

NEWSLETTER I / APRIL 2017



EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR REHABILITATION

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

SPECIAL FOCUS

Annual Conference 2017
Innovation Prize 2017
Public Affairs: ACIG 2017,
EPSR, & EPR Policy papers

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Dear Readers,
Welcome to our new look newsletter. You will see that we are redesigning all of our communications tools in the updated style, and I hope that you find the refreshed format pleasing to the eye and easy to read!

We are in a busy but exciting time of year for the EPR secretariat at the moment. Among other things, the programme of what promises to be a very interesting Annual Conference is being finalised, preparations for our post-2018 strategy are underway and the European Commission recently published its biggest initiative in social policy for years, the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR).

There is still time to register for the Annual Conference and join our biggest learning and networking event of the year. Members have received an invitation to contribute to EPR's future strategy and we look forward to hearing your insights as to how the network can best meet your needs and interests in the coming years. EPR will also be conducting an in-depth analysis of the European Pillar of Social Rights with a focus on health and social care, employment, education and training of people with disabilities.

Best wishes,

Laura Jones
EPR Secretary General



FULL MEMBERS



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



CALENDAR OF EVENTS



Webinar on transition from sheltered workshops



Medical rehabilitation site visit and workshop (Mulhouse, France)



Annual Conference (Mulhouse, France)



Training for social service providers: Making the transition to EQUASS 2018 (Porto, Portugal)



OMVR French benchmarking group (Paris, France)



Workshop for Directors and General Assembly (Milan, Italy)



National awareness raising event on employment (Ljubjana, Slovenia)



Study visit on AT for independent living (Copenhagen, Denmark)



Training seminar on EU funding opportunities (Brussels, Belgium)



Public Affairs event on quality; rights and ethics (Brussels, Belgium)



Centre Coordinators, Board of Directors, General Assembly (Brussels, Belgium)

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

Heliomare (NL) news

Lower limb muscle endurance and muscle strength in children and adolescents with cerebral palsy” - a new research from Heliomare

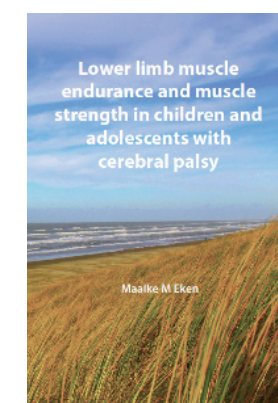
Heliomare congratulates Maaik Eken staff member of the Heliomare Research and Development for earning a PhD diploma at the Free University with a thesis on “Lower limb muscle endurance and muscle strength in children and adolescents with cerebral palsy.”

Introduction

Children and adolescents with cerebral palsy (CP) often have problems in performing activities of daily life, like walking. This might be due to muscle weakness of the lower extremities, which is commonly assessed as the strength from a single maximal contraction. However, most activities of daily life involve a series of repetitive submaximal contractions. This thesis reports on studies on the ability of children and adolescents with CP to perform such repetitive contractions, referred to as lower limb muscle endurance, and how to measure muscle endurance in a clinically meaningful way in young individuals with CP. In addition, this thesis focusses on how muscle endurance relates to problems in daily life, as subjectively reported fatigue, walking capacity and limitations in participation. Furthermore, muscle co-activation was investigated as an underlying factor potentially contributing to reduced muscle endurance.

Conclusions

- Lower limb muscle endurance is considerably reduced in children and adolescents with CP, which can lead to limitations in the performance of activities in daily life.
- Both the laboratory RTF protocol and the clinical squat test can be used to assess lower limb muscle endurance in individuals with CP.
- A reduced muscle endurance relates moderately to



subjectively reported fatigue and reduced walking capacity in adolescents with CP.

- Muscle endurance and maximal muscle strength are closely related, so both can be used to express individuals' ability to exert a single or repetitive physical force(s).

The thesis is available at <http://dare.ubvu.vu.nl/handle/1871/55085>

Site visit to six Orlando schools in Florida

Heliomare participated in a study visit to Orlando, Florida. The purpose of the visit was to get more insights into the practical implementation and use of Positive Behavioural Interventions and Support (PBIS) in six schools and on the cooperation between the University of South Florida and these schools. The study visit was organized by the Center of Expertise SWPBS Windesheim OSO and Altra, a setting for special education and youth and educational assistance in and around Amsterdam. The participants came from the regular and special primary and secondary school. from the MBO and HBO.

The Open day for Care in the Netherlands

On 18th March, The Netherlands celebrated the Open Day for Care and Welfare. Heliomare opened their doors and organised a series of workshops, a demonstration with the Eksoskelet and the projection of rehabilitation movies. In that day more than 500 people visited Heliomare.

Berufsförderungswerk Köln gemeinnützige GmbH (GE)

go2job: modular qualification workshop for older people in vocational rehabilitation



Mrs. B is 57 years old; she used to work as a nurse and enjoyed that a lot. Due to her very long working time in this job, her spine is damaged. Moreover, she had an accident in which different bones broke. She is not able to work as a nurse anymore. She loved this job and the idea of changing the career and to start something new is very painful for her.

In addition to that in her private environment she had to deal with changes; her grown-up son became ill and the economic situation was destabilized by this. Mrs. B has been without work for 3 years now and she decided to apply for a vocational rehabilitation training course paid by the social security institute in Germany. She wants to get started again and get back to working life.

What is go2job?

Since June 2016 the Berufsförderungswerk Köln has offered an individual modular qualification workshop for older people in vocational rehabilitation. "go2job" aims to reach people that

already had a long working life history and experience at the age of 45 +. Going through a complete 2-year vocational education programme often is not necessary for this target group to achieve work reintegration. For this reason, go2job is planned for a period of 12 months to reach this goal. During this time, the participants go through a profiling of their vocational skills and agree upon an achievable goal that is realistic. In addition the participants are supported by the coaches via qualification elements. At least 50 % of this time is spent at the different areas of the Berufsförderungswerk Köln combined with longer internships in companies, coaching to stabilise their health situation.

Each participant of go2job has a different background and an individual goal of reintegration to the job market. Due to this each participant has got his or her own curriculum. To meet this need the organisation can use the diverse infrastructure and experience of the Berufsförderungswerk Köln including more than 30 different vocational education programs, medical, psychological and social worker support, support of reintegration managers and case management.

Mrs. B started with go2job at the end of 2016. Very soon it became clear that she wanted to stay within the health sector as she provided a lot of knowledge in this area. She aimed at working in the administration of a hospital. So far she did not have many skills in the IT sector; she needed to build this up. Moreover, she needed

to face the fact that her knowledge of the German language is not sufficient yet to fulfil the tasks in administration as she emigrated to Germany nearly 30 years ago.

For this reason, Mrs. B is going to participate in the basic IT module at the Berufsförderungswerk Köln. She is going to become familiar with computers, software and the MS Office program for 4 weeks. In addition to that she will participate in German language training course 2 hours per week also at the Berufsförderungswerk Köln. After that she will participate in the vocational education training of the health clerks for 4 months. This will show her which special administrative tasks have to be done in the health sector, especially in a hospital. This longer period gives her the opportunity for her health situation to be stabilised and to regain her self-esteem which she lost more and more during the last years of unemployment. She also uses the psychological support of the Berufsförderungswerk Köln to further stabilise her situation. After that she is going to work in a hospital. Her case manager is going to support this via regular visits. He stays in contact with her via email and phone and will also organise additional qualification elements if needed according to the feedback of the hospital.

The aim of go2job is to assist the participants in finding a new job within 12 months time which allows them to get back to working life in the long term.

High interest in go2job

At the end of 2016 35 participants were registered with go2job. For the starting dates in 2017 – there are four of them each year – the Berufsförderungswerk had more

than 20 applications. So far 70% of the modular qualifications took place in 7 different administrative areas. 30 % took place within the technical area. As soon as the participants sign a working contract the program ends. There have already

been some success stories and the Berufsförderungswerk Köln works on the improvement of the internal support structure in order to work with a higher volume of go2job participants.

INTRAS Foundation (ES)

Upcycling as a recovery tool for people with mental illness

Foundation INTRAS is leading the European project Artcycling Coop: Sustainable and inclusive decorative arts, co-financed by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union and with the participation of the partners: Retextil Alapítvány (Hungary), Cultura21 Nordic (Denmark) and Pacificstream Enterprise Solutions (UK).

This initiative is helping emerging artists at risk of social exclusion (in the case of INTRAS due to severe and prolonged mental illness) to make a living with art, creating a new environmentally responsible business. Artcycling is based on the "upcycling" model: we collected wasted materials to create decorative art objects (furniture, lamps, ceramic ornaments, small decorative objects, jewelry, etc.), thus developing creativity, sustainability and raising awareness about the use-and-throw away society we are living.

How are we creating those products? We took advantage of the local traditional knowledge, organizing workshops with local artisans that taught our participants interesting techniques and inspired them to create their own artistic work. Moreover, we are offering our artcyclers with specific training about how to use ICT tools in artistic creation and about social entrepreneurship to support them, not only from the artistic point of view, but also to think about art as a realistic way to make a living.

All this knowledge is being applied during the artistic workshops organized in the participating organizations. The results will be shown during national and international showrooms which aim is to raise awareness about our consumer society and to give voice to discriminated collectives groups, as for instance the people living with severe and prolonged mental illness. For INTRAS, these art exhibitions will be a great window to fight against the social stigma often associated with psychological discomfort.



For more information about Artcycling project please visit our website <http://www.artcycling.org>.

The Marie Homes (DK) news

Two new Marie Homes in the pipeline in 2017

The Marie Homes in Denmark are going to expand this year. In March, the builders started constructing the coming Cecilie Marie Home in Hvalsoe on Zealand. When ready in spring 2018, the Cecilie Marie Home will provide apartments and common service areas for 20 young adults with physical, cognitive, and social disabilities.

The Cecilie Marie Home has been initiated by a group of concerned parents and relatives who want to make sure that their young sons and daughters with various disabilities will have an appropriate and value-driven place to live when they become adult and want to leave their home.



In the other end of Denmark, in the northern city of Aalborg, we will start building a new facility for geriatric care – the Ella Marie Home for 50 elderly people (see architect's presentation above) – in the autumn 2017. It will be ready for its new residents in the last months of 2018. The Ella Marie Home will be a more urban care facility in the centre of one of Aalborg's biggest suburbs, but it will be based on the same solid Marie Home values as all the other 18 Marie Homes in Denmark.

Growing interest in EQUASS in the Marie Homes

The EQUASS group in the Marie Homes has been growing in size and quality over the last year. Today, five Marie Homes are working with the European Quality System in Social Services with the clear commitment to become accredited. The five Marie Homes consist of four facilities for elderly people (geriatric care) and one Marie Home offering housing and pedagogical support for people with autism and intellectual disabilities. The group meets every three months to discuss how to implement the EQUASS principles into their daily practice and to exchange experiences on defining local policy documents, staff training and daily procedures.

The group has had a busy start to 2017: in January, they went to Norway on a two-day study tour to EQUASS accredited companies in the Oslo area. And in February, many went to the European EQUASS conference in Vilnius in Lithuania, before the whole group met in March in the Meta Marie Home in Vejle. On top of these learning experiences, two colleagues in the Marie Homes have been trained as registered EQUASS consultants in Lithuania this spring as well. It is hoped that 1-2 Marie Homes will achieve their EQUASS Assurance certificate by the end of 2017.



Study tour for directors to Toronto in June

Every second year, the directors of the various Marie Homes go on a common study tour abroad. This June, the study tour group will visit Toronto in Canada.

The main purpose of the study tour is two-fold:

1. To experience and learn from the Canadian rehabilitation sector, with an optional specific focus on: volunteer management, peer specialists, education/training of professionals, sheltered/supportive housing, assistive technologies and motivational training.

2. To build management and leadership capacity through the international exchange of best practices in elderly care and rehabilitation in Canada.

Toronto is one of the biggest and definitely most diverse urban areas in North America, so there are far too many sites and organisations to visit. The Marie Homes have been working closely with the Danish Trade Council in Toronto and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, so that we can put together a programme that is both fulfilling and innovative.

Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (EE)

Meet the new director of Astangu VRC

April 10th, Kert Valdaru took up the position of director at Astangu VRC. Kert has worked in the public sector for 15 years. During the last 7 years he was working at the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences managing the centres for migration studies and further training. He has carried out his academic studies in the social field.

“ In a country where the population is growing older and smaller, we have to know how to value the people – it is the corner stone for retaining and growing our well-being. I want to contribute to raising the quality of life of people with disabilities, offering the best solutions for acquiring education, preparing for working life and assuring access to services that increase their quality of life. Our goal is to work in a way that Astangu remains the competence centre in the field of vocational rehabilitation that can share experience and knowledge with other service providers in Estonia and abroad ”

says Kert after the first weeks of being in the new position. The next steps will be specifying the strategic goals for Astangu for the next years. Hopefully Kert will also have the chance to participate in EPR events and you can get to know him in person.



Until face to face encounters you are welcome to take in contact with him via e-mail: kert.valdaru@astangu.ee

Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre (LT) takes a step forward to improving quality of social services in Lithuania



The long-term project goal is to improve the quality of social services in Lithuania, applying the Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services. The project is meant to include national and municipal public institutions, non-governmental organizations, providing social services, described in the Lithuanian catalogue of social services.

The project is led by Valakupiai rehabilitation centre, working jointly with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, European Social Fund Agency and with the expertise of European Platform for Rehabilitation.

It includes five main activities: EQUASS consultant and auditor trainings, EQUASS implementation, coordinator, manager and staff training sessions, consultancy support, EQUASS impact studies

and dissemination activities. The project aims to involve 120 social service providers in the process of improvement of provided services, 80 perc. of them will be successfully certified with EQUASS Assurance over 5 years time.

The project team believes in enhancing performance and meeting needs - as is EQUASS' slogan!

Valakupiai rehabilitation centre (VRC) is a Lithuanian member of EPR as well as EQUASS Local License Holder and is very active in European and National projects. Working actively in promoting quality in social services this year VRC started the new project "Improvement of quality of social services, implementing EQUASS quality system", which will last from 2017 to year 2022, funded by the ESF.



MEMBER FOCUS

Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse (FR) Discover more about CRM

The "Centre de Readaptation de Mulhouse" (CRM) is a non-profit organization created in 1946. The organization provides different services.

- An assessment and vocational training service with more than 30 different qualifying programs. This service can welcome up to 416 trainees in different fields, such as ICT, electronics, security agent, care assistant, accounting officer. CRM is the biggest vocational training center in France.
- A functional rehabilitation service for inpatients (70 beds) and outpatients (57 places) concerning 3 specialties: neurology (spinal cord injuries, brain injuries and strokes), trauma / orthopaedic and cardiovascular rehabilitation. The programs are delivered with the support of a pluridisciplinary team: doctors specialized in rehabilitation medicine, nurses, auxiliary nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists.
- A home nursing service for disabilities people of 50 places with regular regular visits of the nurses to the patients' home and health care nursing and technical care.

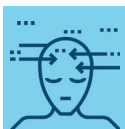
In December 2016, the CRM inaugurated the new self-financed day care hospital of 1000 square meters. The day hospital is specialized in the rehabilitation of upper limbs with complication. It also provides a cardiologic rehabilitation program for groups of people such as those recovering from heart operations. Latest activity offered: re-training programs after treatment of heavy cancer and Parkinson's patient disease. Therapeutic education is included in all programs.

Associated to the day care hospital, CRM offers:

- External specialized consultations in a health center.
- In the new space created, a nursery of 10 places for children of professionals, as part of the quality of work life, has also been created. Thirty to forty people will benefit this new structure and its services.
- Since October 2016, the Centre has been led by Tom Cardoso, the new CEO, who was the former Director of Human Resources. Today, more than 400 professionals serve CRM users (trainees and patients).



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES



Mental health in rural areas, 30 January 2017, Valladolid, Spain

More than seventy participants, including Spanish service providers, policy makers and international experts, attended the awareness-raising event on services to people with mental health conditions living in rural areas organised by the EPR and Foundation INTRAS, in collaboration with the Regional Social Services of Castilla y León.

The local authorities and service providers presented the regional legislative framework, focusing in particular on the recent developments promoting a more person-centered approach of services to people with disabilities. This approach fosters a more effective Proyecto de Vida - holistic approach to promote the well-being of people with disabilities through individual planning – and it is characterized by flexibility, self-determination and takes into account personal expectations and desires of users.

When presenting the local challenges, service providers identified distance as the main problem. People in need of care might be living far from each other and from the

big cities. This situation creates even more challenges in Castilla y León, among the biggest regions in Europe. Furthermore, the high emigration rate creates depopulation, increasing lack of services, unemployment, social exclusion and lack of opportunities, with additional problems for assisting people with mental conditions in rural areas.

Based on their experiences in similar contexts in Eastern European countries and Ireland, the two international speakers provided some examples and ideas on how services can be made more accessible. The Policy Advisor mentioned mobile teams, integration of health and social services and use of modern technologies among the possible solutions that have proved effective in Czech Republic.



In Ireland, Rehab programmes strongly focus on fostering recovery by tackling stigma, promoting advocacy and

engagement initiatives and community integration. The need to reach out and maintain a visible presence in the community is crucial for the success of the programme and meaningful integration of people with mental conditions.

In the last session of the event, participants worked in groups to reflect on future developments of social services for people with mental health conditions living in rural areas. Strengthening the links and support of the local community emerged as one of the most important factors to promote the wellbeing of people with mental health conditions in rural areas. Improving road connections in the region, more financial support to the service providers and increasing use of technology are some practical suggestions that could improve the delivery of services. EU funding opportunities are useful to pilot projects and foster international exchange of good practices. Lastly, local authorities should focus on developing sustainable projects that can make a real impact on the community and create opportunities for those living in rural areas.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

8-9 June 2017, Mulhouse, France

21st century skills and beyond

Understanding the future today to meet tomorrow's challenges

Future skills is the focus of this year EPR Annual Conference, co-organised together with the French member Centre de Réadaptation de Mulhouse (CRM). The conference will take place on 8th and 9th June in Mulhouse, France and will be open to all EPR members and (upon invitation) to external organisations interested in discovering the EPR network.

Participants will be invited to explore and critically reflect on the skills needs of tomorrow and what this means for staff and management in rehabilitation services, for service users, as well as for service provision itself, both in terms of expected challenges and opportunities.

There will be a focus on innovation and creative thinking methods that can equip organisations to meet challenges and seize opportunities. Experts from different corners of the globe and from different perspectives will provide stimulating food for thought in plenary sessions and in-depth learning opportunities through workshops. Group discussions will provide space for interaction and networking amongst participants will be facilitated. A graphic recorder will gather the ideas and reflections shared over the two days.



How to ensure an inclusive society in the light of expected changes and needs, and how can organisations play an active role in shaping the future?

A project market will be organised in a dedicated space in the main conference room to give visibility to projects outcomes and ongoing projects promoted by EPR members, to exchange project ideas and look for partners. In addition, external companies will exhibit their products related to social and care services at the products market that will welcome participants during the breaks. Participants will have the opportunity to network and exchange their views.

For more information about the **programme**, consult the Annual Conference webpage on the [EPR website](#).

Registrations are online and are open until the 26th of May 2017.



PRODUCTS CATALOGUE & INNOVATION PRIZE

In 2016, EPR compiled members' good practices / products / methods in a products catalogue that will be published online (password protected). The aim is to identify products that could benefit from further development, such as being adapted for cross border transferability or developed in a different field, or to provide support for a member to implement it in their organisation.

EPR members are invited to submit their or external innovative practices / methods / products to Mirko Miceli, Membership Officer at EPR, at mmiceli@epr.eu

To give visibility to all practices submitted, EPR decided to organise the Innovation Prize contest by considering as candidate practices the newest and innovative practices inserted in the products catalogue in addition to the practices received explicitly for the contest.

The contest is a way for EPR to promote exchange of innovative practices within the network and foster new ways of thinking and working with the view to continuously improve the service delivery to people with disabilities.

Now, EPR is looking forward to discovering the winner of the 2017 edition of the Innovation Prize! This year the contest gathers 5 good practices.

In the coming weeks EPR Centre Coordinators will select the Prize winner based on a series of pre-defined criteria on the quality and innovative aspects of the practice. The scoring phase is open until the 12th May 2017.

The winning organisation will be given the opportunity to present its best practice during the Innovation Prize Awarding Ceremony at the EPR Annual Conference on 8th June 2017 in Mulhouse, France.

To discover the 2017 EPR Innovation Prize Winner, please consult the EPR website, www.epr.eu



Discover the candidate practices and score them using the scorecard available on EPR website at restricted link <http://www.epr.eu/index.php/about-epr/innovation-prize/560>

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

European Commission event Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth



The Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth, the Commission's biggest event on took place on 24 April 2017. Over 400 policy makers, academics and civil society organisations gathered in Brussels for this one-day event which focused on the social inclusion of young people, including possible solutions to ensure they reach their full potential.

In her opening speech Marianne Thyssen, the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility stressed that the role of the European Union is to bring social progress and real benefits to people. Social progress is opening opportunities to all in order to ensure participation in society. The European Pillar of Social Rights will pave the way for a stronger Europe, where fighting inequalities is a priority. She also spoke of the need for social investment in education, training and care services.

Evarist Bartolo, Maltese Minister for Education and Employment, criticized the use of business words, such as growth and capital, when addressing societal issues. He stressed the importance of inclusive education and was critical of the PISA model which doesn't take this into account.

When discussing on how to best reach young people, MEP Maydell mentioned the importance of promoting intellectual curiosity through education, nurturing soft skills and using role-models. The European Youth Forum highlighted that including young people is crucial to change the political debate, which is currently not representative and excludes the younger generations. On the labour market, new and flexible platforms or services should aim better protecting social rights, to avoid that new jobs

come without any rights. In other terms, inclusive growth should aim at creating the capacity and competences to reach the dreams of young people.

During one Workshop speakers from the EU Commission presented the results of Erasmus Plus programme and the new Solidarity Corps which creates opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in projects in their own country or abroad that benefit communities and people around Europe . . . Another workshop examined barriers to social and labour market inclusion of young people with disabilities and discussed how to overcome them. General solutions included the provision of multidimensional support systems, focused support in the transition to adulthood, providing space and respect for young people to articulate their opinions and promoting role models to raise young people's expectations of what they can achieve. More specific solutions include standardized transport accessibility (e.g. airports), taking account of individuals' strengths and flexible working arrangements, personal assistance, coaching, and upskilling of all people to be able to work more inclusively.

In the afternoon session, participants of the side event on "Barriers and success factors to facilitate young's people social and labour inclusion" heard about promoting "Emotional health" at school and a more inclusive environment, where all parties (pupils, teachers and parents) are involved which showed its effectiveness in promoting a better learning atmosphere for all pupils, including those with mental health conditions. Another event concluded that the engagement of all stakeholders are necessary to promote independent living of young people, and much can be learnt from countries with effective support services.

European Commission initiative European Pillar of Social Rights

On the 26th April 2017 the European Commission launched the long-awaited European Pillar of Social Rights. In March 2016 a draft proposal for the pillar was presented, followed by a long consultation period including a public online survey and meetings in the EU Member States.

The initiative comprises three sections, 'equal opportunities and access to the labour market', 'fair working conditions' and 'social protection and inclusion' and each section features a number of rights, including Education, training and life-long learning, Active support to employment and Inclusion of people with disabilities.

Different documents detail the 20 principles, including existing initiatives and legislation related to the principles, as well as the proposals for new initiatives in certain fields and the justification for action. A joint declaration on the Pillar by the European Commission, the European

Parliament and the Council (Heads of State and Government) is scheduled to be published at the end of the year.

A "social package" of documents were presented this April by the Commission alongside the proposal for the pillar. They include a reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe, initiatives related to the balance between work and private life, access to social protection and the working time directive and a proposal for a social scoreboard listing indicators that will be tracked to measure progress in implementing the rights in the Pillar.

EPR will be analysing the proposals in the light of the response that it submitted to the online consultation and experiences of members, and will publish an analytical note in the coming weeks. The initiative was broadly welcomed by actors in the social field and EPR will cooperate with partners to work for an initiative that strengthens the social dimension of Europe.

IPPR and J.P. Morgan Report Making Inclusion Work – Reaching disenfranchised groups through work-based learning

IPPR and J.P. Morgan have commissioned a collection of case studies from across Europe looking at how work-based learning can help bring marginalised groups into the workplace. The final report identified a range of common themes and learning that will strengthen work-based learning programmes across Europe, including the experience of work-based learning center for people with disabilities in Italy.

A specific conference was organised on this topic to explore what is needed to ensure work-based learning can bring excluded groups closer to the labor market. Part of the event focused on skills, including the relationship

between what are defined as hard skills/soft skills, what are the most relevant skills in the upcoming years and what is the "human advantage" over automation in the future labor market. These and other topics related to future skills will be extensively dealt with at the 2017 EPR Annual Conference in Mulhouse (8/9 June 2017).

Full report is available at this [link](#)



EPR Policy papers published in December 2016

Challenges and opportunities for the integration of migrants in Europe

The paper "Challenges and opportunities for the integration of migrants in Europe" provides a brief analysis of the social and economic implications of migration for the EU (an extremely topical issue), the impact on social services and an overview of the EU political and financial measures adopted to promote the integration of migrants. It also showcases examples of successful initiatives funded by the European Union to promote the integration of migrants. The paper highlights the similarities between migrants and people with disabilities in accessing social and health care services, education and labour market, and the main challenges they are confronted with in participating in society. This briefing paper represents the first step of a longer process that involves EPR members in the reflection and experimentation on how labour market integration models and VET developed for PWD can be transferred to working with migrants. Social Services Europe recommendations on how to enable a supportive environment for social service providers to offer support and integration services to migrant are also integrated in this paper.

Co-production of services

The Co-production of services paper presents the theoretical underpinning of this approach and draws from the EPR study and discussions and presentations at the Public Affairs Event in 2016. Co-production offers the opportunity to meaningfully engage all stakeholders and can bring about social change and transform the delivery of services. The paper examines the benefits and challenges of the approach, as well as proposing some practice and policy solutions to address those challenges and promote the practice. In addition, it highlights EU funding initiatives that could support co-production. The European Union Member States are searching for new ways to engage citizens and bolster their involvement in the provision and governance of social services due to the demographic, political and economic challenges facing the welfare state in the 21st century, which makes co-production a topical issue.

EPR members showed a strong interest in the topic and it will be followed up in 2017 with a workshop on personal planning and a workshop at the Annual Conference on the Star co-production model.

Long-Term Care: Older People and Disability

The paper "Long-Term Care: Older People and Disability" explores the possible consequences of demographic changes on long-term care services, and examines particularly the impact of ageing of people with disabilities. Considering population trends, long-term services are and will be an increasing topical issue in the agenda of the EU policy makers, leading to joint efforts and concrete to develop coherent actions among all Member States. The paper includes the numerous initiatives undertaken at EU and international level, highlighting their relevance for service providers and offers recommendations for such actors to address the challenges to ensure a high quality of care for older people. EPR member experts in the topic contributed their analysis and recommendations.

All papers are publicly available on EPR website <http://bit.ly/2lu6XeA>

EPR PROJECTS

PESSIS III

National employers gathered at the European Parliament to present and discuss with MEPs Common Declaration on the Contribution of Social Services to Europe

Major Employers in Social Services from 6 European Union Member States (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France Germany, and Spain) launched a Common Declaration on the Contribution of Social Services to Europe at a hearing in the European Parliament, co-hosted by MEP Heinz B. Becker (EPP, AT) and MEP Jean-Paul Denanot (S&D, FR) on 21st March 2017.

Heinz K. Becker, opened the public hearing by stressing the key role of social services in Europe, the significant size of the sector and recalled the anticipated increasing demand for social services in the future. He spoke of the necessity to reach collective agreements and clear political commitments to the benefit of a social Europe. He noted that social dialogue in the sector in Austria was very successful.

MEP Jean-Paul Denanot presented the Intergroup on Common Goods and Public Services. As President, his role is to promote the debate on Services of General Interest (SGI) in Europe. SGIs contribute to the maintenance of solidarity within our territories and between generations. "Achieving a social dialogue at European level, the aim of which is to seek and create a framework for both professionals and, above all, for the protection of citizens, would considerably strengthen this sector", he said.

The event was chaired by Laura Jones, Secretary General of EPR, who thanked the MEPs for their support and strong messages, introduced the project, purpose of the meeting and the common declaration that would be

further addressed by the panellists.

Panelists representing employers identified the main challenges and opportunities for the social services sector in their respective countries, including the competition with the for-profit sector, digitalisation of the sector, lack of diversity of workers in social services (i.e gender), quality of working conditions and better work-life balance. They highlighted the necessity to find common solutions to these common challenges through European Social Dialogue (ESD), and that ESD structures for social services would be an important factor in to support social cohesion, economic growth and create jobs. Panellists also spoke of the potential of ESD to bring actions that could reduce Euroscepticism.

From a stakeholder's perspective, Mr Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of EASPD, noted that ESD is a sign



of maturity and a feature of democracy. As well as the potential of sectoral agreement it is also important for the social sector to have the influence it that deserves at EU level.

MEP Kadenbach (S&D, AT) spoke of the fact that solutions to certain issues can only be found at EU level, and highlighted the significance of the EU funding programmes.

The European federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) also attended the meeting and confirmed the strong cooperation with PESSIS III partnership to continue to facilitate this process in order to support the creation of social dialogue structures at European level for the sector. Ms. Heather Wakefield from Unison highlighted a study from the UK that showed the that investing 2% of GDP in social services would double the number of jobs in the sector.

Becker MEP highlighted the importance of calling for the prevention of cherry picking of services, that the Commission should give positive guidance to the member states through the European Semester process that supports social services and that there should be obligatory bench learning on social issues. Both himself and MEP Kadenbach committed to support the development of ESD, potentially though a recommendation in the ECON committee.

Laura Jones concluded the meeting by thanking all the participants for their rich contributions and by stating that the next steps for the partners would be to convince the key decision makers.

The Common Declaration on the Contribution of Social Services to Europe

The Common Declaration provides a timely overview of the positive and essential contribution of the sector to the European Union. The leading message is the need for policy-makers to recognise in their policies the fact that "staff is the main asset in social services".

Developed by major Employers in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany and Spain, the Common Declaration argues that the creation of recognised social dialogue structures for social services at European level would be an important step in this regard. This would allow Employers and Employee representatives in the sector to lay down on the table issues of concern and to provide a space for a collective assessment of challenges faced.

The structures would also allow social partners to negotiate and agree on common solutions affecting the sector and its workforce, and provide the sector's social partners with an effective voice on European policy proposals and processes.

In addition to the request to support the development of social dialogue structures for the sector at European level, the Common Declaration also calls for a EU-wide strategy to support quality job creation in the social services sector; within the competences established within the European treaties. Given the essential role social services play towards enabling access to social rights, the Employers expect the upcoming European Pillar of Social Rights to provide proposals in this regard.

For more information about the project, visit Social Services Europe website at www.socialserviceseurope.eu

PESSIS 3 Promoting employers' social services in social dialogue

NEWS ABOUT EQUASS



EQUASS European Conference, Vilnius, 21- 22 February 2017



The first EQUASS European Conference was co-organised by Valakupiu reabilitacijos centras (VRC) Lithuania and we were happy to welcome 43 participants from 13 different countries. The conference was held in the European information Office in the city centre of Vilnius.

On the first day Tatjana Ulbinienė, director of VRC held an opening speech followed by a representative of the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Affairs highlighting the importance of quality in the Lithuanian social sector. During the plenary sessions our key expert Guus van Beek presented the new EQUASS 2018 system followed by an interesting approach on risk management in social services by

Herman Mooi. In the afternoon participants had the opportunity to participate in one of the three workshops: The role of leadership in sustainable quality implementation by Herma Veltman from Pluryn, Person Centred Approach in Social Services by EQUASS expert Michael Crowley or The Challenge of Benchmarking with EQUASS Criteria by Guus van Beek. The first day of the conference ended with a social dinner at Guru, a social restaurant that employs persons who are rehabilitating from addiction.

The second day started with Guus van Beek's presentation on the results of the EQUASS impact studies carried out independently in 2016 by Nuno Melão from the Polytechnic Institute of Viseu in Portugal.

EURAG Director Dirk Jarré talked about rights and ethics, followed by EQUASS Manager Marie Dubost, highlighting the EQUASS 2017-2019 strategy. As on the first day of the conference workshops were provided in the afternoon. Participants could choose between a workshop on Risk Management by Herman Mooi or Quality Culture presented by Guus van Beek.

This first EQUASS European conference was rated 4.32/5. Overall, the conference was rated between good and excellent. The content was rated as very helpful by 61 % of the participants and a majority of the participants would recommend this conference to a colleague.

EQUASS project

The VET Learning Community: inclusive education and quality culture

On the 3rd, 4th and 5th of April 2017, 10 vocational education centres throughout Europe met each other in Vilnius for an international meeting of the TVLC project.

TVLC stands for: The VET Learning Community. This community consists of 5 schools for special education and 5 schools in mainstream education. Together they look for pre-conditions for inclusive education and for ways to improve their quality culture and quality performance. The strength of the community is the fact that mainstream schools can learn from the way special education works and special education can also learn from mainstream schools. TVLC knows 3 phases; needs assessment, training and benchmarking

Community

In order to have a good mix of schools, the project works with 5 pairs from 5 different countries. Each country is represented by 1 mainstream school and 1 special education centre. This makes it possible to compare ways of working between special and mainstream, but also between countries. EPR joined the project as a special partner with knowledge of the project topics. For the EPR Guus van Beek, EQUASS key expert, is participating. Two additional quality experts are also contracted.

Needs assessment

At the start of the project, all schools made a needs assessment on the topics: (quality) culture, quality management and inclusive education. The framework used for improvement of quality management is Eqavet (Building Blocks). Based on the results of the assessment, a curriculum is made to support the partners in improving their services.



Training and improvement plans

In Vilnius the first training session was held. Topics among others were: the role of management in improvement actions, management styles and staff involvement. The training sessions were guided by quality experts from EPR and from other organisations in Portugal and Ireland. The partners will use the information and tools from the training sessions to make improvement plans for their own school.

Benchmarking and benchlearning

A scan was also introduced to measure the degree of inclusiveness of a school. After a first try-out, the scan will be fine-tuned. Both the results of this scan and the outcomes of the needs assessment will be used in the third phase of the project, when schools will benchmark their results. The project aims to develop a special tool for benchmarking that looks deeper into the topics and the way schools work, and is not only comparing results.



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NEWS FROM THE
SECRETARIAT



After 6 years of commitment and creativity Cinzia De Letis will be leaving Brussels and the EPR secretariat to pursue a new project. Cinzia has been an invaluable member of the EPR team, wearing a number of hats, namely internal and external communications, public affairs and policy and project development and management. She has played a key role in ensuring the success of EPR's projects over the years, helped build EPR's engagement with partners to promote a more social Europe and led the successful modernisation of EPR's brand and launch into social media.

The Secretariat thanks Cinzia for her good spirit, hard work and engagement with members. All her colleagues send their best wishes for her next steps. Alicia Gómez Campos will join the secretariat as Communications, Policy and Projects Officer from the 2nd June. Members will have the opportunity to meet Alicia and say farewell to Cinzia at this year's Annual Conference.

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