

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

NEWSLETTER

Editorial: New year, new initiatives

Special Focus:

- Latest developments in EPR member centres
- National events
- New EPR member
- Public Affairs
- EQUASS in Morocco



Dear EPR Members,

I anticipate a very interesting year ahead in the EPR network. As well as the continuation of existing successful

activities a number of new initiatives are planned.

We will soon be able to provide you with a catalogue of services and events for the year so you can see for yourself. It will provide dates and information about the activities in 2016 so that you can discuss with colleagues and schedule your participation. We drew from your feedback in the online consultation we carried out to inform the topics that will be addressed.

If your organisation did not yet fill in the consultation we would encourage you to still do so, as some of the information will be used in a new online membership directory. Please contact Cinzia in the secretariat for a personalised link to fill in the consultation if you do not already have one.

We also used feedback from the consultation about our communications tools to re-develop and re-design them to better meet your needs. This includes the EPR website, which will reflect the 2015-2017 strategy and facilitate your learning about the past and future work of the EPR

network and initiatives of other members. In addition, we will shortly be launching a Facebook page as a forum for exchange and sharing of information.

Now going back in time, you will know that we had a busy few months at the end of the year, and many interesting events took place across Europe. You can learn from the presentations made and rich discussions that took place at our numerous events on our website, where the meeting reports and PowerPoints can be found.

I will just highlight the successful Public Affairs event which took place in Brussels in November. It looked at good practice in mainstreamed services for people with disabilities, the challenges in promoting community-based services and what should be the way forward. I encourage you to check out the information from this event online, as well as the study of members' services which was launched at the event, if you haven't done so already.

I look forward to your engagement in the coming year, and wish for all of us that 2016 is one of closer cooperation and deeper knowledge.

With best wishes,

Laura Jones
 EPR Secretary General

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News from the members

Astangu VRC students become nationally known with a new punk-rock band!



Bandemoonium is a new punk-rock band formed in Summer 2015 – it brings together current and former students of Astangu VRC and other youngsters with special needs. Bandemoonium has 9 members altogether: 3 singers, a sologuitar player, a bassist, a rhythm guitar player, a keyboard player, a drummer and a person responsible for digital effects. Their repertoire includes self-written original songs and covers.

Forming of the band was inspired by the Finnish punk-rock band Pertti Kurikkaan Nimipäivät who was the first band consisting of people with developmental disabilities to

participate in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2015. After seeing the band perform in front of an international audience, the Estonians decided that they also wanted to express themselves through music regardless of their special needs.

Almost none of the youngsters had played a musical instrument when Bandemoonium started. They have come a long way through practice and with the help of their mentors to make the band sound good. Their mentors include Estonia's famous metal band Metsatöll, our successful rock band Elephants From Neptune, music teachers and Astangu VRC's recreational manager Vello Saaremägi.

As the topic was seen as relevant for the whole society, a documentary-series called "Punk therapy" was recorded for Estonian Public Broadcasting Television that aired in December. The humorous series shows the process of forming the band from scratch.

The band has now had several public live gigs. This is the first band of its kind in Estonia to gain public attention.

Listen to Bandemoonium's first hit in Estonian, that can be translated as "Where are your pants?": <https://soundcloud.com/bandemoonium/bandemoonium-kus-su-puksid-on>

An innovative IT-solution for mapping functioning and assigning assistive technology

The Centre of Environmental Adaptation and Assistive Technology at Astangu VRC has finalised the development of a web-based prototype for mapping the functioning of a person (based on the ICF), appointing necessary assistive technology (based on ISO-9999) and measuring the impact of new assistive technology on the functioning of the person that can be used in Estonia and on an international level.

The purpose of this IT-development is to make assessing and documenting easier, faster, more functional and more comparable for the specialists (doctors, therapists etc) and more understandable for the person who is an active party in

the assessment process. The prototype includes graphical solutions for giving the person and the funders an overview and the possibility to measure the impact of new assistive technology on the person's life. The development process of the idea has been going on since 2013 and the prototype is used to practically demonstrate the solution through several client profiles (with limited functionality). Next steps are to establish an international working group with the ICF Research Branch and develop the final IT-instrument with full functionality by 2017.

More information from Kairit Püüa: kairit.puua@astangu.ee

INTRAS Foundation

Peer2peer: A route to recovery of people with mental illness through peer support training and employment



Peer2Peer is a vocational training course and a project funded by the European Commission through Lifelong Learning Programme, led by Fundación INTRAS (www.intras.es). It trains individuals with experiences of mental health problems to become personal assistants to those currently living with mental health difficulties.

P2P believe that who knows better about recovery in mental health is a person who has been there. The challenge was to enable these individuals to use their experience and knowledge intentionally to support other people's recovery.

Eight organisations from Europe have been working together on Peer2Peer vocational training course. Didactic materials were designed, adapted and testing in 5 different countries. The result is a new and innovative teaching pack which will allow students to better understand their own recovery and develop the insight required to be a professional peer support worker. This innovative teaching pack provides practical information to create a learning environment where

students can develop and practice their skills; you can download it on our p2p website and then just put it into practice.

More than 130 people with mental health issues attended the two pilots courses organized during the last two years; 22 of them have become peer support workers. During these Peer2Peer vocational trainings, a video was recorded and it is available on our p2p website; it shows participants' interesting opinions, thoughts and reflections upon the course and the peer support approach.

People with mental illness have much to contribute to society and Peer2Peer recognises the knowledge they gained and the importance of improving their access to employment and training.

To download the teaching pack, watch some videos and to know more about Peer2Peer project and its partners check out our website: <http://p2p.intras.es/>

Marie Homes at harm reduction world conference in Malaysia in October



The Marie Home delegation in the harm reduction conference in Malaysia

In mid-October, the Mette Marie Home and the Åse Marie Home participated in the harm reduction world conference in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. They brought with them their brand new method descriptions (translated into English) on their work the people with dual diagnoses (mental disorders and active drug/ alcohol abuse), so they could build a stronger international network – and also learn more about the latest developments in their working field of harm reduction.

If you want to become a part of the Marie Homes harm reduction network (and/ or read a copy of the method descriptions), you can contact the director of the Mette Marie Home, Ms Marlene Engel via e-mail on: mke@mariehjem.dk

Visit by Brüsseler Kreis in Denmark



The Brüsseler Kreis directors in the reception area of the Disabled People's Organisations' House in Taastrup.

In October, the Marie Homes hosted a study tour by the directors of the member organisations of the Brüsseler Kreis in Germany. The Brüsseler Kreis is a network of 13 charitable social and healthcare companies with a Christian view of humanity (both Catholic and Protestant organisations, including the EPR member Joseph-Gesellschaft in Cologne). The directors managed to visit both the Louise Marie Home for elderly people and the Lykke Marie Home for young adults with multiple disabilities. Furthermore, the directors went to the Disabled People's Organisations' House, which claims to be the most accessible office building in the world. Here, they had a fruitful discussion on the advocacy work of the organization and state of affairs of people with disabilities in Denmark. The study tour also included a discussion with the director of 'Selveje Danmark', which is the

association for self-governing, non-profit organizations in Denmark. Overall, it was a great learning experience for both visitors and hosts to get a better insight into the state of social and healthcare organisations in two neighbouring, but very different European countries.

Marie Homes has changed its logo

The Marie Homes was founded in 1958 by an entrepreneurial nurse with the poetical name, Rose Marie Rørdam Holm. The middle name – Marie – has since been part of every new Marie Home that has been established – today totaling 17 Marie Homes. In Danish, a ladybug is called a 'Marie-høne', which has been the image of the organisation's logo for decades. In 2014, the Board of Directors decided that the logo needed to be updated. Therefore, a branding committee was set up – and in December, they managed to create a new logo that keeps some elements from the ladybug tradition, but also puts new more modern elements into the visual identity. The new tagline of the Marie Homes will be: "because everybody deserves a good life/ good living". The new visual identity will be implemented into all 17 Marie Homes in the first months of 2016.



The new logo, font and tagline of the Marie Homes from 2016

Workshop Panagia Eleousa

On 22nd of December 2015, Workshop "PANAGIA ELEOUSA" for young people with intellectual and related disabilities was awarded by the Academy of Athens with the prize Catherine P. Economou for its significant social contribution. The Academy of Athens is the highest spiritual institution of Greece aiming at the cultivation and advancement of Sciences, Humanities and Fine Arts, Ethical and Political Sciences, as well as the scientific research and study. The award was presented by the President of the Academy of Athens, Mr. Dimitris Nanopoulos to the President of the Workshop "PANAGIA ELEOUSA", Mrs. Dionysia Samanta, in a ceremony in the Great Hall of the Academy of Athens. This award is the result of the efforts of many people. Primarily the efforts of the Founder Mrs. Maria Tsoutsou, the Board of Directors, the employees for the quality services provided to the people with intellectual and related disabilities (physical, sensory, speech, slight mental disorders, autism, Down syndrome and others) and to their families. The President Dionysia Samanta stated: "We would like to thank all the friends and volunteers of the Workshop "PANAGIA ELEOUSA" in Greece and abroad, who for so many years have supported and continue to support our work. This honorary award gives us strength to continue our struggle. It gives greater impetus and added value to the Workshop "PANAGIA ELEOUSA" to continue to provide quality social services to our weak fellow men with the "wounded" intelligence, free of any charge."

Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre (VRC)

Artists launched the exhibition in one of the top cultural destinations in Vilnius



Lifelong
Learning
Programme

The group of people with disabilities finished the year 2015 with a great experience – opening the exhibition “Filling Life with Colors Through Art”. The exposition presented jewelry works, fine woodworks and furniture that were made through an international art project “ARTABILITY”. The aim of the “Artability” project was to integrate people with disability into society, by enabling them to develop their creativity while having a good time, allowing them to fill their lives with more colors.

All authors of the artworks are people with disability who tried jewelry-making and woodworking for the first time. It was also their very first time participating in an art exhibition. After meeting two hours a week in art laboratories in Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre for almost two years, the 19 participants have discovered the pleasure of creating art with metal or wood. The participants had the opportunity to learn new art techniques during the workshops, and the art laboratories allowed them to get acquainted with the principles of composition, using art to present ideas, drawing, etc. During the project’s lifetime, the participants also attended art exhibitions, and three of them had the chance to participate in a study-visit to Rome, Italy.

When asked, the participants themselves talk about the experience as having discovered the pleasure of creating art, while creating tight bonds with the other participants. This in turn was a powerful boost to their self-confidence, which will be a great help to them on the job market.

Project “ARTABILITY” was implemented by Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre (Lithuania) together with ANTIGONE (Greece), Tlab (Italy) and Cogami (Spain). The “Artability” project was financed by the European Commission.

For more information about the project, please visit the “Artability” website at: <http://www.artability.eu>



Conference on national standards for vocational rehabilitation services in Lithuania



In 17th December, the Valakupiai Rehabilitation Center, the Lithuanian vocational rehabilitation methodical center in Lithuania since 2014, organized a conference on the theme of quality in vocational rehabilitation and the role of different service providers in keeping high standards, with the objective of helping people with disability with their integration on the labor market.

The conference was opened by a speech from the deputy director of the Department for the Affairs of the Disabled under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Jolanta Sliuziene, who reminded everyone of the importance of vocational rehabilitation in the inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream environment.

The principles of Human rights and equality when it comes to access to employment were then reminded to the attendees by the first speaker, Jonas Ruškus, Vytautas Magnus University professor and member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the United Nations. VRC director, Edita Satiene presented the results obtained in the domain of vocational rehabilitation in Lithuania in the past year, while Rasa Ustinaviciene, methodical centre specialist, focused on the actions led by the Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre as the Lithuanian vocational rehabilitation methodical centre, as well as the results obtained in the year 2014-2015. Disability and Work Capacity Assessment Office director Manfredas Zymantas then set out to “bust” some myths regarding vocational rehabilitation, while thoroughly advocating its importance in improving the opportunities of employment for people with disability that have benefitted from it. Invited speakers were

reflecting about their experiences: the representative of vocational rehabilitation providers has presented the improvements after setting up the standards in their organisation, service user introduced the personal story, the employer, himself disabled, inspired everyone in the audience to follow their dreams.

Finally, everyone was given the chance to speak out their opinion in an animated discussion where enriching ideas and arguments were exchanged between different stakeholders, motivating the actors to keep bettering their standards and to multiply their good practices. An important point made by a stakeholder during the discussion, however, needs to be kept in mind when gauging vocational rehabilitation: though essential in the process of getting back to work, vocational rehabilitation is only one piece in the puzzle that is the (re) integration of people with disabilities into the labor market, meaning that in order for it to be solved, all pieces will have to be properly tailored and set together.

Overall, the conference was a great success, with attendance reaching over 80 participants; the feedback given by the participants was widely positive and outlined the quality and welcomed variety of the speakers. This conference came at a turning point, as the new Lithuanian methodology and standards for vocational rehabilitation are about to come out.



New EPR member



EPR welcomes the Don Carlo Gnocchi Foundation as new associate member as of 1st January 2016. Founded by Don Carlo Gnocchi to provide care, rehabilitation and social integration for children who lost limbs in the war, the Foundation has gradually expanded the scope of its operations over the years. Today, Don Gnocchi Foundation continues to provide care to:

- ♦ children and young people with disabilities or congenital or acquired diseases;
- ♦ patients of every age who need motor-skill, cardio-respiratory or oncological rehabilitation;
- ♦ the injured, stroke victims, and those with multiple sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or other debilitating diseases;
- ♦ non-self-sufficient elderly, terminal cancer patients, the severely braindamaged, and those in a persistent vegetative state.

The Don Gnocchi Foundation is an organisation of more than 5,500 employees and consultants. It operates under accreditation from the Italian National Health Service in 29 Centres grouped into 8 districts covering 9 administrative regions. It also conducts intense scientific research and education at a variety of levels. EPR wishes a fruitful cooperation with the Don Gnocchi Foundation in the coming years! An English version on website is available at www.dongnocchi.it/eng

Professional Development Activities

Site visit to LifeTOOL: Computer-aided communication for people with disabilities 29-30 October 2015

A study-site visit was organised to LifeTOOL and the Johannes Kepler University in Linz, Austria, on the 29th and 30th October. On the first day the participants visited LifeTOOL's headquarters. At LifeTOOL team of educational, psychological, social and integrative staff work together with technical, electronic and programming researchers and developers to develop Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), accessible software, programmes and apps as well as computer input devices, such as the multiple award-winning IntegraMouse Plus (www.integramouse.com).

Participants had the opportunity to test the programmes and devices and discuss the features with the developers. LifeTOOL also presented a number of ongoing projects that they are partners in. The Prosperity for all project (<http://www.prosperity4all.eu/>), aims at smart and personalised inclusion through developing affordable Assistive Technology. The SOCIALCARE project aims to provide a set of guidelines, best practices and technological tools for a sustainable social care network by empowered citizens in local communities that supports older people (<http://www.lifetool.at/forschung-entwicklung/fe-projekte/laufende-projekte.html>).

On the second day participants were welcomed by KI-I (Competence Network Information Technology to Support the Integration of People with Disabilities), a research institute, and the Institute Integriert Studieren, a recognized research centre based in the Johannes Kepler University of Linz (JKU). KI-I bridges research, application and teaching in the areas of ICT, Assistive Technologies and smart environment, accessible web- and software design as well as Easy-to-Read. Accessibility and AT are compulsory topics for students of computer science at the JKU. The JKU KI-I researches assistive technology, accessibility, design for all and (e)inclusion, and directly supports about 100 students with disabilities at the Johannes Kepler University. Support



includes social competences, study life and labour market integration. Live demonstrations were made of AsTeRICS - a flexible and affordable construction set for assistive technologies, and the world's first 4D-Joystick that operates remote controlled gadgets with the mouth, aiming

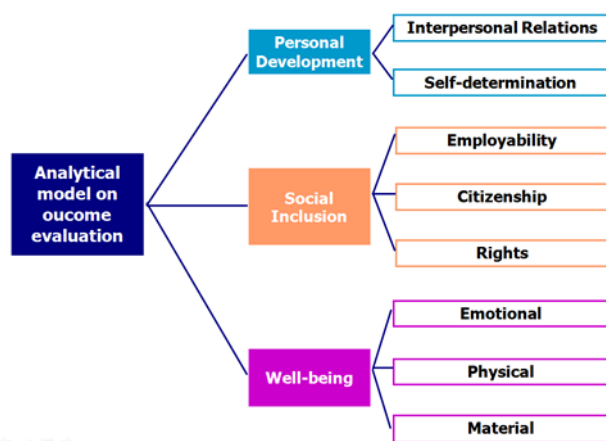
to bring more accessible toys to the market. Members expressed a high satisfaction with the visit and were able to take back very useful information to their colleagues. You can find out more information about the organisation in English at <http://www.lifetool.at/home.html?L=1>

Outcome measurement in Vocational Education and Training and Vocational Rehabilitation: benchlearning group meeting on 18 November 2015

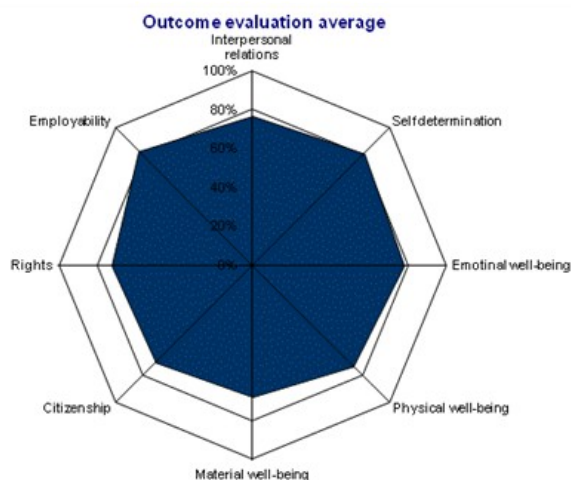
Participants from Slovenia and Ireland reviewed the results of the Quality of Life Impact of Services questionnaire used over the past 5 years in their centres. 10 centres participated in the benchmarking exercise in those past years, allowing them to highlight strengths and weaknesses in their services, on the basis of results comparison and analysis of the architecture of their programmes.

The questionnaire administered in the centres measures the changes that are occurring in the individuals in the following areas: Personal development (consists of Interpersonal Relations, Self –determination), Social Inclusion (consists of Employability, Citizenship, Rights), and Well-being (consists of Emotional well-being, Physical well-being, Material well-being). Thus, QOLIS reflects the services' impact in people's life in a fair way to the staff as it covers all the domains they intervene in, allows services to improve their effectiveness by learning from one another, and proves the added-value of comprehensive rehabilitation services. It exists in three formats: regular version, simplified rating scale, easy-read version.

Interested EPR members are welcome to join the group or simply to contact Claude Delfosse at EPR secretariat to obtain more information.

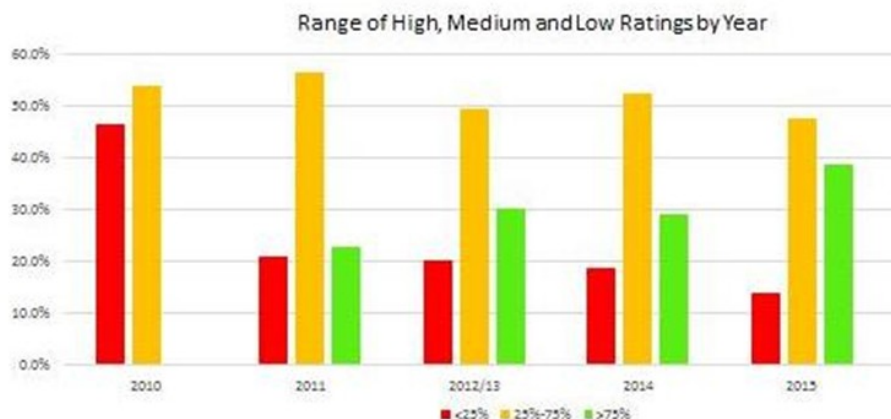


1. Quality of Life's dimension selected in QOLIS



2. Sample overview of evaluation average per dimension for one organisation

3. Overview total group scores 2010-2015 for the dimension: total personal development

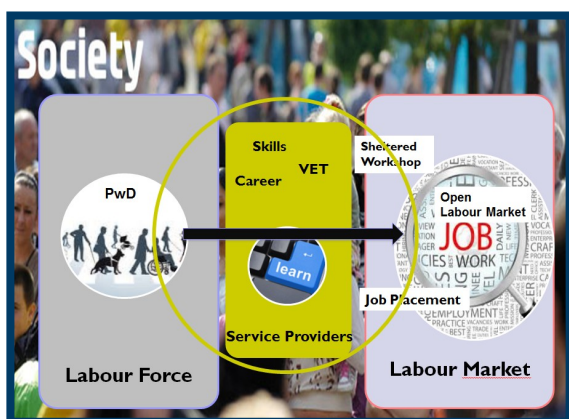


FAGERH members engage into a wide-scale learning process on Outcome measurement with QOLIS – the Quality of Life Impact of Services tools

Ten member organisations of the vocational rehabilitation centres' network FAGERH, from various regions of the French territory, have engaged with the support of EPR into a benchmarking process using the QOLIS tools. Motivation and sharp progress in the implementation of the tools were there in Paris on 26 October 2015, in a workshop animated by Donal McAnaney. EPR will continue to support the work of participating members and wishes them good luck.

Other countries have engaged into similar processes, such as Slovenia, where government financially supports the initiative in which EPR member URI is playing a key role.

Online Training: The impact of the European Semester and the UNCRPD on the right to work of people with disabilities



On 4th November 2015, EPR organised an online training on the impact of the European Semester and the UNCRPD on the right to work of people with disabilities. Participants were trained on the functioning of the European Semester cycle, on the roles played by the different actors and on the monitoring mechanism of UN CRPD implementation at EU and national level. The discussion focused on the use of the European Semester and the Country Specific Recommendations to implement the Article 27 of the UN CRPD on the right of people with disabilities to work, and to promote positive changes in service provision. Participants reflected on what the barriers to employment are and how to coordinate their efforts to remove those barriers and allow people with disabilities

to fully enjoy their rights. They highlighted the importance of investing in social services to enhance the integration of people with disabilities into labour market and improve the health and the well-being of individuals, their families and the whole society. For more information read the full report or download the presentation on EPR website at www.epr.eu (European Semester Platform section).

Seminar on EU funding Opportunities

Each year EPR organises a training seminar to support the understanding of EPR members about EU funding opportunities and improve members' capacity in using the funding. The training, which took place on 18 November 2015 in Brussels, allowed participants to gain greater knowledge of topics such as: the state of play and the funding possibilities for European projects in the framework of the EaSI/PROGRESS programme and the ERASMUS+ strategic partnerships, as well as the strand "Promote rights of persons with disabilities" of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme. Part of the training focused on the 'evaluator's' view on an applications with the aim of deepening participants' ability to deal dimensions such as objective / rationale, added value, sustainability, dissemination, work plan aspects, partnerships aspects; the application process. The small group of participants allowed the trainer, Kerstin Weertz, to deepen the issues raised by participants and follow the debate in a practical way. Presentation is available on EPR website at the following link <http://www.epr.eu/index.php/public-affairs/disability-policy/533>

National awareness-raising events

Community-based supported living services for people with intellectual disabilities in Greece - Concern about Elderly People with Disabilities



The significant contribution of the European Union for the service providers to people with disabilities 14 October 2015 - Agrinio, Greece

The Workshop "PANAGIA ELEOUSA" in collaboration with EPR, and the Municipality of Agrinio, organised an awareness-raising and training event on Wednesday, the 14th of October, 2015, in the Chamber of Commerce in Agrinio, from 10 pm. until 3 pm on Community-based supported living services for people with intellectual disabilities in Greece. The event was conducted in two sections. In the first section, Mrs. Dionysia Samanta, the President of the Workshop "PANAGIA ELEOUSA" introduced the topic of the event and Ms. Laura Jones, General Secretary of EPR made a short introduction

concerning EPR. Following up, Mr. Costas Kalantzis, Deputy Mayor in the field of Social Protection, Education and Culture of the Municipality of Agrinio made a presentation on the contribution of "PANAGIA ELEOUSA", as a social provider in the community. During the second section Mrs. Lutegarda Justo, representative of the organization AFID-Portugal, a member of EPR, made a presentation on "Residential Services for people with Intellectual Disabilities in Portugal". Mr. Dimitrios Cheimariotis gave an overview on EQUASS quality system. This event gathered several public authorities' representatives: the President of the Chamber of Commerce Mr. Panagiotis Tschritzis; Mr Yiannis Vainas former Mayor, Governor and Member of the Parliament; the President and the members of the Board of the Association "Friends, Parents and Volunteers of "PANAGIA ELEOUSA." In addition, representatives of social agencies, service providers of Etoloakarnania Prefecture and also the vice president and members of the Board of the National Union of Organizations supporting people with intellectual disability "MELEDONI" from Athens participated.. The full report is available on www.epr.eu

Corporate Social Responsibility: a frame for supporting employment of People with Disabilities – 29 October 2015 - Vilnius, Lithuania

On 29th October, EPR and Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre co-organised a conference entitled "Corporate Social Responsibility: a frame for supporting employment of people with disabilities". The event gathered together employers, vocational rehabilitation service providers, researchers and people with disabilities who shared experiences and exchanged visions on the topic.

The expert Guus van Beek, representing the European Platform for Rehabilitation, introduced the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from a European perspective and highlighted the win-win situation when companies employ people with disabilities. Different speakers then took turn in addressing the audience, the first of whom was a representative of Swedbank Public Affairs Manager Guoda Lomanaite, who talked about the promotion of Social sustainability, and how it allowed the implementation of principles of the Global Compact. Minna Sild, project manager at the Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre in Estonia, who talked about how CSR is put in practice: their mentoring programme.



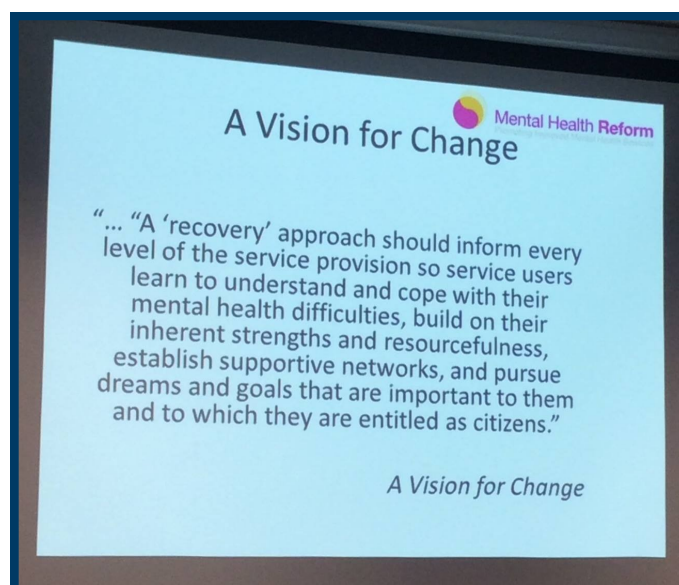
Natalja Markovskaja, the Head of the Employment department at the Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre then explained the added value of vocational rehabilitation services for employers. The conference was also attended by RIMI supermarket chain representative Giedre Bielskyte who explained the RIMI approach on CRS and employment of people with disabilities.

Following the intervention of those speakers, the audience was given the chance to express their opinions or ask questions about CSR and the employment of people with disabilities during the “hot” microphone session. It was overall a very informative conference, where time was allotted to story-telling, sharing experience, giving new ideas and

encouraging good practices. The full report is available on www.epr.eu

Mental Health Recovery in Action - 5 November 2015 - Dublin, Ireland

RehabCare and National Learning Network co-organised with the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) a national event attended by more than 80 delegates from service providers and service user organisations from various counties in Ireland. Tom O'Brien, senior EPR expert in mental health, chaired the conference. Recovery has emerged as a central focus of mental health service policy in Ireland and internationally. As a core human experience, this concept challenges us to re-imagine the power relationship between service users and providers and ideas of service providers on what supports people to lead self-directed lives in their communities. The event gave participants the opportunity to engage with speakers in a lively exchange of views on the human-rights approach to mental health in EU and the lack of awareness of recovery at EU level. Breakout sessions allowed participants to explore recovery-oriented practices such as a peer support programme from RehabCare, student supports from Maynooth University, community-based inclusion practices from the ClubHouse a HSE service, and the Focus programme in Limerick. Presenters were professionals and users from Ireland and Spain, with a Spanish guest Sara Marcos from Intrac, a service provider from Valladolid, presenting the results of Peer2peer, a European project that has developed a professionalizing peer support training programme. For more information, read the report and download the presentations from EPR website at www.epr.eu



The national awareness-raising events has received financial support from the European Union Programme for employment and Social Innovation “EaSI” (2014-2020). For further information please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>

Education and employment as pathways to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the community - 10 November 2015 - Zagreb, Croatia



On 10th November EPR co-organised an event in Zagreb with SOIH, the Croatian Union of Associations of Persons with Disabilities, entitled Education and Employment as Pathways to the Inclusion of Persons with Disability in the Community. Around 90 participants from across Croatia engaged in the event, which was held after the XX National symposium of SOIH. The event was chaired by Marica Miric, member of the board of SOIH, who welcomed the participants and set the scene for the event. Laura gave an overview of the EPR network, how it works and the activities

it carries out. Kristina Brkljača, SOIH social worker then presented the service provision landscape in Croatia. Teja Bandel Msc, a psychologist at the University Rehabilitation Institute (URI), Republic of Slovenia presented their practice of work-based training and supported employment: an example of successful cooperation between service user, employer and service provider. Alice Trinidad, Associate professor and Vice-Dean, Institute of Social and Political Sciences at the Universidade de Lisboa presented Overcoming disability: How ISCSP is learning to educate and research inclusively.

In the round table with the audience the importance of hearing examples of countries who have further developed, and to learn about good practice is important for the disability movement. For more detailed information, read the report and download the presentations from EPR website (www.epr.eu).

Public Affairs

EPR public affairs event: Supporting community inclusion of people with disabilities: challenges and opportunities - 18 November 2015

On 18th November 2015, EPR organised the Public Affairs event which gathered European stakeholders in order to explore how specialized service providers can best promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace and community and design effective support in the mainstream environment. The second part of the event was devoted to interventions that considered future steps and responses; how such services are or can be supported and promoted by public authorities, the EU and other actors, considering the research and recommendations.

The event chaired by Laura Jones - EPR Secretary General - showcased good practices from EPR membership and signals the launch of the EPR Study on the Delivery of Services in the Mainstream Environment. The Study and

recommendations drawn from the research conducted by Paula Campos Pinto, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Social Work, Coordinator of the Observatory on Disability and Human Rights, University of Lisbon in Portugal, with the contribution of EPR members, was presented to the public. The objective of the study was to identify and describe common patterns, themes, challenges and opportunities that service providers are facing when supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities in a mainstreamed environment, drawing from good practice examples.

A few national-level practices on the topic, identified in the course of that study, were also presented. Suzanne McCarthy, Educational Psychologist from National Learning Network in Ireland, presented their successful programme "Education Support Service" which provides an inclusive education support service for all students at the Institute of Technology

Blanchardstown (ITB), a mainstream Higher Education Institute, regardless of whether students have a diagnosed disability. The service strives to promote students' independence and encourage them to develop the skills to see them through their time in college.

Luc Hénau, Director of GTB in Belgium, presented the practice "TAZbis - Building a corporate collaboration between the public unemployment office and GTB". This programme is developed through a collaborative effort and large-scale partnership between the Flemish public employment service (VDAB) and GTB that permit the inclusion of specialised coaches in regular job centre to help address the specific needs of persons with disabilities.

Israel Butler, Independent analyst on fundamental rights and EU affairs and author of the report "*Community, Not Confinement - The role of the European Union in promoting and protecting the right of people with disabilities to live in the community*", highlighted key challenges in the move to community based services (CBS), particularly in relation to the use of the EU's structural funds, and how they could be

overcome. Jan Jařab, Regional Representative for Europe of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, focused his intervention on the role of the UN in supporting community inclusion of people with disabilities. The role of the public authority was explained by Brigitte Plumet, Directrice Coordination générale of Walloon Agency for the integration of people with disabilities (AWIPH). She gave an overview of the situation of people with disabilities in Belgium by referring to the status of the implementation of the UN CRPD.

Sif Holst, Vice chairperson of the Disabled Peoples Organisation Denmark and Alternate member of the EESC, and Frank Sioen, advocacy and communication officer at European Network for Independent Living (ENIL), expressed their perspectives as service users involved in the policy debates at EU level. Following the informative presentations and the debate, Laura Jones thanked all participants and invited them to enjoy the cocktail that gave participants the opportunity to network and to exchange opinions and personal considerations on this topic.

Presentation can be download on [EPR website](#)



Above: Frank Sioen (ENIL)

From the left: Paula Campos Pinto, PhD University of Lisbon in Portugal; Israel Butler, Independent analyst on fundamental rights and EU affairs

Social Services Europe and Trade Unions call for action to unlock the job creation potential of the social services sector

On 1st December, Social Services Europe and EPSU co-organised with the Working Group on Public Services of European Parliament Common Goods and Public Services Intergroup, a public hearing in the European Parliament to exchange on the need of unlocking job creation potential of the social services sector.

Jean-Paul Denanot MEP (S&D), presiding the meeting, underlined the essential contribution of the social services sector to social cohesion, sustainable and inclusive growth and job creation in Europe. "We need to create the conditions permitting the social services sector's actors to employ and retain staff and deliver quality services" he said, inviting guest speakers to discuss the challenges faced across the sector.

Jens Nilsson MEP (S&D), Co-Chair of the Social Economy Intergroup, spoke about the importance of creating local partnerships between public authorities, social economy organisations, including NGOs, providing social services to deliver quality social services and sustain growth.

Laura Jones, Secretary General of EPR and President of Social Services Europe, focused on a set of proposals to tackle barriers hindering job creation potential development. "The European Commission must promote the social investment approach, and allow flexibility for such investment when evaluating budgets under the excessive deficit procedure". Social considerations and quality in public procurement must be promoted to encourage fair competition and ensure good

working conditions. The EU's Structural funds should also be used to support staff development, qualifications and training in social services.

Penny Clarke, Deputy Secretary General of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), denounced the fragmented approach towards social services taken by the European Commission. "Many instruments are available, but at EU-level economic and internal market policies have dominated instead of a focus on quality social services that are embedded in universal, accessible, and affordable systems and that are collectively funded". She called for a European Action Plan for Elderly Care, building on the Social Protection Committee Report on Long-term Care and the European Voluntary Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest.

Sylvie Slangen, Head of UNISOC, Member of CEEP (European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services), remarked that "social profit" organisations have a crucial role in creating job opportunities but their specificities are not recognised. She also called for a stronger role for intersectoral social dialogue in order to effectively improve working conditions and consequently to unlock job creation in the social services sector.

Interventions from the audience converged with the speakers' perspectives and priorities and validated the main messages expressed during the hearing. Full report is available on www.socialserviceseurope.eu



Penny Clarke (EPSU), Laura Jones (EPR), Jean-Paul Denanot (MEP S&D)

Dialogue with the European Commission

On December 10th, the Directorate General for Employment Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission organised a “strategic dialogue” with stakeholders to get input into their initiative of a “pillar of social rights”, in which Laura Jones, EPR Secretary General, participated. According to the European Commission, the initiative is designed to “address gaps in existing legislation and identify common principles and reference benchmarks with a view to a greater convergence of employment and social performance over time”. Participants discussed the initiative in groups and presented feedback to the European Commission. NGOs proposed that case law relating to access to services be reviewed in order to promote existing rights and how they have been upheld, and see where barriers to their implementation are. It was stressed that the “pillar” shouldn’t promote a low minimum of rights, but really clearly focus on promoting improvement in the

countries of Europe, and addressing gaps where rights are not sufficiently protected. A focus on implementation on rights, coordination and integration of policy and was also highlighted as key. The European Commission will further debate the initiative in late January 2016.

At the end of October Laura Jones also participated in a discussion with the Disability Unit in the European Commission, which groups the staff responsible for disability-related policy and mainstreaming disability in other issues in the Directorate for Employment and Social inclusion. Participants appreciated the opportunity to bring concrete ideas to the table and exchange on ongoing initiatives. Ms Jones made proposals including increased awareness raising of good practice in community-based services, engaging service providers in dialogue with employers about reasonable accommodation, and guidelines on the public procurement directive.

EPR speaks at Alliance against Disability cuts meeting in European Parliament

On the 2nd December Laura Jones participated in an open meeting in the European Parliament organised by the civil society coalition called the EU Alliance against disability cuts. The meeting was hosted by Richard Howitt Member of the European Parliament, Co-President of the European Parliament’s cross-party Disability Intergroup and MEPs from across the political spectrum participated in the discussion. The meeting heard from people with disabilities who had directly been impacted by cuts to services, as well from as research and information from across Europe, presented by NGOs and MEPs. Laura Jones presented the findings of the research project Assessing the impact of European governments’ austerity plans on the rights of people with disabilities as well as information gathered from members during the development of the studies on transition services and community-based services. Overall the presentations painted a bleak picture about the disproportionate impact of the crisis on person with disabilities, the impact this has on rights and the ability to live in dignity.

The EU Alliance, which was initiated by the European Network on Independent Living, presented a Resolution of

the European Parliament on the effect of cuts in public spending on disabled persons in the EU. The resolution aims to build political support for fighting cuts to services. More information can be found here: <http://www.enil.eu/news/enil-press-release-eu-alliance-against-disability-cuts-news/>.



The EU Alliance against Disability Cuts is initiated by the European Network on Independent Living (ENIL), with the support of the European Foundation Center, the European Disability Forum, Inclusion Europe, Mental Health Europe, Autism Europe, the European Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry, Disabled People Against Cuts and the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities.

EQUASS in Morocco to Support to the Quality Improvement and Sustainability of Social-Medical Services



The EQUASS unit of the EPR has been selected by Handicap International - Maghreb division to contribute to its project "Support to the Quality Improvement and Sustainability of Social-Medical Services in Morocco".

Funded by the OCP Foundation, the project will last four years (2015-19) and aims to develop the capacities of 5 pilots by implementing a quality system based on the CRPD and good practices of management. The pilots will also receive ad-hoc support in training their staff and management in the various tools and practices identified in their improvement plan.

EQUASS will be supporting the project between October 2015 and May 2016, by training the managers and professionals of the 5 pilot centres in the use of a Quality approach, in understanding the EQUASS standard, and in performing their very first self-evaluation.

The 5 Pilot centres provide a wide range of services: educational, occupational and/or medical services to children, young people and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, persons with sensory and mobility impairments and persons with autism.

Introduction to European Quality concepts for Social Services in Poland

On 17th November 2015, the European Platform for Rehabilitation, in collaboration with the EKON Association in Warsaw, organised a seminar and workshop for social service providers and social enterprises on the use of quality instruments in the sector. In attendance were about 40 representatives of the social sector, mainly from social enterprises, and a few representatives of governmental agencies focused on social affairs.

European Quality in Social Services expert Michael Crowley and Marie Dubost of the EPR Secretariat presented the various quality frameworks in use for social services in Europe, especially in relation to services for persons with disabilities, and the social enterprises that provide them with work.

The seminar explained how business management and quality management approaches can be coupled with rights-based

approaches, to allow service providers and social enterprises to comply with the spirit of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, in the way that they design and deliver their services. The traditional approaches of quality towards ensuring good governance, measuring results for continuous improvement were also explored as another key component of a performant social service in today's environment.

The afternoon session was a practical workshop focused on one of the core dimensions of the rights-based approach: Person centred services. Participants worked on case studies and explored the many ways an organisation serving a person with disadvantages may ensure an individual plan based on the unique and specific needs, situation and aspirations of each service user.

New from the Secretariat

New EQUASS Intern Joins the secretariat



We wish to welcome Madeleine Clarke to the secretariat, who began as the new EQUASS intern at the end of November 2015.

She is a Swedish and British national, speaking fluently both Swedish and English. She studied her bachelor's degree in Politics and International Relations at The University of Aberdeen in Scotland. She joined our staff after living in Scotland for 6 years where she most recently worked for Dräger Marine & Offshore as a Training Administrator. She previously worked for Marine Scotland, a government directorate which manages the Scottish seas and promotes environmental sustainability.

Madeleine Clarke can be contacted at mclarke@epr.eu and through the general EPR telephone numbers.

EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR REHABILITATION

The network of leading service providers to people with disabilities

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