

January 2009

Policy news



European social partners report back on agreement to cut stress at work

Representatives of employers and workers at EU-level presented on 15th December 2008 a report on how they have implemented their framework agreement on work-related stress. Stress is a serious work-related health problem and considered the primary cause of lost working days in Europe. The objective of the agreement is for workers and employers to work together at better identifying, preventing and managing stress.

Mr. Vladimír Špidla, Commissioner for Social Affairs, Employment and Equal Opportunities said: "I would like to congratulate the social partners both for having negotiated the agreement and taken action to implement it at national level. I urge those national social partners who have not yet launched joint actions to do so. Work-related stress is one of the most serious occupational health problems across Europe. Tackling it helps workers and businesses, creating better working environments and contributing to stronger economic performance".

Work-related stress is among the four most reported work-related health problems in the EU, affecting 22% of

workers (in 2005). Studies suggest that between 50% and 60% of all lost working days are related to it. This represents a huge cost, both in terms of human suffering and impaired economic performance.

The agreement, concluded in October 2004, aims to raise awareness of work-related stress among employers, workers and their representatives. It provides them with a framework to identify and prevent or manage stress. At the same time, it sets out employers' and workers' responsibilities.

As provided for by the agreement, this report, co-signed by all the European social partners (BusinessEurope, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC), presents the implementing measures from the Member States one year after the implementation deadline. The European Commission will analyze the implementation over the coming year and then issue its own report. As a partner in the ROSE Project (mental health of staff in the social sector) EASPD is also very active in this field.

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_dialogue/docs_en.htm



Conference "Acting locally for a society for all" organized by the European Commission

To mark the European Day of People with Disabilities on 3rd December, the European Commission organizes a policy conference in the first week of December each year. The last conference took place on December 1-2, 2008 in Brussels on the topic of "Acting Locally for a Society for All". Its focus was on how EU action/legislation reaches the local level and provided examples of disability mainstreaming, including developments in accessible tourism. The current European Disability Action Plan – the roadmap for the EU's activities in the disability field – runs until 2010. One of the aims of the Conference was to kick-start the debate on what Europe should do after 2010 for people with disabilities.

The EASPD Executive Committee, which was present during the whole conference had the opportunity to meet European disability movement leaders, representatives of local and regional authorities and of the EU institutions and to discuss the cooperation between all the stakeholders. They also spoke about the participation of disabled people in decision making processes at national and regional level in the light of this year's entering into force of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

You can find the programme of the conference on:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventId=104&furtherEvents=yes>



In Bulgaria, a day care centre for disabled children excels

By Matthew Brunwasser, published in the International Herald Tribune on 29th December 2008

VARNA, Bulgaria: State institutions in Eastern Europe devoted to the care of children and the disadvantaged are most often the subject of negative news stories in Western media.

So after the British Broadcasting Corp. aired an upsetting documentary last year about conditions at a home for mentally impaired orphans, advocates for the disabled were relieved they could focus attention on good practices and all point to Karin Dom, a nonprofit day care center for children with mental and physical disabilities.

Located in a charming villa built in 1908 on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast, with balconies overlooking the sea and surrounded by a

shady park, the center offers care, and hope - rare in a country that is perhaps the poorest and most corrupt in the European Union.

"I get help here and I also feel at home," said Mariana Atanasova, whose son Ioan, 4, gets physical therapy for legs deformed by the disease. "I have felt love, respect and attention here, and I'm not making compliments."

International human rights campaigners say that neglect, rather than care, often characterize Bulgarian social institutions. The institutions are often tucked away in remote and poor regions, and the homes are seen as sources of jobs for locals rather than places for nurturing patients.

"The staff don't see them as people, but as a substandard species who are fine with food and water," said Judith Klein of the Open Society Foundation's Mental Health

Initiative in Budapest, a Karin Dom funder. "Here it is fundamentally different from everywhere else," said Lyuba Manolova, 55, a physical therapist who has worked at Karin Dom since it opened in 1996. "Everything here is centered around the free will of the child. Because if a person is never able to make choices, he has no hope of ever living a meaningful life."

The center is the brainchild of Ivan Stancioff. Descended from a long line of diplomats, Stancioff, 79, returned to Bulgaria in 1990 after almost 50 years of exile and a career in business to serve as foreign minister, and then as ambassador to Britain and Ireland.

Stancioff donated his family's restituted home to house Karin Dom, named after a cousin who had cerebral palsy. He was quick to attribute any achievement to the dedication of 20 staff specialists and "the fact that we insist on a lot of training, new ideas and moving ahead." The specialists get the standard wages in the sector of about €200, or \$280, a month.

On a recent visit, the center's rooms appeared well organized and cheerful, stacked with thought-provoking toys and games, and physical therapy devices. Children's names, pictures and artwork were posted on the walls along with task-and progress-markers.

Besides aiming to integrate disadvantaged children more fully into society, which is standard practice in the West but rare in the Balkans, Karin Dom also advises parents on how to care for children at home so they do not need to send them to institutions. Training is also on offer for staff from state social homes, one of the only places in Bulgaria that teaches modern educational and therapeutic practices. Specialists from Karin Dom have also trained social home staff in Macedonia and Montenegro. Places like Karin Dom are "extremely rare," said Slavka Kukova, a human rights lawyer and researcher in Sofia.

"The fact that they really have an individual approach puts it on par with best practices anywhere," said Kathy Sinnott, an Irish member of the European Parliament, mother of 16 children including

an autistic son, and an activist on disability issues.

After 12 years of quiet results, the mission of Karin Dom got a boost from an unexpected source, the BBC film, which was first aired in November 2007 and was about a home for children with mental disabilities in the village of Mogilino.

The film, which has been broadcast on television in the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, Finland, Canada and Australia, inspired viewers to donate £200,000, or \$290,000, to a foundation later established by the filmmaker, Kate Blewett. Part of that money is going to hire seven new full-time therapists at Karin Dom to form a mobile training unit for homes around Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian government is still scrambling to respond. "Now the government has admitted the problem, and is trying to do something to solve it," said Mariana Nikolova, the executive director of Karin Dom. "But this will be a very slow process."

On a recent afternoon, 10 specialists from Sofia social homes were observing rehabilitation, including speech and physical therapy, and psychology. They were the first of 50 who will receive three days of training. It was the first time the Sofia municipality had paid Karin Dom for training.

"Here it's a bright child's world," said Tatyana Dimitrova, 56, from the Sofia group. In her home, which she wouldn't name because she had no permission to speak, "it's like a military barracks."

Dimitrova said comparisons between state institutions and Karin Dom, or state institutions and Western countries, were unfair because of the poverty of the Bulgarian state. Karin Dom operates on private donations and also EU-funded projects. "We also work hard and care about our people," Dimitrova said. "With the little we have, we try to create as much as possible."

The Bulgarian organization "Karin Dom Foundation" is a member of EASPD and is setting up a structure for Bulgarian service providers together with EASPD.

Project news

ImPaCT in Europe

The Project ImPaCT in Europe – Improving Person Centred Technology in Europe has been selected for Community co-financing.

EASPD is the promoter of this project, funded under the Lifelong Learning Programme of DG Education and Culture, which started on the 1st of January 2009 and will last for 3 years.

The overall project objective is to set up a network to facilitate the development and implementation of Person Centred Technology (PCT) for the benefit of key stakeholders in the health and social care sectors, such as service providers, commissioners, care staff and, most importantly, service users. PCT brings together the use of ICT, Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT), telecare, telehealth and telemedicine and involves the user first and foremost in designing the technological solutions to meet their individual needs.

All activities promoted by the network will involve end users of the technology to

properly evaluate the effect of PCT on their daily lives. Other aims of the network are to provide advice and support to organisations and practitioners in the field of ICT on strategies to develop user-led PCT for the benefit of individuals, to identify current good practice in regard to the use of PCT for the promotion of innovative education and training systems, and finally to engage in publicity and awareness-raising activities using EASPD's existing EU-level network to disseminate information among service providers across Europe.

ImPaCT project partners are the following EASPD member organisations: Centre de la Gabrielle (France), Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities – FAIDD (Finland), Modem (Belgium), Learning Disability Wales (UK), Centro de Educação para o Cidadão Deficiente de Mira Sintra (Portugal), Protestants Christelijke Stichting Philadelphia Zorg (Netherlands), The Home Farm Trust Ltd (UK) and Nottingham Community Housing Association (UK).

More news



Some presidency events organized by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic

26-27 March 2009: Informal Meeting of the Employment Committee (EMCO), Prague

2-3 April 2009: Meeting of the Working Group of the European Social Fund Committee, Prague

22-23 April 2009: Ministerial Conference: 'Social Services – Instrument for the mobilization of the Work Force and for the strengthening of the social cohesion', Prague.

EASPD Secretary General Luk Zelderloo will be one of the speakers at the conference.

15-16 May 2009: 8th Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion, Prague



Gate to Europe' Project Development Workshop on 19-20 February 2009 in Budapest

The Hungarian Hand in Hand Foundation, member of EASPD, is organising the 'Gate to Europe' International Project Development Workshop that will take place on 19-20 February 2009 in Budapest, Hungary. The workshop's primary objective is to give an opportunity for NGOs from Central and Eastern Europe to get to know good practices in the field of training and employment of persons with disabilities and – at the same time – develop new project ideas in these

topics. Interested professionals from Western European countries are also very much welcome! The workshop will be an outstanding possibility to get to know other organisations active in this sector and set up international partnerships for the implementation of innovative project ideas! For more information please consult the website www.kezenfogva.hu/gatetoeurope or contact Daniel Gal gal.daniel@kezenfogva.hu



Request for an EVS Volunteer in Northern Greece

An Institution in the North of Athens for boys from 6 to 18 years old facing social or economic problems is looking for EVS volunteers, starting in September 2009.

They are looking for volunteers motivated to work with children and are very open to people who would like to start workshops on subjects that they are interested in

(theatre, film, juggling, photography, sports etc). The volunteers could also accompany the boys on excursions and outings. For further information please contact Patty Sotiropoulos: evszanneio@gmail.com and refer to 2008-GR-12.

EASPD news



EASPD conferences in 2009

4-7 March: Barcelona, Spain

4: Board meeting.

5-7: Conference on 'Bridging knowledge in long term care and support – crossing boundaries between ageing and disability'

10-12 June: Thessaloniki, Greece

Conference on Employment 'Bringing people to work' and Project Development workshop

12-13 November: Dublin, Ireland

Conference 'Education for all and Lifelong Learning' – 15th anniversary of the Salamanca Declaration

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