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**Abstract:** *EATS will provide results of great value for the market of assessment and validation of AT&S from a socio-economic point of view. The results will be available for assessors, user groups, suppliers, developers, service deliveries and policy makers in Europe. An exploitation plan, specifying the role of each EATS partner, has been set up through the EATS project. This plan includes:*

- *Dissemination of achieved results on assessment methodology*
- *training programs for administrators, professionals in AT&S services and rehabilitation services*
- *implementation in policy decisions*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A fully operational network for exploitation of the EATS results will take considerable time. Within the framework of the project the commitment of the consortium is to provide an exploitation plan. This plan is laid down in the present report. The plan for exploitation of the results should be seen as a set of actions of the participants in EATS to work towards completion of a strategy aiming at establishing in the future a structure based on wide-spread acceptance, that is comparable to those that exist now for support and maintenance of established instruments.

The EATS products are meant to be publicly available. This implies that there is no direct profit-making potential foreseen in their exploitation. It will be clear that its exploitation will differ in some essential aspects from the exploitation of a product that can be sold on the market. As regards working towards a commercial success EATS has little perspective. But aspects such as promoting wide spread acceptance and use on behalf of offering optimal solutions to those in need could be comparable.

The exploitation plan thus has to be characterised mainly as a plan for structured dissemination of information, aiming at creating awareness and securing availability of the analytical platform, including the instruments developed.

The plan concerns

- a co-ordinating secretariat
- Distribution of material
- Promoting acceptance
- Activities in partner countries

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The EATS project is a horizontal project within the TAP-programme. Its results are intended to meet a need felt in many areas concerned with provision of assistive devices for a methodology to demonstrate effectiveness. The need for demonstrating effectiveness is felt on many levels of decision making. On the micro-level both individual users of assistive devices and prescribing professionals have a need to optimise provision. On the meso-level service providing institutions need to have possibilities to gauge their performance. Policy makers on the macro level in all western countries are confronted with limited resources on the one hand and an increasing demand resulting from an ageing population and fast expanding supply on the other hand. As a consequence they have an ever-growing need to make sure that provision of assistive devices as part of reimbursement policies is carried out in a cost-effective way. Reliable measurement of effectiveness thus is increasingly important for all concerned with making decisions on application of assistive technology.

During the project, the partners in EATS developed a body of knowledge reflecting important issues related to the role and the purpose of assistive technology and rehabilitation and on the strategies for making these facilities and services available to persons in need (service delivery strategies, processes and methods). This culminated into a methodology to measure effectiveness of provisions including assistive technology. The integral complex of know-how and know-why thus acquired should be seen as an analytical platform. Within this analytical platform measurement instruments have been developed, with the purpose to determine utilities. Utilities are extremely important for decision making on any level of aggregation. The most tangible instrument developed is the IPPA instrument. But also refinements of existing generic instruments for measurement of quality of life, such as EQ5D, with the aim of making it more sensitive to effects of application of assistive technology, resulted from the work of the EATS consortium. It should be clear that for appropriate application of the EATS instruments, they should never be detached from their context: the analytical platform. Secondly, it should be noticed that one main importance of the EATS results may be the potential to form the basis for future EU standards and guidelines in the area of assessment of assistive technology and service delivery. In this process the dissemination process of the EATS results is of vital importance.

Developing, validating and evaluating instruments and establishing wide spread acceptance requires far more time than was available within the EATS project. Steps defined in this exploitation plan should therefore also be seen as a continuation of the development process.

The EATS products are meant to be publicly available and no one can claim exclusive rights to them. This implies that there is no direct profit-making potential foreseen in their exploitation. Bearing in mind this very specific character of the products of EATS and their essential public availability, it will be clear that its exploitation will differ in some essential aspects from the exploitation of a product that can be sold on the market. As regards working towards a commercial success EATS has little perspective. But aspects such as promoting wide spread acceptance and use on behalf

of offering optimal solutions to those in need could be comparable. The exploitation plan thus has to be characterised mainly as a plan for structured dissemination of information, aiming at creating awareness and securing availability of the analytical platform, including the instruments developed.

In order to understand the challenge exploitation of the EATS products offers, it is useful to look at comparable products as a reference. There are presently many instruments used for measuring effects or utility of medical interventions, and a general pattern of their exploitation might serve as a template for the activities to be undertaken to exploit the EATS results. This general pattern basically consists of two components.

By far the most important component is more or less virtual. It is the 'acceptance' of the methodology of, and the analytical platform behind, an instrument. This acceptance is reflected in the real world on the one hand by the number of researchers utilising the approach and publicising about their results, and on the other hand by the policy decisions that actually are based on the results of these studies. Acceptance can not only be based passively on the quality of the approach or on the degree in which the approach offers possibilities to cover existing needs. It also requires an effective pro-active attitude aiming at creating awareness and convincing possible potential users of the usefulness of what is being offered. Concrete steps to be undertaken by the partners in EATS for this purpose are described below.

The second component of the general pattern has a more down-to-earth logistical nature. This is about a structure to distribute instruments and connected information on the analytical platform and instructions for practical use. This structure is most commonly also used for collection of experiences and for providing information on studies in which the approach has been used and where results have been published. Also for this component the EATS consortium has specific plans which are described in the following chapters.

It will be clear from the above, that it will take time to establish a fully operational network for exploitation of the EATS results. The major time consuming factor is the process leading to acceptance and enthusiasm amongst users of the approach. Building up the organisational structure supporting such a network needs to stay at least one pace ahead of the development of the acceptance. Budgetary and time constraints of the EATS project do not allow developing such a fully operational network within the project. Within the framework of the project the commitment of the consortium is to provide an exploitation plan, which is laid down in the present report. Thus the plan for exploitation of the results should be seen as a set of actions of the participants in EATS to work towards completion of a strategy aiming at establishing in the future a structure based on wide-spread acceptance, that is comparable to those that exist now for support and maintenance of established instruments. All activities described in the following chapters should be seen as steps in the strategy leading towards the establishment of the intended network structure.

## 2. GENERAL ACTIVITIES

### 2.1 Organisational issues

#### Establishing EATS-Support Centre.

After completion of the project, an EATS-Support-Centre will be established. This centre will consist of the present partners and its function is to carry out all activities following the project intended to lead to the eventual establishment of an EATS Network structure in a co-ordinated way. All partners take up responsibility for specific activities, as indicated in the following paragraphs.

Within the framework of the Support Centre the following activities are foreseen:

- **Co-ordinating secretariat.** One of the partners (*CMT*) will take up the responsibility to act as co-ordinating secretariat. The most important functions of the co-ordinating secretariat are:

to monitor the progress of the different steps to be undertaken by the partners within the framework of the strategy to establish an EATS Network Structure.

to maintain communication between partners in order to keep them informed about activities (and their results) undertaken by individual partners.

to represent the EATS consortium in contacts with third parties where it is necessary to act on behalf of the whole.

to act as an intermediary for setting up bilateral contacts between third parties and individual partners of the EATS consortium.

to co-ordinate fund-finding activities.

to handle and administrate collective financial resources.

- **Distribution of material.** (See also dissemination plan)

Web-pages. The importance of World Wide Web for communication between especially researchers is increasing every day. The most logical way of distributing the material produced by EATS is to put it as downloadable files in a web-site. *SIVA* is already hosting the present EATS web-site:

<http://www.siva.it/research/eats/index.htm>. This facility will be developed further in the near future. Some of the extensions to be developed will be:

- 'Links' to existing European web-locations (EHTO,...)
- 'Links' to relevant sources of other information available.
- 'Links' to persons or institutions capable of offering assistance
- Registration of project utilising the EATS approach
- Collection of experiences gained in these projects
- References to published results

It can be foreseen that this facility will play a more and more central role in the network under development. Plans for further development have to be drafted. They should be closely tailored to the progress of the strategy to establish the EATS Network.

Contacting publishers. Notwithstanding the growing importance of electronic communication and publishing, it will remain necessary to have also paper versions available. Contacts will be made with a publisher to publish and distribute all EATS material in due time. It seems too early at present to contact a commercial publisher, because the EATS methodology is still under development and commercial publication is not likely at this stage.

#### Establishing contacts with WHO

At present WHO is undertaking a revision of the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH), which was originally issued in 1980. Improvements are being developed with an emphasis on adding dimensions such as Contextual factors and Participation. A preliminary version of this ICIDH-2 has been circulated in 1997 for field testing. A final version is foreseen in 2000 or 2001.

The thinking behind ICIDH-2 bears close relationship with what has been developed in the EATS project. ICIDH is basically only a classification system with which a common 'language' describing the nature of problems of individuals is created. Since the EATS approach for measuring differences in situations brought about by application of assistive technology can be seen as complementary to the classification system, it has already been concluded that further development of the EATS analytical platform will be strongly influenced by the thinking behind ICIDH-2.

The first concrete step already undertaken was the participation of a representative of the WHO ICIDH-2 activity in the European EATS conference in Oslo, November 1999. The extensive and enthusiastic presentation of ICIDH-2 by Dr. Bedirhan Üstün of WHO Geneva has made clear to everybody present during the meeting how strongly both visions are correlated.

#### Other contacts

Special contacts will be made with the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research in USA (Dr. Marcus J. Fuhrer) for establishing co-operation. The reason for this is the initiatives taken by this institution on assessment studies and the potentials for cross-fertilisation between ourselves. Dr. Fuhrer has been attending the European EATS conference in Norway, where he has given interesting input supporting the approach taken by EATS.

Further, TNO has taken up contacts with the EuroQol Group, who presently exploit the EQ5D instrument, to explore possibilities of co-operation. Bearing in mind that the EuroQol group manages efficiently a fully developed network comparable in structure and content with what we aim to achieve, possibilities of sharing managerial capacity have been discussed.

The discussions with the EuroQol business manager have been very promising. Jan Persson (CMT) presented the EATS approach in an EuroQol group meeting in Sitges in October 1999. The EuroQol group is happy to discuss refinements of the present EQ5D instrument along the lines as proposed by EATS. Further it seems likely that the business manager could take up responsibilities for some of the (logistical) tasks

resulting from the present plan. Further discussions are necessary to come to concrete decisions. A follow-up meeting is planned in the first half of 2000.

### Finding financial support.

Although the initial steps for establishing the EATS network will be taken by the EATS partners collectively on the basis of responsibilities taken up by the individual participants, available budgets and thus the intensity of activities are limited. Without substantial external financial support it will be virtually impossible to come anywhere near the target of a well running network. The more finances become available, the more it will be possible to speed up the process.

Fund-finding activities will be undertaken by each individual partner where that is most suitable. The Support Centre will also act as a collective with this respect. The co-ordinating secretariat has a specific responsibility to co-ordinate these activities.

Among the possible sources for funding EATS exploitation the following need to be explored:

EU Agencies, specifically the upcoming 5th framework programme. (*Collective: secretariat*). A proposal for further continuation of the work in EATS, which was called SEAMATE, has been submitted to the European Commission in October 1999. Early in 2000, CMT Linköping will prepare a proposal to be submitted to the relevant programme of the European Commission.\*\*\*\* Jan, could you give more precise details here?\*\*\*\*

WHO, as a tributary to the common interest of ICIDH-2 and EATS. (*Rehab-Nor*) National (governmental) funds from the participating countries. (*All individual partners*)

National and private health insurance institutions providing AT devices to individuals. (*All individual partners*)

Part of the margin of the official publisher of the EATS package (in due course) (*IRV*) Fees from those who subscribe to updates of EATS experience and development. (In the initial phase updates will be scarce, and no substantial amount may be expected.) Supplementary fees from services to users of the EATS package. Activities such as advice and counselling, running courses and seminars, preparatory studies for different third parties will be undertaken, most probably by individual partners on the basis of bilateral agreements. A supplementary fee for the use of the EATS package to be handed over to the collective, could be made part of these agreements.

## **2.2 Promoting acceptance**

Promoting acceptance is to be seen as the crucial activity in the initial phase of the strategy to establish the EATS-Network. The planned activities should be seen in connection with the dissemination plan (WP05) which gives further details.

### Publish papers

All partners either collectively or individually, will actively publish papers on the EATS analytical platform and its constituents in well-established scientific journals

and other relevant publications. *For the acceptance of our results by the scientific community, publication in major scientific journals is considered to be of utmost importance.* The partners will pursue this target actively themselves, but will also encourage others, who use the EATS approach to give this proper attention in their own publications. Besides, all publications regarding projects undertaken by the partners in which the EATS approach has been used, will make proper reference to the EATS consortium. A set of guidelines delineating the consortiums publishing has been drafted.

#### Presentations in relevant conferences

The EATS partners both collectively and individually, will present papers on the EATS analytical platform and its constituents in relevant international scientific conferences. Also presentations in such conferences about projects undertaken by the partners, in which the EATS approach has been used, will be utilised as a carrier for dissemination.

Recent presentations and specific plans for the near future are :

The 1999 International Meeting of the International Society of Technology Assessment in Health Care, ISTAHC in Edinburgh, June 20-23, 1999.

The AAATE Conference in Düsseldorf, November 1-4, 1999.

The International Federation for Medical and Biological Engineering (IFMBE) World Congress in Chicago year 2000.

The 1999 International Meeting of the International Society of Technology Assessment in Health Care, ISTAHC in The Hague, June 2000.

Meetings of national support groups

#### Organise international workshops

Beside presentations within the framework of international scientific meetings, the EATS consortium, more specifically its member Rehab Nor in co-operation with the Norwegian Ministry of Social Affairs, has organised the European EATS conference, held in Norway in November 1999. This conference was specifically dedicated to inform relevant parties about the EATS accomplishments. Also related projects from different parts of the world have been presented and a rather comprehensive overview of developments regarding evaluation of provision of AT was given. The proceedings of the conference are reported extensively elsewhere. (ref.: Oivinds report \*\*\*\* please fill in more specifically\*\*\*, EATS Newsletter no.3)

#### Inform networks

Apart from presentations in scientific conferences to inform relevant members of the scientific community, targeted actions will be undertaken to inform more formal networks about EATS. These are:

The International Network of Agencies for Health Technology Assessment (INAHTA)(TNO)

User organisations (*all*)

Provider organisations (*all*)

Manufacturers organisations (*all*)  
Healthcare Insurance organisations (*all*)

### **3. ACTIVITIES IN PARTNER COUNTRIES**

#### **3.1 Sweden**

CMT of the University of Linköping will act as the national contact centre for EATS in Sweden. Plans for the near future are:

- Continue assessments already started in the country, using the EATS instruments in their prototype stage. Funding of SEK 700 000 has been raised for this.
- The strength of the EATS instruments is in policy-making (including guidelines for services) and quality assurance. The methodology is of primary interest to service providers, national authorities and companies as well as users. Therefore, dissemination and implementation will be promoted in the following ways:
- The Swedish Handicap Institute and the Social Board for Health and Welfare, both represented in the EATS Swedish Reference Group, will be invited to dissemination activities.
- The National Federation of Companies in the Health Sector (SLF), represented in the EATS Swedish Reference Group, will be invited to dissemination activities.
- The Swedish Council for Health Care Assessment makes systematic reviews in order to provide national guidelines. This authority is a key actor and will be invited.
- Continued activities to local providers will be carried out. There is already a demand for this.
- The user organisations, represented in the EATS Swedish Reference Group, will be enrolled in the above.
  
- Further refinements will continuously be made in the above activities.

#### **3.2 Norway**

Rehab-Nor will act as the national contact centre for EATS in Norway. Plans for the near future are:

- Continue close co-operation with central authorities and user organisations, establish close co-operation with the National Insurance Institution in Norway and the Technical Aids Centres in Norway.
- Support the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in introducing the EATS way of thinking in the efforts of establish new strategies within rehabilitation, especially related to the **participation** domain of rehabilitation. Integrate service provision of AT into a more holistic rehabilitation approach.
- Run workshops and seminars for potential users of EATS, especially the service delivery infrastructures in Norway, financing agencies, user organisations, industry, central and local authorities.
- Promote the EATS approach in service delivery, in collaboration with the National Insurance Institution and the service delivery infrastructure in Norway.
- Carry out further assessment studies based on national funding

- Continue refinements of the EATS package in co-operation EATS partners, seeking further European funding.
- Part of the field trials in Norway was actually financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Health, i.e. the field trials on hearing impaired was covered by this financial support. This is due to the interests of the Norwegian Ministry in this area, and in our work in particular.
- Rehab-Nor has not received funding for a project to assess outcomes of stair-lifts and platforms in homes. The design of the approach is being based on the EATS concepts, plus some additional questions concerning strategies and approaches for choosing the different solutions. The funding agency is DELTA Centre, an agency under the National Insurance Institution in Norway.
- In addition, Rehab-Nor is now seeking further co-operation with the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in pursuing new projects related to the field, applying modified EATS approaches. The basis for this is the co-operation that we had in organising the EATS conference in Norway.

Rehab-Nor had a strategy meeting with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the National Insurance Institution and the major user organisations to discuss strategies for national follow-up based on concrete results and experiences from the field trials. This took place in mid-summer 1999. One of the results was the co-operation of the Ministry in the organisation of the EATS conference held in November 1999.

### **3.3 Italy**

SIVA will act as the national contact centre for EATS in Italy. Plans for the near future are:

- The Eats questionnaire will be used as educational instrument during the annual courses organised at Siva, in a special section of the Autonomy Technologies course, dealing with technical devices, their costs and the measure of outcomes.
- The forms will be circulated among participants with comments and a simulation of field trial during compilation.
- The questionnaire will be sent out to all the Italian counselling centres connected in the Italian network, up to 87 at present date; and to the international reference counselling centres up to 23 at present date.
- We had some interest demonstrated to the EATS questionnaire by the Italian rehabilitation centres involved in the field validation, and all of them were asking for the possibility to use the final version, so a copy will be sent out for comments to a restrict sample of rehabilitation centres.
- Inside the Fondazione Don Gnocchi the rehabilitation service will try to use the same questionnaire with some of the patients.

### **3.4 The Netherlands**

IRV and TNO-PG will jointly act as the national contact centre for EATS in the Netherlands. Plans for the near future are:

- Continuing the national reference group established earlier, consisting of representatives of all relevant actors. This reference group is being kept informed about the progress of the EATS development and gives feedback regarding both the contents of the products and possible steps for enhancing their exploitation.
- A widely distributed Dutch Newsletter. This will be addressed to service providers, health insurance institutions and researchers who would likely profit from applying the EATS approach.
- Apply the EATS approach in projects undertaken by the Dutch participants. This will both be used for the continued development and validation of the instruments and serve as promotion of the approach.
- Carry out actions as described elsewhere in this document.

#### **4. OTHER COUNTRIES**

As indicated earlier, the EATS consortium will establish an EATS Network, through the identification of national contact persons/institutions. We will do this by help of the professional networks that the EATS partners already do have throughout Europe.

The initiating point to trigger this development was the European EATS conference held in November 1999, to which potential national contact persons/institutions were invited. After the seminar every partner will 'adopt' one or more of the countries to act as a contact and guide for development of further activities. Again the co-ordinating secretariat will play a crucial role in keeping these distributed activities on the track of the greater strategy.

The role of the national contact persons/institutions will be:

- Support awareness raising and the implementation of the EATS thinking and the EATS package in their countries.
- Run national seminars and workshops.
- Facilitate the communication between professional users and the EATS Support Centre
- Carry out their own assessment studies.
- Serve as link to relevant authorities and other relevant bodies.

The intention is to have established this network by mid-summer 2000. But success of this endeavour will be highly dependent on the possibilities to find adequate funding.