

# Building bridges

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Publishing this special issue can contribute to the goal of EUMASS to strengthen European connections in Insurance Medicine. To build bridges by looking beyond each other's borders and by learning from each other's experiences and evidence.

Because there *is* evidence to share, which was uncommon until the 21st century. Especially in the last ten to fifteen years the quality of research has been increasing, in my opinion. That raises the question whether the time is right to start an international journal for insurance medicine. We can use our experiences with this special issue to answer that question.

This special issue would not have been possible without the contributions of many authors from about ten European countries and the United States of America. I want to thank them all on behalf of the editorial office for their varied selection of topics that gives a good impression of the activities in European countries in the field of Insurance Medicine.

It is impossible to address all these contributions, that's why I make a selection.

In the field of disability assessment there are two short articles about functional capacity evaluations (*De Baets and Van de Velde, Ansuategui Echeita et al.*) and a research article showing that there is a substantial over-recognition of functional limitations related to mental disorders among Dutch claimants. Disability experienced by claimants seems to be unnecessarily medicalised (*Cornelius et al.*).

In a great number of articles return to work and work participation is the central theme. *Kupka and Popp* discuss how difficult it is to gain reliable information about mental health problems, often leading to a reduction of counseling or activation strategies for this clientele, which may result in worsening problems and wasted chances of integration. *Viikari-Juntura et al.* advocate in their research

article the use of register data to assess the effectiveness of changes in sickness insurance legislation on work participation and to analyse trends in work disability outcomes. In the field of instrument development I would like to draw your attention to the description of the development and validation of the Work Disability Functional Assessment Battery by *Porcino et al.* WD-FAB is a software-supported instrument to efficiently collect information about the claimant's self-reported limitations for work. In one of two interviews *Porcino and Chan* discuss the background of WD-FAB, how it works, what it's worth (the status of the information it generates), and their European connection. In the other interview we hear from EUMASS itself in the person of *Bronckaers and Čakš*. They talk about organising a EUMASS Congress, developments that took place and about some hot topics in Insurance Medicine in Europe.

We should not forget the claimants themselves: how do they experience disability assessments? *Lohss et al.* find what we expect: claimants expressing approval in their comments were more satisfied and perceived a higher level of fairness with the assessment. Nevertheless, this research clarifies the importance of empathy and interviewing skills of the insurance physician. Remarkable in the contribution of *Oancea* about active ageing programmes is the finding that the process of population ageing can be slowed down by the large immigration flows in some countries!

And, of course, this special issue should not be without an article on a typical EUMASS activity such as the Babylon project (*Lindenger and Williams*).

Finally, I want to thank everybody who made it possible to create this special issue, in particular Katrien Mortelmans, Haije Wind, Bert Cornelius and Selwin Audhoe as temporary editors, the reviewers and the publisher.

I hope you will enjoy reading this special TBV issue.