

EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR REHABILITATION
The network of leading service providers to people with disabilities

NEWSLETTER

Special:

- **Calendar of EPR Activities in 2012**
- **EPR Annual Conference 2011**
- **VIP & AEGIS Closing Conferences**
- **Presentation of newest EPR members**

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Editorial



Dear EPR members,

With a particularly high attendance of about 150 enthusiastic participants at its Annual Conference in Athens, Greece, the EPR demonstrated how the international exchange of practices remains fundamental to rehabilitation professionals, even in challenging times. This Newsletter presents on page 9 a detailed report on this key event, as well as presenting and concluding how solidarity between EPR members has increased to a degree, which has far exceeded the EPR's expectations.

Furthermore, the Board adopted a strategic plan for 2012-2014, which clearly reflects where the EPR intends to proceed and what it wants to achieve over the coming years. The directors strongly endorsed the EPR's current concept, although took the opportunity to add new strategic directions and focus. Conducting further meetings, professional development activities and knowledge management via ICTs, are priorities which need to be invested in. Initiating joint business development between the EPR members, and pooling R&D resources within the network, are more adventurous innovations.

The strength of the EPR lies in the expertise of its members. In this respect, I am happy to

welcome four new organisations that become part of the EPR family as from 1 January 2012. Further on in this newsletter, you can find descriptions on these new members, although we hope you will have the opportunity to meet their professionals in person at one of the EPR's forthcoming activities. The implementation of the Centre Action Plans are at full speed, with a wide range of training and benchmarking actions scheduled in the first months of 2012.

On 31 December 2011, my term as EPR president will end, and Angela Kerins, CEO of the Rehab Group in Ireland, was elected to take over this position. I am fully confident the EPR will, under her leadership, continue to prosper and successfully double its mission in supporting its members, whilst remaining commitment to the enhancement of the disability and social services sector. By remaining a member of the Executive Committee, I will ensure continuity within the EPR. Holding the EPR presidency over the last two years has not only been an honour and a true pleasure, it was also a fantastic personal learning experience. I would like to thank you all for your support and contributions during this period, and wish everyone a wonderful and enjoyable Christmas break.

Bjørn Paulsen
EPR President

Calendar of EPR events 2012

January

- Balance Score Card System, Benchmarking Group, 30 January- 2 February, Brussels, Belgium

March

- EPR Research & Development Forum, 13-14 March, Brussels, Belgium
- Centre Coordinators Meeting, 28 March, Belgium (exact location TBC)
- EU Disability Policy, Training Seminar, 29 March, Belgium (exact location TBC)

April

- Services to people with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), Benchmarking group, 18-20 April 2012, Neuwied, Germany

June

- EPR Annual Conference, 27-28 June, Arendal, Norway

November

- Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach in medical rehabilitation, Action learning group, 22-23 November, University Rehabilitation Institute, Slovenia

List of meetings and events as known currently. In case of any changes you will be duly informed. It is advised to always confirm details of events with the Secretariat prior to attending.

For further information or registration, contact the EPR Secretariat:

Tel: +32 2 736 54 44, E-mail: claudio.delfosse@epr.eu, Website: www.epr.eu

News from the members

Mobility visit for Valakupiai Experts to the CRM in Mulhouse, France

Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre



On the 18th – 24th of September four specialists from the Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre visited Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse (CRM) - one of the largest centres in France; providing medical, social and vocational rehabilitation services. This is achieved through the implementation of the 2011 Leonardo da Vinci mobility project “Improving Competencies of Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists and Employers to Support Employability of Persons with Disabilities”.

The CRM was established in 1946 and currently has approximately 400 employees, providing services for people with physical disabilities, traumatic brain injuries (TBI), visual and learning disabilities.

During the visit, participants were shown the French education system and the vocational rehabilitation services that are provided at the centre; assessment of vocational skills and vocational orientation, vocational training and support into employment. The specialists of CRM presented innovative tools and methods, which are currently being used in medical rehabilitation, self-care services, assessment of driving skills and services for persons with TBI. The VRC staff were particularly surprised by pre-vocational training programmes, which assist and prepare people with disabilities for vocational training. Pre-vocational training in CRM includes the development of basic knowledge and skills – people with disabilities have the opportunity to learn French, arithmetic, accounting, logic and computer skills, according to their needs. Pre-vocational training could be provided to persons directly in the training class or through e-learning programmes.

CRM actively cooperates with different organisations and companies which employ people with disabilities. Members of the project visited the “Peugeot” company and social enterprise ESAT AFAPEI Bartenheim, which employs people with intellectual disabilities.

The visit facilitated mutual exchange of best practices, the development of international cooperation, advancing the qualifications of professionals’ working within vocational rehabilitation and the integration of people with disabilities into the labour market. The visit to one of the biggest French vocational rehabilitation centres gave the VRC staff the best opportunity, not only to look at innovative tools and methods in medical, social and vocational rehabilitation. Furthermore, the visit enabled the participants to gain a better understanding of the country, language, and culture, as well as to meet pleasant and hospitable people.

Europe visited the SRH Berufsbildungswerk Neckargemünd

Berufsbildungswerk Neckargemünd

At the end of September, Jörg Porath, chief executive officer of the Berufsbildungswerk Neckargemünd, welcomed the 12 EPR -Board of Directors, who each come from respected rehabilitation centres from 9 different European countries.



After discussing the topics of the meeting, the Board members visited the different departments of our centre, which incorporated vocational training, virtual vocational school, physiotherapy and residential options. A highlight of the visit was the dinner, which took place in the famous Heidelberg castle, followed by a guided tour of the castle rooms, which provided a fantastic view of the city.



Astangu involved in Social Fund Development Projects

Astangu

Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Center has carried out 3 European Social Fund development projects during the 2010-2011 period:

I. Implementing EQUASS Assurance in 7 organisations, providing rehabilitation services and setting up an Estonian Local Licence Holder.

II. Providing supportive employment rehabilitation programmes for 250 clients across Estonia, including the piloting of a new form of rehabilitation programme (content and finance), including the methodology used when assessing a client's need for rehabilitation services

III. Further development of the Centre

for Disability Related Information and Assistive Technology (PTAK), which was set up using ESF funding in 2008,

The wider aim of all these measures is to pilot and support the creation of a national system, which incorporates specific fields, together with The Ministry of Social Affairs.

All these initiatives have had positive results: we have obtained 6 EQUASS Assurance certificates from 7 pilots; 269 clients received services through rehabilitation programmes, this saw 53 employed, 79 retaining jobs, with 13 going on to study with the support of the programmes. PTAK has managed to become recognised by the national expertise commission and has analysed

the market of assistive technology. It is hoped that these 3 initiatives will carry on during the period 2012-2013 with the support of ESF funding. The final decision regarding funding is expected soon.

Furthermore, we have one new development project starting in January 2012—'Assessment of ability to work and development of work-ability', which aims to build up the capacity of trainers of Hamet and Hamet-e methodology (from Germany); assessing 400 clients across Estonia with the mentioned methods. and develop abilities to work for 40 Astangu's clients.

The EPR will welcome four new members in 2012!



EPR is getting new blood with the addition of four new members (1 full member - GREP - and 3 associate members), starting from the 1st January 2012.

GREP (Kompetanseutvikling Grenland AS) is a Norwegian rehabilitation and growth company, which offers rehabilitation, development, and monitoring of people who are entering the labour market. GREP has the largest VTA centre (permanent individually adapted jobs) of Norway, combined with a centre for health and rehabilitation. GREP deals with more than 1000 service users a year.

The **Rehabilitation Centre of People with Physical Disabilities**

(Mozgássérült Emberek Rehabilitációs Központja - **MERÉK**) provides rehabilitation services to people with physical disabilities. MERÉK is a leading Hungarian rehabilitation centre, and places integration and independence of people with physical disabilities at the centre of its programmes (medical, physical, educational, psychological, social, and vocational rehabilitation). MERÉK currently offers rehabilitation services to about 300 people.

GTB vzw is an NGO working in the Flemish speaking part of Belgium and specializes in guidance and professional integration for persons with a vocational disability. GTB is involved at the very first step of the process by designing individual guidance contracts with each service user. GTB also supports their clients to find other

organizations, enabling them to follow more intensive rehabilitation programmes or training. GTB sees about 10.000 clients every year.

Fundação AFID Diferença serves people with disabilities, children and elderly people. The organisation is located in the city of Amadora, Portugal, and currently caters for around 1300 people, 250 of which are disabled. The activities of the organisation are carried out in four different centres. AFID adopts a multidimensional and multidisciplinary approach, centred on the client by creating individual development plans. AFID also promotes community-based activities and intergenerational relationships.

Examples of cultural activities in Panagia

Workshop "PANAGIA ELEOUSA"



Theatrical Performance

The EPR Conference this year was held in the hotel "TITANIA" in Athens on 10 and 11 November 2011. The conference was co-organized by the Workshop "PANAGIA ELEOUSA" and the "THEOTOKOS" foundation of Athens, under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Culture.

The second day of the conference ended with the play: "MYTHICAL GREEK ROUTES - THE RETURN OF ODUSSEUS TO ITHACA" which was performed by the drama class of the trainees of the Workshop PANAGIA ELEOUSA. The performance involved 30 young people with mental disabilities and 7 employees. It was held at the Acropol theatre and was attended by participants of the conference and friends of the Workshop "Panagia Eleousa."

The performance allowed our young trainees to communicate and express themselves, and to demonstrate that they are very much part of our society, that they need us as much as we need them for different reasons, and that every individual is valued and possesses unique qualities.

Our young trainees once again showcased their acting skills, which was met by rapturous applause from the audience. The performers sent the message that they can play their theatrical role as well as their social one, so long as they are given the opportunities by society and the state.

Choir

The Workshop "PANAGIA ELEOUSA" in the framework of celebrating the 'World Day for People with Disabilities', organized a round table at Papastratio Hall in Agrinio on 3 December.

The theme of the discussion was "Social Welfare - The acts of charity and philanthropy are valuable now more than ever in the social crisis today." The debate involved prominent personalities from our region.

After the discussion, the event concluded with a performance from the choir of twenty young trainees from the Workshop "PANAGIA ELEOUSA", which forms part of a new cultural activity for our users. The choir performed Greek poetry songs along with Christmas carols, which was very well received by the audience.

This attempt to establish a choir was based on the trainees' love for music, which enables them to express themselves. Not only does this activity open a new opportunity to nurture talent, but also provides a chance to further their socialization and awareness of the local community.

Public Affairs

EPR publishes paper on Quality Approaches in Social Services

EPR recently published a new analytical paper in order to provide an overview of the current quality approaches of different actors at the European level in the policy influencing process of the social services. The paper aims at identifying the key European actors in the policy making process on quality in the social sector and their approaches on quality, as well as the other relevant international approaches on quality which have been used in the social sector.

The paper concludes on the importance of common guidelines and principles for all the stakeholders involved, and the need for a systematic approach to quality management.

The paper and his set of annexes are available for EPR members in the "Public Affairs section" of the EPR website, www.epr.eu.

EPR becomes co-founder of the largest social services network in Europe

Social Services Europe

On 12 December, a new European network named 'Social Services Europe' was launched. The overall aim of the network is to strengthen the profile and position of social services, and to promote the role of not-for-profit social service providers throughout Europe. During the first General Assembly held in Brussels, the Presidents and Secretary Generals of seven major Europe-wide networks of not-for-profit providers of social and health care services, signed the statutes of Social Services Europe. Besides the EPR, EASPD, FEANTSA, Solidar, Eurodiaconia, CEDAG and Workability Europe were present around the table.

The members of Social Services Europe have an impressive membership and track record in providing value-driven services for the most vulnerable in our societies. Recognising the mounting pressure on service providers around



Europe, Social Services Europe aims to ensure that the specificity of not-for-profit social and health care service providers is recognized, and that adequate economic, social and legal conditions are put in place for quality social and health care services.

"Following the increasing demand for our input in consultations and in public fora, we decided to transform our fruitful informal co-operation over the last years into a formal grouping"

explained Jan Spooren, Board member of Social Services Europe and Secretary General of EPR. He continued: "Pooling public affairs capacity, exchanging views and enhancing the representativeness will strengthen each of the members of Social Services Europe, at the same time respecting the own identity and agenda of all partners".

Social Services Europe has an important contribution to make to the overall success of the EU 2020 strategy and in addressing the social impacts of the present crisis. Major areas of concern will be the current debates around Europe 2020, the European quality framework for social services, state aid, public procurement and social innovation. It is generally recognized that a current drive exists for providers of health and social services to make an impact on the development of EU strategies on SSGI.

Knowledge Management Centre

Congratulations to HeadsUp, winner of the Innovation Prize



The 3rd EPR Innovation Prize crowned the HeadsUp project as the winner for 2011. HeadsUp is run by the Rehab Group, and aims to reduce the number of youth suicides in Ireland.

Collette Ryan, HeadsUp Project Manager, came to present this outstanding project at the Innovation Prize Awarding Ceremony, coinciding with the EPR Annual Conference 2011. She explained to the attendants how HeadsUp adopts an approach which promotes mental health in order to interact with young people before they reach a point of crisis. HeadsUp tries to prevent youth suicide by intervening with the target group (15-24 years) as early as possible, increasing their resilience by teaching them essential life skills, highlighting where to go for help and advice, and de-stigmatising mental health. Moreover, HeadsUp actively encourages and seeks the involvement of young people in the design, delivery and promotion of the project, to ensure it meets the needs of the age category.

Visit the project website at www.headsup.ie for more information.

Centre Action Plans (CAPs)

Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary Approach in Medical Rehabilitation



This action learning group met in Mulhouse, France, on 24-25 November 2011, in order to discuss collaborative strategies, which involved key personnel from multiple disciplines and organisational units within the Centres and the related community providers.

The training (the first of two meetings) laid the initial ground work to enable participants to gain a greater understanding of the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary process within their centre. The meeting incorporated and addressed a patient/customer orientated approach, knowledge on how to make better use of resources, greater clarity on the case management function, how to implement improvement in cross-departmental co-operation within the mother organisation, and improvements in the continuity of service provision (internally and externally), as well the adoption of an enhanced user-friendly service provision.

The next meeting will take place in Slovenia in November 2012.

Benchmarking on Services to People with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

The Heliomare Centre kindly hosted the initial session of this benchmarking group at their premises, on the 25, 26 and 27 October 2011. The benchmarking session focused upon the current approaches used by participating organisations in their service provision to people with traumatic brain injuries. The current approaches being used incorporate the fields of medical, educational/vocational and social/care.

The seminar was attended by representatives from 6 EPR member organisations, who have become engaged in this action as part of their Centre Action Plan. The meeting, facilitated by the expert Jan Albers, combined discussions and

site visits in order to strengthen the practical approach and effectiveness of the learning process in rehabilitation.

The benchmarking group focused on various areas of rehabilitation, which included elements of medical, vocational and social rehabilitation. By endorsing this interactive approach, it allowed participants to share experiences, methods and techniques, encouraging constructive bilateral relationships in order to foster the development of synergies between centres. The next meeting will be in Neuwied, Germany, on the 17-20 April 2012.

Training Seminar on Services to people with Mental Health Problems

The two day training seminar - kindly hosted by INTRAS, EPR Spanish Associate Member, on 21-22 September 2011 - reflected the growing interest and need for people with mental health problems to become a focus group for EPR members. The seminar addressed the present insufficiency of specialised services throughout Europe to assist people with mental health problems, whilst highlighting the benefits that would be gained from deploying specific approaches and methodologies.

The first day involved a review of current practices and experiences, which allowed for an exchange in the skills learnt thus far. The second day involved visits to different INTRAS sites, which provide a wide variety of services to their clients. This enabled participants to witness first-hand the range of assistance available, allowing for questions and queries to be answered.

To consult the presentation given during the seminar, visit the "Professional development" section of the EPR website, www.epr.eu.

Outcome Measurement in Medical Rehabilitation (OMMR)

The latest meeting of the benchlearning groups on OMMR took place in Athens, Greece, on 10 November 2011. It was designed to ensure activities previously undertaken within this category were completed, by analysing the data gathered, and to make further recommendations from the results obtained.

The seminar resulted in the development of appropriate methodologies, in order to compare the outcomes of

medical/therapeutic interventions and to create a comparative assessment into the current practices in each centre.

The seminar also allowed the group to generate a meaningful discussion on the key recommendations needed for further improvement, enabling the methods and advantages of outcome measurement to be better understood and to provide greater clarity on their use.

Benchmarking on Quality within the EQUASS Framework



On the 4 and 5 October 2011, 16 participants from 11 organisations and 5 European countries, participated in a training seminar on the benchmarking of quality within the EQUASS framework. This event was kindly hosted at the RehabCare headquarters in Dublin, Ireland.

Participants were given the opportunity to learn about the experiences from other centres also complying with EQUASS quality principles; learn how to overcome specific challenges encountered with EQUASS certification, and find the most appropriate strategies to achieve goals.

Additionally, participants gained insight from the concrete examples and approaches provided, which were designed to improve an organisation's practices in the areas covered by EQUASS, and to boost their EQUASS score by engaging in international benchmarking. All the presentations given during the seminar can be accessed via the "Professional Development" section of the EPR website, www.epr.eu.

Outcome Measurement in Vocational Rehabilitation (OMVR),

The benchlearning group on OMVR concluded on the 9 November 2011 with a meeting in Athens, Greece. The seminar resulted in the comparison of outcome indicators that are being currently used within the participating centres. Furthermore, the seminar looked at the formulation of key recommendations and the adoption of an improvement plan for the outcome measurement approach. The improvement plan is to be integrated by each centre.

Our Engagement in Internal Change Processes: It is Our Professional Life!

This two day training seminar took place in Brussels on 26 and 27 September 2011, and was attended by representatives from 6 EPR member organisations. The aim of the training was to enable participants to learn new methods and develop appropriate mind-

sets, to meet the ever increasing demands and challenges encountered by their organisations, in an environment that is constantly changing.

This innovative training session addressed the need to renew and modernise established and well known processes, in order to ease the burden

placed upon professionals and staff alike.

To learn more about this challenging topic, consult the "Professional Development" section of the EPR website, www.epr.eu, and download the presentations given during the seminar.

EPR Annual Conference 2011

The EPR Annual Conference has been a great success this year again, thanks to the outstanding commitment of our two co-organisers, the Theotokos Foundation and the Workshop Panagia Eleousa.

The conference was hosted on 10 and 11 November 2011 in the great city of Athens, Greece. The winter coldness of Athens did not prevent the participants from fully engaging their minds on the two predominant themes of the conference. Day 1 was dedicated to meeting the increased interest in reintegrating young people with disabilities, and Day 2 shed light on the role of professionals in rehabilitation services. Both themes were equally important on the members' agenda in 2011, and combining them was a way to increase the value and impact of the conference.

In keeping with the usual and efficient Annual Conference format, both days were filled with a combination of keynote speeches, workshops and satellite meetings. The programme left ample space for the participants' to become involved in discussions, with a discussion panel and a round-table session. Among the speakers were high-level representatives from the Greek ministries, Yannis Vardakastanis, President

of the European Disability Forum and some well-loved favourites like Fred McFarlane, Guus van Beek or Jan Spooren.

With a very high attendance of nearly 150 participants, the Annual Conference proved again to be the most important event for professionals to share expertise and to meet with fellow professionals and friends from other countries, who attended the conference despite the unstable situation of the host country at that time.

Participants experienced the warm-hearted hospitality of Greece at the exuberant conference dinner, filled with traditional music and dance. A theatrical performance by Panagia Eleousa clients and staff members, ended the event on a bright note (more information on the theatre play is available page 5).

Visit the Conference webpage at <http://www.epr.eu/index.php/about-epr/annual-conference/267> to consult the extensive conference report, to download all the presentations given during the event, and to browse through the picture gallery.



Annual Conference 2012 Quick Facts

WHEN: 27 - 28 June 2012

WHERE: Strand Hotel Fevik, Norway (close to Arendal, in the north of Norway)

WHO: Durapart



Projects

AEGIS Final Workshop & Second International Conference

AEGIS Open Accessibility Everywhere: Groundwork, Infrastructure, Standards

The EPR assisted the AEGIS project in organising its final Workshop and 2nd International Conference, entitled "Accessibility Reaching Everywhere", on 28-30 November 2011 in Brussels. The event was designed to bring together both end-users (people with disabilities) as well as platform and application accessibility developers, representative organisations, the Assistive Technology industry, and policy makers. This 3-day event came ahead of the European Day of People with Disabilities.

The workshop on 28 November focused on the realisation of the AEGIS project and offered attendees the opportunity to try out the material created through the project. The displayed products remove the barriers in accessing desktop, mobile and web applications, and are open source based as well as being freely available.

The conference on 29-30 November gathered a wide array of experts, end-users and their representative organisations, designers and developers, as well as gatekeepers (service providers) and local, national and European policy makers from 28 countries, to discuss scientific and policy developments in accessible technology and to showcase relevant projects in the area of assistive technology.

Conference participants were also invited to visit the AEGIS exhibition stands, where commercial and non-profit organisation showcased a wide variety of products and research. Further accessibility related initiatives were presented via a poster exhibition.

The conference ended with the AEGIS Awards Ceremony, during which the best poster, the best accessibility project and the best paper were selected by their peers.

The three-day event, which included key note speeches from Jan Spooren, EPR Secretary General, and Jan Albers, EPR Senior Expert, proved to be an outstanding platform for EPR and the AEGIS project to present, not only the AEGIS work, but also many relevant initiatives from across the world that relate to Assistive Technologies. The event also involved high-level speakers, most notably Ms Stevens, Senator and Flemish Member of Parliament, and Mr Paul Timmers, the Head of Unit of ICT for Inclusion in the European Commission, both of whom were given the honour of officially opening the AEGIS exhibition.

For more information, consult the conference website www.epr.eu/aegis and the AEGIS project website www.aegis-project.eu.



Helga Stevens, Flemish MP, and Jan Spooren at the opening of the AEGIS exhibition.



The Conference successfully showcased the results of the AEGIS project.



EPR Members get involved in a large partnership on Social Dialogue in the social services sector

PESSIS Project

Eight EU networks of various social service providers have agreed to jointly apply for a project concerning the framing of social dialogue in the sector of social services, from the perspective of not-for-profit employers. The PESSIS project is financed by the European Commission, in particular, by the unit of Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue in DG Employment. The project will have a strong focus on long term, personal care services, mainly services to the elderly and the disabled.

Despite the growing importance of social services, there is a lack of qualitative and quantitative data on labour issues in the sector from the perspective of employers. This project

aims to better understand the barriers in order to enhance cooperation among employers in the sector, and to ensure participation in social dialogue can become a reality in the future. In most Member States, a common framework enabling employers to exchange experiences, and find solutions to common problems, is rare or non-existent. This project aims to update the existing information and data in 12 EU Member States, identifying practices and experiences which might help the sector to better organise itself and become employer representative.

From the side of EPR, URI (Slovenia), Luovi Vocational Institute (Finland) and

Panagia Eleousa (Greece) are involved as National Contact Points. They will gather information and experiences in their respective countries, and contribute to the comparative discussions at the European level.

A kick off meeting with all partners will be hosted by EPR on 9-10 January, and the final conference will take place on 21-22 June 2012 in Brussels. Seen from the long-term perspective, the outcome of the project intends to help the sector structure itself at the national level, helping it to assume a role in social dialogue at the European level, which is appropriate to the economic and social contribution of the sector.

EPR Active Inclusion of young people with disabilities and health problems: meeting of national experts

Eurofound Project



On the 2 December the EPR held a meeting which brought together the partners and experts from 11 countries participating in the research project on Active inclusion of young people. This is a project funded by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). Participants reviewed the findings contained within the national reports, with the view of

progressing forward with a consolidated report on the status of active inclusion in the European Union. The research carried out exposed the alarming relevance of the topic, highlighting the increasing number of young people out of employment, education or training, and who are in receipt of benefits within many countries. It also brings to light the current challenges, but also good practices, related to the active inclusion of this target group. The deliverables will be available on the website of the Foundation in 2012.

ATIS4All project connects to Cloud4All

The final results of the ATIS4All project will be linked to the findings of the newly launched project Cloud4All. Cloud4All aims to develop a completely new paradigm in accessibility, by replacing the adaptation of individual products and services for a person (2nd generation concept), with automatic-personalisation of any mainstream product or service a user encounters, using cloud technologies to



activate and augment any built-in accessibility the product or service has (3rd generation concept), based on a profile of the user's needs.

For more information about this revolutionary project, contact Julie Buttier at julie.buttier@epr.eu.

Vocational integration of persons with disabilities in Romania Closing Conference

The three year VIP project drew to a close with the final conference in Bucharest, which took place on the 24 -25 October 2011. The final conference highlighted the momentous progress made in the past three years, which saw intensive collaboration between EPR experts and Romanian professionals (from three different localities), but also to reflect upon the long-lasting close ties and partnerships which had been fostered.

The project which was aimed at improving the integration of people with disabilities within the Romanian labour market, primarily through the review of the pre-existing legislative framework, the development of competent services and the training of professionals. The National Learning

Network, the Rehab Enterprises and Pluryn demonstrated their expertise and ability to provide high-quality, focused and sustained expertise, in order to design and implement methods of vocational assessment, develop services for vocational preparation and training, employment enterprises and supported employment.

The final conference provided the opportunity to promote and commend the results of the project in front of more than 160 Romanian providers of services to people with disabilities, and representatives of local and national authorities. Stakeholders applauded the significant efforts made, evoking lively debates, and expressed further recommendations in order to

safeguard the significant results obtained thus far, and to ensure the sustainability of this vital project. Before the conference concluded, the EPR took the opportunity to reinforce their longstanding commitment and allegiance in supporting the Romanian partners, by emphasising the continuation of their services.

The project brought together professionals from the EPR network from different organisations and nationalities; their commitment led them through many unforgettable professional and personal experiences – a big thank to them!

This project was funded by the European Commission through the European Social Fund 2007-2013.



Left: Closing Conference in Bucharest, where the project consortium gathered one last time to present their results to Romanian stakeholders.

Right and below: Snapshots of the VIP project and the dedicated professionals who made it happen.



EQUASS Awarding Ceremony 2011



This year's EQUASS Awarding Ceremony was held in the framework of the EPR Annual Conference, organised in Athens, Greece, on 10 November 2011. The Awarding Ceremony took place during a Gala Dinner, where delicious Greek food, live music and dance were offered to the attendants.

Among all the organisations certified since the last Awarding event (November 2010), 18 came to receive their **EQUASS Assurance** certificate, with 7 receiving their **EQUASS Excellence** certificate. Many EPR members were represented during this prestigious ceremony. The following members received **EQUASS Assurance**: Astangu, Luovi, Berufsförderungswerk Hamm, JG-Group, Theotokos Foundation, RehabCare, Fretex Norge and Pluryn- REA College Nederland. The following EPR members and future members received **EQUASS Excellence**: C.R.M Mulhouse (UEROS Department), Workshop "Panagia Eleousa", National Learning Network, Valakupiai rehabilitation centre, Fundação AFID and URI - Vocational Rehabilitation Centres.

An extensive photo gallery is available on the EQUASS website, www.equass.be.



EQUASS Assurance reaches its 300th certification of the year

The dissemination of EQUASS Assurance has reached new levels, with more than 300 organisations becoming certified in 2011. EQUASS, at both Assurance and Excellence level, is currently present in 14 different European countries. EQUASS certified organisations serve above 80.000 users and employ more than 19.500 staff.



EQUASS in Practice: "Best practice" at the QALLL conference



The EQUASS in Practice project, led by EPR member AVRE (Association of Vocational Rehabilitation Enterprises) in Norway, who ran the project from 2008 until 2010, has been singled out for offering a best practice project in 2008, and for providing a successful European Project which delivered outstanding quality in the sector. More information about the project is available on the EQUASS website, www.equass.be.

EQUASS upcoming events

19-21 December 2011: EQUASS Excellence auditor training, Brussels, Belgium

16-19 January 2012: EQUASS Assurance auditor training, Olsberg, Germany

EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR REHABILITATION



The European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) is a network of leading European providers of rehabilitation services to people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups. EPR's member organisations are influential in their countries and stand for high quality service delivery in the fields of vocational education and training, reintegration, medical rehabilitation and social care.

EPR assists its member organisations in achieving continuous professional improvement, best practice and competitiveness in every aspect of service delivery. Through its Public Affairs activities, EPR enables service providers to contribute to the formulation of European social policy, and facilitates access to EU funding.

Recognised as an important player on the European scene, the network receives structural funding under EU's Life-long Learning Programme. EPR has a seat on EU's High Level Group on Disability and has participatory status with the Council of Europe. EPR cooperates actively with all key sectoral stakeholders.

EPR on the web!

For regularly updated information on EPR and its activities, please visit our website:

www.epr.eu

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EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR REHABILITATION

The network of leading service providers to people with disabilities

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