance with the European Quality Framework for Social Services.

The debate is still far from reaching conclusions. Sectorial stakeholders therefore should be encouraged to take this opportunity to raise concerns and identify alternatives which will ensure the quality and uphold the specific nature of social services.



## Formal co-operation with “Social Services Europe”, the largest social services network in Europe

During its first year the newly established ‘Social Services Europe’ proved to be a highly productive vehicle for influencing European policies in the social services sector. Social Services Europe, which brings together nine Europe-wide networks of not-for-profit providers of social and health care services, has filled its agenda with active commitments in lobbying activities at European level and in drafting several position papers on the major areas of concern that have been debated around the Europe 2020 strategy, the European quality framework for social services, state aid, public procurement, social innovation and the job creation potential of the health and social services sector.

Members of Social Services Europe, through their meetings with Members of the European Parliament, key actors in the European Commission and other relevant stakeholders at European level, have firmly demonstrated the importance for social services providers to formally speak with one voice to strengthen their crucial role in the further development of the European social model and act as important stabilisers in times of economic recession.

As one of the founders of Social Services Europe, “EPR is satisfied that recent developments confirm there was a space for a formal, strong network that can promote the not-for-profit agenda in the social services sector”, said the EPR Secretary General, Jan Spooren. Besides contributing to drafting position papers, EPR participated in a round table discussion organised by Social Services Europe at the European Parliament. Social Services Europe discussed with European Parliamentarians and experts the role of social services providers in reaching the goal of the Europe 2020 strategy, and it was able to shed light on the viable possibility for the network to become a true partner in the implementation of inclusive European policies.



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## Key stakeholder cooperation of EPR in Public Affairs

- EPR is one of the representatives of Civil Society in the **High Level Expert Group on Disability**. This expert group, which is chaired by the European Commission, brings together specialists from EU Member States with the aim to develop greater interaction between national policies. During 2012 the High Level Group focused on good practices to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Structural Funds Regulations, and policies in education, training and employment for students with disabilities and special educational needs in the EU.
- As a member of the **European Platform of Social NGOs**, EPR engaged in drafting recommendations for care practices which respect the rights of individuals and promote social inclusion. EPR representatives also contributed to the development of a new long-term strategy for the Social Platform, defining its core mission and activities for the coming years.
- The **European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP)** invited EPR to become a member of its Disability and Rehabilitation Committee which undertakes a peer review of vocational rehabilitation systems in various EU Member States. The expertise of EPR is used to complement and balance the inputs of funding organisations in this domain.
- Jan Spooren, EPR Secretary General, spoke at the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) 2012 High Level Segment** event, which took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, Tuesday, July 3. He gave an overview of approaches within the European Union to support people with disabilities to access employment. The main message was that alongside anti-discrimination legislation and support to employers, services to people with disabilities fulfil an essential role in bridging the gap to the open labour market. The event was co-sponsored by the Rehab Group, one of the leading members of EPR.
- On 21-22 May, EPR was a main contributor to an international conference on **Service Delivery Systems for Assistive Technology in Europe**. This event was organised by the Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe (AAATE) and the European Assistive Technology Information Network (EASTIN) in Copenhagen.
- The **European Economic and Social Committee** on 6 November hosted a seminar on labour market participation of people with intellectual impairments or relational problems. The EPR Secretary General was invited as an expert to share the practical experiences of service providers and professionals within this target group.
- A delegation of EPR participated in the **European Day of Persons with Disabilities (3-4 December)**, part of the EU's wider efforts to promote the mainstreaming of disability issues in line with the EU Disability Strategy 2011-2020. The event focused on the active participation of persons with disabilities in different areas of public life, such as politics, media, sports and leisure.
- EPR delivered a key-note speech in the **European Parliament in Strasbourg** on 19-20 December at an event which was organised by FEHAB. The theme of the conference was the challenges facing not-for-profit social service providers in the light of recent European developments. The EPR representative spoke about the rationale for using Assistive Technologies in Rehabilitation, but also highlighted the risks and limitations.





## EPR establishes a partnership in the United States

In its attempt to look beyond the borders of the European Union for relevant expertise, EPR during 2012 initiated a partnership with the Counsel of State Administrators in Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). CSAVR is composed of the chief administrators of the public rehabilitation agencies serving individuals with physical and mental disabilities in the States. The start-up process included the participation of Mr Stephen Wooderson, CEO of CSAVR, in the EPR annual conference in Fevik, and the exchange visit of the EPR Secretary General to the CSAVR autumn conference in San Diego on 12-14 November. Both visits were used to organise a plenary speech, several bilateral meetings and a discussion with the Boards. These initial discussions resulted in the set-up of more structured co-operation from 2013 onwards.

The exchange of experiences will mainly focus on following themes:

- Transition from school to work
- Case management
- Assistive technologies

In addition to on-line co-operation via thematic communities, limited involvement by American experts in EPR seminars is envisaged, and exchange centre visits will be considered. Since the members of both networks offer similar services and as both organisations focus on mutual learning and exchange of experiences, the co-operation seems feasible and opens up a wide range of additional opportunities.



## EPR Analytical Policy Papers

During 2012, EPR speeded up its activity of drafting analytical policy papers to inform its members about the most important developments at European level and to inspire reflexions on critical issues related to the implementation of European policies in the social services sector.

Notably, the importance of the impact of European Commission legislation on social services of general interest (SSGI) has been identified, especially in the debate on the adoption of the new proposal for a directive on public procurement, which highlighted the demand to ensure in the new legislation the respect of quality dimension of social services.

Substantial research has also been led on social innovation, now at the top of the European Social Agenda. This research focuses on ways to promote “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” by emphasising the role of social services providers to identify social needs, allocate their specific expertise and maximise the social impact of innovative services.

EPR has coordinated a study funded by the European Foundation Centre on the impact of the economic crisis on the rights of people with disabilities. The study highlights the need to develop innovative services which protect people with disabilities, promote them as a specific target group and allow them to achieve greater participation in public and political life. The study covered six European countries - the UK, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Greece and Hungary - and a comparative European report was produced. A key findings document offers a summary of the main conclusions of the whole study. The findings of this study were also presented in the European Parliament on 6 November 2012 and attracted a broad audience in the European disability and political spheres.

Beside those wide themes, more concise information on relevant news from the social services, health and disabilities sectors is disseminated among EPR members through the online publication of the monthly ‘e-bulletins’.

## Funding opportunities at EU-level: a growing priority

The difficult economic context and the complexity of the European funding opportunities landscape led EPR to organise in 2012 a training seminar on these themes. The aim was to provide its members with a comprehensive picture of all available EU funding relevant to rehabilitation and health services. Additionally, EPR regularly informs its member about the latest funding opportunities via the online ‘Funding Alerts’ which contain the objectives, guidelines and deadlines of each selected funding opportunity. In 2012 EPR published 28 funding alerts to support its members to find partners and develop project proposals.

“ I believe that a fundamental redesign of services and addressing new target groups are important pathways through which service providers can face the challenges of the economic crisis. A positive approach towards the modernisation of social services will enable us to introduce long-term improvements and secure an adequate level of quality for the service-users.”

Jan Spooren, EPR Secretary General



## V. European Quality in Social Services



The European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) EPR initiative provides comprehensive services of certification, training and consultancy in the area of quality. With its multi-stakeholder approach, EQUASS aims to enhance the social service sector by engaging social service providers in quality and continuous improvement and by guaranteeing service-users quality of services throughout Europe. Since its creation, EQUASS has successfully found its place in the European market and is certifying more and more organisations every year. Service providers certified with EQUASS gain an invaluable competitive advantage and are able to distinguish themselves from other service providers with their proven quality of service provision. Through its work, EQUASS contributes to the modernisation of the social sector.

### Overview of EQUASS certifications in 2012



116 new organisations were certified with **EQUASS Assurance** in 2012, representing a total of over 30 000 service users, and over 3 800 staff members. Two new organisations were certified with **EQUASS Excellence** in Portugal and Germany.

### EQUASS trainings: overview and new format

Six auditor training sessions took place in 2012 (not including projects), with one dedicated to the consultancy format and one to the calibration of EQUASS auditors. The sessions, held in Olsberg (Germany), Lisbon, Porto, Vilnius and Oslo, were attended by a total of 35 participants.

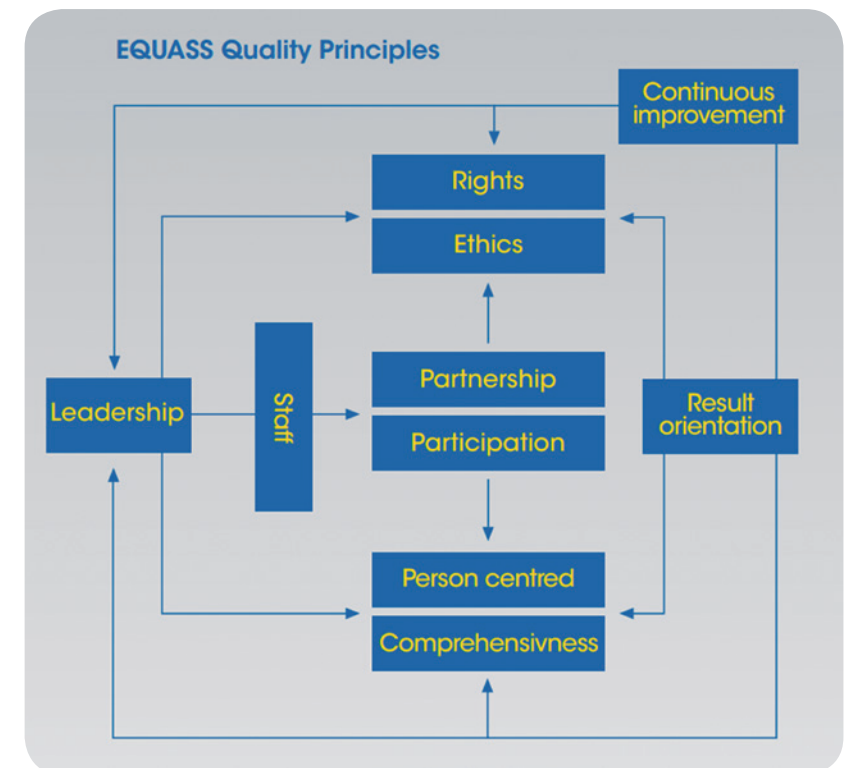
This year participants were able to experience the new training format. In response to participants' feedback, the auditors' and consultants' training has been extended to three days. This ensures that participants are adequately prepared to carry out their role as auditors and consultants. The new auditor training format offers more opportunities to exchange and to calibrate the performances of individual potential auditors, while giving ample time for a practical training session in writing the audit report, preparing the site visit and interview techniques. The new consultancy training format pays more detailed attention to all the implementation phases of the EQUASS Excellence and the EQUASS Assurance programmes: the self-evaluation process, writing the implementation plan, supporting the implementation process, internal auditing, organising test audits and reporting and preparing the final external audit.

### First conclusions of the implementation of the EQUASS Assurance and EQUASS Excellence new system

The EQUASS Assurance and Excellence certification programmes were modified in 2011 so both certification programmes meet the principles and criteria set out in the Voluntary Quality Framework for Social Services (EQF), developed by the Social Protection Committee in October 2010. The majority of the changes entail a more detailed description of principles, criteria and indicators; in total 10 principles and 50 criteria. For the EQUASS Assurance certification programme each criterion is measured by two validated specific and operational indicators. The indicators require detailed and specific evidence of meeting the requirement in the performance of the social service provider.

The EQUASS Assurance 2012 certification programme has been operational since January 2012. All service providers who applied for (re) certification should implement the EQUASS Assurance 2012 requirements. Since indicators are defined in a clearer and more specific way, social service providers should pay much more attention and make extra efforts when collecting types of evidence which show their compliance with the performance requirements. Meanwhile, the auditors who received calibration training in the new system now have to check and review the performance of the service providers in more detail.

For those social service providers who needed to re-certify their quality system in 2012, extra efforts are required in applying and collecting evidence which shows compliance with the indicators. Additionally, the social service provider should identify some area for improvement and





additional development for the upcoming two years. These issues will be included after two years in the follow-up audit. Both changes in the system have been put in place to ensure that the social service provider is engaged in assuring quality to its stakeholders and in continuous quality development.

Nevertheless, all social service providers that have been certified according the EQUASS Assurance 2012 can as a result prove that they have met the latest European Quality requirements for Social Services set out in the EQF.

The change in the certification programmes also had an impact on the performances of the auditors. Auditors are now more focused on checking the quality requirements in detail and reviewing the development of continuous quality development and quality continuous improvement. They also provide more specific feedback on performance and suggestions for quality development in the audit reports. The implementation of these changes impacted the training programmes for auditors. The programmes, which now last for three full days, pay more attention to how auditors can perform more systematically and be more efficient in carrying out EQUASS audits. Special attention is given to the calibration of a common understanding of the EQUASS standard and documentation review, more standardisation in the approach of auditing, and verification techniques via interviews.

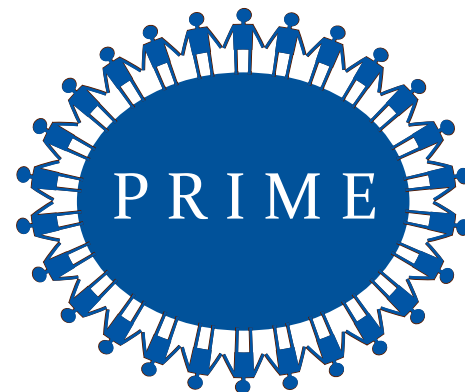
Experiences of working with the new documentation, tools and instruments are positive. Some improvements in the EQUASS Excellence system may be carried out by making the information, which is needed to review the performance of the service provider, more easily accessible for auditors. This will allow the preparation and the site visit to be carried out in a more efficient and effective way.



## PRIME project

The PRIME project, short for PProject for IMplementation of Equavet, is funded under the Lifelong Learning Programme of the DG Education and Culture of the European Commission. It is a Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation Action project. Led by RCN Pluryn in the Netherlands, it started in November 2011 and will run until the end of 2013.

The project aims to improve the quality of Vocational Education and Training (VET) services by transferring the expertise and experiences of quality assurance in VET services for persons with a disability to those VET-providers who would like to implement the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET) and EQAVET criteria in their services. The instrument used for implementing the requirements expressed in the EQAVET framework is EQUASS, the European Quality in Social Services. In the framework of the PRIME project a cross-reference study describing the result of the in-depth analysis of both Quality frameworks has been published, which takes advantage of different partners' experiences and contributions.



## VI. EPR Structures

### Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is the decision-making body of EPR. Its main task is to supervise all EPR activities and to set the strategic, financial and organisational framework of EPR. The three pillars report on their activities to the Board of Directors and work within the framework that has previously been decided upon. The Board consists of the Chief Executives/Directors of the full members. In 2012 the Board held five meetings to discuss and approve EPR policies and activities in Belgium, Spain and Norway.

Organisation	Director
RehabCare	Angela Kerins, EPR President
Adelante	Jean-Paul Essers
A2G	Sigurd Gjertsen
Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse	Bernard Barthe
Durapart AS	Bjørn Paulsen
Fundación ONCE	Sabina Lobato
Kompetanseutvikling Grenland AS (GREP)	Thor Fjellvang
Heliomare	Frits Wichers
Institute for Rehabilitation-Republic of Slovenia	Robert Cugelj
Josefs-Gesellschaft	Manfred Schulte
Luovi Vocational College	Tarja Mänty
National Learning Network	Frank Flannery
Pluryn	Tessa Zaeyen
Stiftung Rehabilitation Heidelberg	Jörg Porath (till August)
TBG Learning	Andrew Conlan-Trant

### Subcommittees

In line with the strategic plan 2012 – 2014, the EPR Board set up three 'Subcommittees' with the aim of enhancing the involvement and ownership of all Board members:

- Finance Committee
- EQUASS Management Committee
- Membership Committee

The Subcommittees act on the basis of Terms of Reference which are agreed by the Board and report to each Board meeting. In order to avoid additional travelling, the meetings of the Subcommittees are mainly organised as a part of Board meetings (parallel sessions) or via teleconferencing.



## Centre coordinators

Centre coordinators of full and associate EPR members represent the direct link between EPR and its member organisations. Their main role is to disseminate EPR information throughout their organisation and implement decisions taken by the Board of Directors. They also operate from a centre perspective to generate centre input in EPR initiatives and to ensure maximum return on investment by disseminating EPR results and products. Usually EPR Centre coordinators meet twice a year and hold additional bilateral meetings in the margins of other EPR activities they attend. They have the following responsibilities:

- managing contacts and information exchange between the Directors, all levels of the centre, the EPR Secretariat and other centres of the EPR
- implementing at centre level decisions taken by the Board of Directors
- generating ideas and fostering a proactive attitude within EPR
- coordinating the organisation of EPR meetings hosted in the centre, included the EPR Annual Conference.

In 2012, the EPR coordinators met twice (March and December) in Grimbergen and in Brussels. Both meetings were a great opportunity to discuss on-going and future activities in EPR, as well as to re-think and re-shape the internal functioning of the network based on the membership experience.

Organisation	Coordinator
A2G	Wenche Iren Warberg
Adelante	Paul Kurvers
AFID Diferença Foundation	Lutegarda Justo
APPACDM de Vila Nova de Gaia	Dulce Maria Feirreira Coutinho
Association of Vocational Rehabilitation Enterprises (AVRE)	Paal Haavorsen
Astangu	Marika Hass and Keiu Talve
Berufsbildungswerk Südhessen Gemeinnützige GmbH (BBW)	Carsten Rehbein
Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse	Jean-Claude Schrepfer
Comitato Regionale Lombardo AIAS	Gaetano Santonocito
Durapart AS	Grete Kristiansen/ Hiis Søftestad Hanne (since August)
Fagerh	Raquel Sécades
Fundación INTRAS	Pablo Gomez
Fundación ONCE	Ester Bueno
Kompetanseutvikling Grenland AS (GREP)	Anne Britt Holtren

GTB Flanders	Sophie Vandermarliere
Heliomare	Frank 't Hart
Josefs-Gesellschaft	Nina Louis
Institute for Rehabilitation-Republic of Slovenia	Jurij Svajger
LOS	John Anderskou
Luovi Vocational College	Mari Kontturi
MEREK - The Rehabilitation Centre of People with Physical Disabilities	Csaba Andor
National Learning Network	David Muldoon
Pluryn	Cees Jonkheer
RehabCare	Laura Keane
Stiftung Rehabilitation Heidelberg	Renate Bauder
TBG Learning	Michelle Mayo
Theotokos	Vaia Arsenopoulos
USEL (Ulster Supported Employment Ltd)	Arthur Savage
Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre	Natalja Markovskaja
Workshop "Panagia Eleousa"	Mina Kyziridi

## EPR Secretariat

The EPR secretariat is the main unit responsible for the development and implementation of the network's activities. Based in Brussels, the secretariat acts as the interface with EPR member organisations and with external stakeholders. It is composed of a core team of staff members and benefits from the additional expertise of external consultants. The members of the EPR secretariat speak most major European languages: English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Dutch.

Based in the heart of the European quarter in Brussels, the secretariat office provides its staff member with a pleasant and functional working space. The office includes a fully equipped meeting room, used for many EPR meetings and available to all EPR member organisations who wish to host an event in Brussels.



The following persons were part of the EPR Secretariat in 2012:

<p><b>Jan Spooren</b> <i>Secretary General</i> jan.spooren@epr.eu</p> 	<p><b>Laurence Meuret</b> <i>Financial Officer</i> laurence.meuret@epr.eu</p> 
<p><b>Claude Delfosse</b> <i>Project Coordinator</i> claudedelfosse@epr.eu</p> 	<p><b>Julie Buttier</b> <i>Communications/ PR Officer</i> julie.buttier@epr.eu</p> 
<p><b>Cinzia De Letis</b> <i>Project Assistant</i> cinzia.de.letis@epr.eu</p> 	<p><b>Marie Dubost</b> <i>EQUASS Coordinator</i> marie.dubost@epr.eu</p> 
<p><b>Guus van Beek</b> <i>EQUASS Key Expert</i> equass@xs4all.nl</p> 	<p><b>Donal McAnaney</b> <i>Senior Expert</i> donalmcaney@gmail.com</p> 
<p><b>Jan Albers</b> <i>Senior Expert</i> albers.jan@home.nl</p> 	<p><b>Dimitri Fatralis</b> <i>IT Expert</i> sysadmin@epr.eu</p> 

## VII. Financial Information

Item	Budget	Results (in Euro)
<b>Revenues</b>	<b>805 074</b>	<b>807 152</b>
Membership fees	398 750	390 500
EQUASS	246 625	183 939
Projects and Consultancy	145 699	210 115
Other Incomes	14 000	22 598
Extraordinary Incomes		
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>805 074</b>	<b>807 184</b>
Staff costs	360 580	374 174
EQUASS Operational Costs	155 000	124 176
Operational Costs Projects and Consultancy	55 618	99 165
Operational Costs EPR	95 500	97 005
Office Costs	104 500	99 922
Other Costs	33 876	12 743
<b>Balance</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-32</b>



## VIII. Membership

### Description of members

#### Full members

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# What is EPR?

## European Platform for Rehabilitation

### Vision

EPR contributes to a society where every person with a disability or other disadvantages accesses the highest quality services that create equal opportunities and independent participation in society. EPR intends to 're-think' and 're-invent' service provision as well as service-providers with the aim to match reintegration and participation of clients with the newest developments of a market driven by objectives and outcomes.

### Mission

The goal of the network is to assist its member organisations to achieve continuous professional improvement, best practice and sustainable growth in every aspect of service delivery to people with disabilities and other disadvantages (vocational training and vocational reintegration, employment, medical rehabilitation, social care and housing services). Through its Public Affairs activities, the association also intends to enable service providers to contribute to the formulation of European social policy and legislation, as well as facilitating access to EU funding.

### Values

- *Innovative and entrepreneurial pioneering*
- *Openness to share and exchange expertise, knowledge and information*
- *Solution-orientation*
- *Independence and neutrality*
- *Professionalism*
- *Partnership*

epr

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