



ISSA and Rehab International Sign Tripartite Agreement with the IDMSC



It took five days of intense negotiation this October in Düsseldorf, Germany and when it was done the Geneva-based International Social Security Association (ISSA) had signed a milestone three-year agreement with the IDMSC to promote the IDMSC's standards to its 330 member organizations in 153 countries. As significantly, Rehabilitation International (RI) was the third signatory to the tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which will bring the IDMSC's standards to RI member organizations in 100 countries. Here's more on why ISSA and RI have adopted the IDMSC's standards.

ISSA: Dynamic Social Security and "The Way Forward"

ISSA fosters the concept of Dynamic Social Security (DSS), which promotes the innovative use of integrated, proactive and forward-looking social security policies with the near-term aim of building high-performing social security organizations. Underlying this idea is the view that effective and well-governed organizations are vital for a social security's credibility and, ultimately, its sustainability. Building on this first step, the longer-term aim of DSS is to contribute to providing universal access, at least, to basic cash benefits and primary health-care in all countries.

According to ISSA, "Throughout its history, social security has never stopped adapting. However, today, after more than a century of existence, the challenge remains one of making the right to 'social security for all' a reality."

Photo L to R: Joachim Breuer, Vice President Europe, Rehabilitation International and Director General, DGUV; Wolfgang Zimmermann, Executive Director, IDMSC; and Hans-Horst Konkolewsky, Secretary General, ISSA.



Secretary General Hans-Horst Konkolewsky, who signed the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the ISSA, commented about the significance of this historic agreement. “The Memorandum of Understanding lays the foundation for an international cooperation of three key players in the area of return to work / disability management / rehabilitation. While all three partners can rely on their own expertise, it is the first time they have formalized their cooperation and agreed to jointly work on and contribute to the global promotion of the impact that effective workplace-based return to work and disability management programs can have for employers, workers and social security organizations. The impact will depend on the time and effort put into the follow-up of this Memorandum, but it could be huge, as all partners dispose of large international networks that can either contribute or benefit from the envisaged work.”

Konkolewsky outlined the next steps envisioned, “The partners have set up a task force to develop return to work guidelines, which shall provide social security organizations with the tools required to set up the above mentioned program. This process will be further supported through the exchange of good practice examples, strategic documents, as well as scientific information and publications of the partners. Other cooperation activities, like the joint organization of international conferences may follow.”

RI: Advancing the Rights and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities Worldwide

Founded in 1922, Rehabilitation International (RI) is the worldwide network of people with disabilities, service providers, government agencies, academics, researchers and advocates working to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities. With member organizations in 100 countries and in all regions of the world, RI provides a forum for the exchange of experience and information on research and practice.

RI takes pride in being the organization that developed the International Symbol of Access in 1969, which is said to be one of the five most recognized signs in the world today.

Dr. Joachim Breuer, Director General of the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV), signed the Memorandum of

Understanding on behalf of RI and had this to say about the tripartite agreement and its potential impact: “This agreement has the potential to take disability management to the next level. Recently, attention for and public awareness of the need for return to work and rehabilitation has been increasing around the globe, especially in the context of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

This is a good time for a cooperation between three of the most important players worldwide: the International Social Security Association, which represents social insurance institutions around the world; Rehabilitation International, which brings together payers, providers, professionals and users of rehabilitation; and the International Disability Management Standards Council, an institution that has tremendous experience in defining and establishing quality criteria for successful return to work methods and structures. Together, we can promote return to work and disability management programs and optimum practice professional and program standards, which is a prerequisite for creating worldwide acceptance for such programs.”

Dr. Breuer further outlined some of the next steps. “One of the first steps is a survey conducted by ISSA among members of the international partner organizations. The survey aims to identify models and examples of effective disability management and return to work systems. This is something we are still lacking at the moment. I am confident that the results of this survey will provide valuable input for developing guidelines for return to work and rehabilitation.

We need to come to a point where we can all agree that such programs must have some specific features; that the program must follow a consensus-based approach, which means both social partners must be involved, for example. We hope to be able to present these guidelines at the ISSA general assembly at Qatar in 2013 and at the International Forum on Disability Management in New Zealand in 2014.”

For more information on the International Social Security Association, please visit www.issa.int/; for more on Rehabilitation International, please go to www.riglobal.org, and for the International Disability Management Standards Council, please visit www.idmsc.org.