

EASPD Innovation Awards: October 2023

# Enabling Social Innovation



European Association of  
Service providers for  
Persons with Disabilities

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The European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities ('EASPD'), a non-profit NGO in the disability sector, promotes the views of over 20,000 social services and their umbrella associations. We promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high-quality service systems.

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# 1 Foreword: EASPD Innovation Awards

When we selected the topic of ‘Social Innovation’ for our 2023 EASPD Conference in Helsinki, there was no doubt that we should also host another edition of our Innovation Awards. What better occasion to celebrate the forward-looking concepts and practices developed by our members and other disability service providers worldwide than during an EASPD conference on social innovation?

While the decision to host another edition of our awards was easy, defining what constitutes a socially innovative practice proved trickier than anticipated. We all agree that we should support innovation, but what exactly is innovation? To help us answer that question EASPD’s recent study on *‘The Concept of Social Innovation in the Disability Field’* more clearly defines what social innovation is in the disability services sector. This is not the end of our questions, however. We debated whether innovation can only occur at the very forefront of service delivery development, or if this risks overlooking the crucial work of organisations who are finding innovative solutions with fewer resources. Debating these questions with the members of our Board and our Secretariat has been energising, and it was with great optimism that we launched the call for applications for this edition of our Innovation Awards.

Reading through the many applications submitted by service providers across Europe and the world, I’ve seen that this optimism was well-founded. It has been inspiring to learn about the ambitious and genuinely innovative new approaches to service delivery. Still more impressive is that they have been developed during a uniquely chaotic period marked by the pandemic, the war on Ukraine, and the cost-of-living crisis in fuel and food costs.

There is a proverb we are all familiar with which says that *“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”* At EASPD, we want to go far. We can achieve this by working together, building on each other’s knowledge, and driving innovation together.

Social innovation is in the DNA of EASPD, and of our members. We must do our best to promote it across Europe in all areas of service delivery linked to the implementation of the United Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). Innovation is also at the heart of EASPD’s 2022-2025 strategy. We strive to lead innovation, sustainable service delivery and community building, as well as identify and share promising practices. Innovation is particularly valuable if it can work at scale and be applied universally.

I wish to sincerely thank all those who have applied for this call to submit innovative practices. Your efforts are invaluable to our sector and the persons we aim to support.

We are indebted to the jury who gave their time and effort to carefully review all the practices submitted.

**Jim Crowe**  
**EASPD President**



**If you want  
to go fast,  
go alone.  
If you want  
to go far,  
go together.**

## 2 Enabling Social Innovation

Hosted within the framework of the October 2023 EASPD conference, the third edition of the EASPD Innovation Awards focuses on identifying practices that foster social innovation.

Choosing this topic stems from a question we have asked ourselves: what does social innovation mean today? Do we use this term as an easy shortcut to categorise any project with social ambitions? Or do we attach certain values and objectives to such innovation?

The lack of a clear definition and meaning of social innovation has hindered the capacity of support services to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). With our conference, we wish to build a common understanding of what social innovation entails across the disability sector.

Our aim is that, following our conference, support service providers will know what social innovation is as well as:

- » how it applies to them;
- » how they can implement it in their organisation;
- » what impact social innovation can have on the lives of persons with disabilities and their families;
- » the existing legal and financial frameworks that can help support service providers to innovate;
- » how their organisation can become more open and ready for social innovation.

Our Innovation Awards will serve as an opportunity to discover concrete applications of such innovative processes and practices. We want to learn from European and non-European service providers who have developed new and innovative approaches, the challenges, and opportunities they have encountered, as well as how these can be transferred and made sustainable, available and accessible.

In keeping with these objectives, the practices selected by our jury as winners of the 2023 EASPD Innovation Awards help inspire support services to adopt forward-looking perspectives for the people they support. They show us various examples of how we can work together to provide better, more user-centred services to implement the UN CRPD.

# 3 Selection process

## Overview of the process

Our Annual Innovation Award is based on a multi-stage process:

1. Submission of applications from disability service providers
2. Internal review by EASPD against eligibility criteria
3. Assessment by a panel of judges against the eligibility criteria, involving peer review, expertise, and voting.

For both the internal pre-assessment and the assessment carried out by the jury, EASPD has developed guidelines that provide assessors with a clear definition of each eligibility criterion, as well as an evaluation grid that enables them to score each practice alongside each criterion on a scale of 1 to 5.

The jury is made up of a mix of experts, including public authorities, service providers, Disabled Persons Organisations (DPO) representatives, and researchers specialised in the subject of the conference. This jury rotates every year. It plays a crucial role in the evaluation process by ensuring that the winning practices are selected by impartial experts based on transparent criteria.

The 6 proposals that received the highest percentage of votes from the largest number of evaluators, also considering geographical distribution, have been selected as winners and are presented in this brochure.

## Eligibility criteria

These criteria reflect our focus on practices that are innovative, user-centred, sustainable, and adaptable, with the view of both rewarding such efforts, and encouraging other organisations to develop similar approaches.

The eligibility criteria can be divided into two sub-groups: recurring criteria, which are assessed every year, and specific criteria, which are linked to the theme of the conference.

The recurring criteria are as follows:

1. The practice needs to be an 'innovative practice', in the sense that the practice is:
  - » **Innovative:** it proposes something that has not been done before or has not been done in this context.
  - » **Human rights-based:** it promotes a shift from a medical to a human right-based approach to disability. The focus is on the person – supporting the moral agency and legal capacity of the person – and not on perceived 'impairments'.
  - » **Effective:** it is demonstrably impactful.

Impact of the practice on the **quality of services**, in the sense that the practice has a direct/indirect positive impact on the provision of high-quality services for persons with disabilities.

The specific criteria are those that are related to the theme of the conference. For this third edition, this means criteria linked to the topic of social Innovation, including:

**a) Personhood (autonomy), choice and control:**

The practice recognises and supports persons with disabilities as human rights holders. Therefore, the focus of the service is on the person (and not on the impairment) and the objective of the services is autonomy – voice, choice, control, and social inclusion and no longer about maintenance, care or protection.

The practice supports persons with disabilities to choose and have control over their life and the type of support they want to use. The practice

emphasises new ways of providing support and/or new ways of ensuring that persons with disabilities receive the support they wish. This also includes how persons with disabilities are driving the development of their support, for instance through co-production and active participation in decisions affecting their support plan.

**b) Community and social inclusion:**

The practice supports the realisation of the right of persons with disabilities to live independently in the community, with choices equal to others. The practice for instance enables the person to perform essential daily living activities (and this may include from performing basic living activities, related for example with personal hygiene, to participating in education, employment, etc) and to engage with the community.

The practice offers personalised support, recognising the right of individuals to control and direct their own lives and the support they wish to receive.

# 4 Selected Best Practices

## 4.1 Winner 1: Enable, 'ENABLE Personal Assistant (PA) Model'

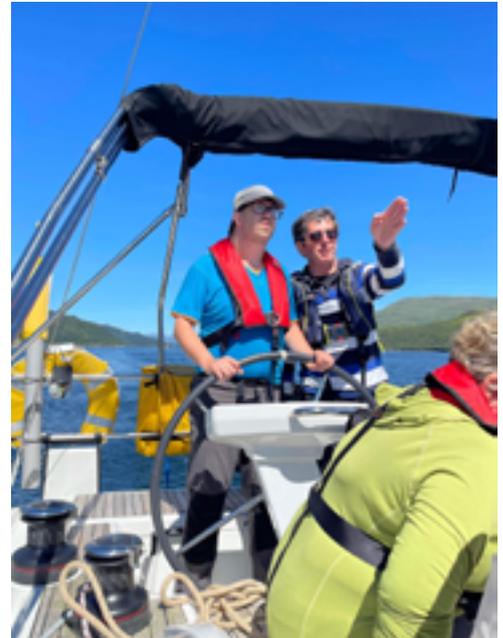
**Organisation name:** Enable

**Short description:**

Enable believes in an equal society where everyone has the right to live, work and participate as an active and respected citizen in the communities of their choice. Enable provides self-managed health and social care (Enable Cares), employability and training services (Enable Works) and community projects and campaigns (Enable Communities). Enable employs 2,500 people and helps over 13,000 people to live independently as active citizens in their local communities.

Enable's vision is of an equal society where everyone has the right to live, work and participate as active and respected citizens in the communities of their choice.

Enable's mission is to deliver human rights-driven self-directed social care and employment opportunities, and to build inclusive communities.



**Country:** Scotland

**Region:**

Across Scotland

**Website:** <https://www.enable.org.uk/>

**Contact details (name and email):**

Theresa Shearer; [theresa.shearer@enablegroup.org.uk](mailto:theresa.shearer@enablegroup.org.uk)

**Description of practice:** 'ENABLE Personal Assistant (PA) Model'

The Enable Personal Assistant (PA) model is a scalable, transferable, and tested model of self-managed, human rights-led social care, delivered by a valued, skilled and well-paid workforce, contracted directly with the person being cared for. The model was intentionally built by Enable in response to the Self-Directed Support (SDS) (Scotland) Act 2013, as a mechanism to meet both the spirit and aims of the legislation for all people. The PA model is designed to offer the benefits of Self-Directed Support (SDS) Option 1 (direct payment of a person's social care budget so that they have full control over how it is spent), without the additional burden of people becoming employers. The Personal Assistant (PA) model sets up small bespoke teams, chosen by the individual and contracted directly with them. This ensures that the Personal Assistant (PA) matches the person they are working for, shares their interests and is someone they can talk to and feel comfortable with. The Personal Assistant (PA) model is the democratisation of social care - it makes social care truly accessible to everyone, regardless of their disability, level of education, social capital or family ties.

**Quote from organisation:** "Enable believes in an equal society where everyone has the right to live, work and participate as active and respected citizens in the communities of their choice. Through our 'Personal Assistant (PA) Model', people can direct how their support is designed and delivered, and who is employed to work for them. People have real choice and control over how we support them to live the life they choose and to achieve their outcomes."

The aim behind the development of the Personal Assistant (PA) model is to provide care and support that is:

- (1) Consistent; the right to self-directed care and support is a reality, regardless of where they live or how they are commissioned;
- (2) Equitable; all the benefits of self-directed care and support are available to all, regardless of the level of education and social capital of the individual or their family members;
- (3) High quality: the services offered are rated “very good” or “excellent” by the Care Inspectorate at a higher rate than the national average;
- (4) For all; the Personal Assistant (PA) model is scalable and transferable across different geographical areas and for different health and social care needs.

Regarding its implementation, the Personal Assistant (PA) model works as follows:

- (1) Service design: Once there is an agreement to work together, the planning stages are led by the individual based on what is important in their life, what they would like to achieve and how they would like to do it.
- (2) Individualised support strategies: Enable works with the individual to develop detailed guidelines for the team about their likes and dislikes, and to ensure that they put in place the best possible support for the individual to live their life as they choose.
- (3) Dedicated team of personal assistants: Enable help the individual build their own team of personal assistants, who are hired directly by the person they are assisting, with Enable taking care of the administration.
- (4) Transparent funding arrangements: Every person supported has access to their own individual service fund, so regardless of how their support is commissioned, they have full control and visibility of their own support budget. Budgets can be used in many ways including peer support, direct support, technology, bespoke purchases that will make life easier, or other community activities.

#### **Funding:**

Funding comes from local commissioning bodies, who allocate a Self-Directed Support budget to the individ-

ual, who in turn chooses Enable as their provider. The individual exercises choice and control over how their budget is spent.

#### **Impact:**

The Enable Personal Assistant (PA) Model has been designed to support people who have a physical or learning disability but has been extended to support people with acquired brain injury, autism, or mental health issues. It is transferable to support a full range of care and support needs. More than 1,100 people are currently supported through the Enable PA Model, spread across 27 of Scotland’s 32 local authority areas.

#### **Sustainability, success factors and transferability:**

Although a non-profit, Enable has generated modest surpluses year on year while the charity has doubled its income since 2015. This has been invested in Enable frontline social care workforce, through digital innovation like smartphones, data allowances and online rota management, and crucially, in raising pay to no less than the real living wage (beyond the statutory minimum wage) for every hour worked, including overnight support. A well rewarded workforce with career progression opportunities has demonstrably helped Enable’s recruitment and retention, ensuring the Personal Assistant (PA) Model’s sustainability.

The Enable Personal Assistant (PA) model is being chosen by more and more people every year, as it provides genuinely self-directed care and support without requiring individuals to take responsibility for human resources, legal and financial administration, which most people don’t feel equipped to take on. Since adopting the PA model in 2015, Enable’s income has doubled. The PA model delivers significantly better wellbeing outcomes than other models of care, as demonstrated by superior Care Inspectorate rankings (79% ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ compared to 54% for the sector average). In addition, this model has shown strong advantages in reducing the risk of Covid compared to other models and providers during the pandemic, with people supported by the Personal Assistant (PA) being 5 times less likely to contract Covid than the general learning disability population.

## 4.2 Winner 2: Hubbie, 'Ieder Zinneke zijn thuis'

**Organisation name:** 'Hubbie vzw'

### Short description:

Hubbie supports people with disabilities in the Brussels Capital Region and is active in four domains

- » Supporting persons with disabilities in the areas of living, work, leisure and learning
- » Supporting mainstream services in adapting their services for persons with disabilities
- » Bridging the gap and promoting inclusion
- » Investing in influencing policy

Hubbie has an enthusiastic and expert team of 140 employees and 42 volunteers who support 400 users.

**Country:** Belgium

**Region/City:** Brussels, Capital Region

**Website:** [www.hubbie.brussels](http://www.hubbie.brussels)

### Contact details (name and email):

lieve.dekempeneer@hubbie.brussels 0032 479 49 80 28 -  
Janne.Deblicke@hubbie.brussels

**Quote from organisation:** *'As ordinary as possible, as specific as necessary'*

### Description of practice:

 'A home for every Zinneke'

'Zinneke' is a statue from Tom Frantzen of a street dog and refers to all the residents of Brussels, at the crossroads of so many cultures, races, histories, ect.

### Summary:

Many homeless people have intellectual or psychosocial disabilities. Becoming homeless can have many causes but always has a great impact on well-being, health conditions, and many other domains of quality of life. Because of the often- complex situation of a homeless person, disabilities are not always recognised as such, which means that appropriate support is not given.



This project is a collaboration between several services for homeless people (CAW – centre for public welfare) and Hubbie. The aim is to reintegrate these people into society, taking account of their talents and abilities and supporting them where necessary so that they can live the life that suits them best.

The objectives behind the development of this practice were:

1. A more appropriate form of support for homeless people with disabilities (HPWD).  
To achieve this, support workers from Hubbie and CAW conduct the accompaniments together.
2. Detection of homeless persons with disabilities.  
To achieve this, they discuss cases during team meetings within the service for homeless people to help them recognize and support people with disabilities.
3. Education  
This cooperation includes training for homeless support workers, for example to learn about disabilities, legal possibilities, and the rights of persons with disabilities, and to deal with specific topics such as adapting communication methods, socio-emotional development and so on.

To implement this practice, the support workers from Hubbie go to the services for homeless people to work there together with the user or the team.

**Funding:**

This is a pilot project funded by The Flemish Agency for Persons with Disabilities ((FAPD or VAPH)

**Impact:**

The programme's target group are homeless persons with disabilities (HPWD) and the support workers in the services for homeless people in the Brussels Capital Region. On average, the cooperation's team directly support 12 homeless persons with disabilities. Users can leave but also re-enter the programme. By training the support workers in the services for the homeless people, the impact is much bigger and goes beyond these 12 persons.

**Sustainability, success factors and transferability:**

This practice has a direct impact on the high-quality

service provided to people with disabilities in serious distress. While homeless support workers can focus on helping them arranging their paperwork, finding a home, medical health, and other urgent matters, Hubbie can focus on 'who the person is' on the long run, their qualities, their needs for support, the choices they want to make and how they want to live their lives in the future.

Therefore, we establish a strong and formal cooperation with the services for the homeless people: joined forces guarantee a much better result. We are confident that the Flemish Agency will convert the project resources into regular subsidies.

This methodology can easily be used in similar projects.

## 4.3 Winner 3: Access4you International, 'Access4you® certification'

**Organisation name:** Access4you International

### Short description:

Access4you International is a social enterprise that works for disability inclusion by collecting accessibility information and promoting accessibility development in all types of businesses. Access4you assesses, certifies, and qualifies the accessibility of the built environment based on a proprietary 1000-point criteria system, according to the usability criteria of 9 stakeholder groups. Access4you provides validated accessibility information for persons with disabilities, their families, as well as for persons with special needs. Access4you also helps other organisations to assess the accessibility of their physical locations, provide development suggestions for better accessibility, and help reach persons with disabilities through their website and social media channels. The Access4you European certification mark supports effective communication and increases the value of a property.

**Country:** Hungary

**Region/city:** Budapest

**Website:** <https://access4you.io/>

### Contact details (name and email):

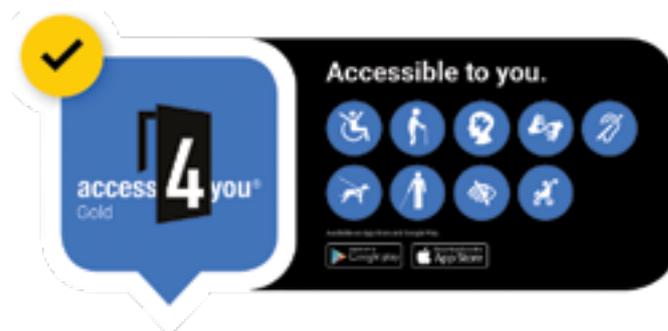
Andrea Szilágyi, +36 30 5038598, [andrea.szilagyi@access4you.io](mailto:andrea.szilagyi@access4you.io)

**Quote from organisation:** *"I firmly believe that the first step in the (re)integration of people with disabilities is accessibility and reliable, detailed information about it. Without that, none of the further efforts to support inclusion can be realised." Balázs Berecz, CEO and founder of Access4you*

**Description of practice:** 'Access4you® certification'

### Summary:

Access4you® is an international certification mark that provides detailed and reliable information on the accessibility of the built environment for persons with special



needs in mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive areas, as well as for property owners/operators/tenants. The mark guarantees that certified information on the accessibility of sites is available free of charge on the Access4you database, website, and mobile application. These can be filtered by relevance and include descriptions, images, accurate dimensions, and useful photos. It also ensures that, for at least one affected group, the site meets the minimum accessibility requirements set by Access4you. The mark does not only support people with support needs, but also benefits property owners and businesses: besides contributing to their business and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) goals, they can see how accessible their sites are, as well as how they can improve accessibility for specific stakeholder groups.

The objectives behind the development of this practice are that for people with disabilities, it is crucial to plan ahead before accessing and navigating unfamiliar locations to know whether the barriers they will face there can be overcome. Often this information is unavailable or self-reported, which can be unreliable as location owners often lack the necessary knowledge. Reliable and detailed accessibility information support people make informed decisions about the accessibility of a specific site for themselves based on their own access needs.

Access4you assesses, certifies, and qualifies the accessibility of the built environment on the basis of a proprietary 1000-point system, according to the usability criteria of 9 stakeholder groups. Besides presenting the Access4you database and the concept of accessibility information to people belonging to the 9 stakeholder groups, their families and organisations, the focus is also on encouraging

venue owners to foster inclusion and communicate the profile of their venue to their customers.

#### **Funding:**

Access4you business model is that people can access their database free of charge, but location owners and businesses pay for the certification process and the use of the certification mark.

In 2022, Access4you started to establish our accredited partner network internationally starting from Central and Eastern Europe. Since 2023, Access4you is also present in India.

The company is funded by private investment by the company owners, Erste Foundation Social Loan and since 2023 July, the Hungarian Development Bank VC Hiventures' investment.

#### **Impact:**

The main target groups are persons with disabilities, but also s businesses and property owners, as Access4you strongly believe that accessibility benefits everyone.

Access4you's impact is based on three pillars:

#### **1. Promoting the social (re)integration of people with disabilities**

With detailed and reliable accessibility information, persons with disabilities can plan their daily lives in advance which supports them in living more independently and being included in the community. Social Impact Key Performance Indicators: the number of users on Access4you website between June 2022 and June 2023 is 20 000 and this number continuously increases as their usersbase expands. Access4you's goal is to double the number of users by the end of 2024.

#### **2. Improving accessibility of the built environment, inspiring inclusive approaches in companies**

The certification scheme encourages owners/tenants/operators of real estate to improve accessibility. Improving accessibility contributes directly and indirectly to increasing inclusiveness, moving towards a more people-centred corporate values and operations. Social impact KPI: Access4you have assessed around 1000 locations in 23 countries based on the criteria of nine stakeholder groups. Approximately every third audit process leads to further accessibility improvements (whether big or small), in which Access4you's qualification system often plays a motivational role as well.

#### **3. Sharing Access4you's knowledge, methodology and technology**

Through its proprietary accreditation programme, involving companies and individuals who master the methodology, Access4you further increases the positive social impact, scalability of the product and related services.

Social impact KPI: Access4you has already 30 accredited partners working with us worldwide representing 15 companies.

#### **Sustainability, success factors and transferability:**

The limited accessibility of physical spaces and the lack of information about accessibility is a global challenge for 15% of the population meaning around 1.3 billion people. Moreover, there is a strong ESG, institutional and societal pressure on businesses to focus more on social sustainability and provide data on it. Customers are also more conscious and have higher expectations than just marketing promises and pledges from brand. They look for real social impact, something that has a proven effect on the lives of people.

Access4you firmly believe that the access4you® certification mark answers all these needs: with detailed and reliable certified accessibility information available free of charge, Access4you supports independent living of people with disabilities (in line with CRPD); helps businesses to understand, improve and communicate accessibility for nine stakeholder groups; and provide certified data and a score which supports Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting endeavors.

In 2022, Access4you started its international expansion through an accredited partner network. The objectives were not only a good opportunity to provide answer to the above-mentioned global challenge in more markets and support the (re)integration of more people with disabilities with multiple social impacts, but also to help their partners to develop a profitable business that benefits society with minimal entry cost.

Access4you's fully digitalized accreditation program is designed to help companies, professional individuals or even non profit organisations to gain the skills and knowledge they need to assess and certify building accessibility and to promote the access4you® certification mark. Access4you provides full support based on an internationally tested proprietary methodology: sales and marketing communications processes, dedicated software, training, and an online knowledge base to master the certification process.

## 4.4 Winner 4: e-Nable, 'Transforming digital images into 3D printed tactile images for Visual Impaired children'

**Organisation name:** e-Nable

### Short description:

The mission of e-Nable Greece is to use new technologies such as 3D printing and mechatronics to design, produce, and develop assistive devices or educational aids (accessories, assistive prostheses, educational kits) for all needs and all people with upper limb disabilities, visual impairments or mild autism. In addition, e-Nable trains people associated with persons with disabilities (their teachers, families, friends) and anyone else interested in using 3D printing to help reduce the social exclusion of vulnerable groups. e-Nable Greece involves people to take part in their actions as volunteers so as to turn people into active citizens.

**Country:** Greece

**Region/City:** Athens

**Website:** <https://enabling.gr/en/>

**Contact details (name and email):** Thanos Mitzifiris, [thanos@enabling.gr](mailto:thanos@enabling.gr), +306977207967

**Quote from organisation:** "Give the world a helping hand".

**Description of practice:** 'Transforming digital images into 3D printed tactile images for Visual Impaired children'.

**Summary:** The practice consists of transforming digital images into tactile 3D printed images. The objectives behind the development of this practice were:

1. To design and create accessible open-source tactile images for people with a visual impairment.
2. To train the teachers or families of people with visual impairments about the methodology e-Nable use for transforming digital images into tactile 3D printed images.



3. To develop further the use of technology for inclusive education.

At the first stage, this practice concerned only the conversion of the images of fairytales into tactile images for blind or low vision children. Now, the methodology of this practice has been extended to other images too, such as schoolbooks, paintings, and others.

1. The methodology of this practice can be deconstructed into 3 steps:
2. To simplify the image, keeping only the basic shapes.
3. To convert the file to suitable format for 3D print.

3D printing the image with different shapes having different height in the final tactile image. For increasing the impact of this practice, e-Nable usually trains the teachers or families of visual impaired children.

e-Nable works in collaboration with 3 inclusion or special schools for visual impaired students in Greece. Their trainers give them feedback and analysis of the needs of their students, while e-Nable works on designing and building tactical images for their students.

#### **Funding:**

e-Nable Greece got three different funds so far: 1) from the charity organization John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation, 2) from the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports and 3) from the Erasmus+ project.

#### **Impact:**

The target groups are visually impaired people, i.e., people with poor or no eyesight, as well as trainers/teachers and families of visually impaired people.

Regarding the direct beneficiaries of this practice, e-Nable Greece reached out to approximately 50 visually impaired students and 40 teachers and parents of visually impaired students. The impact on this type of beneficiaries is significant as they can 'read' images from fairy tales, books or other media. The impact is further increased by the training provided to teachers and families on how to apply this practice/method by themselves. E-Nable online e-platform is available to anyone in Europe who wishes to take online courses on how to use this practice. E-Nable also provides all the models as open-source files that anyone with a 3D printer can download and print. Additionally, indirect beneficiaries should also be considered when assessing the impact. This group consists of all the people who can download the files from the e-Nable Greece website.

#### **Sustainability, success factors and transferability:**

In terms of the project's sustainability, e-Nable has managed to train around 50 people, including teachers and family members of students with visual impairments. Most of them have a satisfactory level of practical knowledge to act as multipliers for their colleagues and communities.

In addition, e-Nable is constantly promoting this practice in all training courses for people working with visual impairments, as well as for inclusive education trainers/teachers in general.

The identification of success factors can include:

1. Number of people trained to use this technology and technique.
2. Dissemination of the technique in multiple channels/networks related to people with disabilities.
3. Further improvements and updates in the technique.
4. Cost of the technique.

Regarding the transferability of the practice, e-Nable upgraded this practice in a European Erasmus project (<https://stories4all.eu/>) and, in collaboration with their partners, build an online platform (<https://elearn.stories4all.eu/>), which anyone can register to so as to be trained to this practice. In addition, e-Nable recently start working on a new Erasmus partnership about promoting the UN Sustainability Development Goals in inclusive education. e-Nable plans to use this methodology and practice for creating inclusive material about UN SDGs, for visually impaired students. Finally, e-Nable also uses a similar technique in order to convert art paintings into tactile paintings for accessible art exhibitions.

## 4.5 Winner 5: Shekulo Tov Group, 'Shekulo Tov's scalable Vocational Engagement Enterprises (VEE)'

**Organisation name:** *Shekulo Tov Group*

### Short description:

Shekulo Tov was founded in 2005 with the objective to promote social inclusion and independent living for people with psychosocial disabilities. To do so, it encourages independence, social activities in the community, supported employment and self-confidence, to enable people with psychosocial disabilities to realise their potential and achieve their life goals while reducing the stigma of mental illness and promoting social inclusion in their communities.

**Country:** Israel

**Region:** 148 units across Israel

**Website:** <https://iumodel.org/>

**Contact details (name and email):** *Ophir Peleg, Chief Global Officer, [Ophirp@S-tov.org.il](mailto:Ophirp@S-tov.org.il) +972-54-4465771 and Dr. Yael Weinstein – Director of Research and Development, [research@s-tov.org.il](mailto:research@s-tov.org.il) +972-50-314-0482*

**Quote from organisation:** *"It is good that you came; now let's discuss when you are leaving."* – This is Shekulo Tov Group's organizational motto and how they welcome new series users.

**Description of practice:** *Shekulo Tov's scalable Vocational Engagement Enterprises (VEE)– Person-Oriented, Community-Based, Transition-Focused training model implemented through a circular, green economy approach.*

### Summary:

Shekulo Tov's scalable Vocational Engagement Enterprises (VEE) provides people with complex disabilities with relevant and meaningful rehabilitation and training programs that are socio-contextual and person-oriented. They occur in units that 'look and feel' like any other business. However, they prioritize rehabilitation, placements, and career development over revenue



generation. The Vocational Engagement Enterprises (VEE) implement the Integrative Unit Model (IUM), combining practices from Vocational engagement and recovery, sheltered and supported employment, and business philosophy. The service design and branding of the green Vocational Engagement Enterprises (VEEs) are based on unique ongoing community engagement – a strong brand awareness around the promotion of green values and circular economy alongside strict zero donation and zero volunteer policies, ensuring sustainability and maintaining the respect of persons with disabilities as independent members of the mainstream society outside the medical or social context.

The objectives behind the development of this practice were:

1. Offering relevant and meaningful vocational training to people with complex disabilities on a zero-exclusion policy.
2. Maximising interactions between persons with disabilities and mainstream society.
3. Enabling thousands of persons with disabilities previously reluctant to join existing services by offering them innovative and relevant vocational journeys.
4. Building 'bridges' between the social and the medical. Shekulo Tov operates units within mental health facilities and prisons to facilitate a smooth transition into community-based services.

Out of our eight scalable and transferable Vocational Engagement Enterprises (VEEs), two deal directly with the 'green circular economy', representing 31 units:

1. Rebooks is a chain of 25 second-hand bookstores, Israel's largest bookselling website, over 200 selling shelves in the community, and dozens of lending libraries in companies in trains stations. Among others, service users acquire professional skills in inventory management, online customer service, onsite sales, and improved communication. Rebooks reuses over 550K books annually, saving 33,121 trees. Rebooks also operated in Catalunya by Grup Exit, thanks to a partnership established at an EASPD conference.
2. Dandasha is a chain of 7 second-hand boutiques for women's clothing. Most trainees are women; Some with a background of traumatic sexual abuse and assault and a PTSD diagnosis. They enjoy a safe place for practical training, including styling, customer service, shop window design, digital marketing, sewing, and repairs. It reuses 108,000 clothes annually, which saves about 800 million liters of water annually.

#### **Funding:**

75% of the funding comes from selling vocational engagement services to the ministers of Health, Social Affairs, Defence, the Prison authority, and the National Social Security.

25% comes from sales of the Vocational Engagement Enterprises (VEES) products.

#### **Impact:**

Originally designed for people with complex psycho-social disabilities, today, the model serves people with autism, intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities.

The number of individuals impacted by the practice is 4,500– out of them, 1500 are with independent employee-employer relations and receive our supported employment services and 250 'service improvers' who take part in decision-making.

#### **Sustainability, success factors and transferability:**

Shekulo Tov's P3 model (Preparation, Placement, Progress) is practiced within the Integrative Unit Model (IUM) with a designated job coach in each unit, responsible for training and encouraging service users to try open market employment. Knowing their abilities from daily interactions, they are in a better position to communicate with employers and create a perfect match. Through Shekulo Tov's partnership with over 500 employers, 95% of employed service users at free employment earn at least the minimum wage. This success ensures stability and continued funding and stakeholder support.

## 4.6 Winner 6: Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan ('SV'), 'Mitt val'

**Organisation name:** SV - Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan

### Short description:

Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan is an NGO specialising in non-formal popular adult education (folkbildning), which receives national, regional, and municipal support every year. The organisation has activities in each of Sweden's 290 municipalities, where people can learn together and/or access the arts and cultures of their choice. It offers creative meeting places in the form of conferences, study circles and various cultural arrangements. There are ten NGOs of this kind in Sweden, and Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan is the largest in the field of learning and the arts for/with people with disabilities, with traditions going back more than 50 years, in cooperation with disabled people's organisations.

**Country:** Sweden

**Region:** Nationwide

**Website:** <https://www.sv.se/en/this-is-sv/svs-vision/>

**Contact details (name and email):** Kjell Stjernholm, [kjell.stjernholm@sv.se](mailto:kjell.stjernholm@sv.se), +46-708553087

**Quote from organisation:** *"It's no use to instruct on how to vote, if you are not allowed to understand what we are voting about."* (Kjell Stjernholm, SV)

**Description of practice:** 'Mitt val'

### Summary:

The aim of this practice is to make politics more accessible. It works through study circles where people with intellectual disabilities learn how Swedish and European democracy works and prepare to take part in the next elections. They learn not only how to vote, but also how to think about voting.

The objectives underlying the development of this practice were:



- 1) to bridge the democratic gap between people with intellectual disabilities and the political levels that interfere with/support most aspects of their lives.
- 2) Increase voter turnout among people with intellectual disabilities (previous research indicates a turnout rate of 20-43%).
- 3) Put people with intellectual disabilities in touch with their political leaders and integrate them into society.

In practice, the study circle consists of 7 meetings: one on how to vote, four on the different levels of democracy (municipality, region, nation, EU), one on other ways of exerting democratic influence and one evaluation. In addition, we invite all parties to take part in an easy-to-understand political discussion just before the elections. The participants, who are people with intellectual disabilities, lead the debate, ask the questions and decide the agenda. The politicians spend an hour practising how to lower the speech barrier. They have to speak with the principles of easy reading in mind.

SV has 28 local branches, serving all 290 municipalities. Each of these branches gets education and support from our national level on how to organise, lead, recruit, communicate and follow through. From that, there are

as many local solutions as there are municipal ways of organising services for people with intellectual disabilities. We adapt learning mutual learning to local circumstances.

All study circle leaders need to be trained (3x3 hours, numerically with the national project coordinator). This is because we have a method for investigating politics and opinions according to the participant's interest, including the way study circle facilitators deal with political issues. Groups are made up of 3 to 15 participants. There may be several study circles in the same municipality. In this case, they share the easy-to-understand political discussion. This event is also open to any person with an intellectual disability who wants easy-to-understand language on political issues. We also offer local political groups online training to learn how to write their most important election promises in easy-to-read language ([sv.se/lattlastpolitiker](http://sv.se/lattlastpolitiker)). In 2022, we added a digital section, in which we added online games to help participants after taking their comments into account. One of these games is called "Guess the Party". It challenges the player to combine the photo and name of the party leader with the correct party logo. Another game, called "Who decides", involves giving the player an illustration of a company and asking them to point to different parts of the illustration to receive an easy-to-read question about who is in charge of that part of the company (school, defence, immigration, agriculture, special transport, etc.) Finally, another new feature last year was questions to politicians on Facebook. The study group records a question, we publish it and tag the local branches of the parties, inviting them to respond in simple language. In addition, a bank of images on politics will be used by the study circle leaders in class.

### **Funding:**

In 2022, the National Agency for Youth and Civil Society, which is the agency that handles the government's democracy funding, initially funded the new digital tools with around SEK 1 million (around €90,000). It also supported the implementation and administration of the project during the election year with SEK 1 million (around €90,000). SVs' own national funds contributed SEK 1.6 million.

### **Impact:**

The target group is adults with an intellectual disability who want support to be able to vote and understand politics. We are committed to participation in the education and personal adaptation of participants according to their needs. We are a grassroots movement, providing education and lifelong learning for all, regardless of disability, and the needs of participants are always at the centre of our focus, whatever the disability. When it comes to engaging with the community, the practice ensures that participants build relationships with the politicians who run the society of which they are a part.

During the last elections (2022), 922 people took part in study circles and 1605 in easy-to-understand political discussions, in a total of 85 municipalities. Voter turnout was 85% (Sweden 84%). One of the key elements of the study circle is the way in which policy issues are addressed. When participants understand that municipalities run schools and regions run hospitals, they begin to wonder what the different parties think about schools and healthcare. Our study circle facilitators don't answer these questions. Instead, they help participants get their answers from politicians and political parties, or from easy-to-read editorial sources, which allows us to be neutral while promoting political interest.

### **Sustainability, success factors and transferability:**

The results are impressive, with an 85% participation rate, and all the participating politicians love it. This is not only because it is fundamentally democratic, but also because, thanks to the interaction, they learn what these people need and want in politics. The project is a key national identity for SV, and it is recognised by the political parties.

For SV, the key to their success is that they do not just teach people how to vote. They invite them to find out what we are voting on, without filters or interference. Politics itself becomes accessible. Another key success factor is their involvement of politicians. Relationships are forged, changes proposed, understanding achieved.

# 5 Outcomes for winners

We wish to warmly congratulate all the winners of this edition of the EA-SPD Innovation Awards!

Enable, Hubbie, Access4you International, e-Nable, Shekulo Tov Group, and Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan have all developed greatly innovative and forward-looking practices in line with our 2023 focus on Enabling Social Innovation.

The winners of this edition of the Innovation Awards have been invited to receive their award in our Autumn 2023 conference '**Enabling Social Innovation: Concepts, frameworks & organisational change**', hosted in Helsinki, Finland on 12th-13th October 2023.

With these awards, we aim to put a spotlight on the excellent work of our members to ensure people with a disability benefit from innovative services.

We hope that, like us, you have been inspired by the innovative work of our 2023 Award winners!

# 6 Acknowledgements

EASPD would like to thank the following jury members for their time in reviewing all the submitted practices as part of the EASPD Innovation Awards:

- » **Gabriela Munares**, Senior R&D&I Consultant and Social Science Researcher, Kveloce
- » **Phd. Eleonore Segard**, Université Sorbonne Paris Nord
- » **Luk Zelderloo**, Former Secretary General EASPD, Voorzitter EMINO and Ambassador Zero Project
- » **Kirsi Konola**, Managing Director, KVPS (Service Foundation for People with Developmental Disabilities)
- » **Dr. Valerija Buzan**, President, Center VAL

Thank you also to KVPS for their support to organise the Awards Ceremony.

# 7 What's next for innovation at EASPD?

Within EASPD, innovation is present in all aspects of our work, from project development to policy efforts, or communication strategies, as well as in the expertise shared by our members, of course. In order to further foster such innovation, we have set up our [Knowledge & Innovation Team](#), which aims to coordinate various platforms designed to develop and disseminate all the exciting innovative approaches and knowledge developed in our sector. To keep up with our work on innovation, please have a look at the various links below:

We continue to organise **online and in-person events**, including our Knowledge Cafés designed to give a voice to service users and providers who want to help our members and partners discover key areas of service provision for persons with disabilities. The next Cafés to be announced soon will tackle quality measurement frameworks, inclusive sports, and innovative ways to discuss sexual rights. More information to come here: <https://www.easpd.eu/events/upcoming-events/>

Every year, EASPD coordinates various **studies** designed to help us inform our policy efforts and to ensure that our members have access to up-to-date information on the key areas of our work. Please visit our website to discover our latest publications: <https://www.easpd.eu/publications/>

As a members-led organisation, EASPD seeks to promote activities designed and led by our members. Our Lighthouse Network was created to encourage our members to share solutions and learn from each other via **peer-learning** activities focused on bringing together EASPD members with certain expertise, and others who would like to improve their knowledge and capacity. Find out more about the Lighthouse Network and how you can participate in future editions here: <https://www.easpd.eu/membership/lighthouse-network/>

Finally, to discover the freshly revamped EASPD Knowledge Hub, make sure to visit our online platform which includes a collection of online courses (MOOCs) pertinent for all actors in the disability support sector, and an e-library hosting hundreds of useful resources: <https://knowledgehub.easpd.eu/>

And for the next steps in our efforts to support the creation, collection, and dissemination of innovative practices, please stay tuned to EASPD communication channels.



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