



***On June 11, 2014 the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) signed a license agreement with RIZIV-INAMI, (Belgium Health Insurance Agency), which manages supplemental security income (SSI) benefits for non-occupational injuries and illnesses for the country's more than 11 million people. The agreement allows the agency to begin training individuals under its own "Back to Work" program, using the International Disability Management Standard Council's curriculum and designations. Currently, more than 300,000 Belgians are off work due to non-occupational disease and injuries.***

*Photo L-R: Philippe Mairiaux, Université de Liège; Katrien Mortelmans, Mensura; Marc Vandeweerd, Fonds voor de Beroepsziekten [standing]; Jo De Cock, CEO, NIHDI, RIZIV/INAMI; Wolfgang Zimmermann, NIDMAR; Francois Perl, NIHDI, RIZIV/INAMI.*

## Belgium's Health Insurance Agency adopts IDMSC Standards and Professional Program



François Perl, RIZIV-INAMI Director General, Disability Insurance, signed the agreement with NIDMAR Executive Director Wolfgang Zimmermann in Brussels after first learning about the IDMSC, its programs and benefits four years ago. The relationship between the two organizations was further solidified when Zimmermann and Perl – who is also Vice President, Technical Committee Retirement Pensions and Disability for the International Social Security Agency (ISSA) – met again at the ISSA conference in Doha, Qatar in November 2013.

According to Perl, the reasons were two-fold for signing the agreement with NIDMAR to begin delivering the IDMSC program. He explains, "The standards are international, which is the biggest added value for us. We had a lot projects based on empirical experience, but we wanted to go further and adopt an international standardization. Secondly, is the transdisciplinarity. It's not only physicians who can go through the certification process, but all the people having a role in return to work processes."

Perl is responsible for the "Back to Work" program developed by the NIHDI, a division of RIZIV-INAMI that manages and implements compulsory health and disability insurance benefits under the supervision of Belgium's Minister of Social Affairs. Perl advises that, as an independent branch of the Belgian social security mission, the NIHDI provides "replacement income to workers no longer gainfully employed" because of reasons not related to their jobs, including disease, personal accidents and maternity leave.



The NIHDI “Back to Work” program was designed with regional employment agencies. Perl adds, “INAMI also cooperates, of course, with agencies responsible for workplace accidents.”

### **NIHDI working with universities on 2015 program launch**

The NIHDI division has a comprehensive roll-out planned for the IDMSC certificate program. The IDMSC curriculum will first be offered to what Perl describes as Belgium’s “sickness funds,” (i.e., the country’s various public insurance funds for health) and to their physicians and social workers. The next priority will be to cooperate with the physicians dealing with occupational injuries and, after that, the program will be made available for private companies to train their staff. Ultimately, “all organizations involved in accidents” will be targeted, he adds.

The agency is working in cooperation with universities, developing joint ventures for delivery of the IDMSC education program. “We are cooperating with all universities with a medical curriculum to launch a special certificate in disability management,” Perl reveals. The goal, he says, is “trans university cooperation.”

RIZIV-INAMI plans to secure five or six universities by this fall and will begin working with them to customize the IDMSC program for the Belgian market. The plan then is to launch the program in April 2015, train 20 to 30 people the first year, and a similar number on an annual basis after that.

A press release announcing the signing of the license agreement with NIDMAR was sent out by NIHDI in June with positive results. “Already 30 organizations have shown a marked interest,” Perl confirms. “We’re not worried about finding candidates. On the contrary, we hope we have enough resources to train all the people interested.”

Belgium is now among the 16 nations delivering IDMSC programs and certification under license agreements with NIDMAR.

### **NIDMAR’s training recognized by United Nations agency**

NIDMAR’s expertise in disability management (DM) and return to work (RTW) training and certification is recognized by the International Social Security Agency (ISSA), an agency of the United Nations. In June 2013, after having participated as part of a global working group in the development of global best practice guidelines in RTW/DM, NIDMAR signed a memorandum of understanding with ISSA to become part of a new international Centre of Excellence for Social Security Administration.

The IDMSC and its member organizations play a pivotal role in supporting the implementation of the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities, Article 27 on Work and Employment, and works collaboratively with ISSA to ensure an internationally recognized best practice model designed to reduce the socio-economic impact of disabling conditions on employers and workers, with the ultimate goal of improving conditions for persons with disabilities everywhere.

**For more information on ISSA, visit [www.issa.int](http://www.issa.int). For more on the IDMSC, go to [www.idmsc.org](http://www.idmsc.org). For information on NIDMAR, see [www.nidmar.ca](http://www.nidmar.ca).**