



EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR REHABILITATION

The network of service providers to people with disabilities committed to excellence and innovation through mutual learning

NEWSLETTER

Editorial: In front of the looking glass: what you see is what you get!

Special Focus:

- News from members
- Focus on Theotokos
- Public Affairs Event
- Consultation on European Pillar on Social Rights
- PESSIS 3 Project
- EQUASS Standards

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Dear EPR Members,

There is a time for everything, we all know this saying. But still life finds ways to surprise us!

As your brand new, 8th EPR president, elected on November 24th, I found myself 'suddenly' in an editorial writing process for the last newsletter of 2016. So it is not only EPR that will need to rise to the challenges that we may encounter in 2017, but I also need to, right from the beginning!

Developing EPR's network is vital for a lively cooperation between our members as well as with (new) stakeholders.

On February 13 and 14 the secretariat, directors and coordinators will come together to discuss all possible and realistic ways to strengthen and expand our network. At the same time, I realize that all individual members have their own challenges to face, seemingly never ending, changes in rules, regulations, laws and finances. And all this while our clients expect our services to be delivered without any loss of quality, and on time!

In the Netherlands the tax office uses this slogan: **'we can't make it more fun...but we can make it easier'**. That in the end is the strength of our network: all together we have a huge store of knowledge and experience to discuss that can absolutely **make things easier by 'sharing and daring'!**

EPR's 2017 activities will be varied and, as you are used to from us, tailor-made, but this is only possible if the commitment of our members is assured. That is to say: by our staff. So another slogan we could use is **'go higher: inspire'; let's involve more colleagues in EPR.**

But enough for this moment from my point of view. I trust EPR will keep evolving in a way that meets the challenges appearing all around us, and we aim to keep EPR one or two steps ahead of these challenges so we can all be better prepared to meet them, together.

I am looking forward to meeting you in 2017!

With best wishes,
Frits Wichers
EPR President



News from the members

Arbeid & Inkludering [Not just sheltered work](#)

ASVO Nøtterøy has traditionally provided sheltered work opportunities for people with disabilities. However, in the last few years a transformation has taken place. Today, 75% of its employees work outside company walls. *“Close cooperation with local business and the municipality is crucial”*, says Ingunn Rogstad, managing director.



ASVO Nøtterøy is member of AVRE (Association of Vocational Rehabilitation Enterprises). During the last few years, the small enterprise has turned the concept of sheltered employment upside-down. Each employee has his own career development plan. They say: We emphasise work in ordinary work-place settings, rather than traditional sheltered work. As a company, we do deliveries, gardening and maintenance work for local companies and the **municipality. It's a part of a normalisation strategy, and the response is very positive.** Sometimes, we lose employees to other companies that have been so impressed by their work ethic and skills that they wish to hire them on a permanent basis. Nothing could be better than that.

AVRE has embarked on a project to revitalise the concept of sheltered work. ASVO Nøtterøy provides a fine example of what is possible.

Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre [News](#)

[All activities related to the development of the field of assistive technology move from Astangu to the Social Insurance Board](#)

From February 1st 2017 all activities related to assistive technology will be carried out by the Social Insurance Board. These activities include co-ordination and development of the service, counselling, training of specialists etc. These activities were previously carried out by the The Centre for Environment Adaptation and Assistive Technology Information at Astangu VRC. Five employees from this centre at Astangu will continue their work at the Social Insurance Board. This change is taking place due to the changes in the national system of assistive technology provision in Estonia that took place on 1st January 2016. The Social Insurance Board became the main coordinator for the service (previously it was divided regionally across Estonia). There is a need that all of the activities regarding the co-ordination of assistive technology provision nationally would be carried out by one organization.

Astangu VRC says a big thank you to all the people who have been working hard in the field of assistive technology at Astangu! All activities related to environment adaptation will continue at Astangu VRC. Astangu VRC will also continue all other activities which include providing training, rehabilitation services and employment support to working-age people, counselling about environmental adaptation and acting as a competence centre in the fields of social and vocational rehabilitation.



Astangu VRC looking for a new director



Mari Rull
Director of Astangu

The director of Astangu VRC, Mari Rull, finished her job at Astangu on 31st December 2016. Mari filled this role for almost 10 years which has marked a time of notable growth in functions and responsibilities in the social sector for Astangu. In autumn 2016 Mari decided it was time to move on and take up new initiatives in her professional career.



Liina Teesalu
Deputy director in the role
of the Director from 2017

From January 1st the duties of the director are carried out by the deputy director on quality issues, Mrs Liina Teesalu. At the same time the Ministry of Social Affairs is carrying out an open call for candidates to find a new director for Astangu. The applications deadline is January 13th.

Astangu VRC would like to give a huge thank you to Mari for her dedicated work!

Heliomare News

The Vitality Challenge

Health and Vitality receives more and more attention in the Netherlands, both in private life and at work. This can be seen in many initiatives that are underway and being developed. The internet bombards people with much information about healthy diets and lifestyle; at the same time there is more evidence proving that people need to move more. Employers are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that staff should be as healthy as possible to come along and remain permanently employable.

Last year, Heliomare came up with new initiatives in this **direction**. **“The Vitality Challenge” event, attended by managers of TATA steel, Rabobank IJmond Health Checks (Heliomare’s customers) and the Pilot preventive physical training for employees of Esdégé-Reigersdaal, are some examples.** For 2017, Heliomare has planned to organise more events during the so-called open week. The events aim to draw attention to the topic of vitality at work and call on additional customers to make healthy choices to have a better vitality. During the open week participants will get free meals, access to the gym, lessons Power, boxing, yoga and virtual spinning.

R&D Activity Review

In 2016, Heliomare reviewed its 15 years of activity in Research & Development in the field of rehabilitation, education, sport, employment, housing and care. All **Heliomare’s studies aimed to improve and innovate** treatment and counseling provided to clients. For the years to come, Heliomare will focus its research on five diagnostic

groups: brain injury, spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, autism and chronic pain. In addition, they will initiate and expand the knowledge of four additional themes: fitness and physical activity, work, outcome measurements and e-health.

Mutual learning visit of Danish school KKFO Friluftsskolen Copenhagen

On 29th September, ten teachers and pedagogues of the KKFO Friluftsskolen Copenhagen visited the Heliomare school in Wijk aan Zee. They work with students with physical disabilities, long-term illness, intellectual disabilities, autism and collaborate with mainstream schools. The visit was very interesting; Heliomare staff had the opportunity to discuss methods and approaches of specific educational support for students with disabilities with the KKFO.

Transferring competences to regional level

On 15th December, the Board of Directors of Heliomare submitted to the Works Council and the Council of Housing and Daily Occupation, a proposal to transfer four Housing and Daily Occupation centres to regional partners as of 1st of July 2017. The decision was taken based on the idea that each centre will be able to provide better services if managed **at local level. This decision affects Heliomare’s employees in those centres who will look for other employment.**

ONCE Foundation and its social business group ILUNION have been recognized by the Global Diversity list as top disability network



Supported by
The Daily Telegraph

The ONCE Foundation and its social business group, ILUNION, have been included, for the second year in a row, in the Global Diversity List, which recognizes individuals and organizations from the public and private sectors that have distinguished themselves worldwide through their commitment to diversity.

Divided into eight categories, the Global Diversity List **focuses on the top fifty professionals in industry, the world's leading diversity consultants, the top fifty diversity figures in public life, and provides a guide to the top ten employee networks based on women, LGBT, ethnicity and disability.**

The 2016 Global Diversity List, unveiled in November, was ratified by a panel of independent expert judges among several thousand nominations submitted from all around the world.

ONCE Foundation and ILUNION are the only Spanish **entities in the "Top 10 Disability Networks"**. The other 9 organizations in the list were Sodexo, Chevron, the Shaw Trust, Dell, Fujitsu, the University of Bradford, the International Disability Alliance (IDA), the LEAD network (USA), and Lime Connect Canada, most of them international.

ONCE Foundation's appointment to the list recognizes its continuous work and strong commitment to the inclusion of people with disabilities at all levels and in all fields.

www.globaldiversitylist.com

ONCE Foundation ILUNION was recognized for its social business model at the United Nations Headquarters in New York

On December 2 ILUNION received the Global Recognition **"Good Practices for Employees with Disability" at the UN Headquarters in New York**, awarded by the Brazilian State Secretariat for the Rights of the Person with Disability.

This award highlights and recognizes the commitment of public and private companies which have implemented successful initiatives for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market. Supported by the United Nations, the award held in 2016 its first international edition to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The CEO of ILUNION, Alejandro Oñoro, accepted the award during an event organized by the Secretariat of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. **"We promote economically and socially profitable businesses, thus showing that persons with disabilities can lead successful business projects. We have a unique model, which we are now exporting to other countries, and even during the economic crisis we have continued to create employment for professionals with a disability", Oñoro said.** ILUNION has a diverse staff, formed by almost 34,000 employees, over 37% of whom are persons with disabilities, 54% are women and 52% are aged 45 to 65. The Group

develops its activities in 50 business lines, including a leading chain of industrial laundries, and the only Spanish hotel chain awarded with the universal accessibility certificate to all of its establishments. ILUNION also has an important line of service provision to other companies (security, cleaning, environment, industrial services, auxiliary services, facility services, etc.), and it is the gate to the labour market for many persons with disabilities through its physiotherapy clinics, convenience stores, elderly homes and tele-assistance services, contact centres, its pioneer company offering accessibility solutions for new technologies, or its consultancy departments specialized in insurances, technical aids, human resources, etc. The video is available [here](#) (min. 47:50)



AFID Diferença, DESIGN project: innovation in social services sector to promote employment at European level

Disabled Employability Signalling project (DESIGN project) is a 3-year project (2016-19) created by 7 organisations from France (AFEJI, ADESAT), Portugal (Fundação AFID Diferença, APROXIMAR), Romania (ASSOC, EaSI) and Hungary (Hand in Hand Foundation) providing support services to persons with disabilities and social innovation consultancy. They will work together to, on the one hand, fine-tune the evaluation of aptitudes, skills and competences of persons with disabilities, and on the other, to develop the right set of instruments; training courses and employment services settings, to empower the services dealing **with disabled persons' employability**. In terms of this incremental innovation the partnership will have access to some existent tests and tools.

The project foresees the development of a set of intellectual outputs, including:

- 1) Evidence review of disabled persons' job placement services
- 2) Job Profile Assessment tool and manual
- 3) Job Placement Services Learning programme manual
- 4) Communication toolkit and
- 5) Job Placement Services model

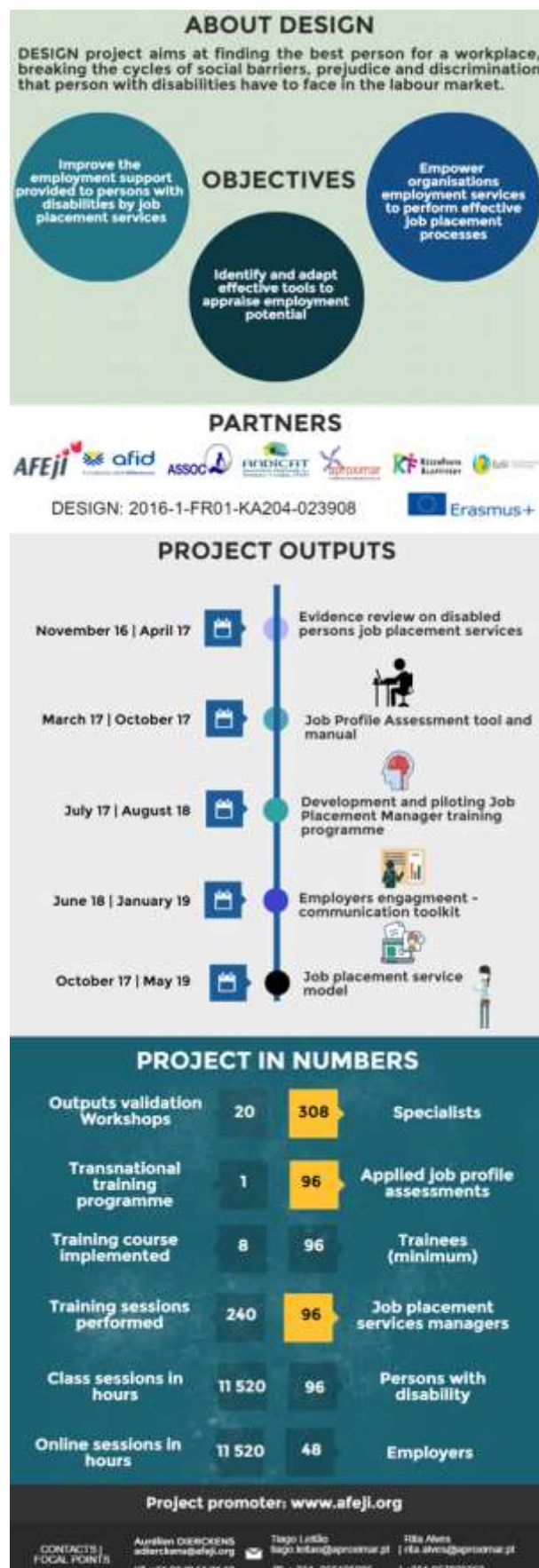
During the 3-year project, partners will organize validation workshops per output in each partner country (20), 8 pilot training courses (2 per country), 3 short-term joint staff training events, and each partner will host at least one national seminar to engage stakeholders and disseminate the project results.

This project is funded by the European Commission ERASMUS+ programme.

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INTRAS Foundation

CHIC & CRAFT EU project for people with mental health issues



INTRAS (Spain) and Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre (Lithuania), both EPR members, are working together on the European Chic & Craft project.

It is about upcycled fashion design and peer mentoring between people with mental health issues, trying to offer them new job opportunities or hobbies to continue with their recovery process.

In September 2016, trainers of the Chic & Craft project met in Spain to attend an intensive training on upcycling and peer mentoring. During five days trainers working in the mental health sector in Spain, Lithuania, Slovenia, Greece and Germany had the opportunity to learn and practice the most important points of the pilot course that is just about to start.

The Chic & Craft working group has selected 53 upcycled products to be created by people with mental health conditions during six months (until spring 2017). The products will be developed in the therapeutic and labour workshops that the organizations working in this project (INTRAS, OZARA, CJD, IASIS and the Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre) run in the above mentioned countries.

The partners wish to implement an innovative methodology

based on peer learning to empower clients and enhance the autonomy and responsibility of the people living with severe **and prolonged mental illness**. Small **“tailor-made” groups** amongst each national group composed by 2-4 people have been created with special abilities on sewing or an interest in the initiative to play the role of teaching assistant. They will help organize each training session and will support their peers during the training course. To facilitate them to assume this role, we have created 50 exercises to train transversal abilities needed to support the professionals as for instance motivation, communication, team work, self-esteem, leadership or concentration. Once per week the tailor-made groups will attend this extra training.

In the coming months, EPR will keep you updated about this exciting pilot course where people have the chance to develop creativity and fashion.

Project website: <http://chicandcraft.intras.es>



SIVA kicks-off the ESF project "People with disabilities or mental health problems integration into employment and society"

In April 2016 The Social Integration State Agency launched the ESF project **"People with disabilities or mental health problems integration into employment and society"** which will be carried out until December 2019. The project's aim is to increase the level of integration into the labour market and society one of the most discriminated groups of society in Latvia – persons with severe disabilities and persons with mental health problems.

During the project research of the Latvian labor market was conducted which showed the most requested professions where people with severe disabilities and mental health problems could get involved. As a result, it is planned to develop 5 new **vocational training programs with qualifications such as carpenter's assistant, gardener's assistant, florist, warehouse worker and file clerk professions**.

SIVA staff members visited Lithuanian and Danish social services providers

One of the Chic and Craft project activities was an experience exchange where SIVA specialists visited several organizations in Denmark and Lithuania which are providing social services for people with disabilities.

The benefit of those visits was to get new ideas for skill training programs and improvement of the Professional Adequacy system including work ability, psychomotor and cognitive skill assessment methods.

Main featured activities:

- ◆ to improve the Professional Adequacy system/process;
- ◆ to develop and implement 5 new vocational training programs for people with severe disabilities;
- ◆ to develop 35 skill training programs for people with mental health problems;
- ◆ to develop a skill certification system in Latvia.



Latvian delegation visiting "KLAP" - Kreativ langsigtet arbejdsplanlægning



Latvian delegation visiting Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre (LT)

Member Focus

Theotokos Foundation

A closer look at their services and the use of ICF and ICF-CY (child and Youth)



Theotokos Foundation is a non-profit welfare organisation that has been operating continuously since 1963. Theotokos is located in the Municipality of Ilion and is situated on 51 acres of land with about 7,000 m² of buildings.

Special education and therapy services are provided to preschool children aged 2,5 - 5 years (early intervention) and to teenagers aged 14 - 20 years with developmental delays, developmental intellectual disorders and autism spectrum disorders. Vocational training and rehabilitation are provided to young adults aged 20 – 35 years. Family environments are supported and intervention is implemented when necessary.

More than 5,000 individuals have been supported and have **received services during the 52 years of the foundation's** operation. Currently, 370 children and young adults attend daily, of which, about 60 are from poverty-stricken families without social security. They are all supported by innovative programs, exemplary for Greece and Europe.

Theotokos works to continuously improve services provision and to use innovative approaches in order to prepare children and young adults with intellectual developmental disorders and autism spectrum disorders to work and participate in everyday life. Theotokos promotes the respect of rights and human dignity, and confidentiality and devotion to their work is the core of their relationships with trainees.

All Theotokos services are planned in a way to minimize social exclusion of persons served and the technique of simulation in vocational training is promoted. Vocational education and training are provided as close as possible to the reality of work and society.

In a cooperative, communicative, united, honest and committed environment, the Board, the Management, the **staff, the “Friends of Theotokos” Union, the parents and the parent and employee associations**, offer in a united and transparent way, services that respect, include, empower and ensure equal participation of persons with intellectual developmental disabilities and autism spectrum disorders in education, training, society and work.



Carrying out evaluation by using ICF / ICF- CY (ChildYouth)

In 2013-2014 Theotokos implemented the European co-financed project **“Digital Convergence”** with the aim of **digitally recording all Theotokos’ service users files based on** the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth ICF and ICF-CY. Based on this project, the following were developed:

- ◆ Digital Welfare File, for the digital management and the further utilization of welfare data, deepening the interdisciplinary functioning of their scientific and educational personnel.
- ◆ Internet portal
- ◆ Serious games (Interactive educational games)
- ◆ Digital library
- ◆ Online applications and transactions
- ◆ Tele-counseling

The ICF can be characterized as a versatile classification system designed to serve various disciplines across several sectors and can be useful for a wide range of diverse applications, e.g. social security, evaluation of health care management and population surveys at the local, national and international level.

Specifically it has been designed to:

- ◆ Provide a scientific base for understanding and studying health and health-related conditions, outcomes and critical factors.
- ◆ Establish a common language for describing health and health-related conditions, in order to improve communication between different users (health care workers, researchers, policy makers as well as people with disabilities).
- ◆ Allow comparison of the available data across countries, across disciplines that provide health services and across health services.

Provide a systematic coding scheme for health information systems.

As an extension, the Interdisciplinary Team at Theotokos is endeavoring to plan individual therapy and education interventions based on the results of classification with the ICF, an effort which is considered innovative and is currently in progress.

Professional Development Activities

Online training sessions on supported employment (25, 27, 28 October 2016)

In October EPR held an online training seminar on “Securing Employment for Job seekers”. During this 3-session webinar we welcomed 17 participants from 7 different countries. The training was led by Mike Evans, supported employment expert from the Guernsey Employment Trust. The first session covered the key elements that can improve job outcomes and increased effectiveness in working with employers, while the second session focused on job finding skills by exploring job finding techniques and activities that could ensure effective job finding activities. The third and last session discussed the ways in which service providers and professionals can support the employer and increase cooperation with the business community. **The seminar provided food for thought about the “perfect” profile for a job coach/supported employment worker. Our trainer emphasised that staffing is the most essential aspect in succeeding. Participants were concerned about the high expectations that are set for these professionals. Mike Evans confirmed that this profession requires “super human skills” due to the diversity of the job. Another topic that was subjected to discussion is the issue regarding disclosure of disability in job applications. The work experience placement and its practicalities was also extensively covered. These topics will therefore be considered for future workshops and/seminars.**

Sharpening professional skills in writing project proposals - Second session

On 25th October, a group of eight people from different EPR members participated in the second session of the online training seminar on EU funding opportunities. The training was led by Kerstin Weertz, director at EU Warehouse BVBA and expert in EU financial instruments. The focus of this session was the essential eligibility criteria relevant for the application to EU call for proposals and on how to write a successful project proposal.

Participants had the opportunity to work on case-studies and to exchange on project ideas.

The seminar was evaluated by the participants on five aspects: matching needs, relevance and possible application at work of the gained knowledge and information, the overall satisfactory level of the training seminar and an assessment of the expert. The participants rated the training seminar with 8/10. In the previous session participants looked at the funding possibilities for European projects in the framework of the Easi/PROGRESS programme and the ERASMUS+ strategic partnerships, the strand “Promote rights of persons with disabilities” of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC).

Webinar on Mental Health services in rural areas in Spain

On the 14th December 2016, EPR with Spanish member Fondacion INTRAS co-organised a webinar to address and raise awareness on the management of local mental health services in rural areas. The event targeted mainly Spanish service providers and local/national stakeholders.

After Pablo Sanchez (Managing Director at Foundation INTRAS) presented the main challenges in delivering services in Castilla y León region (Spain), David Muldoon from the Irish EPR member REHAB Group, shared their experience on how they work to ensure access to mental health services rurally, promoting international exchange and best practices.

Before closing the webinar, participants discussed some opportunities for the further development of services in rural areas, focusing on inclusive approaches to design services, EU funding and the use of ICT technology. A report and presentation are available.

Study visit to the Don Gnocchi Foundation: Focus on medical rehabilitation



The Don Carlo Gnocchi Foundation (DCGF) hosted an event on 17th and 18th November 2016 in Milan to share experiences and promote future collaboration in the field of medical rehabilitation among members of the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR).

The first day of the visit, representatives of the Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse (France), Adelante (the Netherlands) and the University Rehabilitation Institute (Slovenia) had the opportunity to visit different department of the DCGF carrying out advanced research in the field of rehabilitation and care services.

The second day of the visit, the three visiting organisations presented experiences and good practices to the Carlo Don Gnocchi Foundation's professionals and external audience in order to promote mutual learning and to identify common interests among the four EPR members. During the closing session of the workshop, Laura Jones thanked the DCGF for **hosting this great event and stressed EPR's commitment in supporting members' future activities in the field of medical rehabilitation.**

The study visit to the DCGF in Milan ended with a workshop in which Adelante, CRM, URI and DCGF identified priorities and a proposed work plan for 2017.

Workshop partnerships with employers

In December 2016, EPR and the French member FAGERH co-organised a two-day workshop event to explore strategies and good-practices to develop successful partnerships with employers and promoting diversity in the workplace. An experienced facilitator guided participants from ASTANGU (Estonia), VRC (Lithuania), URI (Slovenia), FAGERH and CRM (France,) AFID (Portugal), NHO (Norway) and ONCE (Spain) in sharing their experiences and identifying strategies to create, sustain and re-build partnerships with employers.

The event was highly interactive and participants identified the trust building process as a key factor in developing fruitful relationships with companies. The facilitator presented the Action Coordination Cycle and its steps as a possible model to take into account when developing future cooperation strategies.

During the event, participants showed a keen interest in the use of social media to engage with employers and how to

develop soft skills in trainees. On the second day, participants of the workshop had the opportunity to meet one employer and discuss his experience in hiring people with disabilities, focusing on needs, benefits and possible challenges.

Participants expressed a high level of satisfaction for this benchlearning event. EPR will organise a follow up event in 2017 to build on the workshop conclusions.



Webinar on Portamento: exploring the online portal

EPR organised a webinar between its members to assess the potential adaptation of the Por Talento platform to other organizations developed by the Spanish ONCE Group. Mr. Lastano of ILUNION (ONCE group) and in charge of managing the technicalities of the Por talento platform, and Edurne Alvarez, human resources expert at FSC INSERTA, share additional information with representatives of the Josefs-Gesellschaft. Por Talento is a well-developed system and it offers benefits to both employers and job-seekers. By organising such events, EPR aims to identify possible solutions to support its members in developing similar platforms in other contexts.



Public Affairs

Social Services Europe briefing paper: “Role of social service providers in the integration of migrants”



Migration is not a new phenomenon for Europe. Migration within the European Union and from outside the European Union has been an increasingly normalized pattern of our demographics for many years. However, in recent years the increasing numbers seeking to migrate to the EU has been combined with the increasing number of people coming to the EU looking for international protection because of global political crises.

The European institutions continue to search for solutions amid a sense of crisis –a crisis that for many citizens and organisations such as those in Social Services Europe is borne out of a lack of solidarity. Against this complex context, Social Service Europe (SSE) members – being not-for-profit social and health care service providers and civil society organisations – have been involved in the provision of short and long-term solutions for building welcoming

societies and fostering the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the receiving countries, as well as the integration of other disadvantaged people within their own country.

This paper presents five key points that should be addressed and discussed to highlight the essential role played by not for profit social service providers in the support and integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The five points also underline the main challenges that not for profit social service providers are confronted with and are points for discussion and debate. Social Service Europe also puts forward some recommendations on how to enable the environment for social service providers to offer quality support and integration services and welcome discussion as to how these recommendations could be realised.

Read the paper [here](#)

Public Affairs Event: Co-production for quality of services and quality of life

On 23rd November 2016, EPR in collaboration with the European Disability Forum (EDF) organised the Public Affairs event which gathered European stakeholders in order to explore how specialized service providers can best co-produce services to persons with disabilities and promote their integration in the workplace and community.

The event was open by Jean-Paul Essers - EPR President – and John Patrick Clarke – EDF Board Member – who stressed the importance to have a strongly united voice to address the needs of people with disabilities.

Co-production is crucial to ensure that people with disabilities are included in the implementation and in the design of services. Co-production reflects the main principles enshrined with the UNCRPS whilst giving the ownership of the processes, from identification of the needs to services to the people with disabilities. In this sense, co-production practices broaden UNCRPD principles to all aspects of daily life.

The first part of the event, chaired by Laura Jones - EPR Secretary General showcased good practices from EPR membership and launched the EPR Study on Co-production in Services for People with Disabilities. The Study and recommendations drawn from the research conducted by Lilia Angelova-Mladenova from the European Network of Independent Living (ENIL), 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 co-producing services with people with disabilities, drawing from good practice examples.

Martin Künemund, Project Coordinator at Josefshiem-Bigge in Germany, was interviewed on the successful project “We



Empower us bh, toolkit for people with Spina bifida and Hydrocephalus”. **Martin stressed the fact that the toolkits** were co-produced by service users and professionals, providing resources for employment and training, and developing peer support. The project empowered service users to co-produce services and policies, and supported people to be self-advocates towards decision-makers.

Sonya Felton, Head of Public Affairs and Advocacy at RehabGroup in Ireland, was interviewed on the model developed in Ireland: **Rehab’s Advocacy and Representative Structure**. Sonya highlighted how the structure enables a strategic approach to participation in all consultation process and planning process within the organisation.

Based on the German and Irish experience, participants discussed suggestions for future co-production services and pointed out that it is important to have more networking and collaboration with other organisations, a sufficient allocation of budgets from public authorities to support co-production process and a stronger commitment of policy makers to promoting co-production.

The second part of the event was devoted to an engaged panel debate, chaired by Laura Marchetti, EDF Policy Officer, that considered main challenges and barriers to co-production and reflect on how policy-makers at European, national, regional, and local level can support co-production. Representatives from key European organisations representing social service providers and people with disabilities were invited to debate on the topic: Nadia Hadad, Board member ENIL; Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General EASPD; Heather Roy, Secretary General Eurodiaconia and Alva Finn, Policy Manager, Mental Health Europe.

In the spirit of co-production, all participants were engaged in the debate and developed recommendations for next steps.



Attendees reflected on the importance of staff-training and sensitization about co-production, the necessity to provide good information about services and to facilitate communication of service users with professionals. Actions and recommendations to overcome barriers to and to promote co-production were discussed with speakers. Following the informative presentations and the debate, Laura Jones thanked all participants and invited them to enjoy the complimentary cocktail that gave participants the opportunity to network and to exchange opinions and personal considerations on this topic.



Public consultation on European Pillar of Social Rights



In March 2016, the European Commission launched a public consultation on the European Pillar of Social Rights which was adopted on 6 September 2016. The

European Pillar of Social Rights has been designed to identify a number of essential principles to address the challenges in the field of employment and social policies. The Pillar spells out in more detail principles and commitments that have been **achieved in the “EU acquis” and that can steer greater social convergence within the euro area.** The consultation on the Pillar provided an opportunity to take a holistic view of the “acquis”, to review its relevance in the light of new trends and to identify possible areas for future action, at the appropriate level.

EPR responded to the consultation and emphasized that the outline of the EU Pillar of Social Rights recognises that adequate and sustainable social protection, as well as access to high quality essential services, including childcare, healthcare and long-term care, equal opportunities and access to the labour market, including skills development and life-long learning, and fair working conditions are essential.

The Pillar is an important opportunity for the EU to rebalance economic and social policy at EU level, highlight the importance of the social policy dimension of the EU, and provide a tool to mainstream social policy in other policy

areas. This is necessary to help rebuild trust among the inhabitants of Europe in the EU by showing it can bring benefits in areas important to them (social and employment issues), and in so doing, help counter nationalistic tendencies that can arise because unmet needs are perceived as not being addressed at EU level. However, this potential will not be fulfilled unless the Pillar is integrated with existing EU policy mechanisms - and this integration is not outlined in the approach.

EPR pointed out that in the Pillar there is no reference to social investment and the importance of adequate financing of social protection systems and social services in the outline, which are essential for accessing rights as explained above. There is also a lack of reference to quality social services yet these services must be of sufficient quality to be effective and efficient.

The UNCRPD is not mentioned and in “Chapter 1, principle 6 3 Equal opportunities”, there is no explicit reference to the disability dimension, while people with disabilities often face a high level of exclusion in the society and still suffer from specific barriers and discrimination.

EPR expressed concerns on the strong focus in the Pillar on employment as the main outcome. Recognising that employment is an important factor to achieve social inclusion should not divert from the fact that there are people who cannot work during all of their working years or part of them, and who are more at risk of poverty and social exclusion. EPR answer to the consultation is available [here](#)

EPR contributes to national conference on labour market reintegration

The Belgian [Institut national d'assurance maladie-invalidité](#) (National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance) organised a conference on the 2nd December in Brussels looking at good practice and developments in labour market reintegration. The meeting was attended by around 200 people from the public, private and non-profit sectors and Laura Jones, EPR Secretary General, gave the opening address. She introduced EPR, EQUASS and presented a snapshot of good practices and trends on the theme across Europe. She spoke about a number of successful EU-funded projects EPR or members have been involved in, including Re-integrate addressing return to work, Peer2Peer in mental health led by Intrac, Learnabil-IT which addresses building partnerships with employers. She also introduced the Recovery approach in mental health and the WRAP® method for mental well-being and EPR's e-learning material mental health. Finally, Laura shared the conclusions of the 2015 report on mainstreaming and on success factors for fruitful relationships with employers. The presentation (in French) is available on request.

Sofie Vandermarliere, who works for EPR member GTB, presented as an expert of the VDAB (Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Service) their work on using the

International Classification of Functioning to support work capacity assessment. A researcher talked about a pilot of the Individual Placement and Support method in Belgium which will be evaluated with the consideration to mainstream the method across the country. Another researcher explained the concept of social investment and the importance of seeing social expenditure as a productive factor. An INAMI expert explained their capacity to train in Disability Management, having received accreditation from the Internationally recognised National Institute for Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) in Canada. The experience and value of job coaches was also presented by practitioners.

Following the conference, moderated by the Directeur général du Service des indemnités, a few organisations were interested in what EPR membership could offer, as well as in learning more about EQUASS, and the head of the health department of a large bank was interested in the Re-integrate resources. The INAMI representatives were **pleased with Ms Jones' contribution and expressed a hope** to continue to cooperate on topics of common interest.

Laura Jones introduces EPR and ENIL work on co-production in Paris

The conference *Participation des personnes: Quelle réalité* on the 6th December 2016 was the final event for the French project « Participations des usagers et démocratie en santé » which aimed to promote, exchange on and develop the role of service users in the running of medico-social services. The project, led by the Association de Paralysés de France, promoted mutual learning and produced a guide of different good practices and a Easy-to-read version (both in French) which are available for consultation [here](#). A short video giving an overview of the project and results was shown at the event and can be viewed [here](#).

Representatives of networks and people using services from across France talked about the success of the initiatives and the wish to further develop them. Speakers from the design sector talked of the value of involving end users of furniture and housing in the development of the product. Laura Jones was invited to take part in a panel looking at practices from

across Europe on the participation of service users. She introduced some of the key findings and recommendations of the 2016 [report on co-production](#), carried out by ENIL, **based on members' inputs. The panel discussed the** differences between participation, empowerment and co-production; noting that the latter terms did not easily translate into French. The ICF consultancy informed participants that they were working on a pan-European study into co-production practices.



Projects

PESSIS 3 project **on promoting employers' social dialogue in social services** Joint meeting in Brussels: steps forward in the development of the European Social Dialogue



On 4th **October**, national employers' representatives from Austria, Belgium, France and Germany, trade unions representatives and all project partners discussed a Joint Declaration on a European social dialogue in social services. The two documents and the intentions expressed in them will be discussed publicly next year in a hearing at the European Parliament (March 2017).

By then, the European report drawing together the mapping of social dialogue in the social services sectors from each of the 17 national reports published so far, will be updated with 5 additional country-studies: Portugal, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and the United Kingdom.

After an overview of the history and aims of the project from Thomas Bignal, EASPD, participants heard from researcher Jane Lethbridge about how consensus was reached to create a Hospital Sectoral Committee, social dialogue in the hospital sector, over a number of years via EU-funded projects. Updates on national discussions on European Social Dialogue were then given by the four countries present. The importance of the impulse for creating dialogue coming from national level was stressed.

The draft Common Declaration between Employers was one of the main items for discussion. The draft had been developed with input from the four countries and Trade Unions and aims to lay out the significance of the sector, challenges it experiences and recommendations for the EU level. The draft was well received, and the debate focused on ensuring clear, positive messages in the text. A few issues of importance were also added. The new version of the text would be approved at the next meeting.

The group then discussed aims of and preparations for the Hearing in the European Parliament. The plan is to organise

it in late March 2017, date dependent on availability of a host MEP. The joint declaration would be presented, with employers giving their experiences on the different issues addressed within it. It would also be an opportunity to highlight the importance and size of the social services sector. EPR is leading on organising the event and is working with EASPD.

More information about the project is available [here](#)

The other phases of the project

Extending the research on social dialogue in the social and health services sector to Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and United Kingdom. Almost all countries are undergoing change in their social services sectors, with the future of long term funding posing specific problems for planning and maintaining a high quality workforce. The sector is characterised in all countries by low pay, shortage of workers, lack of training and problems with recruitment and retention. The future of the social services sector depends on finding solutions to these issues.

Establishing capacity-building with employers and discussing the participation in European Social Dialogue in Czech Republic, Spain and Ireland. Several national meetings were organized during 2016 and attended by a mix of employer and trade union representatives to discuss on the necessity of strengthening social dialogue in the social sector at EU level.

In December 2016, Mr. Javier Güemes, working at ONCE Foundation, was appointed as EPR representative in PESSIS 3 to follow the ongoing debate in Spain.



EQUASS 2018 standard available

In the beginning of January 2017, the EQUASS 2018 standard for Assurance and Excellence were published on the EQUASS website. This came after two years of development by the EQUASS unit and its Technical Working Group, and guided by the input of the EQUASS Awarding Committee.

The new EQUASS 2018 standard will be launching alongside the current system in the Spring of 2017. As of January 1st 2018, it will be the only quality system in use for the assessment and recognition of quality by the EQUASS department of the EPR. The quality standard documents have been further refined into a version focusing specifically on EQUASS Assurance level requirements, and another one on EQUASS Excellence requirements. The documents are available for download at this [link](#).

Translated versions of this standard will be made available shortly on the EQUASS website, in Norwegian, French and Dutch. The Application form for both EQUASS Assurance and Excellence, as well as its procedures and other useful documents, will be made available by the end of the first quarter of 2017.

EQUASS Audits in the last quarter of 2016

Between October and December of 2016, 52 organisations became EQUASS certified, some for the first time.



For the EQUASS Excellence mark, APPACDM in Coimbra and the Évora Association of Cerebral palsy both received a recertification of their services. Coimbra once again received the highest mark of any other Excellence organisation!



In November, RehabCare challenged EQUASS to the largest Assurance multi-site audit ever performed: 39 sites to be simultaneously audited by a team of 4 auditors! The audit resulted in a certification for all sites concerned.

EQUASS Round Table in Antwerp, Flanders

On Thursday 13 October EQUASS organised a round table in Antwerp. This was the first EQUASS information event in Flanders, Belgium. Six participants from civil society organisations, disability services & networks and Flemish policy making institutions attended the round table.

We started with a short introduction of EPR and the EQUASS 2018 system, followed by an interactive information session which focused on the different views on quality and **how EQUASS relates to the need of the Flanders' market**. Participants were challenged to discuss existing policy concerning quality and quality systems. It was an interactive discussion where participants showed interest in EQUASS.

After the event it was concluded that it is important for social service providers to get EQUASS recognised by the

regional and national authorities. This will make it easier to implement the EQUASS system in the social service sector in Belgium. Official recognition is needed to justify the service **providers' action**.



Upcoming Events

- ⇒ 13-14 February 2017 - EPR Coordinators Meeting, Brussels
- ⇒ 14 February 2017 - Board of Directors, Brussels
- ⇒ 21-22 February 2017 - EQUASS European Conference, Vilnius

For more information on EPR and EQUASS events visit

www.epr.eu

www.equass.be

News from the Secretariat

Welcome Mirko!



Mirko Miceli joined the EPR Secretariat at the end of October 2016 in the role of Membership Officer.

He studied Sociology and Criminology at the University of Bologna (IT) and obtained his second Master degree at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. Before joining the EPR, Mirko worked at the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna, for RAND Corporation Europe in Cambridge, and the Italian Honorary Consulate in Leuven. Since 2013, Mirko

has been working in the third sector, first as project officer for a London-based civil society organisation and then as Liaison Officer for members of a European network organisation based in Leuven for the last two and half years.

As EPR Membership Officer, Mirko is responsible for liaising with members and external stakeholders, planning and organising professional development activities and assisting the Secretary General to develop and implement expansion strategies of the current EPR membership.

Mirko can be reached at mmiceli@epr.eu

EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR REHABILITATION

*The network of service providers to people with disabilities
committed to excellence and innovation through mutual learning*

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