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Newsletter No. 3

29th of November 2001

Dear partners and friends,

firstly we would like to welcome the readers, who receive the newsletter of the EU-Project “Steps – Structures towards emancipation, participation and solidarity” for the first time.

Steps is supported in the programme to combat discrimination by the European Commission. In the project we want to develop structures for social services, which are able to realise Non-discrimination and full participation and which protects individual rights for people with learning disabilities. (In the list of the supported projects you find the project still under the title “Restructuring the municipal and local structures of social services for people with learning disabilities”.)

With the newsletters we would like to inform you regularly about the activities of the project. Furthermore we will publish organisational advice and statements of the partners. And we are looking forward to your contributions as well! Whether you know about persons, who might be interested in the newsletter as well, do not hesitate to send the email-address to anne.ernst@freenet.de.

In the moment we are a little bit behind with the latest news. We had the pleasure to welcome our partners from Rotterdam and Barcelona in Hamburg. Last week we had the first conference of the Hamburg partners and a first workshop with about 50 employees last Tuesday. And we have started our visits in the partner cities: We have been in London, next week we are in Rotterdam and the week after in Barcelona. After the meetings we are even more optimistic to built up a very interesting and creative network and we will inform you “step by step” about the activities in the project.

In this newsletter you find a retrospective view at the meeting of the possible partners from Rotterdam and Hamburg. We hope you enjoy it!

Best wishes

Dorothee Bittscheidt, Anne Ernst, Michael Langhanky

On the way to a productive cooperation

Anne Ernst, Hamburg

On their trip from Rotterdam to Hamburg Bart Branderhorst, Ino Cornell and their colleague Jolanda made a small detour: Because of our vague description they took a very long way into the city. Thanks to the mobile phone – together we find the destination.

This episode is an appropriate picture of our discussions during the following two days: We had to check out slowly the mutual interests and objectives of a possible cooperation with the PameijerKeerkring and the OMIJ in Rotterdam. But at least we found the destination and lots of questions which are interesting for the project.

The provider PameijerKeerkring (PaKe) offers support to 2200 people with disabilities. 1400 people are employed as professional social workers (with various qualifications and specializations). Bart Branderhorst is the Project Manager at PaKe, looking for initiatives in Europe and initiating new projects for the provider.

The OMIJ is a private employment society. 550 people are employed at present. All of them are, more or less, considered to be "distanced from the labour market".

Both institutions are working together since two years: About 75 persons with learning disabilities are working in the OMIJ (so outside the Care system). Together with the city council of IJsselmonde they have applied the Equal Project "Shop to learn".

The key elements are: paid jobs for (learning) disabled persons by training them as shop assistants and stimulating social cohesion in a neighbourhood by preventing small corner shops (unique selling points) to disappear in certain areas.

Jolanda is responsible for the project at OMIJ. Ino Cornell, freelancer and specialist for EU-projects, is working together with both institutions.

Corresponding to the Equal-Project, they are very interested in work as a key instrument of integration. Compared with the first proposal and the issues of the project we had to detect that we were coming from different directions. But as I mentioned at the beginning we turned into the same way. During our discussions we could clear up the following mutual interests:

- Integration of the staff, the question of qualification and ways of attitude change: According to Bart Branderhorst, PaKe has problems to find qualified staff. Therefore

they are working together with social partners like OMIJ to offer for example workplaces and work assistance.

Furthermore the question how to include and to motivate the staff in the restructuring of the institutions is on the agenda as well in Rotterdam as in Hamburg.

- The development of the institutions between decentralisation – flexibility – ambulant care was a blank paper for everybody in the discussion.
- How to realise an advocacy system and life planning is not only a central question in our project. It was as well in our mind when we compared the German and the Dutch care system.
- We took different viewpoints on the regulation of the social service system. The discussion moved between market and governmental regulation.
- In this context quality control will be an issue which we would like to integrate in the project.
- The financing system in Hamburg differ from the financing system in Rotterdam to a great extent. The systems should be compared referring to the participation of the people with learning disabilities.
- And: Work as the key instrument of integration should receive attention in the project as well.

Starting point of the project, that was consensus, should be the people with severe disabilities.

Back in Rotterdam Bart Branderhorst wrote us: "It was interesting and much promising. It is a big challenge and something that we (PaKe) can learn from as well.

Also for the OMIJ it will be interesting to see how (and if) UPC's (unique selling points) can be developed on an individual level AND on the level of organisations (as OMIJ).

We as PaKe are getting in severely disabled now. We have to organise day activities for them. In this we can learn from the two Hamburger Organisations.

Staff motivation (ongoing) is also an aspect we see as our benefit when joining your project.

As is common curiosity and the lust for new developments; you start something big and

beautiful!“

Part of the Trialogue in Rotterdam will probably be as well the PameijerKeerkring as the OMIJ. Furthermore Michael Langhanky and Bart Branderhorst have got in contact with Peter Peters from the Ichtus Hogeschool, Department of Social Work in Rotterdam. Unfortunately we are still looking for a suitable partner in the administration.

I think (and I hope) that the project partner as well in Rotterdam and Hamburg as in London, Sweden and Barcelona become more and more curious to start the international discussion because from different points of view we touched the same or similar questions in every discussion. It is really “luxury” for the Hamburg partners to travel from one city to another to continue the dialogues – next week in Rotterdam, the week after in Barcelona. It will be our big task to bring together the interests and questions for the second proposal at the international conference at the end of January. We are looking forward to it!
