



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

# NEWSLETTER

## Editorial

### Special:

- Latest developments in EPR member centres
- Launch of Thematic Communities
- Innovation Prize
- Projects

### Sections:

Calendar of Events	[2]
News from members	[3-4]
CAPs Activities	[5-6]
Innovation Prize	[6]
EPR Annual Conference	[7]
Public Affairs	[7-8]
Projects	[8-9]
EQUASS	[9-10]



Dear EPR Members,

An interim evaluation during the summer has confirmed that most parts of the EPR Strategy 2012-2014 are implemented as planned. Following a recommendation from the Board, we will during the next 18 months even more focus on mutual learning within the EPR Network. Re-thinking established concepts and formats via international co-operation is still considered as a cornerstone of EPR activities, and necessary for continuous improvement. The great interest in the upcoming workshop for directors on 'Communication between leadership and staff in rehabilitation' should be seen in this context.

One of the most striking findings when evaluating the EPR activities is the success of the quality system EQUASS in 2013. For the first time since its launch in 2003, EQUASS is able to generate sufficient revenues from its certification activities to sustain and further develop the system. We estimate that about 450 social service providers throughout Europe will receive an EQUASS certification during 2013. As this large volume is mainly realised in Norway and Portugal, we still have to work hard on a wider dissemination. But much more important than numbers is the positive feedback from professionals and clients in those certified

organisations, who witness that EQUASS has made an actual difference on the satisfaction, quality and results of service delivery.

Next to quality, 'social innovation' has settled itself on the top of the EPR agenda. Broadly speaking, social innovation in social services can be described as the process by which new responses to social needs are developed in order to deliver better social outcomes and address new social challenges. They are considered to be innovative by their novelty, ability to improve the efficiency of pre-existing solutions and environmental, economic and organisational sustainability. The European Commission has for the years to come allocated substantial project funding to support social innovation. On 5 December, EPR will bring together some key persons in this area at the European level, to them engage in a discussion with EPR members on future opportunities for their services.

As usual, the last months of the calendar year in EPR will be very busy and important. Next to a revision of our governance model and various training activities, we will finalise our attempts to obtain structural funding from the European Commission. Although EPR will never be dependent on external financial resources, such structural funding would be a recognition of the leading role EPR plays at the European level, and would allow the network to initiate some new and ground breaking activities.

Jan Spooren  
 Secretary General



## Calendar of EPR Events 2013

- **Workshop for Directors** (hosted by Heliomare)  
2-3 October 2013, Zeeduin Wijk aan Zee, the Netherlands
- **Cooperation with Employers: staff skills in marketing and job finding**  
Training seminar, 5-6 November, Brussels
- **Mental health & recovery, thematic community**  
Webmeeting on project development, 25 October 2013, (10:00-12:00 Brussels time)
- **Technical assistance in home environment**  
Site visit, 27 November, Duisburg, Germany
- **Integral Performance Management (IPM)**  
Training seminar, 4 December 2013, Brussels
- **Centre Coordinators meeting/ Board of Directors**  
5 December morning, Brussels
- **Public Affairs Event on Social Innovation**  
5 December afternoon, Brussels
- **Mental health & recovery, thematic community, Services to Youth with mental health problems**  
Webmeeting, 13 December, (10:00-13:00 Brussels time)
- **Social firms**  
Site visit, 5-6 December 2013, Belgium (to be confirmed)

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*This list is subject to change and is regularly updated as new events are planned.*

Please consult EPR website for the most up-to-date information: [www.epr.eu](http://www.epr.eu) or contact EPR secretariat  
Tel: +32 2 736 54 44, e-mail: [claudio.delfosse@epr.eu](mailto:claudio.delfosse@epr.eu).

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## News from the members

### Second Special Education International Seminar in Vila Nova de Gaia

#### APPACDM

Following the success of the first edition, APPACDM Vila Nova de Gaia in collaboration with Dr. Costa Matos School Group, held the 2nd Special Education International Seminar in Vila Nova de Gaia under the theme “Symbiotic Structures and Dynamics: The importance of the Permeability and the Combined and Sustainable Diffusion in the Reconfiguration of Educational Practices”. This event, that happened on the 4th and 5th of July, aimed to create an opportunity for dialogue between lecturers and professionals in the Special Education field sharing and debating current issues concerning schools and the educational system itself, while searching for new ways of intervention and consolidation of knowledge.



### Project “WE ARE ABLE TO WORK 2020”

#### Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre

Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre (Lithuania) together with partners from Spain, Italy and Greece implements the project “We are Able to Work 2020” which promotes youth’s with disabilities active citizenship, in particular by promoting the involvement, in core EU policy making and implementation, and at the same time improvement of their employment possibilities.

During the project activities 45 young people with disabilities from Lithuania, Spain and Greece will participate in info sessions on the Europe 2020 strategy using the

method of the forum theatre. Later on creative workshop on personal branding and self-promotion through social media will be organized in order to gain skills on how to promote themselves and their competences in the real life and in the social networks. Finally these skills will be demonstrated shooting short video presentations. Project results will be disseminated by the number of national and international events: campaigning days on the skills of youngsters with disabilities in employment and in productivity, media campaign to promote the project and its principles, final international conference in Thessaloniki, Greece (March - April 2014).

The project is financed under Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission.



### The first certification of EQUASS Assurance in Lithuania Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre



In June 2013 the first organisation in Lithuania was awarded with EQUASS Assurance certificate. The scope of certificate of Siauliai Labour Market Training Centre includes services of vocational educational training for unemployed adults and vocational rehabilitation for people with disabilities.

This organisation provides services in north part of Lithuania and approximately 400 new service users and 30 staff members per year will benefit from the services that meet the requirements of EQUASS Assurance. "EQUASS quality mark guides us how to improve the

quality of services, grow and to deploy innovative solutions in our everyday activities" - says G. Martinaitiene the Head of vocational rehabilitation unit. Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre acting as a local license holder in Lithuania is working along with two organisations seeking for EQUASS certificate. It is expected that EQUASS will expand to other areas beyond vocational rehabilitation in Lithuania and that Lithuanian service users and stakeholders recognize the benefits from being certified.

### Inclusion - Opportunities for education and work: learn from the best Conference on 30 October 2013 in Karben near Frankfurt (Germany) Berufsbildungswerk Suedhessen (bbw)

BBW organises in its centre Southern Hesse bbw the Conference on Inclusion of young people with disabilities into labour market and in the whole society. Service providers, companies and public authorities will seat together to illustrate and discuss strategies and opportunities for successful processes of social inclusion. For more information, please contact Petra Vogt at [petra.vogt@bbwsuedhessen.de](mailto:petra.vogt@bbwsuedhessen.de)

## Welcome to the new member



EPR welcomes the Mariehjemmene Foundation (Marie Homes Foundation) as new associate member in July 2013. Mariehjemmene Foundation is a non-profit humanitarian organisation represented 17 institutions in Denmark. It offers housing and care services for people in need of help and support, including elderly people, people with mental health problems, physical disabilities, people with autism, drug abuse, social disabilities and acquired brain injuries.

The fundamental idea of the Mariehjemmene Foundation is to establish small homes – not institutionalised – offering

residents a safe and personal environment suitable for stimulating and supporting individual development, based on the needs of the person. This ideology was the fundamental starting point of the founder of Mariehjemmene, Mrs Rose Marie Rørdam Holm, in 1958 – and still remains the common and mutual guideline in the organisational strategies of today. In line with its Strategy plan 2013-2017 Mariehjemmene Foundation focuses on the improvement of the cooperation with other service providers and on the strengthening of the quality of Danish welfare services in all aspects. EPR wishes a successful cooperation with Mariehjemmene Foundation in the coming years!

# Centre Action Plans (CAPs)

## Launching the Thematic Communities More flexibility in Centre Action Plan activities

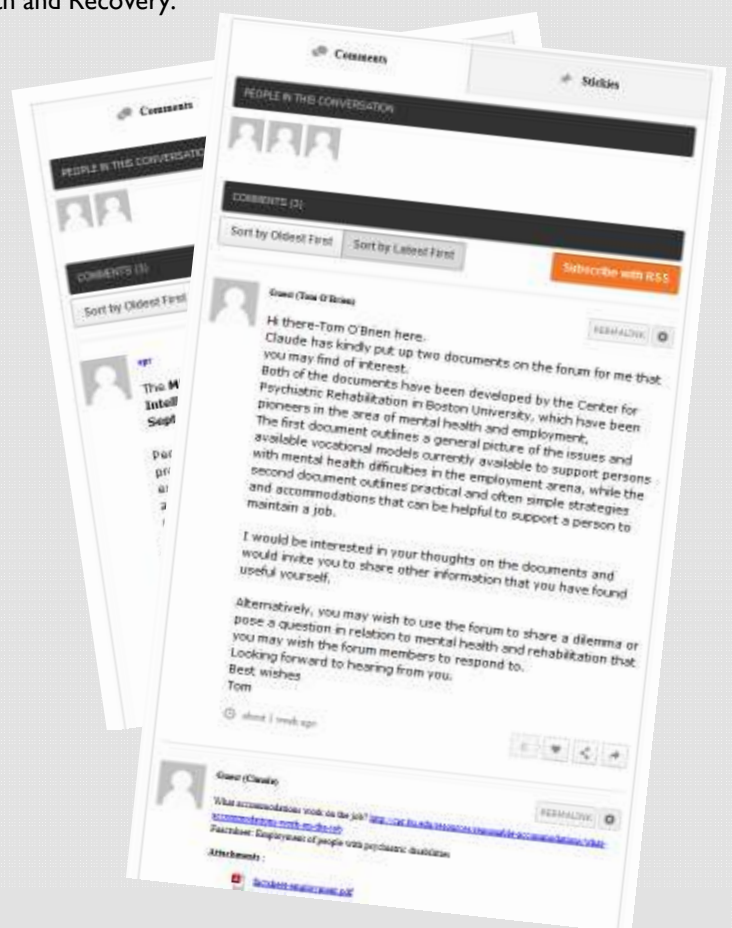
Under the CAP cycle 2013-2014, EPR proposed to its members the introduction of a new concept for joint action in the form of 'Thematic Communities'. The concept of Thematic Communities favors mid- and long-term cooperation of interested professionals. The thematic communities address substantial cooperation areas which attract a sufficient number of participants. They encompass a flexible combination of different activities on a specific thematic area, such as training seminars, site visits, web-based learning sessions, benchmarking, on-request advice, project development and input into the permanent online knowledge management platform. Since June 2013 EPR has set up two Thematic Communities, one on Cooperation with Employers and the other on Mental Health and Recovery.

### 1) Cooperation with Employers

Building upon the successful training seminar led by Mike Evans in June 2012, EPR has set up a Thematic Community on Improving relationships with Employers. The Thematic Community was launched in Dublin in June 2013, whereby the group of 20 participants from 11 EPR member organisations agreed on priorities in terms of focuses and activity formats. As an outcome of this start-up, the webpage of the Thematic Community has been open to participation of all, under the section "Work & employment" of EPR website. This page contains relevant learning resources and a Forum moderated by Mike Evans, where professionals can raise issues they face in their daily practice. Moreover, a training seminar will be organised on 5 and 6 November 2013 on "job finding and marketing skills". Two member organisations will benefit from in-house seminars, and a bench-learning meeting on "Partnership strategies with Employers" will be organised in 2014.

### 2) Mental Health & Recovery

EPR member organisations face a strong increase in the need for services to people with mental health problems. EPR supports them to develop state-of-the-art services in this Thematic Community led by Tom O'Brien, principal psychologist at EVE, Ireland. Upon request of the participants, a first training in the form of a webinar (web-seminar) was organised on "Facing the employers' concerns when employing persons with mental health problems" on 28 May. The section of EPR website dedicated to Mental Health offers a range of learning materials and the possibility to raise questions to Tom O'Brien and peer professionals in the Forum. In the coming months, the Thematic Community on Mental Health will address specialized services to Youth with mental health difficulties in a webinar on 13 December, led by the President of the European Association for Mental Health in Intellectual Disability, Johan De Groef.





### Person-Driven Planning in the transition process

The issues related to transition services for people with disabilities are complex and challenging as each individual moves from education and training programs to independent life, further education, employment and inclusion in society. EPR has organised for its member organisations two activities in 2013, in close collaboration with Dr Caren Sax and Dr Fred McFarlane, both leading personalities and professors at San Diego State University, USA. An introduction to Person-Driven Planning in transition was designed in the form of a recorded webinar, which is accessible on EPR website, in the section “Key concepts” < “Person-Centredness”. A benchmarking seminar was hosted by GREP, Norway, on 17-18 September, which gathered approximately 10 participants. Professionals benefited from the expertise of both professor experts, and had the chance to confront their rich respective experience.

### Blended learning

Several EPR members and service providers are increasingly offering to their clients distance (e-) learning modules in combination with more traditional (face-to-face) classroom training and on the job training schemes. The use of ICT in blended learning – this was the theme of interest for a group of education and training professionals present in Dublin in June 2013 for EPR Annual Conference. They seized the opportunity to spend half-a-day at National Learning Network and meet with Enda Connolly, e-Learning & Strategic Projects Manager. Enda presented the e-learning strategy of NLN, and offered a very concrete insight into NLN’s e-learning practices. He shared successful and less successful experiences in the implementation process, and made this moment a very learning session for the participants.

## Innovation Prize 2013

### Congratulations to Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre!



The 2013 edition of the EPR Innovation Prize awarded the Estonian organisation Astangu VRC, which presented the training programme “Give us a chance to expand your mind”. The programme aims to increase employers’ awareness about capacities and employability of people with disabilities, and encourage them to offer jobs and internship positions to Astangu clients. The training programme proposes to employers a visit of the rehabilitation facilities, workshops with rehabilitation personnel as well as meeting peer employers that are ready to share their positive experience of employing people with disabilities.

Astangu is happy to announce that the video is now available on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpRwjvly2VA>).

The first screening of the video took place in the EPR Annual Conference 2013 in Dublin where according to the feedback report it received the best presentation scores. The video has been made completely by Astangu staff, without the involvement of any professional video producers. They greatly enjoyed making the video and hope that the viewers will enjoy it at least as much as those who saw it at the conference!

The video is now available also on the EPR website, [Innovation Prize section](#).



## EPR Annual Conference 2013

The EPR Annual Conference 2013 has been hosted in Dublin on 10 and 11 June by EPR member RehabCare in association with the Irish Presidency of the European Union.

The conference gave to participants the opportunity to reflect on how demonstrate the added-value of social services in developing creative service models to promote quality of services to people with disabilities and better support equal opportunities and independent participation in society. The Annual Conference format, combining keynote speeches, workshops and speed presentations, drove discussions on the future of disabilities services and the role of service providers in designing new services on the basis of the client's needs.



On the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of EPR, the conference ended celebrating the added-value of the international cooperation as a driver for change and innovation, and look forward for new opportunities for cooperation.

The conference was well perceived by the participants as showed in the evaluation forms distributed during the event. Positive comments from EPR member organisations showed that the annual conference has some room for improvement, as the area related to the relevance of the topic, more focused on the actual needs and current trends of the members. EPR Secretariat in strict collaboration with its member organisations set up the Annual Conference Committee (ACC), which aims to review the members' wishes, increase the involvement and ownership of members regarding the annual conference, and ensure the highest quality and relevance of the conferences' contents.

The Annual Conference Committee 2014 has been set up with the voluntary participations of professionals from Josefs-Gesellschaft, Heliomare, Astangu VCR, AVRE, Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse and Marie Homes. EPR Secretariat in collaboration with Josefs-Gesellschaft and the ACC is working to welcome all of you to the EPR Annual Conference 2014 on 26-27 June 2014, in Cologne, Germany.

## Public Affairs

### EPR invited as expert for the Council of Europe

On 13 June, EPR presented the results of the study on the 'Impact of the crisis on the rights of persons with disabilities' to the Council of Europe. The 'Committee of Experts on the Rights of People with Disabilities' (CS-RPD) is an intergovernmental body for experts from 47 member states and some observers. People sitting on the committee come mainly from Ministries of Social Affairs, and they are all however well familiar with disability-related policies. The members of the Committee were in particular impressed by the scientific but at the same time practical approach that EPR used for the study. The Committee works on recommendations to member states, and intends to use the findings of EPR as a basis for its next paper on the challenges faced by regional and local authorities in their policies for people with disabilities.



## Manifesto for the European Parliament Elections 2014



EPR supported Social Services Europe in drafting the Manifesto for the European Parliament Election 2014 to invite the European Parliament to protect and support social and health care services and promote their strategic importance for the social and economic policy and for the well-being of the people of Europe. The Manifesto gathers 10 recommendations to put social and health care services at the heart of a stronger social Europe. It calls on prospective members of the European Parliament to commit to support the provision of social and health care services, in particular the not for profit sectors, by considering the recommendations.

The Manifesto strengthens the idea that every person is entitled to high quality, accessible, sustainable and affordable social and health care as and when they are needed and the European Parliament can use its powers to make that a reality. The need for such social and health care services includes but also goes beyond the needs of the most marginalized in our

communities and ensures the well-being of all. Social and health care services are essential throughout the life cycle and support integration and participation in everyday life for every person. Social Services Europe, bringing together nine Europe-wide networks of not-for-profit providers of social and health care services, calls for consultations and partnership to promote the role of social service providers in contributing to create a smart, sustainable and inclusive society by support the active participation of people benefiting from social services. The Manifesto is now available on [EPR website](#), in the Public Affairs section or on the [Social Services Europe website](#).



## Projects

On 17 and 18 September 2013 the ATIS4all and the ETNA networks hold the last joint workshop in conjunction with the AAATE 2013 Conference, organised in Vilamoura Marina, Portugal. EPR attended the workshop aimed to share the current progress of the two projects and discuss the roadmap towards the effective implementation of the two portals.

The initial vision of the two projects was creating a unique joint Web Portal on Assistive Technologies and inclusive solutions based on ICT (information and communication technologies). In the course of the projects, as tangible results gradually took shape, technical considerations and thoughts related to future sustainability led to the decision of having two distinct but coexisting portals, communicating with each other: the ETNA information system – a search engine that aggregates information from various providers and repositories all over Europe and beyond – and the ATIS4all collaborative portal – an open and collaborative portal that offers reliable information on ICT ATs, inclusive solutions and R&D initiatives, and fosters online discussion,

exchange of knowledge, expertise and sharing of information among its different portal members, which aims to benefit all the key actors in the chain value of ICT ATs and accessibility products (from research centres to the end-users).

The meeting was particularly meaningful as it prepared for the overall conclusion of the projects. The discussion among ATIS4all partners mainly addressed exploitation and dissemination strategies for the future sustainability of the ATIS4all Collaborative Portal. Partners are actively promoting the portal and inviting interested parties to join the community as simple user or supporters in order to share information and disseminate initiatives, best practices and case studies to a wide community. E

PR invites member organisations and partners to visit the [ATIS4all collaborative portal](#) and share feedback with the Secretariat

For more information about ATIS4All, please contact Cinzia De Letis at [cinzia.de.letis@epr.eu](mailto:cinzia.de.letis@epr.eu) or visit the project website [www.atis4all.eu](http://www.atis4all.eu)



## Learnabil-IT: Mutual Learning on skills for the ICT labour market for people with disabilities



EPR Secretariat sets its sails for a new European project on the field of ICT skills and employment! The project Learnabil-IT is funded by the programme PROGRESS of the European Commission contributing to the strategic goals of creating more and better jobs and offering equal opportunities for all. Learnabil-IT aims to promote the cooperation and mutual learning between the worlds of work and vocational education and training in the ICT sector, supporting a better labour skills match and a greater employability of people with disabilities in the open labour market.

The project brings together six EPR member organisations with a strong operational expertise in the field of education and training for people with disabilities (Astangu VRC, Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse, National Learning Network, Plurn, University Rehabilitation Institute, Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre) and, beside EPR, other two European organisations with a more international view in representing people with disabilities (European Network on Independent Living – ENIL) and employers (Business Disability Forum). EPR is pleased to wish good start in the coming months!



**EQUASS**

## PRIME partners meet for the final conference

On 24 October the partners in project PRIME (project for the implementation of EQAVET) meet for the last time.

In this final meeting they will present the results of their two years' work on Quality:

- ◆ They improved the quality of their VET services for people with disabilities through the implementation of the EQAVET framework.
- ◆ They increased their capacity and competences to implement the EQAVET framework in VET through training in self-assessment and internal auditing.
- ◆ They increased their knowledge through the exchange of experiences in implementing EQAVET framework via interactive workshops and bench learning.
- ◆ They have demonstrated in a cross-reference study that for VET-providers the EQUASS- Assurance certification program is an effective instrument to implement the EQAVET framework.

All partners ended their EQUASS-Assurance certification program with an external audit. In the final meeting they also demonstrate their quality assurance approach by using the building blocks of the EQAVET framework.



### DeSqual partners start with their kick-off meeting

On October 23 and 24 the partners in project DeSqual (Development of Sustainable Quality assurance in VET) will meet for the kick-off of their new project. This project is a collaboration of 4 Quality assurance expert organisations and 10 social service providers / VET providers for people with disabilities who will pilot a new developed training program for achieving sustainable quality assurance. With an EQUASS quality assurance certificate as a start partners will develop a training program that focusses on individual quality behavior and quality awareness of professionals and quality culture in the organisation. In this way project DeSqual will contribute to the sustainable implementation of EQAVET requirements in their quality system.

# DeSqual



## EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR REHABILITATION

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EPR on the web!

For regularly updated information on EPR and its activities, visit our website: [www.epr.eu](http://www.epr.eu)

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