

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

NEWSLETTER

Editorial

Special:

- Latest developments in EPR member centres
- Innovation Prize Winner
- Annual Conference
- Public Affairs
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Dear EPR Members,

It is with pleasure that I am writing my first editorial as Secretary General of EPR.

Although I have only been in office for two weeks, I have learnt much about the network. I am looking forward to working with the very competent team here in Brussels and supported by the board's expertise to deepen and broaden the network, in order to strengthen your capacities as members. I am convinced of the value that EPR brings members, and believe that in implementing the strategic plan we can further increase this value. I am also convinced that this value can attract many more actors from across Europe, and I will be prioritising engaging new members in the coming months, in order to achieve the strategic objective of an expanded and more balanced membership base.

In my former job I had the opportunity to work with EPR, including being active in the Prometheus project, and particularly within the Social Services Europe network. Social Services Europe is important for EPR in its public affairs activities, bringing together

the main pan-European not-for-profit social and health service providers, facilitating contacts with the EU institutions. EPR will take over the Presidency of this network in July. As the leader for six months, EPR will be working to ensure the profile and position of social services continues to be strengthened, and to promote the role and impact of not-for-profit social service providers in the EU policy arena. It will also enable EPR to raise its profile and the work that members are doing; in order to work towards our strategic objective to be seen as a leading network of service providers.

The strategic objective of a more structured, fixed menus of services can be seen in the focus of our activities in 2015 and more information about upcoming events will be available soon. One of our most important activities in the year is the upcoming Annual Conference. It promises to be a very interesting and informative conference, in a special location, and I look forward to meeting many of you there.

With best wishes,

Laura Jones

EPR Secretary General

News from the members

News from Heliomare

A Structural problems in financing education for severely children with disabilities in The Netherlands

Until 1st of January 2015 parents got money for the children who need intensive care in the classroom, as foreseen in the AWBZ (law). Since this year, those children, as soon as their indication expires, dependent of the Health Insurance Act, the long-term care Law, or of the municipality in the context of young and social support. All those laws have a different access: a municipality, a care office or a health care provider. As children go to school, the schools must also arrange extra care in the classroom. That is arranged through the partnership appropriate education. Parents with children with multiple disabilities are sent back and forth between all those authorities.

As Heliomare has special education as part of its services, parents have to negotiate about the use of their own care budget: students with multiple disabilities need more care than Heliomare's schools can offer. Those cares are expensive and do not fit to the education budget parents dispose. At the moment, Heliomare pays for these costs from its own budget but if no solution pops up the school has to close the doors for these severely disabled children. Heliomare and parents now try to inform and convince the funders of the need and advantages for these children to be able to go to school by informing the media about this unwanted situation. Latest news (9th of April 2015) Policy makers agreed with 9 of 12 motions that support the possibilities for these children to get education till they are 20 year old.



A new Information desk for brain related disease

Starting on 1st of March professionals can enquire about brain related diseases at the free BRAIN desk counter. The aim of Braindesk is to support people with diseases like TBI

(Traumatic Brain Injury), MS (Multiple sclerosis) and epilepsy, in a way that makes it possible for them to live as long as possible in their own familiar environment. Brains desk has employees specialized in TBI, MS and epilepsy. They support the visiting nurses by offering general information, advices or trainings. Heliomare answers questions about TBI, Nieuw Unicum about MS and Sein about epilepsy.

Major and council members visit Heliomare

Heliomare organized a centre visit for the major and council members of neighborhood councils to explain needs and (financial) sorrows that rose after the implementation of new laws.

In Wijk aan Zee, original main location of Heliomare, and Heemskerk (wood workshop location) explanation was given about the consequences of the new situation, furthermore the guests were invited to visit the workshop of Veel in Hout where clients make garden furniture out of old wooden pallets. Two clients explained the history of their TBI and the positive results of (vocational) rehabilitation and daily occupation as they receive currently. The aim of the visit was to convince the executives of the added value of the services that Heliomare offers to the specific target group allowing them to participate in the society.

Heliomare now is waiting for the final decision to be able to start in September 2015 an extra workshop in cooperation with another service provider for a broader target group including students of Heliomare education.



Irish Wheelchair Association - Independent Living Programme



In September 2014, 20-year-old Kayleigh McKevitt took part in an Independent Living Skills Course at The Carmel Fallon Holiday Centre at IWA, Clontarf. She tells Susan Dennehy why the experience was a real eye-opener

Kayleigh McKevitt currently lives at home in Walkinstown with her mam, dad, brother, sister and nephew. Like most 20-year-olds, she likes listening to music, going out with her friends and her boyfriend, and she dreams of having her own place one day. Born with cerebral palsy, Kayleigh uses a power chair full-time and has difficulty using her left hand. So far in her life, she has always had her family close by to take care of her, but living independently is something she knows she must learn to do.

"I hope it will happen. I would love to have my own space," she says. "Just to be able to watch whatever TV I want or to have a party and invite some friends over. It would also be really nice to have a place just the way I like it. For example, the other day I asked my mum if I could get some decorative skulls, as I am really into those at the moment, and Mum's answer was the same as usual, 'When you get your own place you can put them up!'"

An active participant in several IWA services, Kayleigh is a youth leader at The Youth Café and she takes part in the IWA Disability Awareness Workshops. "When I was asked if I would like to take part in a week-long, residential Independent Living Skills Course at IWA's Carmel Fallon Centre, I said I would – because I do want to live out on my own. When the letter came from IWA to say that I had a place, I was delighted."

Kayleigh had been to The Carmel Fallon Centre for holidays before. "I knew it was a very relaxed place with friendly, down-to-earth staff and lovely, spacious rooms." However, coming up to the date of the course, Kayleigh was feeling nervous and a little excited because she didn't know what the course was going to be like. "All I knew was that I would be taught the basic skills of living on your own, like how to manage your money."

In fact, according to Kayleigh, the course turned out to involve a combination of participants learning basic living skills with the assistance of the staff, and hearing advice and personal stories of independent living from guest speakers. "In terms of basic living skills, I feel like I did get some things from it," says Kayleigh. "It was really good to identify what I can and cannot do. I found out that I can manage money quite well and that I can use an ironing board."

Usually, it isn't really safe for Kayleigh to cook or use a kettle, because she often startles and might jump if she hears a loud noise, so she was delighted to make her own tea during the week. "I used a specially designed 'pour kettle' which doesn't have to be lifted because it tips itself, making it much easier." While cooking is still difficult, since doing the course Kayleigh has discovered that she can wash dishes quite well. Kayleigh adds, "There is one job that I don't like to do and find very difficult – folding clothes." She giggles, "But I won't lie to you, even if I could do it, I probably still wouldn't like it!"

A number of speakers came in to talk to the course participants during the week. Kayleigh found the advice given by Dolores Murphy, Housing Officer with IWA, very useful, but she was most impressed by Natasha Philips, also a wheelchair user, who talked about her apartment and her experience of living independently. "I could identify with her when she said she wanted to have her own life separate from her parents and I agreed with her that just because she can't do certain things doesn't mean she can't live alone. I asked her loads of questions and I learned a lot. For example she has a monitor on the wall so she can see who's at her front door. Security would be a concern for me, because being a wheelchair user I feel more vulnerable and would need that reassurance."

Kayleigh thinks that if you are interested in moving out this is a very good course to do. "You are on the go the whole week and so it gives you a flavour of what it would be like to have more responsibility. It also opens your eyes to what is involved in living on your own, like paying bills. It's a lot to take in. For me it was a little shock to learn what my family actually does for me, and I am very grateful to them. I now realise that moving out won't happen overnight. It is a process and it might take a long time but I do want it. After doing the course, I did go and get the forms. I haven't filled them in yet but I have taken the first step."

Marie Homes

New Marie Prize given to Working Environment Network

Possibly inspired by the EPR Innovation Prize, the Board of Directors of the Marie Homes in Denmark last year decided to initiate a new annual prize for an individual Marie Home or employees who have done an extraordinary effort for the residents in their Marie Home or the Marie Homes community at large. The overall idea of the 'Marie Prize' is to further strengthen the quality of life for all residents in the Marie Homes. The winners receive an amount of 10,000 DKK (€ 1,350) to enhance their efforts of quality of life improvements for the residents.

The first winners of the 'Marie Prize' were the two founders of a new **Working Environment Network** in the Marie Homes, *Anne-Mette Hansen* and *Maybritt Zola Christensen*. These two entrepreneurial women who are employees (and Working Environment Representatives) in two different Marie Homes on Zealand met at a public meeting on working environment issues – and they were both surprised that there was not any cross-organisational network on positive approaches to 'Health & Safety' and general working environment issues in the Marie Homes. Therefore, they immediately decided to form a network for their colleagues and managers.

With good support from their managers and the Marie Homes head office, they managed to call for the network's

first meeting in less than 4 months. And the meeting on how to improve job satisfaction and the psychosocial working environment had broad backing from all 17 Marie Homes. Building on this successful start, the next network meeting has already been planned.



"Working environment issues are central to all of us in the Marie Homes," says CEO of the Marie Homes, Bo Kristiansen, *"because who wants to go to work, if it makes you unhappy and doesn't give you job satisfaction and professional challenges? And the residents can definitely feel the difference between a happy*

The Meta Marie Home uses new assistive technology to improve quality of life

The Meta Marie Home in Vejle, Denmark, is a nursing home for 28 elderly people. In January 2014 they started an incontinence project to improve the quality of life of the residents, and minimize the medical and social complications of incontinence.

"The desire of the Meta Marie Home is to create an environment for a safe and good ageing, where values such as dignity and respect as well as high professional competence is the foundation for the care of the residents", says Karina Lange, Director of Meta Marie.

The inspiration to the project was found in the media's focus on the fact that people in nursing homes were

wearing too large diapers, resulting in health and mobility issues, economic problems, as well as environmental issues.

In order to assure the right care for the individual residents at Meta Marie, they have combined physical therapy and modern assistive technology. Meta Marie has tested the 'Wear&Care' system from Suma Care, which is a sensor system for diapers that monitors when a diaper change is needed as well as clarifies what size diaper is best suited for the user. The knowledge of the individual resident's daily rhythm also provides an overview of when it is most beneficial to offer toilet visits.

At Meta Marie combining physical therapy and the Wear&Care system have created many benefits.

The most important benefits are higher self-esteem and improved quality of life for the residents:

- All the residents using diapers have gone a minimum of 2 sizes down, which means higher comfort for the individual and less visibility of the diaper.
- It appears that there are fewer urinary tract infections – Meta Marie is preparing an evidence based investigation to verify this.
- The residents get better sleep because the personnel don't have to wake up residents to check their diapers – the sensor alerts the personnel when a change is needed. Also it is possible to wake up the residents that need to go to the bathroom, so they can sleep in a dry bed all night and don't have to worry about accidents.
- Some residents have stopped using diapers, others have got catheter instead. The care has been adapted to fit their needs. This has for some residents meant that they no longer have trouble with odor from urine, which has improved their self-esteem.



Furthermore there are also economic benefits:

- Approximate saving on the daily use of diapers per resident is DKK 39,50/€ 5
- Approximate saving on the monthly use of diapers per resident is DKK 1233,50/ € 164
- Approximate saving on the annual use of diapers per resident is DKK 14802 / € 1974
- There are also significant savings on waste disposal due to less waste

If you would like to know more about the incontinence project, contact Karina Lange at: kl@mariehjem.dk

To read more about Wear&Care, check out www.sumacare.dk



ONCE Foundation

Osdimet, the Disability and Labour Market Observatory



The improvement of policies for the labour inclusion of people with disabilities requires the existence of a systematic framework for the monitoring, assessment and analysis of their situation. On the one side, because the international legislation

and the European and national policies so determine it. On the other, because we are now in a severe crisis context that implies an important growth of unemployment rates and the increasing work instability for an important part of the working population. Both phenomena – unemployment and increasing labour precariousness – have a significant effect on people with disabilities and complicate the role of employment as essential tool for the social inclusion of this group.

These are the reasons that have taken the ONCE Foundation and FSC Inserta – in the framework of the Operating Program for the Fight against Discrimination co-financed by the European Social Fund – to join SIIS (Eguia Careaga Foundation Research Center) to develop the Disability and Labour Market Observatory (ODISMET in its Spanish acronym). This new observatory, through its website (www.odismet.es) allows users to access the main indicators regarding inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market, as well as some complementary products and reports.

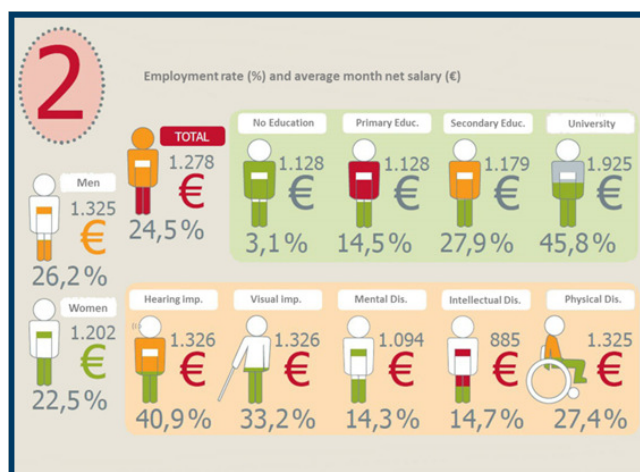
ODISMET aims to be the main reference for the analysis of employment of people with disabilities in Spain. It offers a dual approach:

- As a knowledge management platform open to public and private entities and professionals requiring this kind of information to design action plans, measure proposals or research;
- As a platform to raise awareness on the real situation of people with disabilities in the labour market, to highlight existing inequality and promote the implementation of measures to ensure the progressive decrease of those unequal situations.

Although the Disability and Labour Market Observatory is intended for any person interested in the analysis of the labour inclusion of people with disabilities, its main goal is to offer useful and relevant information to:

- People with a responsibility (political or technical) in those administrations working in the field of employment and labour inclusion of people with disabilities;
- People in third-sector entities working in social and labour issues, and, in general, in disability movement associations;

- Professionals from the disability field.
- Researchers, teachers and students interested in this field.
- The media;
- Companies interested in knowing the situation and measures promoting employment for people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities themselves, their families and relatives.



ODISMET offers the following products:

- Interactive database of employment and disability
- Database of compared policies on labour inclusion
- Virtual Library on labour inclusion of people with disabilities.
- Bimonthly Newsletter
- Monographic and Annual Reports
- Custom search engine

Website: www.odismet.es (only in Spanish)

Usel Trainees Celebrate Employment Success

Derek Baker, Permanent Secretary, Department for Employment and Learning today awarded participants their certificates for successful completion of the S.T.E.P. “Skills Training for Employment Progression” training programme.

Part funded by the European Social Fund and delivered by USEL (Ulster Supported Employment Ltd) the S.T.E.P. programme is specifically designed to address long-term unemployment and tackle barriers to employment by assisting people with disabilities and health related conditions move into the workplace.

The programme offered up to six months fully paid work placements with local employers. Participants to date have benefited from accredited training opportunities, skills acquisition, job match and the in-work support services necessary to gain and

sustain paid employment. Many individuals who had previously faced considerable barriers to employment have been provided with the opportunity to gain employment skills and work-related qualifications which has enabled them to move into permanent paid employment.

At the event held at the Scullery at Crumlin Road Gaol, Derek Baker, Secretary, Department for Employment and Learning commented: "I would like to congratulate all the trainees who have received awards today. The S.T.E.P. programme continues to prove hugely successful and USEL are to be commended on their delivery of the programme."

"Through its own diverse workforce, USEL is helping to demonstrate the role that people with disabilities have to play in growing the local economy, and giving inspiration to others that they can achieve their own employment ambitions. The Department for Employment and Learning fully supports the role USEL plays in the local community and especially its contribution to the employment and

employability of people with disabilities."

Sam Humphries, Chief Executive, USEL commented "The on the job work experience complemented with the opportunity to acquire accredited training qualifications has proven to be a great success. Individuals who had previously faced significant barriers to finding a job have become more motivated, confident and self-aware of their own potential based on their experience and qualifications."



Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre, Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre Change Management in Social Services Sector

VRC and Astangu VRC participated in a training program for managers facilitated by Fred R. McFarlane, Ph.D., who is Professor Emeritus and Co-Director of the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University.

During the 2 sessions the training program combined theoretical information with practical change initiatives proposed by the participants of the training. The first training session took place in October 2014 in Tallinn, Estonia, the second session was held in March 2015 in Vilnius, Lithuania.

During the second session, the training participants gained knowledge about building and strengthening a culture of retention and engagement, discussed individual and organizational change and measureable outcomes, discovered the balance between leading and managing, change leadership and management, system-centric and person-centric models for policy and change initiatives as well as working on consistent messaging, communication throughout the organization and employee engagement, not to forget transforming and strengthening organizational performance within the work field.

After the training, the participants reflected that it had been great pleasure learning with Ph.D. Fred R. McFarlane.

"He was our guide in this road, always urging us to keep focus on own vision in engaging all employees in own mission".

Astangu and VRC are both concerned in providing high quality social services for people with disabilities. Mutual training during these two sessions helped develop a tight partnership and understanding as well as developing each other's strong sides and improving challenging issues. The participants have exchanged experiences which definitely will be used to improve both VRC and Astangu services in the future. This training has been implemented with the support from the Baltic-American Freedom Foundation (BAFF), United States Embassy Vilnius.

For more information about BAFF scholarships and speaker support, visit www.balticamericanfreedomfoundation.org.



Professional Development Activities

Visit to GTB Flanders



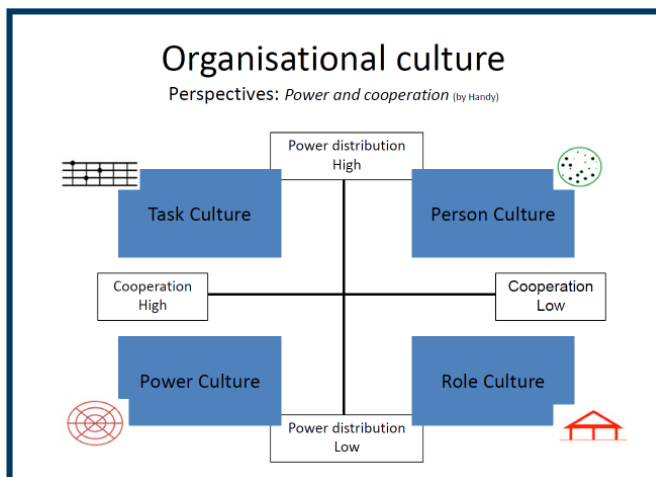
On 4 March 2015, GTB Flanders opened its door to EPR Centre Coordinators who gathered in Belgium for their annual Coordinators meeting. GTB is recognized by the mainstream Flemish Labour Office (VDAB) as the specialized partner for guidance and professional integration for persons with a vocational disability. They have about 10.000 clients every year who pass the mainstream and inclusive entrance of the local job shop to find their way as a disabled jobseeker.

Coordinators were provided with explanations about GTB functioning and their collaboration with the Labour Office in providing employment services. GTB also presented the DUOday practice as “DO-day” for job seekers who have more trouble finding work because of poor health or a disability. GTB presented this initiative as an example of the strong collaboration they have with other stakeholders, in particular with companies, social organisations, governments and local authorities.

Training Seminar on “understanding and assessing organisational and quality culture”

The culture of an organization is the embodiment of the leading principles and opinions, core values, behaviours, attitudes, rituals and symbols that collectively contribute to the daily operations of its employees. Organizational culture is the very essence of how work is accomplished; it matures over several years, during which norms are passed on from one “generation” of staff to the next. Over the last decade interest in organisational culture has grown rapidly in the Vocational Rehabilitation Sector and in social services. It is also considered to be a crucial topic in healthcare organisations.

On 5 March 2015, EPR Centre Coordinators attended a training seminar on the topic of organisational culture (and specifically in quality cultural aspects). The seminar, held by the expert Guus van Beek, focused on the different existing organizational culture models and on the instruments and methodologies available to assess the organizational culture. During the seminar participants had the opportunity to reflect and assess the organizational culture in their own centres and discuss on strategies and opportunities for desirable cultural changes.



Annual Conference 2015

“Bridging the Gap” - Matching services to persons with disabilities with labour market needs, is the title of the EPR Annual Conference 2015 that will take place in Valencia, Spain on 28 and 29 May.

This year the Conference is dedicated to the common challenge faced by EPR member organisations in building successful collaboration with employers to create a better labour and social inclusion for people with disabilities. Service providers and their professionals still struggle to correctly understand the needs of companies and the specificities of a business environment. The EPR Annual Conference 2015 will provide a unique occasion to discuss employment and service trends with regards to people with disabilities: “How do employers’ expectations meet with service providers offers?”

During the first day, the participants will have the opportunity to explore the needs of the labour market from the point of view of employers’ networks. The conference will then allow participants to learn about innovative projects that have been successfully implemented by EPR Members to tackle the current low rates of employment of people with disabilities in close cooperation with employers. In the afternoon, the “Ateliers” will offer concrete training to explore different methodologies and approaches to innovate

the service provision in the field of collaboration with employers and other topics. On the second day, participants will be given the opportunity to discuss on learnings and proposals to support employers in order to jointly boost the inclusion of people with disabilities in the future.

This Conference is hosted by the ONCE Foundation, and it is partly co-funded by the European Social Fund within the framework of the Spanish Operational Programme “Fight against Discrimination 2007-2013”, which runs until 2015 and by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007- 2013).

For more information on the programme consult the Annual Conference webpage on the EPR website.



Innovation Prize 2015

Congratulation to RehabCare for winning the Innovation Prize

The initiative “Dundalk Football Supporters Club” submitted by Mr Stephen Caraher. The initiative was selected by Centre Coordinators amongst 15 candidates as the most innovative practice, with a high level of benefits and added value for its target group.

The practice is about community involvement and engagement of RehabCare clients who expressed the desire to support the local football team in its season matches. RehabCare built the relationship with Dunkalk Football Supporters Club to discuss and design clients individual Person Centred Plan. This successful collaboration allows clients to become members of the Dundalk Football Supporters Club, to travel around Ireland for the away matches and follow the entire football season without the support of RehabCare staff.

Mr Stephen Caraher will present this selected best practice in a plenary session at the EPR Annual Conference 2015 and will be awarded with the prize. A full description of the practice will be published later on EPR website, Innovation Prize section.

Knowledge Management

Use of ICT in EPR activities

The use of information and communications technology (ICT) has become increasingly widespread in all aspects of our societies. If at one time, ICT solutions were mostly targeted at big businesses, major universities and governments, today smaller organisations like EPR can fully benefit from tailor-made ICT solutions, at a much more reasonable cost and for a wider range of activities.

Achieving an enhanced use of ICT in EPR professional development activities was one of the objectives set out in the strategic plan 2012-2014. The target of 25% of EPR activities (partially) conducted via ICT has been largely met. In 2014 EPR organised 4 online trainings on different topics and with the involvement of external experts, 3 expert meetings on the exchange of good practices under the Learnabil-IT project, 1 benchmarking meeting on outcome measurement on vocational rehabilitation and a series of organisational meetings for the EPR Annual Conference. 124 EPR professionals attended those meetings with a high level of satisfaction.

This positive experience shows that ICT have a definite role to play in two key areas of work for EPR. On the one hand, the regular activities of EPR can benefit from the introduction of ICT-based meeting solutions and allow members to increase their participation and reduce the costs. On the other hand, ICT greatly influence and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and the networking between members, in particular via an increased interactivity of the EPR website.

In 2014 EPR proposed three integrated we-based platforms as lighter, more focused, and interactive way to display and optimally use the expertise available within the EPR network by stimulating the exchange of information and best practices. The platforms, hosted on EPR or EQUASS website, are fully accessible and feature moderated fora and specific resources. EPR created the platforms with the financial support of the European Commission PROGRESS programme.

EPR offers a new service to its members: Webinar software

In 2012, EPR purchased a subscription to “GoToWebinar”. GoToWebinar is an easy-to-use webmeeting service, allowing up to 1000 people to meet online an unlimited number of times, to speak, work collaboratively on documents, share presentations and audio-visual material with high-definition and in real time. “GoToWebinar” features different interactive sessions that the audience can use to ask questions, “raise the hand” to intervene in the discussion, answer polls and surveys.

After a trial use of the software, EPR is now offering to its members the possibility to organise online meetings and seminars by using the EPR subscription to “GoToWebinar”. EPR staff will support members during the entire organisational process and provide technical assistance during the broadcast. This service is offered to full and associate members within the standard service package (as described in the new strategy 2015-2017).

Why Host a Webinar?

Professionals use webinars to give presentations. It could be a one-way type of broadcast where one person simply hosts a lecture or seminar, training sessions, workshops, or it could be used to promote discussion and questions asked from any viewers. Webinars are also helpful tools for conducting live interviews with other professionals, which are often attractive aspects used to encourage people to attend webinars.



For more information please contact Cinzia De Letis at cinzia.de.letis@epr.eu

Public Affairs

Social Services Europe organized a breakfast meeting with MEPs

Social service providers and policy makers convened at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels on 26 March to work together on how to put social investment back on the European Commission's agenda. The breakfast session was organised by Social Services Europe, which brings together eight Europe-wide networks of not-for-profit social service providers. Through its membership, Social Services Europe represents over 100,000 organisations active in promoting social inclusion and cohesion across Europe.

In a context where unemployment and poverty levels are so high, the Commission's 2015 Workplan is failing to adequately consider the crucial need for social investment. Guest speakers discussed solutions to tackle this agenda change, as well as the additional challenges faced across the social and health care sector.

The meeting was hosted by Ariane Rodert, Vice-President of Group 3 in the European Economic and Social Committee, who underlined the timeliness of acting now and collaborating more closely to improve the conditions for non-profit service providers. "We need to have a joint action plan and ownership", she said, observing the fragmented nature of the new Commission when it comes to social issues. "We need strong social policies also to support Europe, and the social and economic dimensions must be in harmony", she added.

In this regard, Heinz Becker MEP (EPP/AT) expressed his disappointment with Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker for his apparent failure to adhere to his pledge of becoming a 'Guardian of Social Europe', adding that the Commission must be the first point of target for social investment advocates, given the current lack of awareness of the sector's added value.

Jutta Steinruck MEP (S&D/DE) seconded this concern. "We as parliament have to do our homework. We have to be very strong to support the social services sector as one of the key sectors for our societies", she observed. One vital aspect for Ms Steinruck is to harness the sector's great job creation potential – but importantly, to ensure that these jobs provide workers with a promising career path.

Building on the issue of working conditions in the sector, Jean Lambert MEP (Greens/UK) spoke about the risk of zero-hour contracts and temporary agencies, which in the UK leads to the



poor employment conditions that are strongly associated with the sector. Finally, Ms Lambert commended the UK Public Services (Social Value) Act as a potential case of best practice to be emulated by other Member States in their handling of public procurement procedures as commissioning authorities have a duty to look at the additional social value when they are tendering contracts.

Concetta Cultrera, European Commission DG Employment, responded to the claims that the Commission is doing nothing for social service providers. She stated for instance that progress has been made in the new public procurement and state aid rules. In relation to the Social Investment Package, she advocated the importance of promoting investment in social services as a "smart investment, because of the societal-inclusive effect of social services, and because of the job-creation potential."

Moderator of the proceedings, Board Member of Social Services Europe and Secretary General of Caritas Europa, Jorge Nuño Mayer welcomed Ms Cultrera's contributions, adding that relations between social service providers and the European Commission are sometimes strained due to the latter's "dual personality," which sees the institution working under two paradigms – "the economic paradigm or the paradigm of the people."

Laura Jones, former Senior Policy and Membership Development Officer at Eurodiaconia, and actual Secretary General at EPR; Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) and Leon Prop, President of Social Services Europe and Director of the Red Cross EU Office reiterated the important role that not-for-profit service providers play in supporting vulnerable people in local communities, highlighting the shared experience of growing demands for social services across Europe.

EPR participated in European Commission Work Forum on the UNCRPD implementation



On 29 April 2015, European Commission hosted the Work forum on the implementation of the UNCRPD. Mrs. Maria Luisa Cabral, Head of the Unit for the rights of persons with disabilities at the European Commission, opened the conference. She welcomed the audience to actively participate in the Work Forum meeting, which aimed at sharing experiences, challenges and recommendations for the practical implementation and monitoring of the UNCRPD in the European Union.

Elina Celmina, Director of Social Inclusion and Social Work Policy Department of the Ministry of Welfare, on behalf of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU, provided some insights on the Presidency's initiatives with disabilities regarding the needs of persons during the next 6 months.

Donata Vivanti, Vice-president of the European Disability Forum (EDF) underlined that people with disabilities are still facing discrimination and social exclusion despite the ratification of the UN CRPD. "It is time for action to apply the UN CRPD principles in concrete policies and measures at EU level. It is time to invest on the potential of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities want to contribute to the sustainable development of a more equal society, but they are prevented from doing so. It is time for a revision of the European Disability Strategy in light of the concluding observations from the UN Committee on the CRPD" – she said.

The morning focused on how to improve synergies between the EU and the national level in the implementation of the Convention. There were some discussions regarding the European statistics and data collection on people with disabilities especially on its

current and future plans. The forum focused on the use of EU's Structural and Investment Funds to stimulate the transition from institutional to community based care for people with disabilities and other disadvantages. Critics about the implementation and monitoring of the ESIFs call for a more alignment with the UN CRPD.

The afternoon session focused on what could be done differently to implement the UN Convention in the EU. Based on the fact that the EU's implementation will be under scrutiny this year by the UN Convention's committee, those organisations who have contributed to this examination through an alternative report presented their main findings and make proposals for improvement.

A discussion followed on issues such as the awareness of rights at grassroots level (including parent organizations), and the competence of the EU in advising Member States and taking its own initiatives.

The Forum brought together representatives of those responsible for implementing and monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention, both at EU and national level; these are Focal Points, Coordination Mechanisms and Monitoring Mechanisms. Civil society and disabled people's organisations also actively participate in the Work Forum.

Presentations are available on the European Commission website



Projects

Partnership agreement with the European Commission: approval of the operational grant for 2015

In the framework of the 4-years partnership agreement with the European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) for the period 2014 – 2017, EPR reported to the Commission on the implementation of the work plan 2014 and received the new grant for 2015.

The work plan 2015 features some follow-up activities on the outcomes of last year and proposes a range of activities and events to strengthen EPR capacity to assist its member organisations to achieve continuous professional improvement and sustainable growth in every aspect of service delivery for people with disabilities and with other disadvantages.

The activities planned for 2015 respond to four main priorities:

- Support the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of initiative undertake towards policy objectives of Europe 2020 Strategy
- Support stakeholders' involvement in the policy process
- Strengthen the capacity of national members to support implementation of EU priorities, such as long-term unemployment, long-term care, and job creation
- Providing data and collection of information about good practices in the social field, so as to contribute to better policy making.

The calendar of activities will be published soon on EPR website.



EQUASS news

4Quality! project

The 4Quality! project is a European project funded by the PROGRESS Programme. It started in October 2014 and will last until April 2016. Within the aim of contributing to the improvement of working conditions and of quality of personal care and household services (PHS), the 4Quality! project intends to:

- supports a European dialogue on the quality of jobs and services in personal care and household services through a partnership representative of the variety of workers and services employers;
- develops knowledge and looks at how working conditions, quality of services for person-centred care, professional qualifications, quality of life for services users and workers, economic and financial crisis influence the

quality of jobs and services in the personal care and household service;

- raises awareness among important stakeholders at the European and national levels, through a transnational network, on the issue of quality of jobs and services in these sectors;
- contributes to the advancement of policies and legislation in the area of household and personal care services;
- provides practical tools for household and personal care services local providers in order to improve quality of work and quality of services.

EPR, through Social Services Europe, is involved in the implementation of the project with other 8 partners able to structure a European stakeholder dialogue on quality of jobs and services in some personal care and household services.

News from the Secretariat

Welcome to our new Secretary General Laura Jones!



On 27 April, Laura Jones joined the EPR Secretariat as new Secretary General. For the past eight and a half years Laura Jones has worked for Eurodiaconia, a pan-European network of not-for-profit social and health service providers, based in Brussels. Her position as Senior Policy and Membership Development Officer has involved external representation, strategy development, membership liaison and engagement, staff recruitment and policy development. Her areas of focus have included long-term care, financing of social services, quality in social care, social enterprise, service user engagement and empowerment, social impact assessment and social innovation. She was elected as Vice-Chair of the Services of General Interest Working Group at the Social Platform for four years. She has been active in Social Services Europe since its formation, and has represented both networks externally and been involved in the development of their work programmes. We are pleased to welcome Laura and we are looking forward to working with her.

EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR REHABILITATION

The network of leading service providers to people with disabilities

EPR on the web!

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

website: www.epr.eu

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