



CONFERENCES
IN FLANDERS



Flanders
State of the Art

EACD 2024

Impact report

VISITFLANDERS





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This impact report gives an in-depth overview of the impact created by the EACD 2024 conference and the EACD+ extra-curricular activities.

The Impact Report paints a detailed picture of how the annual meeting of the European Academy of Childhood Disability contributed to societal advancement, engaging various stakeholders in addressing pressing challenges and fostering positive change for people with a childhood-onset disability.

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EACD promotes research and education for the benefit of people with a childhood-onset disability, and organises each year the largest European scientific conference in this field.

For their meeting in 2024, EACD wanted -in addition to pushing boundaries in research- to create a positive impact for people with a childhood-onset disability in the destination (and across Europe): **to improve the quality of life of people with a childhood-onset disability.**

For that purpose, the EACD 2024 LOC, EACD and a large group of local stakeholders ...

- developed the EACD+ program, which included a Sports Festival, a Concert and a Technology Experience Room to improve access to sports, culture and technology for people with a childhood-onset disability
- radically changed the scientific program of the conference, placing more emphasis on end-user involvement in research projects and retranslate relevant abstracts in laymen's terms
- added a pre-symposium with academics, industrial partners, governmental and societal stakeholders to accelerate successful innovation and collaboration with an end-user perspective.





90

children



57%

intention to
continue sporting



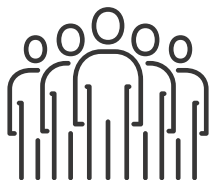
40

professionals



70%

plan to offer or expand sports
for children with disabilities.



1249

participants



50%

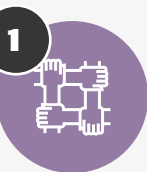
of the 997 abstracts
involved people with
lived experience.



81%

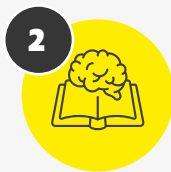
said EACD+ activities
added value to the
annual meeting.

3 impact intentions positively influence 4 impact areas:



Human

Skills development
Work conditions
Talent recruitment in city
Opportunities
Well-being
Health



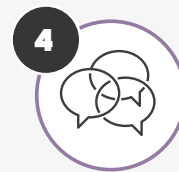
Intellectual

Innovation
Knowledge transfer
Technology transfer
Knowledge diffusion
Entrepreneurship
R&D



Social

Networks
Collaborations
Shared experiences
Social inclusion - Sense of belonging
Pride
Collective identity



Political

Ability to influence decision-making and policy
Affect attraction & distribution of resources
Raise the voice and profile
Engage value chain
Ability to engage into reciprocal relationships

and work towards several targets from SDG3 Good health & wellbeing





**European Academy of
Childhood-onset Disability**

2 INTRODUCTION EACD

The **European Academy of Childhood-onset Disability (EACD)** was founded in 1989 and is an international not-for-profit association for anyone with a clinical and/or scientific interest in childhood-onset disabilities in Europe.

EACD's mission is to **promote excellence in research** and services for the benefit of people with, and at risk for, childhood-onset disabilities, and to **provide multidisciplinary, state-of-the-art education** for professionals active in the field of childhood-onset disabilities in Europe and beyond.

EACD aims to be a **multidisciplinary, welcoming and constructive academy** to build a better future for people with a childhood-onset disability. Education, ethics and social commitment are essential to **bridge cultural, societal and economical differences** across the entire European region.

EACD organises each year the largest European scientific conference in this field.

For the **annual meeting in 2024**, The Local Conference Chair, Elegast Monbaliu and EACD's President Bernard Dan, wanted -in addition to pushing boundaries in research- to create a **positive impact for people with a childhood-onset disability** in the destination (and across Europe).



3 IMPACT OF EACD 2024 AND EACD+

3.1 EACD 2024 Impact Intention

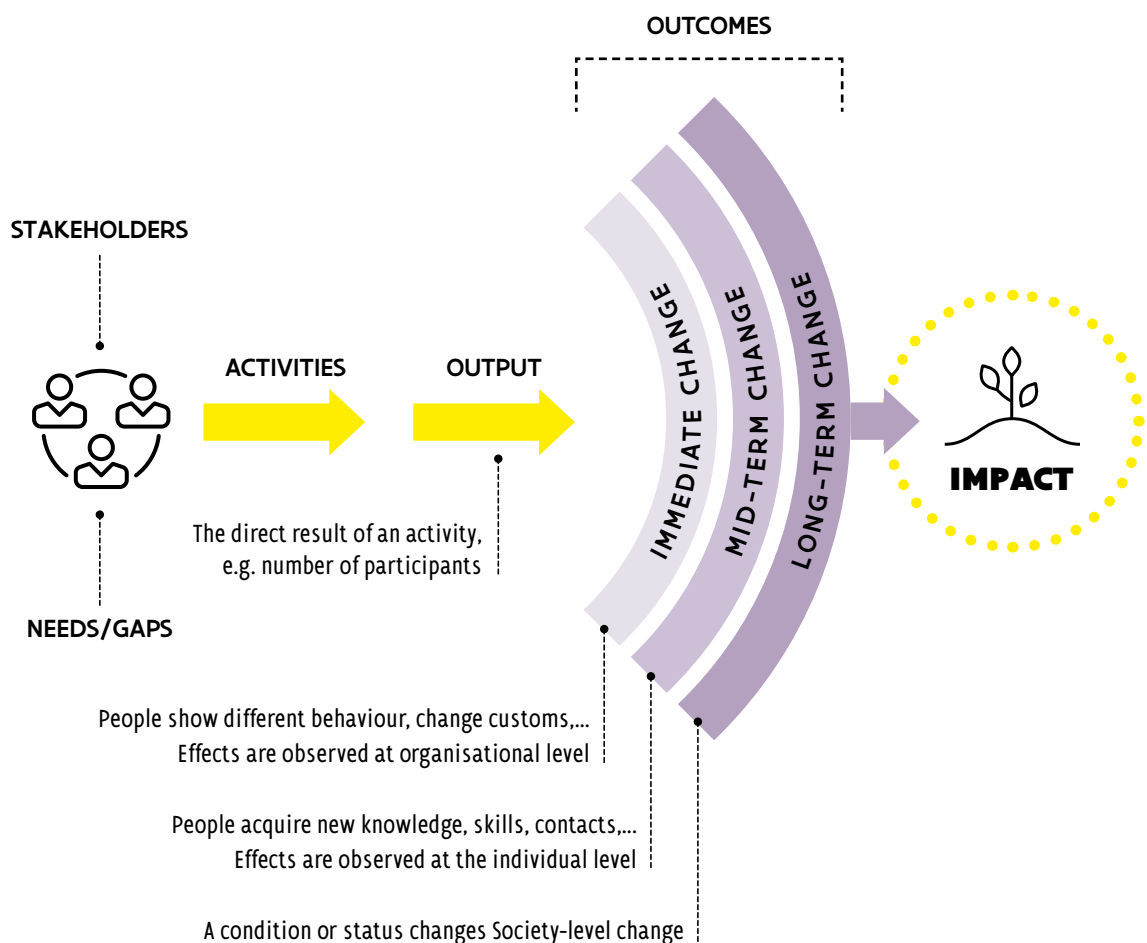
IMPACT INTENTION

Insert info about the N° of people globally being born with a disability.

To support the realisation of the long term impact intention, the following expected outcomes were identified and grouped into 3 main themes/tracks:

- People with a childhood onset disability have better access to everything in life
- Research-driven, modified clinical practice leads to an improvement in quality of life of people with a childhood onset disability
- People with a childhood onset disability have access to better and new technologies

By means of the Theory of Change (ToC), the Impact Task Force of EACD 2024 defined activities with short-term results, which would lead to longer-term, more sustainable outcomes.



3.2 Stakeholders

The initiative was taken by the Local Conference Chair, Elegast Monbaliu and EACD's President Bernard Dan, with the support of VISITFLANDERS Convention Bureau.

Together we mapped and invited a diverse group of stakeholders with different backgrounds (people with lived experience, parents, therapists, academics, policy makers and entrepreneurs...) to take part in the 'Impact Task Force'.

With this group we identified needs and gaps, that could potentially be addressed by the organisation of the conference. The group defined the **long term impact intention** as “to improve the quality of life of people with a childhood onset disability”, aligning local needs and gaps with EACD's mission.

The Impact Task Force was expanded with a larger group of volunteers; exceptional individuals who helped to realise the impact program, with extracurricular activities that not only address immediate needs but also foster long-term growth and independence for people with a childhood onset disability.

We identified parties in government, education, business and local volunteer organizations to support the impact program, creating a strong local support base, which increases the chance of a positive and durable impact.

- **End-beneficiaries:** EACD Family and Users Forum, parents, professional care givers
- **Academics:** Flemish Universities researchers, Flemish fund for Scientific Research
- **Policy makers:** City of Bruges, Flemish department of Care
- **Entrepreneurs:** 40+ companies and organisations providing technology, products and services
- **Volunteer contributors:** Youth Symphony Orchestra, In4Care, Flemish Football association, Watermusic
- **Donors:** Mira-Louise fund, Club Brugge foundation, Miles for Smiles, Kiwanis
- **Destination:** VISITFLANDERS CVB, Visit Bruges CVB, Venues, KU Leuven PCO



3.3 Activities, results and outcomes

1. Accessibility

People with a childhood onset disability have better access to everything in life

Needs/Gaps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access for people with childhood onset disability to education, work and leisure activities (sports, culture ...) • Parents needs easy access to the right treatment & therapist • physical accessibility - Digital accessibility - Self-sustainability 	
Activities:	IMPACT TRACK	IMPACT TRACK
	Accessibility to music	Conference Opening Concert <i>Symbolising the power of collaboration, friendship and the universal language of music.</i>
	Accessibility to sports	Sports Festival <i>For children with a disability to try out different sports, and for therapists, sports teachers and policy makers to expand their knowledge on inclusive sports</i>
	Accessibility to work	People with disability at work during conference <i>The conference Master of Ceremony is a person with lived experience</i>
	Accessibility	Testimonials at conference of personal stories <i>EACD+ media campaign: testimonials in opening video, the city magazine and national & regional press</i>
	Accessibility	Inclusive design of the conference <i>Ooh Bruges' accessibility website & brochure for delegates, coaching of venues and support to the PCO</i>



Spotlight on EACD+ activities:

OPENING CONCERT

350 children participating / 1.200 guests

- For 1,5 year children -both with and without disabilities- have rehearsed for their 'performance of a lifetime' for a fully sold-out concert hall in Bruges.
- Led by top conductor Dirk Lievens, children of different backgrounds, talents and abilities will shine together on one stage.
- Music transcends all limitations. The concert symbolises the power of collaboration, friendship and the universal language of music.

SPORTS FESTIVAL

90 children participating / 40 professional care-givers

Because sports participation encourages self-confidence, teamwork and fun!

- A one-day sports event where children with a disability could shine in adapted sports and have a fun-filled day together with their families.
- A unique experience for children where sport, friendship and inspiration all come together in 10 different sports and 4 exploratory sessions
- Therapists, sports teachers, policy makers, sports officials joined as visitors and participated a range of educational workshops and training sessions to expand their knowledge on inclusive sports.
- Organisation of the first International CP soccer game between Belgium – Netherlands

Expected output and outcomes:

- Showcase of what is already being done to conference participants and key stakeholders in Flanders and Belgium
- Create a baseline for growth in offering after the conference, with a clear view on opportunities and barriers
- Growth in inclusive offering of sports, culture and leisure activities for people with childhood onset disabilities





Achieved output:

OPENING CONCERT

- 350 children (with & without disability) practiced music and dance for 18 months
- 1,200 guests experienced their possibilities
- the start of a permanent musical collaboration that transcends all limitations – thus promoting inclusion.

SPORTS FESTIVAL

- 90 children participated in 10 different sports, of which 57% have the intention to continue sporting
- 40 professionals participated in educational workshops around inclusive sporting, of which
 - » 70% declared to have the intention to offer sports activities for children with disability or to expand the existing offering
 - » 75% of them declared they would be willing to help colleagues who want to start offering sporting activities for children with disabilities

CONFERENCE

81,3 % of the conference delegates declared that the extracurricular activities of the conference, with the aim to create a positive impact in the destination, were an added value to the EACD 2024 annual meeting.



2. Research

Research-driven, modified clinical practice leads to an improvement in quality of life of people with a childhood onset disability

Needs/Gaps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• more interaction needed between researchers and ‘users’ before and during research• Parents need easy & understandable access to research, and should participate more actively in research• Priority setting in research• Need for more transnational research networks			
Activities:	RESEARCH	Research abstracts are developed with the active involvement of people with disability <i>Meaningful engagement of people with lived experience in all stages of the research process</i>		
	RESEARCH	Specific networking moments (SIG, research networks...) <i>Organisation of dedicated network groups childhood-onset disabilities</i>		
Expected output and outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An increased number of abstracts are published / presented in a layman’s format• Higher involvement of people with lived experience in research projects• More interaction between researchers and people with lived experience during the conference• Researchers have a better understanding of the needs of caregivers and people with lived experience• People with lived experience understand the added value of participating in research			
Achieved output:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50% of the 997 abstracts were developed with involvement of people live lived experience <div><div><p>% of submitted EACD 2024 abstracts in which people with lived experience contributed to:</p></div><div><div><div>50%</div><div>At least 1 step of the research process inquired</div></div><div><div>36%</div><div>At least 2 steps of the research process inquired</div></div><div><div>29%</div><div>At least 3 steps of the research process inquired</div></div><div><div>21%</div><div>All steps of the research process inquired</div></div></div></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All 997 abstracts included a short text (± 75 words) describing what the relevance of the work is in layman’s terms for people with lived experience. This was made available to all conference participants via the (online) book of abstracts.• EACD 2024 counted 51 participants ‘with lived experience’; a substantial increase from the previous conference in Ljubljana 2023, where 15 participants with lived experience attended.• For the 1st time, a dedicated ‘Family & Users’ Special Interest Group session was included in the program during the congress.			



3. Technology

People with a childhood onset disability have access to better and new technologies

Needs/Gaps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents need easier & more understandable access to technological solutions• we need to use technology more to facilitate life and work for people with a childhood onset disability• Technology providers think the market potential is too specific and too small	
Activities:	TECHNOLOGY	Pre-conference symposium ‘the quadruple helix innovation framework’ <i>Technological and industrial partners meet family representatives and policy makers; to exchange knowledge and projects</i>
	TECHNOLOGY	Presidential keynote session on bridging industry and clinical field <i>Technology & Innovation Key-note Prof. Mieke De Ketelaer</i>
	TECHNOLOGY	Experience Room <i>One-day event for people with lived experience, families, therapist, companies and other stakeholders in the field</i>
Spotlight on EACD+ activities:	EXPERIENCE ROOM <i>1.249 people with a disability and caregivers / 50 technology providers</i> Because together we can make technology better and more accessible <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A one-day experience fair where visitors were introduced to low- and high-technological solutions that make life with a motor disability more enjoyable and qualitative.• Visitors could experience rehabilitation aids, gaming tools, sports aids, smart toys, adapted musical instruments, ... and much more.• Free of charge and open to all congress delegates, therapists, care providers, people with and without disabilities, policy makers ... to test the latest care innovations.	



Expected output and outcomes:

- People with lived experience and therapists have increased awareness of the technology that is available
- Increased adoption of technology solutions by people with lived experience
- People with lived experience provide input about their needs, as basis for the development of technology solutions
- New collaborations are established between research groups and industry
- New initiatives are started to develop technology solutions: researchers and clinicians work more together with TTOs and industry to test ideas

Achieved output:

- 1,249 participants explored new low- and high-tech products and services
- 38 booths representing 50 companies, service centers and knowledge institutions
- 74% of participants indicated they would use new products/services in the near future



4 FUTURE OUTLOOK

Generating Long Term Impact

The EACD Impact Program has an exciting future ahead as it continues its mission of improving the quality of life of people with a childhood-onset disability.

The EACD 2024 conference and EACD+ were a first milestone for the realisation of the long term impact intention of EACD, by addressing immediate challenges but also fostering long-term growth and independence for people with a childhood-onset disability.

With the continued support of VISITFLANDERS Convention Bureau and the International Alliance for Impact, EACD is committed to continue the program in sustaining and expanding its reach.

By offering ongoing encouragement and resources, we can ensure that EACD's impactful work continues to thrive, reaching more individuals across Europe. By recognizing and backing this invaluable work, supporters can help EACD build on its strong foundation, advancing toward a more inclusive and supportive society for all.

EACD's future plans include:

- make **EACD+ Belgium** sustainable in the long term
- expand the **EACD+** program across **Europe**
- establish the **EACD Impact Task Force**
- creation of the **EACD Impact Grant**

1. EACD+ BELGIUM

Following the success of EACD+ in Bruges, EACD Belgium will expand and continue the cultural and sporting activities across Flanders, develop a wider communication campaign and organise a hackathon.

- **CP football (soccer) festival** on Sunday, October 6th (World Cerebral Palsy Day, worldcpday.org)
 - » Exploratory foot festival for children 8y -> 13y
 - » Showcase game of the CP team against KV Mechelen
 - » Special guests: football players of national CP team of 1984 who became champions 40 years ago
- **'Frame It':** Artistic Project in cooperation with schools, academies and specialized institutions to develop various artistic products with children without and with disabilities.
- **EACD+ hackathon** to accelerate innovation in low- and high-tech support with the involvement of the end beneficiaries, i.e. people with a childhood-onset disability.
- **EACD+ Communication campaign**, aimed at changing the narrative in the media in Belgium to inclusively represent people with childhood onset disabilities. This initiative involves strategic efforts to reshape public perception, promote diversity, and ensure equitable representation.



2. EACD+ EUROPE

The upcoming EACD annual meetings will take place in Heidelberg, Germany in 2025, and in Galway, Ireland in 2026.

EACD, the LOC of EACD+ Belgium, and VISITFLANDERS Convention Bureau will work with LOCs, convention bureaus, and PCOs in future destinations to deliver EACD+ activities alongside the EACD Conference.

Seed funding and support will be provided to organise 3 extracurricular activities:

- initiatives / activities to improve access to sports & physical activity
- initiatives / activities to improve access to low- and high-tech support
- local activity of choice aligned to local needs

This way EACD can support a positive impact creation for people with childhood-onset disabilities across Europe, to improve the quality of life of people with a childhood-onset disability.

3. EACD IMPACT TASK FORCE

The purpose of the EACD Impact Task Force is to set a pathway to generate and measure broader societal impact around future EACD conferences in a systematic and sustainable way.

The Task Force's mission will be to continue to reinforce involvement of people with a childhood-onset disability, to raise awareness of their needs and rights to the general public and to advocate to policy makers for more inclusive policy-making across Europe.

Starting from the Long term Impact Intention as defined for the EACD 2024 annual meeting, the EACD Impact Task Force will support the positive impact creation for people with a childhood-onset disability across Europe, i.e. to improve their quality of life.

As one of the founding members of the International Alliance of Academies of Childhood Disability (IAACD), EACD aims to capitalize on the learnings of EACD+ to promote and support the development of similar initiatives with the member academies.

As such they can contribute to improve the quality of life for children with child-onset disabilities across all continents and geographical regions.

4. EACD IMPACT GRANT PROGRAM

The EACD Impact Grant Program will be developed by the EACD Impact Task Force and designed to support initiatives that focus on improving the quality of life of people with a childhood onset disability.

This long-term initiative will involve a structured approach, with clear objectives, robust support mechanisms, and thorough evaluation processes. As such EACD can ensure that funded projects effectively contribute to societal impact.

The objectives of the program will be to:

- increase public awareness about childhood onset disabilities and the unique challenges faced by individuals with these conditions.
- promote inclusivity: encourage media to include stories and perspectives of people with childhood onset disabilities
- change perceptions: challenge stereotypes and misconceptions by showcasing the capabilities and contributions of individuals with disabilities

5 VISITFLANDERS' CONTRIBUTION

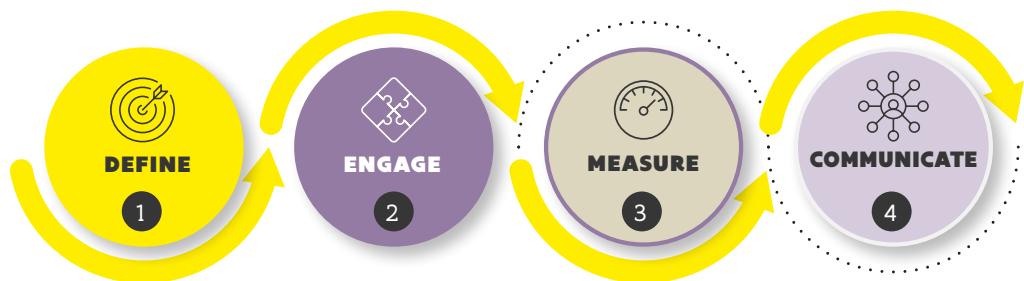
Ambition

Conferences and events can be important drivers for growth, innovation and community building, but often these events are not leveraged to their full potential.

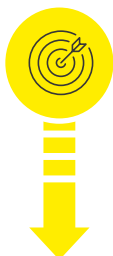
In Flanders, we want to strengthen the positive power of conferences and events and focus on the positive impact international conferences.

That's why we developed an impact methodology, in order to co-create a lasting impact of conferences on the association and its members, on the host city, the region and residents.

VISITFLANDERS Convention Bureau has an intentional approach to strengthen the positive power of conference and events tourism, and has developed a 4-step impact methodology, in order to co-create a lasting impact of association conferences in the destination and for the association and its members



VISITFLANDERS Convention Bureau supported EACD and the Local Organising Committee in:



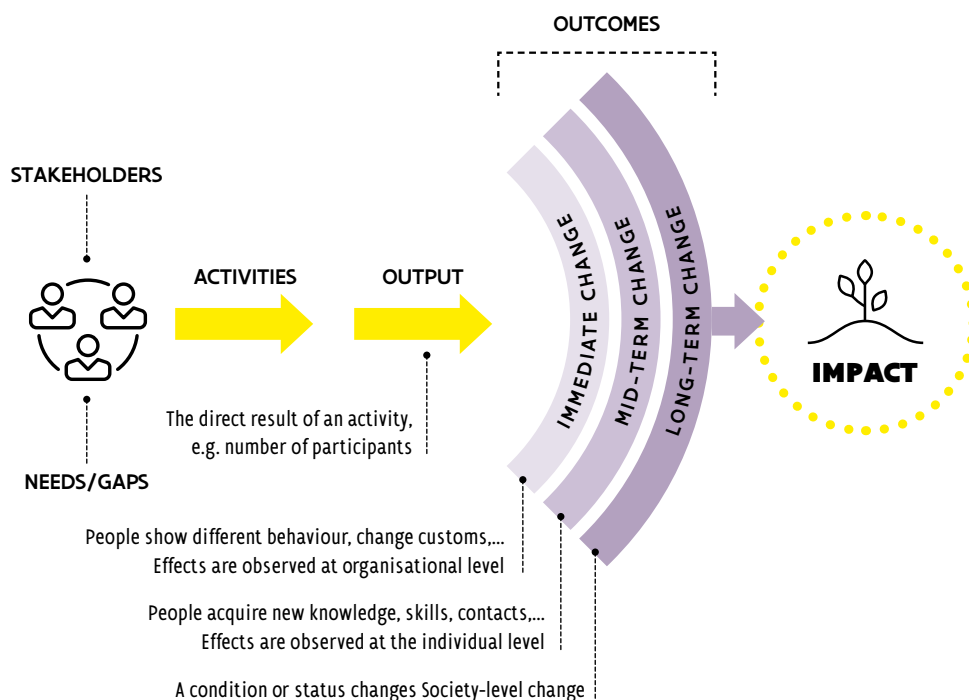
DEFINE

Together we mapped and invited key stakeholders (people with lived experience, therapists, academics, researchers, entrepreneurs and local policy makers) to take part in the 'Impact Task Force'.

With this group we identified needs and gaps, that could potentially be addressed by the organisation of the conference. The group defined the **long term impact intention** as "to improve the quality of life of people with a **childhood onset disability**", aligning local needs and gaps with EACD's mission.

As next step, after defining the impact intention, we worked to turn the impact intention into measurable short-, mid- en long-term outcomes.

By means of the Theory of Change (ToC), the group defined activities with short-term results, which would lead to longer-term, more sustainable outcomes.



We started by reviewing the already planned activities and see how these could be improved to better respond to the impact objectives. To complement the existing conference activities, the Impact task Force discussed what additional activities were necessary to maximise benefits for targeted stakeholders in the destination and to fulfil the long-term impact goals.



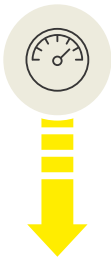
ENGAGE

The Impact Task Force was expanded with a larger group of volunteers; exceptional individuals who helped to realise the impact program, with extracurricular activities that not only address immediate needs but also foster long-term growth and independence for people with a childhood onset disability.

A dedicated governance structure was set up to oversee the Impact program and to successfully plan and execute the impact program. Typically, EACD conferences are organised by a Local Organising Committee (LOC), a Scientific Committee (SC) and a Professional Conference Organiser (PCO). Next to these, 2 additional teams were set up to ensure that crucial contributors were actively engaged.

- The **Impact Task Force** was responsible for leading the legacy/ impact project and converting the initial vision into a strategy and action plan. Their tasks included: define the impact intention, develop activities, identify additional stakeholders linked to the local ecosystem, safeguarding the alignment of the activities with the Impact Intention and do the main data analysis for the reporting.
- The **Impact Ninja Team** was a subset of the Impact Taskforce, and responsible for executing the initiatives and ensuring their delivery. They are the main liaison with the other entities (LOC, SC, PCO), ensure that the execution of activities is aligned with the Impact Intention.

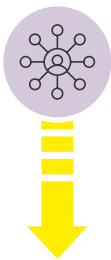




MEASURE

VISITFLANDERS Convention Bureau worked with the Impact Ninja Team and the activity leaders to develop and implement a measurement strategy and plan for the impact program to collect, analyse, and report data that would prove the value and outcomes of the impact program.

The main objectives are to showcase immediate results and achievements, communicate on future challenges and crucial next steps for mid-term impact, demonstrate the credibility and reputation of EACD and to improve future conferences.



COMMUNICATE

VISITFLANDERS Convention Bureau supported the Impact Task Force and the LOC to integrate storytelling into their external communications, with the aim to bridge any gap between people with live experience, professionals, and the general public. Through personal anecdotes and compelling stories, the EACD+ team was able to cultivate empathy and understanding.



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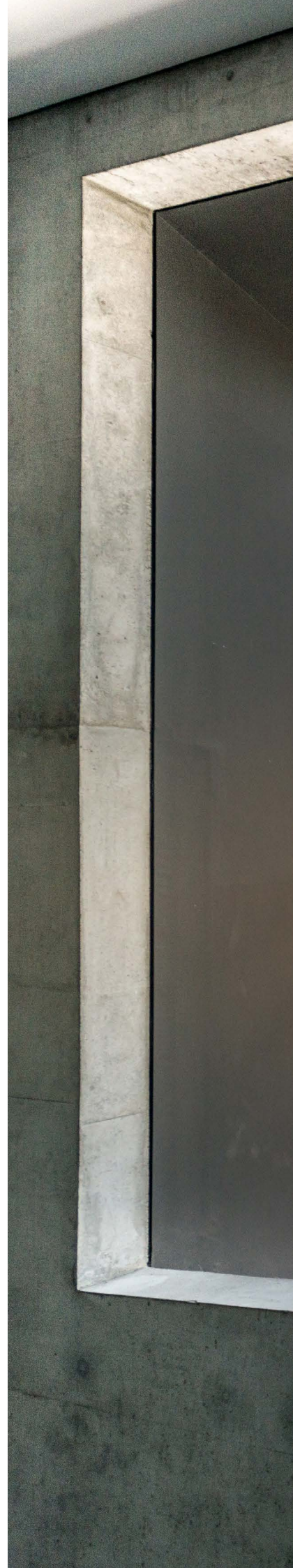
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