



STUDY OF SERVICES TO SUPPORT THE INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY IN MAINSTREAM ENVIRONMENTS

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OCTOBER 2015

epr

european platform for rehabilitation



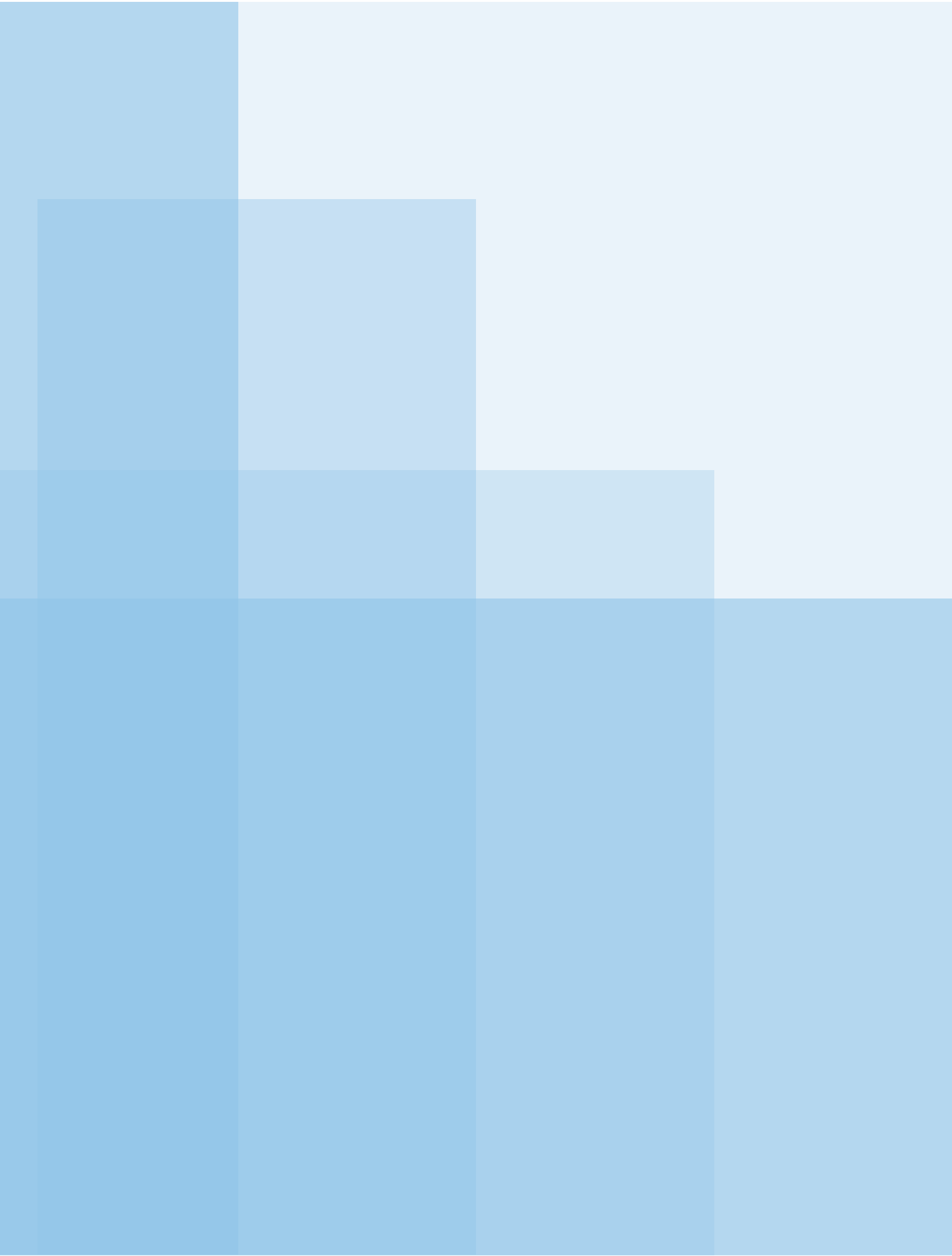


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Annexes: Services to Support the Inclusion of Persons with Disability in Mainstream Environments Study Protocols – available on www.epr.eu



I. INTRODUCTION

A. EPR

The European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) is a network of leading European providers of rehabilitation services to people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups.

EPR's member organisations are influential in their countries and stand for high quality service delivery in the fields of vocational education and training, reintegration, medical rehabilitation and social care. The thousands of professionals active in the EPR membership throughout Europe represent a wide range of expertise in the sector.

EPR's Vision is that EPR contributes to a society where every person with a disability or other disadvantages accesses the highest quality services that create equal opportunities and independent participation in society.

EPR's Mission is to enhance the capacity of its members in view of providing sustainable and high quality services to clients against the background of a changing social services market environment.

B. Aims and context of the study

This study is part of a series of reports published by EPR that aim to provide evidence of trends and developments in delivery of services to people with disabilities. This particular study presents services from the EPR membership that support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream environments.

This study intends to be a useful resource for service providers, for disability communities, and for policy-makers, including the European Commission.



It aims to provide disability service providers with ideas for possible innovations in the contents of service delivery, but also with insights into practical improvements in the methodology and processes supporting services. This study has thus a very hands-on mission to disseminate and support good practice.

Representative associations of people with disabilities may find in this document an advocacy resource to advance community inclusion and argue for de-institutionalisation and access to mainstream services in community-based environments. Key recommendations for services have been drawn out.

This document also aims to provide analysis of the context within which the services are operating, the relevant legislation and funding mechanisms. This in order for policy-makers to be able to understand and create the right framework for the development of community-based service delivery to people with disabilities.

The present study has been drafted based on the inputs from EPR member organisations and with financial support of the European Commission under the Programme for Employment and Social Innovation, “EaSI” (2014–2020). It is one of the resources available to encourage the provision of quality services to people with disabilities in mainstream environments, which supports de-institutionalisation. The focus on de-institutionalisation was initiated in the EU under the impulse of disability movements and with inputs notably from the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care.

An explanation of the methodology of the study can be found in section V.

2.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

By ‘mainstreamed environment’ we mean the common society, that is, environments that are not segregated or targeted exclusively to persons with disabilities. A regular school, the open labour market or a community facility that is opened to the general public are examples of ‘mainstreamed environments’.

The examples gathered through this research are analysed in this report in order to identify and describe common patterns and themes and the challenges and opportunities they are facing. Based on the overall picture of the current promising practices collected, key lessons and recommendations are derived with a view to inform the development of future initiatives.

This study is framed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which puts forward an understanding of disability as a human rights issue, resulting from “the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (art.1). Consequently, society has an obligation to change and adapt in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination and facilitate the full participation of persons with disabilities.

Mainstreaming is about challenging discrimination to promote participation. As such, “it involves supporting basic services to ensure that persons with disabilities are included, and enjoy equality of access to those services” (UNRWA, n.d.).

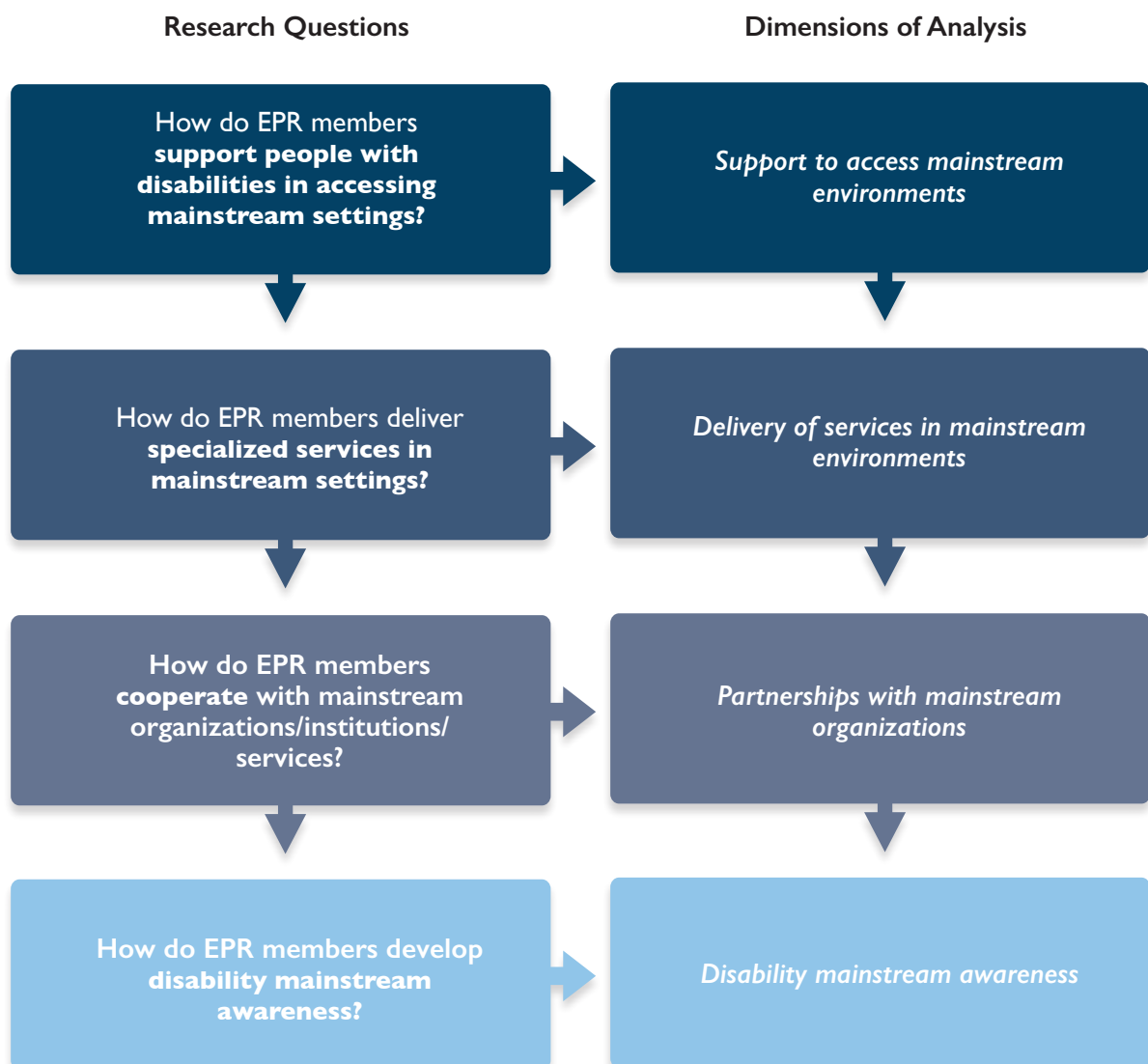
The United Nations promotes the ‘twin-track approach’ for advancing the rights of persons with disabilities, which consists of: “(a) integrating disability-sensitive measures into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes and (b) providing disability-specific initiatives to support the empowerment of persons with disabilities” (UN Economic and Social Council, 2012). While the overall goal of this study was to learn about practices that support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream environments, the main focus was to collect data on disability-specific initiatives, through addressing four key questions.

These are:

- How do EPR members support people with disabilities in accessing mainstream settings?
- How do EPR members deliver specialised services in mainstream settings?
- How do EPR members cooperate with mainstream organisations/ institutions/services?
- How do EPR members develop disability mainstream awareness?

Each of these questions is directly related to a particular dimension of disability mainstreaming, as shown in Figure 1. These dimensions will be used later in this report to draw conclusions about the promising practices collected.

Figure 1: Research questions and dimensions of disability mainstreaming analysis





3. RECOMMENDATIONS

This report intends to analyse and lend visibility to the initiatives currently being developed by EPR member organisations to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream environments in Europe. From the evidence gathered through this study it is possible to draw six recommendations for future directions regarding social inclusion programmes. These recommendations are in line with the principles and standards of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and reflect the EPR Charter on Modernisation of Disability-related Health and Social Services. Programmes should:

A. Enhance the capacity of persons with disabilities and develop transition programmes

The UNCRPD emphasises participation in society as a guiding principle and a goal for persons with disabilities. This goal may require the development of contextualised capacity-building strategies and transition programmes, and the provision of specific coaching and ongoing support, but it is ultimately focused on promoting equal opportunities, autonomy and the development of persons with disabilities' capacity to live independent lives. This recommendation is echoed in Pathway 3 of the EPR Charter, which states that disability-related health and social services should actively contribute to enhance the capacity of individuals to participate fully in society.

B. Be person-centred and take a rights-based approach

A rights-based approach places persons with disabilities at the heart of all intervention processes. This implies a careful assessment of the person's potential, limitations,

needs and interests, in order to adjust intervention strategies, as well as develop strategies to include the perspective of the users throughout the intervention process. This suggestion is in line with Pathway 6 of the EPR Charter, which states that service users should be involved in all aspects of their (re)integration process with a view to maximising their potential and realising their aspirations.

C. Promote 'mainstreaming' through a twin-track approach

In order to achieve full participation for persons with disabilities, across a wide range of ability levels, it is necessary to develop services as close to the mainstreamed environment as possible, while providing any necessary specialised support to facilitate inclusion. This recommendation is in line with Pathway 4 of the EPR Charter, which states that mainstreaming should be pursued through a twin-track approach that integrates a mainstreaming model with specialised solutions for

people who find it hard to integrate in the mainstream. The analysis of the experiences of some EPR member organisations presented in this study suggests that in these cases the inclusion in mainstream environments can be accomplished on a gradual basis, through capacity-building strategies undertaken within a semi-protected environment. The number of activities in mainstreamed environments will be gradually increased throughout the programme in order to make the transition as smooth and sustainable as possible.

D. Develop strategic partnerships with mainstream organisations and actors

Full participation of persons with disabilities will not be achieved without the involvement of mainstream organisations and actors. Developing partnerships is a way to ensure a maximum complementarity of approaches by sharing resources and knowledge, and making full use of each partner's area of expertise, as suggested in Pathway 4 of the EPR Charter.

E. Promote and facilitate inclusive environments

While recognising that most EPR member organisations are focused on service provision, rather than on advocacy efforts, the Individual Protocols have presented interesting examples of activities designed to promote disability mainstream awareness in regular service-provision programmes. These strategies constitute promising practices that could be replicated in future programmes, since they simultaneously work with the clients (persons with disabilities), to build their capacity and support their transition to mainstreamed environments, while acting on those very environments, in order to render them more inclusive of the needs of persons with disabilities. Such a comprehensive approach to mainstreaming issues reflects the spirit of Article I of the UNCRPD, which recognizes that disability emerges when persons with impairments encounter environmental barriers preventing their full participation

F. Strive to achieve political support for disability mainstreaming

Taking into account the previous recommendation, disability awareness and education of policy-makers and other stakeholders are therefore necessary steps and must emphasize the importance of considering disability in the design, implementation and evaluation of all policies and programmes, across all areas of society.

Five key recommendations can also be made to decision-makers, based on the challenges and opportunities identified by the service providers.

a) Ensure sufficient, sustainable funding of mainstreamed disability services

Funding authorities must think long term, taking a social investment approach to financing social and employment services, recognising the value and future impact of effective mainstreamed services. The EU should strongly promote the social investment approach and ensure that the social impact of any recommendations is taken into account.

b) Allow flexibility in funding pilot programmes

Funding authorities should not be afraid to take risks in financing programmes in development. They should not cut funding if an approach is not as effective as anticipated, but adapt funding as the approach develops, to fit needs.

c) Assess and ensure the inclusiveness of public employment, education, housing and leisure services

Public authorities should assess the accessibility and inclusiveness of their employment, education, housing and leisure services and take action to ensure that people with disabilities do not miss out on the support available to them in this field.

d) Build understanding among employers of the UNCRPD and of reasonable accommodation

Public authorities and the European Commission should work with service providers to people with disabilities to explain obligations under the UNCRPD and the feasibility of workplace adaptation.

e) Develop and support initiatives that tackle socio-cultural barriers to the inclusion of people with disabilities in society in general and in the labour market in particular.

Public authorities and the European Commission should work with stakeholders to develop campaigns and information material to dispel prejudices and show the benefits that a diverse workforce can bring.

f) Use the EU tools and funds available to develop and support community-based services

The European Commission should promote good practice in the use of EU funds for community-based services and de-institutionalisation. Member states' authorities managing EU structural funds must ensure projects funded are compatible with the UNCRPD and seek to learn from good practice.

For further information on the recommendations please see the section 'Concluding Observations'.

4.

INDIVIDUAL PROTOCOL FINDINGS BY SECTION

The following provides a summary of each Section of the Study Protocol for all of the responses. These are provided in a narrative format. Interspersed with the summary findings are examples from individual Study Protocols. Further to these, the annexes on EPR website provide an abbreviated summary of each item for all of the Protocols.

Below is presented the complete list of programmes, organised by country and organisation:

Belgium	GTB vzw	TAZbis (Tender activation and care, second phase) for persons with mental, medical, psychic or psychiatric problems (MMPP)
	GTB vzw	Building a corporate collaboration between the public unemployment office VDAB and GTB to promote the employment rate of people with disabilities: a good example of mainstreaming
Denmark	The Marie Homes	The Selma Marie Home – rehabilitation of young adults with TBI/ABI
Estonia	Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre	Opening Doors and Minds: A mentor programme
France	CRM (Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse)	CDI ISI Curriculum
Germany	Josefs Gesellschaft gGmbH	VAmB – Verahnte Ausbildung mit Betrieben
Greece	Theotokos Foundation	Early Intervention
Ireland	Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA)	Operation Sign-Up
	National Learning Network	Education Support Service Learning & Assessment
Netherlands	Adelante	Training towards community based living
	Heliomare	Arbeids Trainings Centrum (ATC)
Poland	EKON	Complex social and vocational skills assessment as a supporting practice in vocational rehabilitation
Portugal	Fundação AFID Diferença	Transition to Active Life
Spain	ONCE Foundation	Support to Ongoing Entrepreneurs

SECTION I INCLUSIVE PROGRAMME INFORMATION

This section included the **goal** of the programme, its **outcome measures**, the **theory** or theories underlying it, the **year** the programme started and the relevant milestones, the staffing patterns and the **physical location** of the programmes analysed.

DISCUSSION:

GOALS

An overview of the stated goals of the initiatives gathered for this study reveals that the **majority of programmes are focused on employment and/or vocational training**. Of these, five initiatives can be categorised as **activation programmes** aimed at supporting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the open labour market, through guidance, support and training - VAmB in Germany, the two programmes promoted by GTB in Belgium, CRM in France and Astangu in Estonia. One programme, from ONCE (Spain), aimed to support entrepreneurs with disabilities through customized training. Three other initiatives endeavoured to promote rehabilitation, social participation and transition to the labour market of clients with disabilities (Heliomare in The Netherlands, the Marie Homes in Denmark, and EKON Association in Poland), while **two others focused exclusively on support to independent living** (Adelante in The Netherlands, and the Irish Wheelchair Association, IWA). The remaining programmes focused on **early intervention** (Theotokos Foundation in Greece) and **support to inclusive education** (NLN in Ireland and AFID in Portugal).

OUTCOME MEASURES

The outcome measures used in the programmes reported usually combined **quantitative and qualitative indicators**. Programmes concerned with work activation and vocational training, typically included completion and drop-out rates for training programmes, assessments of the number of clients who access internships and/or jobs during the programmes and follow-up measures of job retention rates after participation in the programme. Programmes concerned with social participation and independent living included measures of increased awareness of existing programmes and benefits of independent living among persons with

disabilities and other stakeholders and well as a direct assessment of the number of persons with disabilities who gain access to housing and other support services. Programmes concerned with inclusive education assessed rates of integration in mainstream schooling systems and measures of school progression and psychosocial indicators after participation in the programme. Moreover, three programmes, from Theotokos, Astangu and Ekon, included evaluation of satisfaction rates among clients, family members and partners.

THEORIES

Programmes differed on their underlying theoretical orientation. While some initiatives adopted clearly structured intervention models, with established theoretical frameworks and methodologies, others have developed bottom-up approaches that departed more freely from key theoretical guidelines to establish their own intervention models.

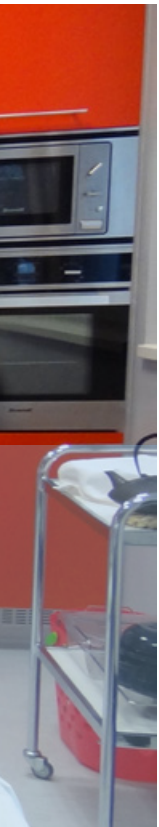
The most cited models included **person-centred approaches** (e.g. Person-Centred Approach *per se*, Self-Direction, Empowerment and Capacity-Building) and **rights-based perspectives** (e.g. Inclusive Education and Work, through integration in mainstreamed environments; Independent Living), followed by **bio-psycho-social perspectives**, namely as defined by the ICF. Other theoretical perspectives included **mentoring, solution-focused approaches** and **cognitive-behavioural techniques**.

BEGINNING AND MILESTONES

The vast majority (11 out of 14) of the programmes have been going for no longer than 10 years, with 8 out of the 14 programmes having started over the past five years. ONCE has in place the longest standing initiative, an entrepreneurship programme directed at persons with disabilities that began in 1988. However, all initiatives seem to be constantly re-adapting. Many have been built upon previous experiences and have been evolving since their creation, through a continuous assessment and consolidation effort. Even among the most recent initiatives there seems to be an effort to continuously assess and improve the intervention strategies.

STAFFING PATTERNS

The staffing patterns present important differences according to the structure of each programme. Most programmes (10 out of 14) employ small or medium-sized interdisciplinary teams (5-21 people), including



project managers, psychologists, social workers, trainers and other professionals, combining full-time and part-time workers. In several cases, these human resources are responsible for different projects within the organization. In three cases, the programmes involve large teams, working in different locations. These initiatives rely for the most part on networks of local-based workers with a centralized coordination (e.g. IWA in Ireland or both programmes led by GTB in Belgium). One of the programmes, promoted by Astangu, relied on only one worker, responsible for the coordination of the project, complemented by a number of volunteer mentors.

PROGRAMME LOCATION

Most programmes are located in the organisations' headquarters, usually in central and accessible locations, developing also a number of activities in partner organizations' offices or in mainstream environments, such as ordinary schools, universities, job centres or even public socialisation spaces (e.g. community and cultural centres or cafes). GTB's programme of collaboration between mainstream and specialised employment services is embedded in the regular services of the employment offices in Flanders and, as such, all activities are developed in a mainstream environment. Similarly, AFID's and NLN's programmes of support to inclusive education are developed exclusively in mainstream environments (primary and secondary schools and university). Two organisations (Astangu, ONCE) further mentioned developing frequent online activities (e.g. meetings, training, online support).

SECTION II CLIENT INFORMATION

This Section includes a description of the **type and number of targeted clients** who participate in the programmes, in addition to a description of the involvement of **family members**.

DISCUSSION:

TARGETED CLIENTS AND NUMBER OF CLIENTS

The analysis of the study protocols yielded a **great diversity in the size and profile of the targeted clients**. Some programmes are based on long-term training and/or support programmes that require a highly individualized intervention, resulting in a lower number

of clients per year (Astangu, CRM, Adelante, The Marie Homes, Theotokos, averaging less than 25 clients per year). Two initiatives support an average of 50 clients per year (Heliomare, ONCE) and three others between 100-200 clients a year (VamB, NLN and EKON). GTB promotes the largest programmes, ranging from 1000 (TAZbis) to 10 000 clients per year (Collaboration with VBAD employment centres).

Concerning the profile of the participants, **almost all programmes were directed at adults and young adults**, involved in vocational training, work activation and independent living programmes or ordinary schooling (13 out of 14). Only one programme was directed at children, the early intervention programme of the Theotokos Foundation (Greece).

The majority of the programmes were **open to clients with any type of disability**, with the exception of TAZbis (focused mostly on persons with psychosocial disabilities), Adelante, (mostly directed at persons with physical disabilities), and the early intervention programme from the Theotokos Foundation, which does not include children with physical disabilities.

FAMILY MEMBERS

The last question in this section concerned the involvement of family members in the programmes. The answers reveal that **family involvement largely depends on the age of the target-group and the nature of the programme**. As expected, the highest level of family involvement was expressed in the programme targeted at children - Theotokos' Early Intervention Programme, where parents were involved throughout the programme's implementation, namely in needs assessment, training and counselling sessions. Other programmes, especially when directed at young people, reported involving the family in the assessment of the client's situation and needs or as an additional source of support throughout the programme (Heliomare, Adelante, VAmB, The Marie Homes). Heliomare also mentioned the involvement of family members as volunteers.

NLN expressed a similar perspective on family participation, but emphasised that the involvement of the family is only sought when the client gives his/her direct consent and such an involvement is potentially beneficial to the client. In the other cases, the involvement of family members was limited, since all activities were exclusively targeted at the clients themselves.

SECTION III

PROGRAMME SERVICES AND INTERVENTION

This Section includes a description of the Programme **activities, targeted and/or involving the clients, family and community members.**

DISCUSSION:

ACTIVITIES TARGETED AT CLIENTS

The first question in this Section assessed the activities directly targeted at persons with disabilities. **Due to the highly diversified nature of the programmes, the activities reported covered a wide range.** Most programmes included a **comprehensive assessment** of the needs, interests and general profile of the clients, in order to adjust the intervention plans accordingly. This was the case of vocational training and job activation programmes, where this individual profile helped find the company or type of job placement that best fitted individual needs (e.g. CRM, EKON, TAZ, VAmB), but the same principle applied also to other programmes (e.g. Theotokos' early intervention programme or IWA's housing initiative). The core activities depended on the nature of each programme. Job activation programmes typically included **specific training** (e.g. IT training in the case of CRM, Digital Marketing & Finance Management in the case of ONCE), **capacity-building** and **soft-skills training** (e.g. Astangu, TAZ) and **internships or job placements** (e.g. TAZbis, CRM, VAmB). GTB's programme of collaboration with public employment offices includes guidance, mediation and counselling services provided directly in a mainstreamed environment.

Programmes of support to social development, participation and independent living included, apart from general assessment and skills-training activities, a number of **psychosocial and medical support activities** designed to facilitate social inclusion and access to services and rights (e.g. Adelante, Heliomare, IWA, The Marie Homes). Finally, inclusive education programmes included a comprehensive assessment of needs and tailored training and individualised support (NLN, AFID). NLN offers a particularly comprehensive support programme that is also available for students without a diagnosed disability.

ACTIVITIES INVOLVING FAMILY MEMBERS

The involvement of family members is highly varied depending on the nature of each programme. Since all programmes are designed to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities, they are highly focused on the client himself/herself. As such, five programmes do not promote any activities involving the family. The programmes that involve family members usually include them in activities designed to assess the needs and resources of the client and his/her personal network, as well as in specific training and counselling sessions. Sometimes, they make this participation contingent upon the client's consent or an evaluation of whether such participation is truly beneficial to the client (e.g. VAmB, NLN). Theotokos' early intervention initiative was the only programme with activities specifically targeted at parents, namely parental training and support.

ACTIVITIES INVOLVING PARTNERS

Some programmes promote **activities involving partners on an occasional basis.** These activities may include contacts, meetings and information sessions with current and potential partners in order to introduce the programme and get them engaged in the project (CRM, Astangu, EKON, Heliomare, GTB, VAmB, The Marie Homes), collaboration with other NGOs that develop a similar activity (EKON), awareness-raising campaigns (CRM, EKON, IWA, Theotokos), or participation in public policy advisory boards and networks (IWA). Some of these contacts result in a tighter engagement of the partners in the programmes' activities.

ACTIVITIES TARGETED AT PARTNERS

Several programmes mentioned developing activities involving partners on a regular basis. These activities included ongoing support for the programme's activities through funding and creation of opportunities for inclusion, namely through job coaching, internships or job placements (CRM, Heliomare, Astangu) or mediation with other professionals in order to support social inclusion and help overcome attitudinal barriers to inclusion, for instance, as in the case of NLN's advisory role with academic, administrative and support staff in higher education, Theotokos' collaboration with healthcare or educational professionals to support early intervention, or IWA's contacts with local authorities to facilitate access to housing. GTB's collaboration with VDAB public employment offices presents an interesting example of a close partnership with a mainstream service.

SECTION IV LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION

This Section includes a description of the **legal and funding basis** for the Programme.

DISCUSSION:

LEGISLATION

Most programmes are linked to existing legal frameworks (13 out of 14). Eight of these programmes take advantage of existing laws and regulations to develop intervention strategies that are in sync with the legal framework of each country, namely concerning employment, vocational training and/or entrepreneurship (CRM, ONCE, VAmB, Heliomare, EKON), health and social welfare (Adelante, The Marie Homes) or education (Theotokos). Five programmes have an even closer connection with specific public policies and/or structures in the field of employment (both programmes led by GTB), education (NLN, AFID) or housing (IWA). The only programme that developed without a clear connexion to pre-existing policies was Astangu's.

FUNDING

An overview of the answers concerning this topic shows a **wide diversity of funding strategies among the initiatives analysed**. Six of these programmes are funded by a single source, either public funding through sectoral programmes concerning employment, education and health (both GTB programmes, VAmB, NLN and AFID) or private donations from large corporations (CRM). Six programmes have developed more diversified funding strategies, relying on a mix of public (national and regional) and private funding (Adelante, The Marie Homes, EKON, ONCE, Theotokos, Heliomare). Two other programmes have developed as a complementary response relying on previously existing resources and/or voluntary work and, as such, do not imply any specific funding (Astangu, IWA).

SECTION V CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This Section describes the **challenges and opportunities** with the individual transition programmes. There is also an item that addresses **suggestions** for improvement from the perspective of the organisation.

CHALLENGES

The key challenges mentioned by the programme promoters can be organised around four main themes

- **a) ensuring adequate funding and resources;**
- b) involving and motivating the clients and other stakeholders;**
- c) challenges resulting from the specific methodology that was adopted;**
- d) macroeconomic and institutional challenges.**

One of the first challenges faced by the programmes is **ensuring adequate and sustainable funding** to develop the programme. Most programmes rely on some level of public funding, but even when such funding is available, it is often insufficient to cover all expenses, especially as programmes develop and expand with new clients. This often requires attracting private donations and creates the additional challenge of keeping the donors involved or attracting new donors for every new edition of the programme. Pilot programmes (e.g. Heliomare) face some added challenges at this level, since not all income and expenses are determined in advance.

Secondly, the programmes are faced with challenges concerning the **selection, involvement and ongoing motivation of the clients and other stakeholders**.

These challenges vary from initiative to initiative. In some cases, the programmes imply an added effort to target clients with a specific profile (e.g. find students corresponding to the level of the training required, in the case of CRM, or with some basic knowledge of finances and marketing, in the case of ONCE) or to ensure the compatibility between the client and the company where he/she is integrated (e.g. VAmB). In most programmes, one of the main challenges is ensuring that the clients and other stakeholders (e.g. mentors, workers and partners) stay motivated and engaged throughout the programme (e.g. successfully completing the training, internship or counselling sessions) and after its completion (e.g. remaining committed to work activation, education or independent living). Programmes are frequently faced with high withdrawal rates, especially in the medium and long run. For this reason, several programmes mentioned working with the clients towards building intrinsic motivation and engagement with the project's goals (e.g. Astangu, NLN, ONCE, TAZ, Heliomare).

Thirdly, the programmes are faced with the **need to respond to challenges arising from their own methodological choices**.

For instance, the mentoring programme developed by Astangu implies a certain degree of unpredictability, resulting from the continuous adjustment between the mentor and the mentee's needs and availability, requiring a high level of flexibility from the part of the person responsible for the overall management of the programme. Another methodological issue concerns the challenge of balancing an individualised approach to coaching and support while ensuring that the methodology retains some uniformity (e.g. TAZbis).

Finally, some organisations mentioned a number of **economic and institutional barriers** that place a challenge to the programmes' success, such as the overall economic context and the lack of work opportunities for persons with disabilities (ONCE, EKON), regional disparities in the level of inclusiveness of each employment service (GTB's Programme in mainstream employment services), or socio-cultural barriers that prevent the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market (The Marie Homes).

OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunities identified by the programmes revolved around four themes: a) **expanding opportunities for capacity-building and inclusion of the target group in a mainstreamed environment**, whether in the scope of education, employment or social participation, mentioned by CRM, ONCE, Theotokos, VAmB, EKON, AFID; b) **Using these programmes to test innovative methodologies to promote inclusion** (e.g. Astangu's mentoring programme) **and potentially scale them up region- or nation-wide**, as mentioned by TAZ Belgium, NLN in Ireland or Adelante in The Netherlands; c) **Using these programmes to raise awareness in the communities and support the creation of more inclusive environments**. For instance, Theotokos and AFID mention the need to develop awareness-raising activities to help parents, teachers and other professionals overcome stigma and support the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstreamed environments; d) Finally, some programmes mention the **opportunity to create or reinforce the links with other initiatives, in order to develop a more comprehensive approach to social inclusion** (e.g. NLN is currently engaged in a multi-campus research project on supporting students with psychosocial disabilities in higher education).

STRENGTHENING THE PROGRAMMES

One of the points highlighted as a suggestion to strengthen the programme was the need to **ensure the engagement of the target-group throughout the programme**. Be it in the case of training programmes (e.g. CRM, Astangu), guidance and counselling (e.g. NLN) or other initiatives, the success of the programmes requires paying attention to any oscillation in the motivation of the participants and developing personalised strategies to keep them engaged with the programme's goals. For instance, Astangu mentions the need to adjust the profile of each mentor to the profile of the mentee in order to build a positive bond and ensure the engagement of both parties, and NLN is developing complementary strategies to reinforce the support to students, namely through online support media. Similarly, the need to **expand and consolidate a network of partnerships**, including other service providers, non-profit organisations, public and private companies, community structures and public authorities, was also mentioned (e.g. Helimare, Theotokos). Another point highlighted by some of the programmes was the need to **increase the number of activities developed in mainstream environments** or involving other stakeholders, such as community members, families and other professionals (e.g. AFID, Theotokos). Some programmes also expressed the need to **reinforce funding** so as to enable the programmes' consolidation and expansion (VAmB, GTB) or improve service provision, namely the delivery of appropriate and accessible housing to need (IWA). Finally, the organisations left some suggestions for strengthening these and other programmes, namely through **good monitoring and evaluation procedures and external research studies** that may provide insights concerning the strengths and weaknesses of each programme (ONCE), through investment in strong multi-disciplinary teams (Selma Marie), or through a gradual approach to programme expansion, starting small and building on that success (Adelante).

SUMMARY OF THE INDIVIDUAL PROTOCOLS:

The previous summary of the individual protocols provides an overview of the 14 programmes, highlighting common goals, strategies and concerns, as well as individual specificities. For a more thorough analysis of each programme, the individual Study Protocols should be consulted.



5.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The analysis of the Individual Protocols of the 14 inclusion programmes developed by the EPR member organisations presented an interesting array of initiatives, with many commonalities, but also important distinctive factors. The next section will draw a number of **Concluding Observations**, critically reflecting upon these experiences and how they promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstreamed environments. Finally, some suggestions concerning **Future Directions** of social inclusion programmes will be highlighted.

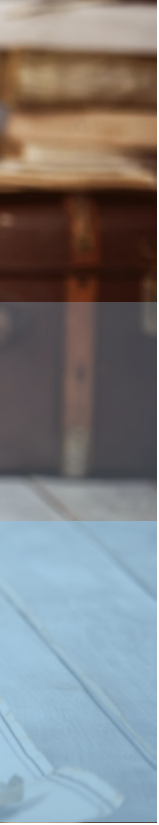
This report aimed to gather information about services to people with disabilities in the mainstreamed environment offered by members of EPR, with a view to identifying good practices that support inclusion of persons with disabilities in different domains.

As presented in Section II (Purpose of the Study), this study looked for **disability 'mainstreaming'** good practices across **four interconnected dimensions**:

- a) Support to access mainstream environments;
- b) Delivery of services in mainstream environments;
- c) Partnerships with mainstream organisations;
- d) Disability mainstream awareness.

All the programmes submitted by the EPR member organisations contribute to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstreamed environments, through one or more of these critical dimensions.

The first dimension, **supporting access of persons with disabilities to mainstreamed environments**, is the only feature common to all programmes. All 14 programmes presented by EPR member organisations aimed to support better access to mainstreamed environments, whether connected to the labour market (e.g. access to employment in public or private companies or to independent economic activities), education and early intervention (e.g. access to non-segregated schooling and early intervention care) or support for independent living in ordinary community settings.



For instance, **ONCE** has in place a programme of customised support for entrepreneurs with disabilities, to help them address the challenge of running their own business in a real-life economic context, in order to improve the sustainability of these initiatives. As previously mentioned, most programmes reflected a rights-based and person-centred approach that put the client at the heart of the intervention process, adapting the programme's activities according to the profile, needs and goals of each individual.

Examples of such initiatives include **Selma Marie's** and **EKON's** rehabilitation programmes, which depart from a careful assessment of the client's potential, competences, needs and interests, in order to draw a tailored and comprehensive plan of rehabilitation, and professional and social inclusion.

The second dimension, **delivering services in mainstreamed environments**, is also a visible feature of most programmes. 'Mainstreamed environment' is understood here as the common society, that is, an environment that is not segregated or targeted at special groups. This dimension reflects the **endorsement of a mainstreaming perspective within the programme's design**. Few programmes are developed exclusively in mainstreamed environments, but GTB and AFID presented interesting examples of such initiatives. **AFID's** programme, for instance, manages one of the 'Resources Centres for Inclusion' (CRI), created through the Inclusive Education legislation passed in 2008, thus providing educational and therapeutic support for children and youth with disabilities attending regular public schools. **NLN's** programme of support for students in higher education is a further good practice of service provision in mainstreamed environments, not only because it includes a wide range of student support services, completely embedded in ordinary educational environment (regular higher education institutions), but also because the service itself is not targeted exclusively at students with disabilities, being open to any student facing challenges in his/her academic integration.

Other programmes combine activities that take place in mainstream settings with additional support activities developed in a supported environment. For instance, **Adelante** develops a programme of support for independent living, where clients transition from a more protected to a more autonomous and mainstream environment. The **VAmB** programme also promotes a gradual inclusion of youth with disabilities in a mainstreamed environment, by finding vocational training opportunities in the regular labour market and supporting them throughout their training, in order to ensure a seamless integration in the labour market, preferably in the business where the vocational training took place.

The third dimension, **developing partnerships with mainstream organisations**, is another key mainstreaming strategy. These partnerships can involve different actors, both public and private, to render them co-responsible for the programme's success. Involving organisations, outside the disability and service-provision sector, in programmes to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities can have several benefits. On one hand, it creates opportunities for mutual learning and knowledge sharing between actors with different areas of expertise. On the other hand, it contributes to the mainstreaming of disability issues and of broader concerns with the positive accommodation of individual differences in mainstream organisations. The Individual Protocols submitted by the EPR member organisations contained interesting examples of such partnerships. For instance, **GTB's** programme of guidance to employment for persons with disabilities is developed through a collaborative effort and large-scale partnership between the Flemish public employment service (VDAB) and GTB that permitted the inclusion of specialised coaches in regular job centres to help address the specific needs of persons with disabilities. This initiative constitutes a good practice, since it combines a comprehensive partnership with a public mainstream organisation and the provision of services in a mainstreamed environment.

CRM has put in place a comprehensive partnership agreement with four major corporations to develop an innovative advanced curriculum of IT skills for persons with disabilities, designed to simultaneously address the needs of the industry (i.e. Engineer-level training in IT), while providing adequate support and personalised training strategies that respond to the needs and profile of the target group. These partners are involved with the programmes in multiple capacities – funding the programme, validating the selection of candidates, managing their work experience or engaging them after the training programme's completion.

The fourth and final dimension concerns **disability mainstream awareness**, that is, raising awareness of the importance of considering disability as a cross-cutting issue in all programmes and areas of society. This dimension departs from the notion that true inclusion cannot be fully achieved without embedding policies, programmes and services, no matter where their specific focus lies, with a cross-cutting concern with the needs of particularly groups (e.g. persons with disabilities, women, or children). This concern does not intend to create an unfair advantage for any of these groups, but to ensure equal access to rights and services, developing specific strategies to address some of the disadvantages and (multiple) discriminations historically faced by some groups. Promoting disability mainstream awareness implies drawing attention to some of these issues, in order to promote more inclusive environments.

Some initiatives reflected this dimension, first and foremost, **IWA's** Operation Sign-Up that aims to raise awareness of disability mainstream issues related to access to housing. For this purpose, IWA develops a comprehensive awareness-raising campaign, with complementary measures intended to raise awareness at different levels (e.g. at a *macro level*, through representation in the National Advisory Group on the Implementation of the National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011-2016, the Disability Federation of Ireland and Irish Council for Social Housing special needs Housing Groups; at a *meso level*, through representation on many of the developing Housing and Disability Steering Groups presently being established in City and County Councils; and at a *micro level*, through information campaigns and other activities targeted directly at persons with disabilities, their families and communities). Other programmes, although less focused on advocacy and awareness-raising issues, contain a number of strategies to promote disability mainstream awareness. Some examples include **Theotokos'** early intervention programme, which develops awareness-raising activities targeted at parents, educational and health sector workers to help overcome the stigma associated with disability, **Astangu's** mentoring programme, which tries to promote disability awareness among employers (i.e. the mentors and their co-workers), or **Heliomare's** vocational rehabilitation programme, which promotes disability awareness-raising activities among local companies or the school community, whenever needed.



6. STUDY METHODOLOGY

The EPR study of Services to Support the Inclusion of Persons with Disability in Mainstream Environments was initiated in 2015. There were three phases in the study. Each of the phases is described below and provides the framework for the resulting concluding observations, comments and recommendations.

PHASE I

During August 2015, Professor Paula Campos Pinto, with the staff of EPR, adapted the Study Protocol that had been used in a former EPR study on Transition Services (McFarlane, 2014). This Protocol was developed by Professor McFarlane with the support of EPR staff and consultations with EPR members.

The decision to use a qualitative instrument similar to the previous one was made on the basis of the success of the former research and the proven ability of the tool to collect rich information, enabling each EPR member to describe their programme in detail and provide examples that are relevant in their communities. As acknowledged in the previous study, the narrative format chosen presents, nevertheless, some limitations, particularly related to the lack of quantitative indicators to develop a comparative analysis. It is important to note that the intent of this Mainstream Services Study is to

illustrate the multiple strategies that are currently used by participating EPR member organisations to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream environments and not to describe every mainstream service provided by each EPR member organisation.

The final Protocol had five distinct sections:

- Section I: Programme Information,
- Section II: Client Information,
- Section III: Programme Services and Interventions,
- Section IV: Public Authority/Legislative Information, and
- Section V: Programme Directions.

A total of 19 separate items are contained in the five Sections. The Protocol is provided in annex on EPR website.

To facilitate the ease of completing the Study Protocol, the instrument was converted to a web-based format. The web-based format enabled each EPR member to submit its response to each item of the Study Protocol and electronically provide any attachments that were considered relevant. The EPR member also had the ability to submit the completed Protocol as a Word document and transmit it through email.

PHASE 2

The data collection at the individual organisational level was conducted during September 2015. Thirteen EPR member organisations submitted Study Protocols (note: GTB completed two Study Protocols).

PHASE 3

The researcher, in collaboration with a research assistant (Teresa Janela Pinto, who was enrolled in the Doctoral Program in Social Policy at the School for Social and Political Sciences (ISCSP) of the University of Lisbon) reviewed each completed Study Protocol and undertook their analysis in order to identify strategies and dimensions of mainstreaming presented, to draw conclusions and make recommendations for future work. Readers are encouraged to examine each Study Protocol to learn about the specific approaches and strategies used by each EPR member organisation.



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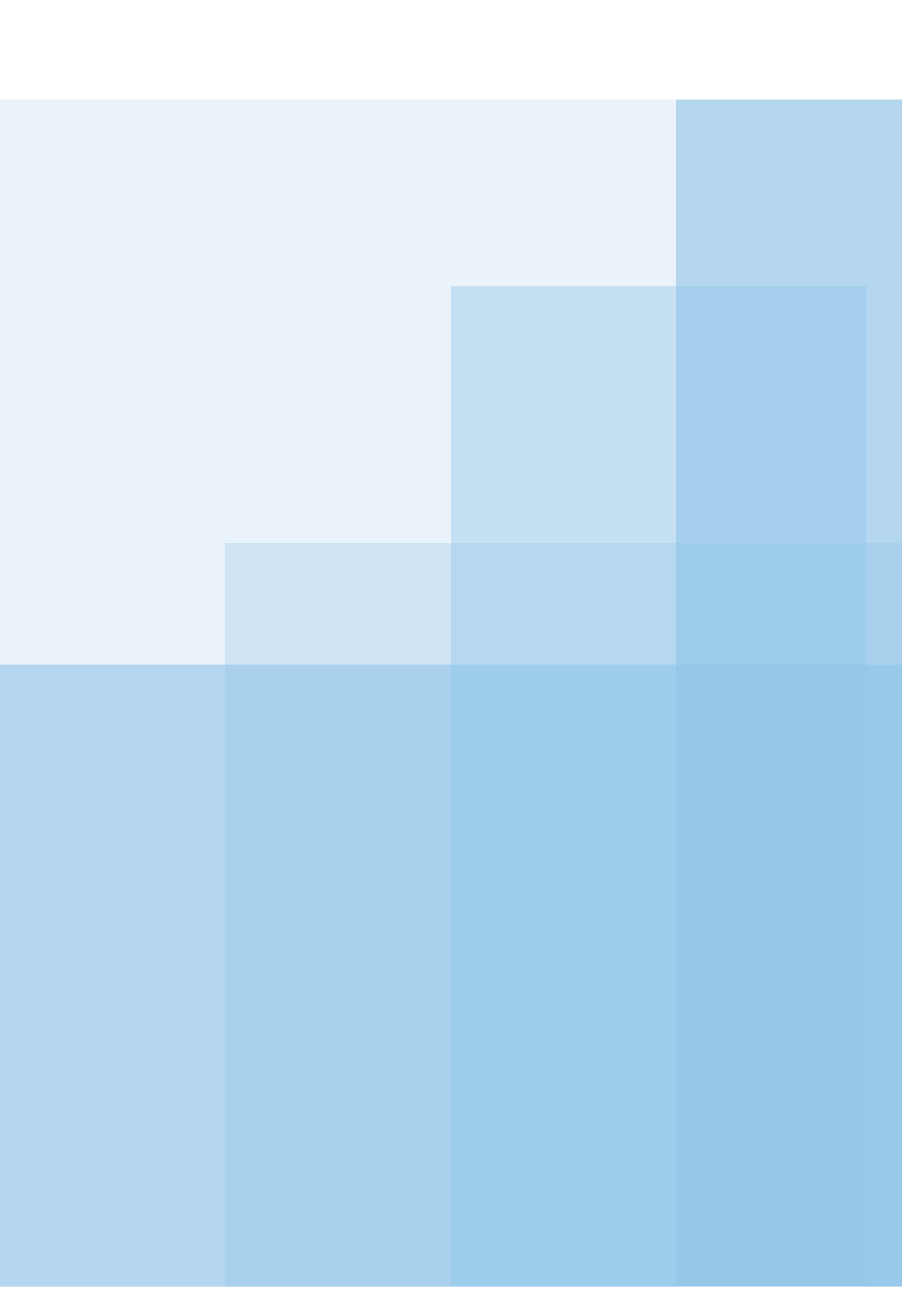
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European Platform for Rehabilitation – October 2015
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This study has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). For further information please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>. The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.