

## Contents

Latest news	1
The name: Operatie Pelios	1
Mid-evaluation	2
Colophon	2
Self-search model in practice	2
Word from the consultants	3
The X Train	4
National co-operation	4

## The name: Operatie Pelios

*"...Six hours later a spaceship of type 45-G slid like a silver drop out of the black sky of the moon. The runway in the Sea of Tears was lid by yellow and white floodlights and on the top of the mountain Pelios in the neighbourhood flamed a red and green beacon..." (From 'The World Thinker' by Jack Vance)*

After centuries, mankind finally succeeded to set foot on the moon. Something believed to be impossible for a long time became possible. The occupationally disabled often experience difficulties acquiring a position on the labour market: often, neither they nor their employers have faith that they will succeed. The mountain Pelios in the quotation above had not yet been explored. Similarly, within Operatie Pelios, paths that were never walked on before are being taken, creating new perspectives.

## Latest news

**Prolongation** — Operatie Pelios will be prolonged by half a year and so will be running until May 15th, 2005. Because the ministerial decree for starting the project came late, the project was delayed. Given this prolongation we now have enough time to offer a continuation training series to the occupationally disabled participants from the last training group, and for the employers' training to take place in autumn this year. Another advantage of this prolongation is that there is more time available for the project's evaluation, which will be executed by the 'Centrum voor Arbeid en Beleid' under co-ordination of the University of Groningen. The formula applied in Operatie Pelios as well as the innovative reintegration strategies can be tested in practice during an even longer time. This will make better founded and more complete end conclusions possible in May, 2005.

**State as of July 13th, 2004** — Of the 99 participating occupationally disabled, 12 are in the last training group. This training will be completed in September, 2004. Of the remaining 87 people, 28 have found an internship post (in some cases, this means a second internship) and 11 have found a regular job.

**Visit of the Agency** — On June 22nd, two representatives of the SZW Agency have paid a monitoring visit to Operatie Pelios. They were received by Toeleiding naar Arbeid and introduced into the practical side of the project. Consultants recounted their tasks and the process of accompanying clients, and two occupationally disabled participants shared their experiences within Operatie Pelios with the representatives, who were very enthusiastic about this lively presentation.

**More news** — Visit our website: [www.operatiepelios.nl](http://www.operatiepelios.nl)

- suggestion -

The double sized July-August issue of 'Maandblad Reïntegratie' has the theme 'Small-scaled Projects'. Operatie Pelios is discussed extensively in this monthly magazine.

### Mid-evaluation

During its entire duration, the project is evaluated under co-ordination of the University of Groningen. In this context, among other things, (phased) interviews with all participants of the project are held; the second round of interviews with the occupationally disabled is still running. The limitations of people within this target group are enormously diverse: ranging from paranoid schizophrenia to being wheelchair-bound due to a muscular disorder. The majority acquired their limitation during life. Although two-third of the interviewed participants judge their own health as being 'good' to 'excellent', about half of them feel restrained in day-to-day life by physical complaints and one-third by psychological problems. The most important reasons to start working (again) are: earning money i.e. no longer being dependent on benefits; obtaining (more) social contacts; and the will to prove oneself. The first mid-term surveys indicate that most participants are satisfied with the training and their personal coaching course. Positive effects named in interviews are: more confidence and increased awareness; more insight in possibilities and impossibilities; understanding the occupational disability in a context; and the feeling of being better prepared for a job. Especially the group process and the contacts with fellow companions in the training are considered important. Less appreciated was the composition of the groups (too mixed regarding level of education, age and type of disability). A number of participants would have preferred a more homogeneous group and especially the higher educated experienced the starting level of the training as being too low. Compared to the beginning of the training, more participants now know what kind of work they would like to do, less people experience pain during daily activities and most of all, psychological problems have decreased. Nearly half of the interviewed participants indicated the training might have lasted longer because of the

### Colophon

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### Self-search model in practice

The self-search model ('Zelfzoekmodel' in Dutch) is one of the three strategies of reintegration Operation Pelios uses. Within this strategy, an application can be made to finance a facility or activity that clearly contributes to acquiring or retaining a job; an additional condition is that a job actually exists, or at least a solid guarantee for a job.

Ina Hageman, participant in Operation Pelios, spends relatively a lot of energy on travelling due to her rheumatic arthritis, which is detrimental to her job. Because of this, she first applied for financing to obtain a driver's license, with the extra argument that this would expand her possibilities for job interviews. This application was subsequently judged by the committee, consisting of the project manager and representatives of the various social services organisations (UWV, Sociale Zaken). The application was rejected: a driver's license could not be interpreted as purely and only job-oriented, and a car still would need to be paid for as well. However, the position remained that motorized transportation was required. Supported in part by a medical statement from her rheumatologist, Ina applied a second time, this time for a motor scooter. This application was honoured and Ina has now been reimbursed for the costs of a scooter, helmet, lock and insurance, amounting to about €2300.



### Word from the consultants

Richard van der Kamp, Riet de Jager

The occupationally disabled participants of Operatie Pelios receive individual guidance by a dedicated consultant right from the start, even during the training. Richard hears many positive sounds about the training, despite the resistance some participants sometimes feel in the beginning: "Experiencing resistance itself often leads to new starting-points. For example, somebody is asked about something he would prefer not to say anything about, or is given an assignment he can't see the point of. At that moment, in that training, the person has to react to this situation immediately. Just afterwards, he can discuss it calmly with his consultant, as to line up the situation. Empowered with new insight he can handle new or reoccurring situations more consciously. For example, a person might learn to better see his own role in conflicts, and not to exclusively blame others." Riet recounts: "This is where we work on building positive experiences. Often these people have experienced so many negative things already. We tend to say: 'The only one that you can change is you.' I compare it with a bus: you can stay sitting comfortably in the back and let someone drive you around, relieving you of all responsibilities. But when someone is taking control himself, that is: sitting in the front of the bus, he will slowly increase his hold on his life and will experience the results." On the one hand, in Operatie Pelios people learn to observe their limitations and to be open towards others about this. According to Riet, this kind of empowerment has a positive influence on society, which is still very much focused on limitations. On the other hand, people discover their possibilities and they can become proud of themselves. Sometimes this is a long road to go; for example, someone says he wants to begin, but then doesn't show up. All the time, the consultant adopts the position of being an equal, so the individual responsibility of the participant is an important issue. Riet: "In the individual coaching conversations, you try to give the participant insight into his own behaviour and the consequences thereof. But it is a lot of probing — you neither want to rush things nor proceed too slowly. Especially after the training has finished, it is crucial to keep on stimulating the participants. Because it's in practice that things become really scary." Richard: "I think along, I mix things up, I am an advisor and regulator. Together with the participants I try to find the proper way, starting from a realistic image of

*"Every human being should get the opportunity to achieve more than seems possible at a certain moment."*

themselves and the world." Operatie Pelios is based on individual needs. People are stimulated to think on their own about what they need, and this makes them more independent than would be the case if someone else would determine their needs. For Richard, this is a strong motivator: "Every human being should get the opportunity to achieve *more* than seems possible at a certain moment. You can watch it happen: people start doing things they considered impossible, like attending an internship despite severe pain issues. But it's also about smaller things, such as keeping to appointments. People sometimes are surprised that they manage to succeed in this. Most occupationally disabled participants are actually motivated to benefit from this course." But the customization goes even further. When searching for an internship post or job, the basic consideration is the participant's needs and not a fixed file of vacancies: the consultants can actually take the participant out into the market. This stimulates motivation and creativity for both the participant and the consultant. Nevertheless, a lot is left to be improved in this step toward internship or work: "In this project, education is an option as well, provided the participant has a good internship post. Now it turns out there also needs be the intention of the internship eventually resulting in a job. So things don't depend only on what the participants would like", Riet says. Richard also experiences difficulties sometimes in this step towards work: "I would like businesses to move more towards the current trend of 'co-operative responsibility for reintegration', by making internship posts available more often, for example. We still encounter some prejudices in employers, who are not always willing to offer a workplace right away." In the practice of Operatie Pelios, the occupationally disabled prove to be well capable of working, provided the expectations of employee and employer are clearly discussed. Riet adds: "The more companies are open towards this, the more the conviction is propagated that everyone, even people 'with a stain', can contribute something in society."

## Transnational co-operation: The X Train

*The X Train is a transnational co-operation between projects in five European countries, intending to exchange practical experiences, to develop toolkits, and to test methods and trainings in different organisational structures and cultures. The following EQUAL projects are partners in the X Train:*

- **CAD (Portugal)**
- **Diversity Faces (Sweden)**
- **Operatie Pelios (The Netherlands)**
- **SWELL (Scotland)**
- **Techne (Italy)**

### Employment Week (April 26-28, Brussels)

Project developers, deciding factions in politics, government representatives, private organisations and other interested people gathered for the Employment Week. The booth of the X Train attracted attention by a thematical decoration: visitors received a train ticket; the slogan rang: "Welcome aboard The X Train"; and the crew was wearing a conductor's cap and accompanying whistle. Visiting cards, flyers and, especially, experiences were exchanged. Potential partners for future projects offered their services, from countries such as Letland, France, and Finland. The workshop 'The X Train — a transnational perspective on equality and lifelong learning' attracted 50 visitors. The English version of the previous newsletter of Operation Pelios was generously handed out. Europe still has the sound of The X Train's steam whistle in its ears!



Photo: One of the Portuguese representatives of The X Train

### Swedish visit to Groningen (May 10-12)

Last May, two female representatives of Diversity Faces from Sweden have paid a visit to Operatie Pelios. They have been given a glimpse behind the scenes of Operatie Pelios, and also worked within the X Train working group 'Changing Attitudes'.

### Next stop: Stirling, Schotland

From September 13 till 15th, 2004, Stirling, Schotland will host the final conference of The X Train. All working-groups will present their experiences and workshop will be organized.

## National co-operation

The development partners of Operatie Pelios are organisations with a lot of expertise in the field of (re)integration of the occupationally disabled and/or have experience with the policy and financial side of things. The development partners of Operatie Pelios are:

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