

Editorial

It is my distinct pleasure to introduce selected Proceedings from the 20th Anniversary of the European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE) conference from June of 2013. All presenters were encouraged to submit their paper for publication into this Proceedings issue and a number of presenters from Europe, one from the US and two from South America have contributed their work to this issue. The conference was truly an international event, as there were people from all over the world in attendance in Dublin. There was an incredible level of enthusiasm in the hallways and at the sessions. Margaret Haddock, President of EUSE provided an exciting welcome and challenge to all that were there and significant networking took place.

It is clear that the issues of supported employment implementation know no boundaries. Some of the language, culture and nomenclature is of course different, but issues involving accessing and engaging employers, measuring outcomes, funding (especially over the long term), and working with individuals with the greatest challenges are universal. It is very evident that supported employment has definitely moved out of the embryonic phase of program start up and awareness, and directly into specific implementation issues. These issues involved dedicated staff who are well trained in the strategies of best practices for high quality supported employment. Program coordinators are struggling with the fidelity of what is being implemented: in short, is what we are doing really good supported employment and are people getting good jobs, being retained and being encouraged into careers that meet their interests and desires?

One paper in this issue from Ireland presents a measurement tool and several directly address engagement with employers. These are not research papers as much

as “how-to” papers or discussion pieces that highlight programs throughout Europe. They have been necessarily shortened due to page constraints. It is important to realize at this juncture of supported employment, that as professionals we need to communicate and disseminate our findings, our successes, as well as our frustrations and failures. The translation of knowledge becomes a critically important part of the implementation science that is necessary to help local community organizations and schools to change. The conference celebrating the 20th Anniversary EUSE provided this type of forum to allow people to openly share the issues, successes and failures they have encountered. This JVR issue helps move this thought process down the road a little bit more.

We have a big challenge in front of us: Do we continue to let the majority of persons remain at home or in segregated day centers? Or, do we raise them up and give them an equal opportunity to participate in each nation’s workforce at the level they wish to and are so able? To say that disability is too much of a burden is no longer an excuse for not opening the doors to open employment situations. The enthusiasm in the Dublin, Ireland conference strongly suggested we want to make change. Now we must go ahead and just do it!

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