

**Improving the quality of life and standards of services for children with disabilities through capacity building. Focus on the role of the occupational therapist in this multiprofessional project.**

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**Introduction**

Through the activities of an advocacy group comprising representatives of NGOs, international organizations, political and religious organizations, concrete improvements for the children with disabilities in the state run internats in Ukraine will be implemented. The overall expected results are:

1. Improvement of the living conditions and health care of the children with disabilities in the state run internats;
2. Dzherelo Rehabilitation Centre will become a certified training centre;
3. The improvement of the competences of people working in the sector of the care (state and non-state) for children with disabilities;
4. Strengthening of civil society through better cooperation and improvement of the capacities of representing structures;

This paper describes activities that have been taken by a Dutch multiprofessional team ( including an occupational therapist) to build capacity of trainers and care givers in Ukraine.

**Objectives**

In 2008 and 2009 a team of Dutch professionals met five times the Ukrainian professionals. The program had 3 objectives:

1. Train the trainer
2. Develop a Course on 'working with children with special needs'
3. Three internats will be strengthened in their capacities

**Description/Report**

Around 10 million children in Ukraine; approximately 177.600 have disabilities from which more than 60.000 live in state-run institutions, the so-called 'internats'. There is a lack of adequate services, rehabilitation programs and skilled professionals.

Twinning and training meetings between Dutch and Ukrainian trainers for the courses and the elaboration of the educational materials. The Dutch and the Ukrainian professionals developed together a course on 'working with children with special needs' and a special course for (health)workers/ caretakers working with children with special needs.

**Results/Discussion**

The presentation will inform how the program empowered the Ukrainian professionals to provide children with services and support indispensable for good health, life in dignity and social integration.

**Conclusion**

Occupational therapy was an unknown profession in Ukraine. By participating in this project (payed by the Dutch Ministry of Health) the Ukrainian professionals do know now the added value of our

profession and how occupational therapy service can help to build capacity in the Ukrainian society and the healthcare system

**Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy.**

Occupational therapy in a multiprofessional team is of great value to build capacity in (Ukrainian) civil society.