

## Foreword

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I recall having a conversation with Dr. Paul Wehman less than a decade ago about the possibility of getting one or two articles from Europe addressing the issue of supported employment. This edition not only has one or two good articles: it is wholly dedicated to the explosion that has taken place throughout many European countries as supported employment has impacted on their service systems. In many ways it is a coming of age of the supported employment movement in Europe for a selection of high quality papers to address current issues affecting those of us who are active in the field.

As President of the European Union of Supported Employment I have had the honour and pleasure of having direct contact with many of our member-country organizations. We have watched supported employment blossom and grow and change significantly the life experience of thousands of individuals throughout Europe. We have also witnessed our own association become a strong, vibrant Europe-wide non Governmental organization, with direct involvement and influence at the level of the European Commission and the European Parliament. All of this has been achieved in a relatively short period of time through the outstanding hard work and dedication of many people, in particular the authors and staff involved in many of the projects that are outlined in this special issue.

We have been fortunate to benefit from the experience of our colleagues in North America. This experience has allowed many of us in Europe to learn from

the mistakes of others and to develop high quality, effective supported employment programmes. I think we have reached the stage in Europe where we are struggling with the same issues around better transition programmes, conversion, quality and the like. Europe now faces some exciting challenges: booming economies, the continued development of the single market, the introduction of a European currency – the *euro* – and the expansion of the European Union to include other countries. All of these changes create exciting opportunities for individuals with disabilities throughout Europe. In this context, supported employment continues to play a very important role and it will have a significant impact on changing the reality of daily life for citizens with disabilities throughout Europe.

As we approach the new millennium, it is my hope that links between the European supported employment movement and that on other continents will be strengthened, that we can learn from each other, support each other's developments and move forward to the day when supported employment is the norm for most people with disabilities throughout the world.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the editors and all the contributors to this special issue for their outstanding and diligent work.

Christy Lynch  
President, European Supported Employment  
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