



## Workability Europe Annual Review June 2004-June 2005

### **Editorial**

The past year has not been short of developments and issues on the European political scene. To mention but a few - the new European Commission took office and new European Parliament was elected. On the macro level, the Lisbon Strategy has been given a new start; a Constitution for Europe faces an uncertain future after rejection in two referenda; and a new Financial Framework 2007-2013 is under debate. In the social area, a fresh Social Policy Agenda 2006-2013 has been adopted; key EC Communications on equality and non-discrimination and Social Services of General Interest are coming up; a proposed Directive on Services in the internal market is being reviewed; there will be a new Regulation on State Aid; the Structural Funds have been revamped; the European Commission has adopted Communication on "The new generation of Community education and training programmes after 2006" and a new overarching programme PROGRESS covering employment, social protection and anti-discrimination will come into being in 2007. For people with disabilities in particular, the EC will for the first time update its Action Plan of 2003 and publish in December 2005 a "Report on the overall situation of people with disabilities in an enlarged EU."

In 2004-05 Workability Europe (WE) continued to make steady progress and at this interim point is well on track in achieving its objectives under the Strategic Plan 2004-06. WE's activities and achievements during the last 12 months can be summarised along two tracks: (i) On the one hand, the organisation has increased its visibility and profile in Europe. This is an outward, sectoral dynamic. (ii) On the other hand, WE is now able to provide a strong package of Public Affairs, PR and other services to its members. This is a more inward, service-oriented achievement. Some impact measures proving each of these two dynamics can be mentioned:

(i) WE has developed a full set of good quality PR materials to underpin its Public Affairs dimension. These consist of brochure, welcome folder, website, e-bulletin, and banner. The executives, staff as well as individual CEOs are increasingly being invited all over Europe to deliver presentations on specific topics of expertise and to present WE. WE is in regular dialogue with the European institutions and the EDF. It is also an active member of ENSPER, CEDAG and EDF. WE was also accepted as member in two other European organisations: the Social Platform and Business & Disability.

(ii) The secretariat also facilitates Workability Europe members access to European funding and partnerships; provides information on policy developments and undertakes research on selected topics of interest and organises events. Finally, WE has been gradually increasing its lobbying efforts and political influence in Brussels.

What are then the priorities and challenges for the near future? For a start, Workability Europe will continue working towards increasing its profile and visibility as the largest body representing providers of work and employment to disabled Europeans. Significant strides have been made in this direction but by its very nature this is a continuous and never-ending goal.

A clear priority is also to attract more members in order to achieve even greater geographical coverage and representativeness. However, growth in membership should never sacrifice the quality of membership. It is imperative that all incoming members respect and share WE's values and are committed to WE's vision and mission to champion disabled people's right to work worldwide!

WE will also continue endeavouring to enter in European project funding whether as partner or in its own right. It is clear that becoming involved in one or two projects can bring benefits not only in terms of finances but can also generate considerable spin-off effects such as development of know-how and expertise; possibilities for networking and image- building.

On the global level, the context within which employment, rehabilitation, personal and social services are being delivered is rapidly changing, both nationally and internationally. The changing welfare state and its implications for service providers in Europe demands that Workability Europe as an organisation provides a forum within which members can explore new strategies and approaches to the impact of emerging socio-economic conditions within the EU arising from the globalisation of markets, including the US and emerging economies, on Social Protection, Education and Health. This exploration would identify and elaborate the challenges and opportunities for the disability sector arising from political and economic enlargement of the EU and underline the contribution that employment of disabled people can make to achieving genuine cohesion within Europe.

Bertie Hunt  
General Secretary Workability Europe

## **ENSPER**

In 2004 Workability Europe's efforts to create a "single voice" for service providers to people with disabilities at European level materialised in the establishment of ENSPER (European Network of Service Providers in Employment and Rehabilitation). ENSPER was set up as an independent, overall structure, grouping together three separate organisations – Workability Europe, EPR and Rehabilitation International. ENSPER aims at proactive and effective policy-influencing at the European level by representing the interests of its member networks to the EU, EDF as well as all other relevant stakeholders. In this way, ENSPER became one of the main vehicles for WE's Public Affairs.

ENSPER achieved significant progress over the past year and it can be expected that in future ENSPER's Public Affairs will be even more dynamic, better defined and more fruitful. There are several reasons for this: knowledge about the field and motivation increased in the ENSPER Board, representation and contacts with key stakeholders were expanded, access to information was improved, and, in general, greater sectoral recognition and respect was attained.

## Major events

### **Workshop on Best Practice for Sheltered Workshops**

In an historic joint workshop on the *Future of Sheltered Workshops* between members of RI's Work & Employment Commission in Europe and members of Workability Europe ways in which sheltered workshops should change to meet the needs of disabled people in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century were discussed in order to identify new ways for service providers to follow as best practice. The workshop was hosted by Remploi UK. The 22 delegates from 10 countries across Europe spent an intensive day and a half in London discussing three areas of focus and determining what actions to take in their respective countries and organisations to achieve change.

Everyone in the workshop agreed on the need for change and particularly ways in which barriers to employment can be removed and ways in which the opinions and views of all disabled people who want services can be heard and adjustments made. The format of the workshop was based on the active involvement of all participants in three subject areas agreed beforehand and following a meeting of Workability Europe's Pillar IV group in September 2004 in Brussels. Stig Larsson, the Chairperson of the Commissions European Region who was one of the presenters said: "this workshop was a major step forward in Europe in raising the profile of modern approaches and to increasing work and employment opportunities for people with disabilities."

### **Seminar on State Aid for Sheltered Workshops**

The Routes to Employment and Best Practice Pillar organised a Seminar on 10 March 2005 titled *Different ways of financing our activities related to the government/state subsidies* and hosted by SAMHALL, Sweden. The Seminar provided an important forum for exchange of experiences and views with regard State Aid for Sheltered Workshops. The participants also discussed the practical difficulties which have emerged in certain new Member States with regard to the application of *EC Regulation No 2204/2002 of 12 December 2002 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the EC Treaty to State aid for employment* and how WE can help. A concrete output from the Seminar was Response to the EC Regulation No 2204/2002 of 12 December 2002 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the EC Treaty to State aid for employment.

### **Seminar on Exchanging ideas to create business opportunities**

Fundosa Group S.A. hosted a very valuable Seminar in Madrid on the 11 & 12 April 2005 in the framework of the B2B & CSR Pillar. Under the theme *Exchanging ideas to create business opportunities* participating members presented successful business experiences, currently being developed their own country, especially those with multinational companies, that could be replicated by other WE members. The key idea was to know at first hand the way that some business opportunities have become successful in a country in order to analyse how these ideas could possibly be transferred to other members of WE.

The Seminar boosted Pillar I and provided a real contribution of business know-how and mainly, a place to create business opportunities for other members, as well as to identify collaborations with multinationals in the field of their CSR policies in order to increase new employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

# Workability Europe Annual Conference – 17-20 May 2005, Leuven, Belgium

## 1. Event summary

The Annual Conference of Workability Europe took place between 17- 20 May 2005 in the historical town of Leuven, Belgium. The event was hosted by Workability Europe's Belgian member VLAB on the occasion of their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Under the banner "*Equality in employment opportunities for disabled people in Europe: different approaches within a single network*" over 60 delegates from 17 European countries met to explore ways of cooperation and exchange of experience, knowledge and best practice. The second aim of the Conference was to discuss matters regarding the present labour situation of the disabled people in Europe as well as the most important problems and challenges sheltered workshops are facing due to globalisation and increasingly competitive markets. Organised visits to neighbouring sheltered workshops helped delegates to understand the Belgian context and to compare it with their national situation. Key Belgian ministers, EU officials, Parliamentarians and partner organisations also shared with delegates their policies and plans to support disabled people and welcomed Workability Europe's members as partners and contributors to future development.

## 2. The theme

Equality in employment opportunities for disabled people is a socio-political goal to which many aspire but what makes Workability Europe special on the European scene? During three busy Conference days WE demonstrated that it strives to achieve this goal precisely by integrating the different approaches of the members within a single network. Avenues and policies aiming at achieving equality in employment opportunities for disabled people vary hugely across national contexts and there probably exists no "unique" or "right" way of doing things. And here is Workability Europe's strength: bringing together the sum total of these efforts in a single organisation championing disabled people's rights to work worldwide.

## 3. The programme

The rich and various programme of the three-day-Conference proved Workability Europe's interest in providing its members opportunity to share their experiences, ideas and knowledge as well as inspiration. Activities started off with a WE Board of Directors Meeting in the afternoon on **Tuesday, 17 May 2005** followed by reception in the evening. During the first official Conference day on **Wednesday 18 May**, VLAB presented its way of working in Flanders both on policy level and in the daily work in its sheltered workshops. VLAB described its approach and achievements also sharing some challenges for the sector and its plans to face them. The "VLAB Day" rounded off with a visit to several sheltered workshops which gave the delegates a more inside view of the Flemish sheltered workshop sector. **Thursday, 19 May** was the "Brussels Day". It gave delegates the unique opportunity to visit the European Commission and Parliament, to learn more about EU's social policies and priorities as well as to meet and exchange ideas with EU officials and MEPs. On their return to Leuven, delegates enjoyed a spectacular Gala Dinner at the Salons Georges which also showcased an exhibition of VLAB's history. On **Friday, 20 May** the WE members discussed and debated the key Conference topic and got updated on the work of the four strategic Pillars of WE. The AGM of WE took place in the afternoon after the official close of the Annual Conference. More social activities followed on Friday evening and Saturday morning.

## 4. Conclusion

The three Conference days spent in Leuven offered the traditional good mix of professional and social activities. The dynamic programme, the magnificence of Leuven, the top Conference venue and impeccable practical arrangements coupled with fine Belgian weather all contributed to the success of the event. Workability Europe already looks forward to welcoming its members to next year's event!

- See the Conference programme, participants list, Conference report, interviews, speeches, quotes, PowerPoint presentations, pictures and feedback from evaluations at the Workability Europe website [www.workability-europe.org](http://www.workability-europe.org)

## Workability Europe's Public Affairs activities in 2004-05: a strategy on four different levels

In essence, Workability Europe realises its *Lobby Strategy & Action Plan* on four different levels. The division is based on gradual deepening in content involvement required.

### **1. Networking, positioning, representation**

This item involves contacts with key stakeholders, image-building & profiling, membership in organisations and participating in various standing committees and bodies. In the context of its intensified Public Affairs fieldwork, in the past months WE sought to broaden and deepen its contacts with key Brussels stakeholders. Thus, WE became a full member in the **Platform of European Social NGOs**; and aims to obtain a seat on the **Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE)** Social Affairs Committee. WE developed its cooperation with the 12 Corporations "Walking the Talk" during the 2003 European Year of People with Disabilities and became an associate member in the newly set up Business & Disability Network and met with McDonald's Europe to study ways to strengthen the existing Cooperation Agreement. WE also stayed close to developments at the **High Level Group of Member States' Representatives on Disability** via ENSPER, met with members of the **European Parliament Disability Intergroup**. Finally, WE was an active member of the **European Council for Non-Profit Organisations (CEDAG)**, the **European Disability Forum (EDF)** and the **European Network of Service Providers in Employment and Rehabilitation (ENSPER)**. Last but not least, WE joined SNAPEI (France) in a project to create a **European Federation of Social Economy** in order to have an official voice in the Social Dialogue with European institutions.

### **2. Providing information on funding opportunities & policy developments**

This item refers to the screening of printed and electronic media, critically selecting issues and providing members with information and advice via particular tools (funding alerts, calls for partners, newsletters and workshops). Throughout the year WE sent its members a number of funding alerts in the fields of disability, equality, non-discrimination, social inclusion and research. The secretariat is aware of some members which submitted project proposals as a result of the alerts.

### **3. Monitoring specific dossiers**

Monitoring specific dossiers means closely following up the life of a dossier, analysing stakeholders' positions, obtaining inside information, and finally, informing and advising members. Main issues WE monitored throughout the year were:

- EC White Paper on Services of General Interest
- The so-called 'Bolkestein Directive' on Services in the Internal Market
- UN Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities

### **4. Influencing policy**

This highest level of lobbying involves issuing position papers, declarations, signing protocols, dissemination of positions to external parties and undertaking effective action towards policy-makers. In 2004-05 WE published:

- Position paper on the EC Green Paper on Equality and non-discrimination in an enlarged EU
- Position paper on the EC's biennial report on the overall situation of people with disabilities in an enlarged EU
- Response to the EC Regulation No 2204/2002 of 12 December 2002 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the EC Treaty to State aid for employment

## **Strategic development**

Workability Europe structures its work and range of activities under four strategic Pillars:

- Pillar I: Business to Business & Corporate Social Responsibility
- Pillar II: Enlargement
- Pillar III: Communications & Networking
- Pillar IV: Routes to Employment & Best Practice

### **Pillar I: Business to Business & Corporate Social Responsibility**

Work by the Pillar members during the past number of months has concentrated on the establishment of a Purchasing Group and the possible business opportunity created under the *Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive*.

- *Joint purchasing*

Shaw Trust, Remploy, Rehab Group, Samhall and Cedris are undertaking a pilot phase to explore cost reductions in major expenditure headings to achieve significant savings. Current purchases of software licensing, hardware (PCs and laptops) are being analysed so that pricing discussions can commence with the major vendors in the sector. It is expected that results from the piloting phase will be available towards the end of April – early May 2005. A report on progress was presented on the findings during the WE 2005 Annual Conference and AGM in Leuven, Belgium.

- *The WEEE Directive*

Member organisations from Germany, Spain, France, Netherlands, Sweden, UK and Ireland active in recycling are working towards the establishment of a pan European group who will be in a position to work with multinational companies to meet the new regulations as laid down in the new European Directive. Progress on this initiative will be published in our next e-bulletin.

For more information contact Ms Mercedes Ramos: [mramos.fundosa@fundaciononce.es](mailto:mramos.fundosa@fundaciononce.es) or Ashley Balbirnie: [ashley.balbirnie@gandonenterprises.ie](mailto:ashley.balbirnie@gandonenterprises.ie)

### **Pillar II: Enlargement**

Meeting in Poland and Lithuania Pillar II stayed well on course in its mission to “To achieve an active and diverse membership of Workability Europe that truly represents organisations that are providing the range of work activities for people with disabilities throughout Europe”. Pillar II completed successfully its objective to get agreement to a fee structure that is affordable and provides sufficient resources to support WE. It was also very effective identifying the range of benefits that belonging to WE brings and its active promotion of WE resulted in the gaining of seven new members for the organisation. Additional three prospective members are in the process of seeking membership of WE and a further six prospective members are currently in discussion about membership possibility.

Pillar II has proved particularly good in getting close to key ministerial and senior officials especially from New Member States but also beyond the geographic boundaries of Europe. An example of this is the interesting link with North Africa. The Pillar Chairman visited BASMA Association in Tunisia whose President – Mrs Leila Benali – is the wife of the President of Tunisia. As a result of the meeting it was agreed that WE’s connection with North Africa will be further developed at a Seminar in Tunisia due to take place between 5-7 July 2005 with the theme *Economic Integration of People with Disabilities*.

The Board of WE have agreed that they will partner the Middle East and Africa, so that membership can be developed prior to the establishment of a stand-alone region under the auspices of Workability International.

For more information contact the Chair Tim Papé: [Sally.Clark@shaw-trust.org.uk](mailto:Sally.Clark@shaw-trust.org.uk)

### **Pillar III: Communications & Networking**

Hosted by SNAPEI in Paris, Pillar III continued to build and expand on the good work done during 2004. The Pillars's main achievements include:

- *Brochure* - a new Workability Europe brochure was designed, printed and distributed to members;
- *Review and expansion of the website* - Pillar III has done very well to create a website which is informative, functional, user-friendly, attractive and up-to-date. Plans are now underway to create a more interactive 'members only' platform of the website.
- *E-bulletin* - the Pillar produces and circulates to the members a WE e-bulletin times a year. The e-bulletin includes updates from the secretariat, the Board of Directors as well as news from the member organisations and a calendar of forthcoming events.
- *Welcome Pack* - a distinctive quality folder with the WE logo and corporate colours was designed and printed. The folder contains printed information sheets and selected WE publications.
- *Relationship between Pillar III, ENSPER and lobbying at European level* – It was clarified that whilst ENSPER acts as the primary vehicle for doing Public Affairs in areas where WE, EPR and RI have common interests, this did not preclude WE having its own Public Affairs profile.
- *Action Plan for Pillar III during 2005* - the priorities and timeframe of the plan were agreed.

The Pillar Group meets three times a year and will be delighted to welcome more members especially from the new Member States, Germany and Spain. For more information contact the Chair François Kuentz [snapei.kuentz@wanadoo.fr](mailto:snapei.kuentz@wanadoo.fr) or Mark Daymond at [daymond@coachhousebox.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:daymond@coachhousebox.freeserve.co.uk)

### **Pillar IV: Routes to Employment & Best Practice**

Pillar IV organised two important and successful seminars in November 2004 and March 2005. (for more details refer to the Major Events section above).

- Workshop on the *Future of Sheltered Workshops* held on the 18 & 19 November 2004 in London
- Seminar on *Different ways of financing our activities related to the government/state subsidies*, took place on 10 March and was hosted by SAMHALL in Stockholm. The Seminar provided an important forum for exchange of experiences and views with regard State Aid for Sheltered Workshops.

Further highlights from Pillar IV's Action Plan for include aims to:

- *Conduct a mapping exercise* on ways of funding of different members. It was agreed that it will be very useful to collect some statistical data from the members on for example the type of organisation, staff, turnover, services provided, funding they receive. The exercise will commence during 2005 via the circulation of standardised questionnaire.
- *Organise a Seminar* in autumn 2005 in Helsinki on the significance of leadership within organisations
- *Put together a project application* under one of the relevant EU-funded programmes

For further information contact the Chair Leif Alm at [Leif.Alm@samhall.se](mailto:Leif.Alm@samhall.se)

### **European Projects**

In 2004-05 Workability Europe participated as partner in various European projects applications. Regrettably, none of the project promoters were successful in their bids, so WE is not currently involved in any projects. Nevertheless, WE has decided to again participate as a partner in some fresh European project applications in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci and 6th Research Framework Programmes. The project bids are by WE members (EKON, Poland; FRMPH, Romania) as well as by external partners (EPR and Institute of Biomechanics of Valencia).