European Cooperation in Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science ‘ECOTROS’:
Final Report 2004-2008

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## CONTENT

1. Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 3  
2. Organisation ..................................................................................................................... 3  
3. Outcomes and results ........................................................................................................ 7  
4. Evaluations and recommendations ................................................................................ 7  
5. Dissemination of results .................................................................................................. 9  
6. Impact of the ECOTROS project group on the European agenda .................................. 10  
7. Conclusion and future ........................................................................................................ 11
1 Introduction

The ECOTROS project group works within the ENOTHE theme: ‘The development of continuing education and research into education’. Within this theme ENOTHE supports the importance of enhancing research in order to underpin higher education and also the strengthening of research and innovation.

ECOTROS contributes to the ENOTHE Charter (November 2007) stated aims and specific objectives. In this report the contribution to these aims and objectives will be evaluated. The elements of the report are based upon the format given by the director of ENOTHE.

The report is based upon the detailed ECOTROS project documentation. Another section of this report is the internal evaluation led by the project group against the specified ECOTROS objectives and a questionnaire completed by the ECOTROS mailing list participants.

For the outcomes we refer to the website www.uniklinik-freiburg.de/ecotros. A printed collection of website products is also available.

All underlying documents are collated in the document: ECOTROS Attachments to Final Report.

2 Organisation

2.1 Members

- Five project group members with research, clinical and educational backgrounds from Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom. They are also the contact persons for their country.
- There are now approximately 333 members of ECOTROS (15 August 2008)

2.2 Allocation of responsibilities:

All project group members have general and special tasks.

- **As project leader, Fenna van Nes** represents the project group at meetings and in the communication with international partners and holds contact with the ENOTHE board and office.
- **As internal project manager, Sebastian Voigt-Radloff** is responsible for the project documentation and progress control. He is also responsible for ensuring the group meets deadlines and adheres to the work plan. He is **Webmaster of the ECOTROS website**.
- **Dr. Tanja Stamm** is the moderator of the ECOTROS mailing list and she is responsible for giving and receiving information to the new moderators for the two sub-mailing lists: one about Evidence Based Practice, and one about Health Prevention.
- **Dr. Asa Lundgren-Nilsson** is responsible for questionnaires
- **Dr. Chris Mayers** is responsible for questionnaires, co-ordinating the Intensive Programme (see under outputs) and checking English.

2.3 Communication structure

The communication among the project group members works via a pre-structured e-mail system with deadlines for comments and decisions. The group members also meet twice a year at the ENOTHE meetings. Letters from the ENOTHE board to the project group as well as personal contact between the project leader and an ENOTHE board link person, ensure the communication with ENOTHE.
Communication among the 333 project members takes place via the mailing list, via the sub-mailing lists and via questionnaires. ECOTROS-information packages are available via the website and there have been workshops at the annual ENOTHE conference in Vienna, Ankara and Cork and Berlin.

The ongoing project documentation as well as all ECOTROS-PR-material, important documents and ECOTROS-information packages are centrally saved and are available on-line for all project group members: www.uniklinik-freiburg.de/ecotros

Contacts are made via the discussion-list with the 333 members and via contact persons for the different countries and with the national contact persons; plus occasionally people outside Europe

2.4 ECOTROS partners and contact persons

There are 12 ECOTROS partners (universities, national associations, Parkinson-network) and 19 national contact persons supporting the continuous dissemination.

These ECOTROS partners are:

1. Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries COTEC
2. European Master of Science in Occupational Therapy
3. European network of Occupational Therapist working with Parkinson's disease (ENOTPD), Jelka Jansa, MScOT
4. German Association of Occupational Therapists
5. Swiss Association of Occupational Therapists
6. Zuyd University Heerlen, Mieke le Granse MScOT
7. University of Applied Science Osnabrück, Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Andreas Fischer
8. Europa Fachhochschule Fresenius Idstein, University of Applied Science, Prof. Pip Higman
9. University of Applied Science and Arts Hildesheim, Prof. Dr. Ulrike Marotzki
11. Alice-Salomon Fachhochschule, University of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Prof. Dr. Elke Kraus
12. Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Hans Jonsson, Associate Professor

National contact persons

There are 19 national contact persons:

1. Austria: Dr. Tanja Stamm, Tanja.Stamm@meduniwien.ac.at
2. Belgium: Luc Vercruysse, luc.vercruyysse@uc-kortenberg.be and Patricia de Vriendt, patricia.devriendt@arteveldehs.be
3. Bulgaria: Lilja Todorova, litod@ru.acad.bg
4. Denmark: Jette Schjerning, schjerning@get2net.dk
5. Finland: Tiina Lautamo, Tiina.Lautamo@sport.jyu.fi
6. France: Marie-Chantal Morel, marie-chantal.morel@chu-bordeaux.fr
7. Germany: Sebastian Voigt-Radloff, sebastian.voigt@uniklinik-freiburg.de
8. Greece: Maria Sjourolliakos, ergostat@otenet.gr
9. Italy: (temporary) Brigitte Fleitz, brigitte.fleitz@claudiana.bz.it
10. Netherlands: Fenna van Nes, f.a.van.nes@hva.nl
11. Norway: Sissel Horghagen, sissel.horghagen@hist.no
12. Portugal: Silvia Martins, silviamg@iol.pt
13. Slovenia: Andreja Svajger, andreja.svajger@ir-rs.si
14. Spain: Salvador Simó, salvador.simo@uvic.es
15. Sweden: Dr. Asa Lundgren-Nilsson, asa.lundgren-nilsson@rehab.gu.se
16. Switzerland: Claudia Rudhe, Claudia.Rudhe@balgrist.ch
17. United Kingdom: Dr. Chris Mayers, c.mayers@yorksj.ac.uk
18. Turkey: Onur Altutras, fztonur6@hotmail.com
19. Estonia: Karin Lilienberg, karin.lilienberg@ttk.ee
2.5 **Objectives**

1. To facilitate the sharing of knowledge and communication in Europe between occupational therapists who are present or future researchers in Occupational Therapy Research (OTR) and Occupational Science (OS), in order to promote research by occupational therapists.
2. To produce 'information packages' containing information in order to support present and future researchers in OTR and OS.
3. To produce a data-base of Occupational Therapists (OT) with a PhD and/or Masters degree, students and others involved in OTR and OS (This objective has changed, because creating an online-database was technically not possible within the given time frame, budget and technical support. The information gained will be summarized in word-format).
4. To make knowledge accessible for clients/users, practitioners, researchers, educationalists and students.

2.6 **Variations and adaptations from original work plans**

There were some minor variations and adaptations from original work plans. These have been documented in the project documentation.

The main adaptations were:
- the way of making information accessible, because there were no resources to set up a good usable database
- strengthening the emphasis to incorporate all the three 'points of the triangle': research, education and practice
- leading to more attention to not only producing new knowledge, but also using it (Evidence Based Practice (EBP) and Knowledge Translation).
3 Outcomes and results

Most outcomes and results are available via the website: www.uniklinik-freiburg.de/ecotros and there is a printed collection of website products (September, 2008).

- Mailing lists
- Website
- Information packages
- Publications: two publications in peer-reviewed journals
- Workshops
- Intensive Programma 2009: Grant obtained, programme will take place in January/February 2009 with new partners included

4 Evaluations and recommendations

4.1 Evaluation method

In 2006 a questionnaire was used for evaluation and a similar questionnaire was used in 2008. Workshops were used to obtain feedback on aims and methods of ECOTROS, these were implemented during the project period.

In 2008 there has also been an internal evaluation by project group members and an external expert has read the draft of this report and commented on it.

The results of these evaluations are summarized below and the evaluations recommend a continuation of ECOTROS

4.2 Evaluation results

Internal evaluation:
The main instrument to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and communication was the email discussion list.

Overall, this was considered successful:
- 333 members from European and non-European countries, such as Australia, Japan, Tunisia.
- The list was used approximately every week at least, almost every message had at least one answer message. In total, we had 1080 messages up to now; the traffic is between 200 and 350 messages per year\(^1\).
- SPAM-messages were frequent after some time, but the majority were successfully banned.
- The list is still growing (see figure 1).

Not so successful:
- Members were asked to introduce themselves as they joined ECOTROS; some did that, but we had a lot of members who did not introduce themselves, nor did they send messages, but were just ‘silent listeners’.
- Some members sent emails in their own languages, after some discussion about this, only emails in English are circulated.

\[\text{Members of the ECOTROS Email List}\]

![Graph showing the growth of members from 15th Nov 04 to 10th Jul 08.](image)

**Figure 1**

**Questionnaire**
The 2008 questionnaire was answered by 93 persons (approx. 30%). The results are summarized as follows:

- Information, and contact aims have been reached
- Information provided on the website is beneficial
- Communication via the mailing lists was beneficial
- The workshops were beneficial only for 20% of the persons who answered the questionnaire (60% didn’t answer this question, so did not attend a workshop).

Statements given: 14 were satisfied with ECOTROS as it is at the moment, 11 gave recommendations and 11 were statements about improvement of research collaboration and about the institutional organization of ECOTROS

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\(^1\) Since the introduction of submailing lists for several topics, the traffic on the main list has been less.
4.3 Conclusions and added value

ECOTROS contributed (along with other groups) to the following ENOTHE objectives:

- enabling European Occupational Therapy Education Institutes to liaise on Occupational Therapy by developing, harmonizing and improving standards of professional practice and education in the field of evidence based practice.
- advancing the body of knowledge of Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science throughout Europe by facilitating research and by sharing knowledge among researchers and professionals interested in research.
- the participation of persons with disabilities by developing user-friendly summaries of research
- facilitating collaboration in Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science research projects

The communication and information exchange objectives have been reached successfully. ECOTROS activities have been, as much as possible, tailored to the needs of researchers, especially to those with limited experience in research. These persons have gained knowledge and support. So ECOTROS has led to an enhanced visibility of research and contacts and cooperation between researchers in OT and OS has been facilitated. This has resulted in small-scale collaborations among European researchers in research projects.

The objective to map information about research and researchers has only been partially achieved, as there are still gaps in this information. The accessibility of this information is somewhat limited because a database was not possible.

The objective to make knowledge accessible has been partially achieved and will be continued as part of the results of an Intensive Programme. Users (clients, carers, practitioners) are involved in this course.

The activities of the ECOTROS project group have added to knowledge production, circulation and use.

5 Dissemination of results

Results have been disseminated via:

- Mailing lists
- Website
- Workshops
- Publications
- Presentations
- Intensive Programme
6 Impact of the ECOTROS project group on the European agenda

- An information/communication platform for European occupational therapy researchers and occupational therapists interested in research.
- Discovery of partners for research projects (funded/nonfunded).
- Replication of a study published on the ECOTROS website leading to European research collaboration.
- Two Erasmus funded Intensive Programmes on “Dissemination of research findings to users – practitioners, clients, patients, carers”. This demonstrates the links between research, education and innovative practice.

Research

Education

Innovative practice

- ECOTROS members are coming from both within and without ENOTHE. This gives a wide and diverse membership.
- Following discussions between ECOTROS and ISOS members in a workshop initiated by ECOTROS (European occupational therapy conference Hamburg 2008), key research areas were identified. (see page 11)
- Membership in ECOTROS has encouraged occupational therapists to register for PhDs.

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7 Conclusion and future

ECOTROS succeeded in enhancing communication among (potential) researchers in OT and OS and developed and transferred information to this target group, via various means. ECOTROS reached persons outside ENOTHE.

Students and (future) users of knowledge were included in the development of user-friendly summaries of research findings, thereby enhancing evidence based practice and (future) knowledge translation.

Future activities to enhance co-operation in Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science should include:

- developing support for occupational therapists undertaking post doctoral research
- collaboration with more institutions and researchers with (large-scale) funded projects
- strengthening and developing the support for PhD students e.g. via yearly meetings
- development towards one structure, or an organisation with strong links between research, education and practice as suggested in the ENOTOS discussion paper.
- more (short-term) working groups within ECOTROS.

Amsterdam, October 2008
Fenna van Nes, projectleader.