

European Guide Dog Mobility Standards

Newsletter 5 – October 2012



SUCCESS IN BRUSSELS

EGDMS Project Final Conference

The EGDMS project Final Conference was held at the NH Hotel du Grand Sablon in Brussels on the 20 September 2012. The conference was organised by the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD).

Review of Project Activities

The meeting was attended by approximately 60 key stakeholders from 16 countries in Europe: Guide Dog Schools, Assistance Dogs organisations, a representative from the Romanian government, European Commission, an awards organisation and project partners. The conference was chaired by Luk Zelderloo, EASPD Secretary-General.

Lead partner Guide Dogs for the Blind UK project manager, Jenny Crawford, introduced the project with a presentation on its' activities and achievements. These included building relationships with European guide dog schools, starting a process which will benefit blind and visually impaired people across Europe and a CEN Workshop Agreement, providing a standard for guide dog trainers.

The Technical Quality Assurance resource, Alan Brooks, discussed the impact the project outcomes on the five European partner guide dog schools. Some positive impacts from the project were networking improvements, confirmation of existing skills and knowledge, exchange of training documentation and future exchanges of dogs & staff. Recommendations for a future project were to plan a series of phases each with realistic objectives, whereas the current project's aims were sometimes too ambitious. Alan also recommended utilising existing training resources from all partners, as well as encouraging all partners to run training courses themselves.

James Churchill, external project evaluator, explained that the project had set itself very ambitious objectives and had to deal with some unforeseen circumstances, but had achieved a very good foundation regarding pan-European training for guide dog instructors.

Anca Vasile, a trainee guide dog instructor, from Light into Europe, Romania, presented an overview of the project from the perspective of the partners. Anca mentioned that lots of networking and exchange of information and training methods had taken place as well as awareness of what is happening in other countries.

CEN Workshop Agreement

Elena Mocchio from UNI in Milan presented the CEN Workshop Agreement. CEN/WS 65 *European guide dog mobility instructor training*. CEN, the European Committee for Standardisation, is the largest and oldest of the three European Standards Organisations and is responsible for the creation of pan-European standards in order to remove barriers to cross-frontier trade and services in the EU. CEN's role was to demonstrate how the CEN/WS65 developed by EGDMS project not only meet the requirements of the sector but is also in line with current European directives and policies.



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Children and Young People in Romania



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The development of a Workshop Agreement will ensure portability throughout Europe and offer greater protection to guide dog schools and their clients. Workshop meetings were open to all interested parties and were coordinated by the Italian Organization for Standardization, UNI, based in Milan.

The CEN Workshop Agreement 65 - "*Guide dog mobility instructor - Competences*" was agreed at the final meeting held at the CEN office in Brussels on Wednesday 19 September 2012. It will be published by CEN during October 2012 on www.cencenelec.eu and reviewed in autumn 2015. All contributors to the development of the final standard will be invited to participate in the review.

Working with Guide Dog Schools

The meeting was also delighted to welcome George Paun, Counselor to the Ministry of Employment, Family and Social Protection in Romania, and he addressed the delegates on the importance of co-operation with guide dog schools.

UNCRPD and Disability Strategy

The afternoon session commenced with an interesting talk on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, given by Erik Somelar of the Unit for Integration of People with Disabilities of the European Commission.

Panel Debate

The last item on the Conference Agenda was a "Panel Debate on future perspectives: Discussion on continuing building a European-wide standard for the benefit of guide dog schools and users".

The debate was facilitated by Luk Zelderloo and the panel members were Professor Daniel Mills, Lincoln University and project partner, Erik Somelar, European Commission, Jacky Elliott, External Relations Manager at AIM awards, and Hans Damm of the International Guide Dog Federation.

The debate discussed the European Standard and how the outcomes from the EGDMS project could progress. There was agreement that there was more work to do and that a bid should be prepared for European funding to continue the work which EGDMS project had started.

EGDMS – Background to the project

The European Guide Dog Mobility Standards (EGDMS) project has been funded through the Leonardo da Vinci programme, part of the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme.

The key project aims and objectives were to develop, transfer and contextualise a training programme for guide dog instructors based on best practice. Guide Dogs for the Blind Association in the UK worked with 5 partner Guide Dog schools across Europe:

- Belgium – Belgisch Centrum voor geleidenhonden vzw
- Bulgaria – Foundation "Eyes on Four Paws"
- Poland - Fundacja na rzecz Osób Niewidomych Labrador Pies Przewodnik
- Romania – Light into Europe
- Slovenia – SLO CANIS - Slovenian Instructors Association – Centre for Guide Dogs and Assistance Dogs

The training and curriculum workstream was led by the University of Lincoln.

The other partners in the project were:

- EASPD – European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities
- European Committee for Standardisation - CEN Partner – UNI (based in Milan)

EGDF (European Guide Dog Federation) supported the project on a voluntary basis.

Copies of the Presentations from the Final Conference are available on the project website – www.EGDMS.eu. For further information on the project, contact Jenny Crawford: EGDMS@guidedogs.org.uk or Katrijn Dekoninck: Katrijn.Dekoninck@easped.eu.