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VET4ALL

Professional Development of VET Tutors and Trainers
to enhance Social Inclusion in Work-based Learning

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VET4ALL RESEARCH ON PARTNERS' NATIONAL CONTEXT

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INTRODUCTION

All European countries are committed to work towards ensuring more inclusive education systems. They do so in different ways, depending on their past and current contexts and histories. Inclusive education systems are seen as a vital component within the wider aspiration of more socially inclusive societies that all countries align themselves with, both ethically and politically.

Education and training systems should ensure that all learners including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special needs, complete their education, including, where appropriate, through second chance education and the provision of more personalised learning (ET 2020 Strategy, strategic objective 3: Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship). The third of four strategic objectives of the ET2020 Strategy is, in fact, a real challenge for the education systems and especially in initial VET the European ET systems are still far away to reach this objective.

The promotion of inclusive education and lifelong learning for learners with disabilities and special needs is also one of the priority areas set up by the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 adopted on 15 November 2010. Moreover, in the *Bruges Communiqué* the European Commission suggests to increase the possibilities for disadvantaged learners in VET by offering alternative pathways, innovative VET training formats, more Work-Based Learning (WBL) in the three main forms present at EU level as it is stated in “Work-Based Learning in Europe, Practices and Policy Pointers” in the initial VET (2013):

1. Alternance schemes or apprenticeships are typically known in Austria and Germany as the "dual system";
2. On-the-job training periods in companies. On-the-job training periods typically cover internships;
3. WBL that is integrated in a school-based programme, through internships, on-site labs, workshops, etc.

VET4ALL project looks at this challenge: it develops and implements an innovative didactical approach for students with disabilities and special needs in initial VET in the frame of WBL and EU-Mobility programmes in the partner countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, Malta, Spain and Belgium.

The project objectives represent a reply to the above mentioned problems as it is inspired by the following factors:

- Train teachers and staff working with the target group to make WBL or internship experiences more fruitful and aimed at future job insertion even in an European context;
- Develop flexible pathways which connect the VET formal school curriculum to Work Based Learning for students with disabilities and special needs;
- Foster the implementation of ECVET principles and tools and develop an innovative approach to Mobility in order to facilitate the access for students with disabilities and special needs;
- Increase the possibility for students with disabilities and special needs to participate to a Mobility EU Experience;

- Support enterprise mentors and staff during the WBL/internship experience of students with disabilities and special needs.

In order to unify all the 4 planned Intellectual Outputs of VET4ALL project, all partner organisations, during the preparation phase, carried out a Desk Research on the national legislative measures and context for promoting equity and inclusion in education and especially during WBL experience for students with disabilities or special needs.

Moreover, the 4 planned VET4ALL Intellectual Outputs are built also after investigating, in each partner country, the real needs of VET teachers/staff in terms of competence gaps in supporting students with disabilities and special needs during WBL/internship experiences.

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE MEASURES TO FACILITATE JOB INSERTION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

In Bulgaria employment of persons with disabilities is regulated by “LAW ON INTEGRATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE” of 01.01.05. This Law aims to create conditions and guarantees for equality of people with disabilities, social integration of people with disabilities and put into practice their rights, supporting people with disabilities and their families, integrating people with disabilities into working environments.

In order to ensure the employment of people with disabilities in a normal working environment there is a labor quota, which regulates the responsibilities of all employers to allocate from their workplaces for the recruitment of persons with disabilities (Law 05/Section 3/Art.41).

Employers shall appoint employees as follows:

1. Employers with 26 to 50 employees - 1 person with permanent disability;
2. Employers with 51 to 99 employees - 2 persons with permanent disabilities;
3. Employers with 100 and over 100 employees - 2% of their average staff.

All employers have the following preferences:

Funds from the state budget for 30% of the contributions paid by the employer to the state public insurance, compulsory health insurance and supplementary compulsory pension insurance for the disabled persons. There is a special State authority – Agency for People with Disabilities – which performs control over the spending of the funds. If the employer fails to comply with these quotas, he/she must contribute to a special fund 80% of the country's minimum wage. These funds are used for people with disabilities.

Every person with disabilities or cooperative of people with disabilities could be financed by the “Agency for People with Disabilities” under specific projects and programs and have funds to start own business (Law 05/Section 3/Art.51).

Furthermore, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy has established a Special Fund – "Employment of People with Disabilities". This Fund aims to support the implementation of priority programs and projects, investment expenditures, activities in the processes of occupational and rehabilitation and other supporting measures to support the employment of people with disabilities.

The Fund's revenues should be collected from:

1. The amounts paid under Art. 43, pr. 3 by the employers;
2. National, European and international programs;
3. Donations from local and foreign persons;
4. Other sources.

In 2016 the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy created the “NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES”. One aspect of this strategy is about outwork and work from distance (very suitable for people of working age with a high degree of reduced working capacity). Rapidly developing information technologies is a very promising form of work, particularly suitable for people with severe disabilities.

Measures to support workers with disabilities (Law 05/Section 3/Art.23).

Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and Employment Agency develop and implement national programs and measures to promote employment, ensuring equal opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in the labor market. All funds are used for:

1. Adaptation of the equipments;
2. Adaptation of work environment;
3. Offering additional job trainings.

WORK-BASED LEARNING (WBL) EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

The Pre-School and School Education Act, as well as secondary legislation documents regulate the support that institutions provide for students at risk and students with special needs. The additional support that students with special needs receive is provided on the basis of the student's individual needs assessment. The evaluation is done by a team involved in supporting students' personal development on the basis of health status documents issued by a medical advisory committee and on the basis of the student personal education records and his/her portfolio.

The Student Personal Development Supporting Team is comprised of: psychologist, speech therapist, teachers and a medical practitioner or a student's GP.

The identification of individual needs takes place at the beginning of the school year. When evaluating students for whom there are indications that they have special educational needs, impairment and functioning are seen as a consequence of the interaction between health and environmental factors, in accordance with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) of the World Health Organization and taking into account the International Classification of Diseases. In evaluating the individual needs an assessment card is drawn up and is developed a plan for additional student support. This plan is provided to the parents for approval.

Additional support includes:

- Working with a student on a specific case;
- Psychosocial rehabilitation, hearing and speech rehabilitation, rehabilitation of communication disorders and physical disabilities, vision rehabilitation;
- Providing accessible architecture and supportive environment, technical resources, specialized equipment, didactic materials and specialists;

- Teaching specific subjects for students with sensory disabilities.

Resource support is carried out by a Resource Teacher. For more than three children with special needs in one class, an assistant-teacher is also provided.

Resource support includes: adapting the learning content according to the individual needs of the students; training through alternative communication; useful skills and independent living skills training; carrying out activities in the classroom for integration and inclusion of special needs children.

The experience of High Vocational School of Tourism “D-r Vasil Beron”

For training students with special educational needs, High Vocational School of Tourism “D-r Vasil Beron” develops individual curricula per each student according to his/her individual needs.

The curriculum may exclude certain subjects or reduce the hours of the respective subject. Based on the individual curriculum developed per each student with special needs, individual curricula are developed for each subject as well. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Science Regulation determines requirements for developing an individual curriculum and individual education programmes for learners with special needs.

BEST PRACTICES ON PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF WBL EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

CNC Project "Coconut" – Getting students with learning disability prepared to programme and operate a computer numerical controlled machine in metalworking

The CNC Project "Coconut", developed by Zentrum für Integration und Bildung (Solingen/Germany), was aimed at preparing students with learning disability to build, programme and operate a model CNC machine in the metal workshop and that directly links theory and practice learning. The challenge was how to lead young people with learning difficulties to more complicated learning subjects such as programming a CNC machine that needs some basic understanding of mathematics and spatial sense. The fact was that the students often get confronted with computer controlled machines when doing an internship in a company. Due to the low educational background of the students and the technical resources of the workshops, for a long time partners involved in the project were reluctant to prepare students with learning disability in more complicated math-based learning matters.

Finally, the team composed of teachers, instructors and educators started to develop an integrated project where the teaching in the classroom would be directly connected to the ongoing work in the metal workshop. The idea was to build a little CNC model machine in the workshop, whereas in the classroom all learning subjects necessary for programming the machine should be taught. The project "Coconut" was born.

Accordingly, the main steps of the project were (a) to put together the machine, (b) to write a programme, (c) to run a simulation and do the error correction, and finally (d) to produce work parts automatically. But before the programming could be done, some other learning matters had to be controlled, such as technical drawing and the handling of the coordinate system, first in the two dimensions of the X and Y-axis, later on with the extension of the Z-axis in three dimensions.

By the end, the project was so successful that for many years the coordinating partner (Zentrum für Integration und Bildung) had a well-functioning student ex-change programme with a Spanish vocational training center which sent its learners to Germany in order to lead them to using CNC techniques, while the German students completed a welding course in the labs in Spain.

Strengths of the project:

- Direct connection between theory and practice learning;
- High motivation of learners since the purpose of every step in the classroom and in the workshop is clear and understandable;
- Even slow learners will succeed and manage to programme and operate the engine;
- The increase of self-confidence especially of slow learners;
- The increase of employability of learners with disability and special needs.

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Country Report: ITALY

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE MEASURES TO FACILITATE JOB INSERTION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

Measures to support employers: the mandatory employment system

The employment of persons with disabilities is regulated, in Italy, on the basis of legislative measures and the most important is Law No. 68 of 1999 on "Regulations on the right to work of persons with disabilities". This Law states the principle that employment of persons with disabilities is a right and not a compassionate measure.

The Law firstly defines the various conditions of persons with disabilities from the employment perspective, as persons in working age affected by a physical, sensory, psychological or intellectual impairment which causes a reduced working ability of 45% as certified by the competent medical committee for the recognition of "civilian disability".

Inactive persons belonging to one or more of the above mentioned groups may register in a list of so called protected working categories.

According to this Law, Public administrations employ persons with disabilities following a well established quota system which sets progressive percentages on the basis of the number of non disabled employees.

In addition, they employ persons with disabilities belonging to the so called protected categories on the basis of competitive entry examinations where people with a severe disability can benefit from special time

adjustments and use adaptations, e.g. human scribe/reader, assistive technologies etc. (regulated by Law 104 of 1992).

Private companies employ persons with disabilities on the basis of employment lists created by the relevant employment service at local/regional level, following a well established quota system which sets progressive percentages on the basis of the number of non disabled employees.

In the quota system adopted by this Law some categories, such as visually impaired people are included thanks to the special laws addressed to this target group (Law 113/85 and Law 29/94: telephone operators and masseurs-physiotherapists).

Private and public entities which do not comply with the legal obligations are subject to administrative sanctions, the revenue of which is allocated to a special fund for the employment of persons with disability held at regional level.

From January 2016 financial incentives may be allocated, upon application/request, to employers hiring a disabled person with an open-ended contract for a period of up to 36 months (art. 10, Legislative Decree 151/2015).

Law No. 247 of 24 December 2007 added Article 12-bis, which introduces interventions aimed at facilitating the recruitment of people with disabilities with specific job placement difficulties through conventions for longer-periods placements in hosting companies (social cooperatives, social enterprises, private employers not subject to the obligations stated in Law 68/1999). These entities directly hire the disabled person for the term of the convention under the assignment of work orders by employers obliged to take on disabled workers (conferring subjects).

The competent offices may enter into a private employment contract with the employers (the issuing entities), the social cooperatives type A and B and their consortia (Law No. 381/91); social enterprises carrying out activities aimed at the employment of disadvantaged and disabled workers (Legislative Decree No. 155/2006), private employers not subject to the obligation of recruitment (beneficiaries), special agreements aimed at facilitating the recruitment of disabled workers who have particular characteristics and difficulties to be included in the ordinary working cycle of the beneficiaries, to whom the conferring parties commit themselves to entrust work orders.

There are no specific regulations concerning self employment of persons with disability. Disabled self-employed workers are subject to the same provisions as other self-employed workers.

Measures to support workers with disability: fund for the right to work

This fund can be used by the Italian regions to promote initiatives aimed at promoting the inclusion of disabled people into the labour market.

From January 2016 a part of this fund is used for the subsidies addressed to employers hiring a disabled person (see financial incentives mentioned above).

The amount of the fund is defined each year by the Government (art. 10 of Legislative Decree 151/2015).

Measures to support workers with disabilities: Regional fund for the employment of people with disabilities

This fund is set by each region (according to art. 14 l. of Law 68/99 as modified by art. 11 of Legislative Decree. 151/2015) and is used for:

- Regional placement schemes for disabled people or related-services;
- Adaptation of the equipment;
- Adaptation of the premises;
- Promoting on-the-job trainings;
- Promoting teleworking for people with disability.

This fund is financed by:

- Compensation fees paid by employers who don't respect the obligations stated by Law 68/99;
- Taxes paid by employers (not included in the previous fund);
- Donations of private foundations and interested institutions.

WORK-BASED LEARNING (WBL) EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

Integration of students with disability in education and training

Law 118/1971 was the first Italian law stating that students with a light impairment had to attend mainstream education. These students had to adjust their needs to the teaching methods used, and not otherwise.

Law 517/77 abolished differential classes for disabled learners and identified flexible didactical models where to activate different cross-cutting paths of integration. From now on, all disabled students have the right to attend mainstream education and can benefit from specialized teachers.

Law 104 of 1992 finally came to an organic framework that rearranges the interventions of the past twenty years. It doesn't focus on assistance but rather on integration and rights of disabled people and aims at promoting a maximum of individual autonomy.

According to this law a disabled person is a person who has a physical, intellectual or sensory impairment, stabilized or progressive, which is the cause of learning difficulties, relationships or work integration, and resulting from a process of social disadvantage or marginalization. Certifications related to the disability status, the difficulties, the need for permanent assistance and the residual individual overall capacity are carried out by the local health units (ASL) through medical commissions.

The Law also specifies that school integration should take place for all students and for each cycle, including university, in common classes (art. 13).

According to art. 16 in the evaluation of the performances of disabled students it is indicated, based on the individual educational plan (*Piano Educativo Individualizzato – PEI*), for which subjects have been adopted special didactic criteria, which integrative and supportive activities have been carried out, even in partial substitution of programmed contents. Moreover, in compulsory education, exams are corresponding to the teachings given and suitable for assessing the student's progress in relation to his/her potential and initial learning levels. In secondary school, equivalent tests and extra-time for performing written tests are allowed as well as the presence of assistants for autonomy and communication.

Disabled students perform assessments (both school performances assessments and university exams) making use of the special aids they need (computer, screen reader, etc.).

Data about students with disabilities

According to the Ministry of Education, University and Research survey in the Academic year 2014/2015, the percentage of students with disability in the National Education system corresponded to 2.7% (234.788 on 8.845.984). In details, 9.5% of pupils with disability were attending kindergarten and nursery school, on a total percentage of 18.3% of pupils attending this school degree; 37% of pupils with disability were attending primary school on a total percentage of 31.9% of pupils attending this level of education; 28.5% were attending lower secondary school, on a total percentage of 19.6% of students; 25% were attending upper secondary school, on a total percentage of 30.3% of students.

Regarding the types of disability: 95.8 includes psycho-physical disabilities, of which 65.3% have intellectual disabilities, 3.5% have motor disabilities and 27% includes other types of disabilities (this category includes early psychiatric disorders, specific learning disabilities, if certified in comorbidities with other disorders, and attention deficit and hyperactivity syndrome). Only 1.6% of students with disability are visually impaired and 2.7% have hearing disabilities.

Epidemiological investigations estimate that in Italy there are about 350,000 children, adolescents and adults with Specific Learning Disorders, a considerable number that takes into account the ever-increasing interest in this subject in the clinical and school context¹.

The percentage of pupils and students with learning disabilities in the national education system was around 2.1% (186.803 pupils/students on a total of 8.845.984). In details, the percentages of pupils with learning disabilities were 1.6% in primary school, 4.2% in the 1st grade of secondary school and 2.5% in the second grade of secondary school².

Regulations for pupils with learning disorders in the school environment

¹ Source: "I DSA e gli altri BES – Indicazioni per la pratica professionale" – National Council of Psychologists; downloadable from: <http://www.psy.it/i-dsa-e-gli-altri-bes-indicazioni-per-la-pratica-professionale.html>

² Source: MIUR–DGCASIS, Statistics Office and Studies, School Surveys, 2015; downloadable from http://www.istruzione.it/allegati/2015/L'integrazione_scolastica_degli_alunni_con_disabilit%C3%A0_as_2014_2015.pdf

Students with learning disorders are safeguarded by both the specific Act for students with learning disabilities (Law 170/2010) and Decree D.M. 5669 of July 12th 2011, with their attached Guidelines. In addition, they are protected by the general legislation regarding students with Special Educational Needs (Ministerial Directive of 27th December 2012 and subsequent circulars).

Work based learning experiences for students with disabilities

Law No. 107/15, the so-called “Good School” (“*Buona Scuola*”), has reformed, among other things, the dual system in school.

In pointing out how to activate work-school alternation paths, it makes no reference to students with disabilities, hence not excluding them, but simply including them, in individuals who are required to follow the path as the others.

It also states that the dual system is in line with the Legislative Decree No. 77/05, which declared that WBL experiences for disabled people have to be designed so as to promote their autonomy, for the purpose of inclusion in the workplace too. So, WBL experiences must be designed in a coherent manner, taking into consideration the specific needs of learners. Therefore, the dual system is a great opportunity to promote inclusion of disadvantaged students, if proper measures are put in place.

Many secondary schools have signed agreements with institutions and companies in order to activate the dual system but have not yet defined specific protocols to ensure that disabled students certified under Law 104/92, students recognized with Special Educational Needs as well as foreign students, can benefit from similar trainings and orientation opportunities as the other learners.

VET Mobilities for students with disability or special needs

According to the Italian Erasmus+ VET Monitoring Report for the period 2014-2016, 187 persons with disability or special needs have taken part in KA102 and KA106 in 2014; 44 persons with special needs in 2015 and 66 in 2016. This is a very discouraging data as in these mobility projects students with intellectual and physical impairments are one of the main target to be involved³.

This aspect highlights the persistence of obstacles to their participation, although it is assumed that the presence of this target is easily quantifiable ex ante due to the high participation of school institutions largely identified before the submission of the project. Thus, it shows the difficulty to draw a really inclusive project.

In spite of this trend, REATTIVA, as partner of the VET4ALL Consortium, is very experienced on the implementation of mobility projects both in outgoing and ingoing for students/learners with special needs and disabilities. The number of participants with special needs and disabilities to outgoing mobility

³ The report is downloadable from http://www.erasmusplus.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Rapporto-Monitoraggio-Erasmus_def-1.pdf

experiences in the last 6 years (LLP-Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus+) is of 325 (on a total of 2.354 VET learners sent abroad) being a standard rule and a pre-condition to all projects in which REATTIVA is involved, to reserve at least 10% of mobility paths of all projects to this target. The number of participants with special needs to ingoing mobility experiences in the last 6 years is, instead, of 182. Most of the latter were from Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Czech Republic and Poland.

On November 04th 2016, the Erasmus+ Italian National Agency for VET (INAPP), in cooperation the Ministry of Labour, the Metropolitan City of Bologna, Volontarimini and the Coordination of the Emilia Romagna Volunteer Service Centers, realized, by the headquarters of the Metropolitan City of Bologna, an infoday to promote participation in the Programme of People with Special Needs.

The need arises, in particular, from the analysis of data on the involvement of people with disabilities inside of mobility actions. Although the Programme provides for specific measures, even from the financial viewpoint, to facilitate its participation, the presence of this type of beneficiaries is, as already mentioned above, rather limited. The event wished therefore to offer the opportunity for a constructive confrontation with schools, vocational training organizations, the third sector as well as with the associations representing families of disabled or with special needs students.

This event is a very good example of close cooperation between the Erasmus+ National Agency for VET and different stakeholders on a National viewpoint. It shows that it is possible to create a real partnership between national education institutions and different kind of organisations (schools, VET providers, associations, public institutions, etc.) on the topic disability and mobility. Participants were invited to share their mobility experiences and to think about how to improve it in the future. To this end, REATTIVA, together with Istituto di Istruzione Superiore “Caselli” from Siena, was invited to present its experience on involving students with special needs and disabilities on mobility programmes. For REATTIVA was, in particular, the occasion to share its adopted best practices in terms of procedures and processes when organizing a mobility for disabled students or with special needs and discuss on the development of a system of communication and joint collaboration between schools and hosting organizations abroad.

BEST PRACTICES ON PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF WBL EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

REATTIVA, together with a regional Consortium, has been partner of the following project: **“Disability and Competences – Training Course to approach the labour market for young people with disabilities”** [approved by the Province of Florence with DD. n. 1468 of 12/08/2010 implementing POR Toscana OB 2 Regional Competitiveness and Employment 2007-2013 Human Capital Axis IV].

The project proposed 4 vocational trainings in order to get a qualification, articulated over 3 years. Each path consists of 2 phases:

1. "Reception and Orientation" (180 hours). At this stage, skills were transferred jointly for the 4 Qualifications and each participant was guided within the process of choosing the next course. He/she was offered the opportunity to experience for 30 hours, through workshops and learning by doing paths, skills and specific knowledge of each proposed qualification;

2. "Qualification" (1010 hours). This phase included 440 hours of on-the-job training.

Qualifications issued:

- Officer for restaurant Services
- Officer at the Restaurant Room
- Graphic Designer and Image Processing
- Officer of Biological Agriculture

Target group: the project was addressed to 32 persons with disabilities who completed the compulsory education and were enrolled in a Secondary School in the Province of Florence, which had difficulties in learning and therefore were at risk of school leaving without obtaining any diploma or qualification.

Duration of the training course: 1190 hours, with compulsory attendance.

Certifications: Professional Qualification Certificate, after passing a final exam, or a certificate of attendance with the acquired skills, if the training course was not completed.

Centri Territoriali di Supporto (Local Supporting Centers)

The *Centri Territoriali di Supporto* (CTS) have been set up from the Regional Offices for Schools and the Italian Ministry for Education within a wider project called "Nuove Tecnologie e Disabilità"⁴ (New Technologies and Disability). The project aimed at setting up one Center in each Province and nowadays the CTS are about 92 all over Italy.

The development of a widespread network of Centers, linked each one to the local schools, has the purpose of giving to the teachers a stable contact point for the issues related to special educational needs.

The project aims at a wider involvement of the schools and the setting up of an effective way of interaction between schools and the CTS network.

The objective is to assure the best provision of consulting, training, monitoring and good practices collection, trying to involve the wider number of ordinary teachers, also through the setting up of work groups for the educational inclusion.

The CTS have also to ensure the effective use of the new technologies making them able to foster the learning process, teaching, development and socialization.

⁴ The project "Nuove Tecnologie e Disabilità", started in October 2005 as an initiative of the *Direzione Generale per lo Studente*. The project aimed at the exploitation of the new technologies as a useful tool for the school inclusion of disabled students. The project is divided into 7 actions; each one of the actions implements local and national interventions. Action 1: research about the available technologies and experiences about the use of the new technologies with disabled students. Action 2: realization of a system for sharing and managing the knowledge. Action 3: accessibility to the educational software. Action 4: local supporting network. Action 5: local training actions. Action 6: research and innovation. Action 7: specific actions for students with dyslexia.

The CTS act also informing the teachers, the students and their parents about the available technological resources, both free or commercial. At this aim, the CTS operate organizing training actions about the new technological supporting tools as well as giving news on the website or interacting directly with the interesting teachers and families.

The CTS organize training courses about the school inclusion of students with special educational needs as well as about the new technologies for integration.

The CTS offer also consulting services aiming at identifying the most suitable technological support for the student, the right educational strategies to be used with the student employing the technological support for integration, paying attention to the need of the student to live, work and interact with the whole class and to the involvement of the families in order to facilitate the accomplishment of the homework.

Furthermore, the CTS carry out several research and testing activities concerning new supporting tools also through the cooperation with other schools, CTS, Universities and Research Centers.

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Country Report: MALTA

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE MEASURES TO FACILITATE JOB INSERTION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

The employment in Malta of persons with disabilities is currently regulated by the “Persons with Disability Employment Act” (Chapter 210 of the Laws of Malta), and is also regulated by the “Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act” (Chapter 413 of the Laws of Malta), according to which employers are, amongst other, prevented from discriminating persons with disability regarding procedures related to hiring, training, promotion, salary, or dismissal of employees. At the same time the state-run Jobsplus – also acting as a public employment – maintains a Register of Persons with Disability.

The 2% quota rule which was implemented by Act II 1969, has been recently enforced by means of Act No. XXII of 2015. According to this rule, Companies employing more than twenty employees should employ a quota of disabled persons (at least 2%). This quote was established by the Minister responsible for Labour after consultation with the Disablement Resettlement Advisory Committee (DRAO) and the person employed to satisfy the quote are selected from the Jobsplus’ Register.

On 28th April 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) acknowledging the financial and tax incentives granted at employers to favour employment of registered disabled persons, has been signed between Jobsplus, Malta Employers Association and Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry. Furthermore, companies employing a person (or persons) with disability are exempted from paying social security contributions related to these employees. Such companies are also entitled to an income tax credit capped at a maximum of € 4,500 for each person with disability employed.

As an encouragement the new Regulation has set out that employers who do not respect the said quota shall be required to make an annual contribution of € 800 for the year 2015, € 1600 for the year 2016 and € 2400 for the year 2017 onwards for each person with disability that should be in their employment, which contribution is capped at a maximum of € 10,000 for any person/company who so fails to respect the said quota.

Employers may however be authorised by the Minister responsible for Labour to disregard the 2% quota rule. This may only be possible if the employer provides evidence of the fact that no person is suitable to hold any work position within that company.

Moreover, the *Kummissjoni Nazzjonali Persuni b'Dizabilità* (KNPD) in its report dated 2010 has stated that employers have also the duty to assign to persons with disability duties which are suitable for their abilities and potential.

The contributions/fines paid by those employers who fail to satisfy the 2% quota are administered by the ETC and contributes to the “Lino Spiteri Foundation”, that has been set up in order to improve the inclusion of vulnerable individuals into gainful employment through the empowerment of the individuals themselves, as well as the employers that recruit them.

In fact, Malta is still one of the lowest ranking countries in the EU when it comes to the employment of vulnerable groups. The employment is around 5% of the potential number of people represented in this demographic group. By comparison, some EU countries are approaching 40%.

WORK-BASED LEARNING (WBL) EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

Vocational Training in Malta

Vocational education is provided in Malta by the two main state colleges, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), offering about 170 courses a year from level 1 to 6 on MQF, and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), offering about 20 courses per year from level 2 to 6.

Besides these two colleges, Jobsplus manages VET in the form of active labour market policies (ALMP) and other services for the unemployed. Jobsplus is also involved in implementing the Maltese youth guarantee scheme, and offers a number of employment and training schemes which target youth participation in the labour market: youth champions; enhancing employability through training; traineeships; work trial scheme and the work and training exposure scheme.

In Malta the Inclusive Education Unit provides the necessary support to Vocational Training students with special needs, including disabilities. A private appointment with the Inclusion Coordinator, before the application to the course, assesses the needs and the support that the school will need to offer.

By MCAST, for instance, a Skills course of 30 hours is organised periodically to provide training to develop communication, creativity and insight skills. At the end a certificate is provided to successful candidates. Furthermore all students can access to the Learning Support Unit to receive the academic support to become independent learners. At level 1 and 2, the students receive support lessons after an Initial Assessment Test. At higher levels, students are provided with extra support on a one-to-one basis or in a small group setting.

The students with disabilities and special needs studying in Vocational Training schools follow the work based learning path accordingly to the Maltese National Framework: work placements (MQF level 1 and 2) apprenticeships (MQF level 3 and 4) and Internships (MQF level 5>).

The transition into work for young people with special needs and disability

Specific service provided by Jobsplus, including Work Exposure Schemes (WES) and mainstream training programmes, are available to all young persons in disadvantaged situations, including students with special needs and disability. However, the Inclusive Employment Services are specifically designed in Malta to help disadvantaged young people who have a harder time finding work. The services are addressed to the followings target: individuals with disability and learning difficulties; young people with lack of a formal school degree and a vocational qualification; former substance abusers; former young prison inmates; other young people with different social, family, mental problems and alike.

For all the listed groups, Jobsplus provides:

Training Courses

Ad hoc training courses are organised for disadvantaged and with special needs young people. These are tailor made to accommodate the particular needs of the target and include specialised training through cooperative agreements Jobsplus has with other training organisations dealing specifically with disadvantaged people and at risk of job exclusion.

Job Coaching and Learning Support Assistance

Should an individual need further assistance during training or during the early stages of employment, Jobsplus team also provides coaching and support to continue to facilitate the transition into work. The Jobsplus assistance does not stop upon finding a work to the disadvantaged young person involved.

The Jobsplus Employment Advisors work with these specific target to create a Personal Action Plan. This is done through close collaboration with other specialised organisations who offer counselling and additional services complementary the Jobsplus work.

MCAST – Pathway to Independent Living Programme

MCAST offers the course Pathway to Independent Living Programme designed for students with moderate intellectual disabilities, which provides a programme of study closer to these individual's needs. The main objective it is to help them to acquire the skills necessary to gain and maintain employment.

Students participate in one day weekly supervised placements during the first year, and in different workplaces during the second year. They are also presented with opportunities to experience hands-on learning in all subjects. Prospective students in this programme should have basic skills in literacy and numeracy, be able to adapt to a classroom environment and be willing to take up employment.

BEST PRACTICES ON PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF WBL EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

HERMES has been involved on a Maltese National Project sponsored by Jobsplus and financed through the ESF. The Project, called **Sheltered Employment Programme**, is provided to youths/students with a disability or special needs who are outside the education and labour market stream. Inactive and unemployed youths with a disability or special needs are encouraged to participate in activation measures which are person-centred. The programme includes specific services leading to different phases of intervention. Since the target group is not homogeneous, enrolled youths/learners participate in all or a number of phases, as may be required following assessment.

Duration of the Programme: Personalised and tailor-made

Methodology: Classroom teaching/training – work exposure

Pedagogical approach: Personalised and tailor-made learning together with work-based learning

Certification: Certificates at MQF levels 1 and 2

Structure of the Programme:

Phase 1: Initial Profiling

Phase 2: Assessment by Occupational Therapist and/or other Professional/s

Phase 3: Training and Development

Phase 4: Sheltered Employment Training

Phase 5: Work Exposure (Bridging the Gap)

Phase 6: Sheltered Employment

Phase 1: Initial Profiling

In this first phase, learners are individually profiled by the Employment Support Worker within Malta's Public Employment Service. Through this stage, participants may be referred to assessment or to training. A Personal Action Plan is designed for every learner.

Phase 2: Assessment by Occupational Therapist and/or other Professionals

A medical assessment confirming the disability is presented. Following the medical assessment, a subsequent assessment by the occupational therapist and/or other professional/s is designed. This focuses on the abilities and/or limitations of the individual, together with the support measures that are required.

Phase 3: Training and Development

In this third phase, specific pre-employment training activities aimed at encouraging independent living and developing social and employability skills are organized and delivered according to the needs of the different target groups. One-to-one mentoring is provided to participants to address the diverse needs of the target group during transport, job tasters and other job-related activities.

Phase 4: Sheltered Employment Training

Following training and development, participants receive work-related practical training accompanied by continuous job coaching and assessment.

Phase 5: Work Exposure (Bridging the Gap)

In this phase, the learner with a disability or special needs is offered a period of work exposure with an employer to enable him/her to demonstrate the skills needed for a particular job. On-the-job support is provided as required.

Phase 6: Sheltered Employment

In this last phase, the services of job coaching is provided in accordance with the needs of participants. The individual's development is regularly monitored with the aim of facilitating the transition of the learner with a disability or special needs to move to open employment with the least possible support.

People with disabilities and/or special needs are the most disadvantaged group with regards to transition from school to work and employment. The Sheltered Employment Project takes inspiration from the well known **Supported Employment Model**. Supported Employment is based on the principle that individuals with severe disabilities have the right to be employed by community businesses where they can earn comparable wages, work side-by-side with co-workers with or without disabilities, and experience all of the same benefits as other employees of the company. This idea is often referred to as "Employment First". Supported employment assists people with severe disabilities by providing individualized support that enable them to choose the kind of job they want and to become successful members of the workforce.

On the base of HERMES experience and commitment on the Project the strengths of the latter are:

- The Project offers equality of opportunity;
- It is a person-centred approach;
- It is a flexible model;
- It is used for a wide range of groups disabled/with learning or intellectual disabilities and/or with special needs;
- It supports both the youth/learner (job seeker) and the employer;
- It is focused on paid employment and full integration.

***Agencija Sapport* – Job Enhancing Skills Scheme (JESS)**

Jess is funded by *Agencija Sapport* and this programme is a job placement scheme for persons with disability between 16 and 55 years old and has a duration of 2 years on a part time basis (20 hours per week). Being a fully funded Government scheme means that there are no financial commitment from the entities' end.

Through this scheme NGOs and Government entities are invited to host persons with disability in their workplace. There is a training phase provided by *Agencija Sapport* and the second phase is the job placement.

Mentors are assigned to accompany all beneficiaries throughout the job placement. The mentors' role is to guide the beneficiaries, offer supervision and support, thus ensuring that the work experience is positive and leaves positive results. JESS covers the payments to the scheme beneficiaries 100%, with an hourly rate of € 5.25.

At the end of the scheme, all beneficiaries are presented with a Certificate of Proficiency that show that they have completed successfully the training process and job placement.

Barclays Bank – Able to Enable

Able to Enable is an internship programme – set up specifically for those whose lives have been held back by the stigma that surrounds mental and physical health conditions – offers a three-month internship, leading to a Higher Apprenticeship for those who want to continue with Barclays Bank and who have a successful internship. The scheme was launched to help more people with disabilities to get into work, by providing valuable work experience that could help people take a positive step onto a full-time apprenticeship pathway.

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Country Report: SPAIN

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE MEASURES TO FACILITATE JOB INSERTION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN SPAIN

Economic Protection

Economic benefits that substitute wage incomes in Spain can be categorised differently according to different points of view. On the one hand, they can be categorised according to the type of disability, i.e. differentiating between temporary and permanent disability. On the other hand, they can be categorised according to the work record of recipients, i.e. differentiating contributory benefits (where eligibility is based on classification of the recipient in the tax regimen of the Social Insurance System and on the fulfilment of several contribution requirements) from non-contributory benefits (which are provided to those who have not contributed to the Social Insurance System or whose contributions are insufficient)

There are several employment opportunities for Spanish people with disabilities which vary according to individual capacity:

1. Occupational Centres, which aim to provide occupational therapy and personal and social adjustment for those who cannot be integrated into other schemes;
2. Special Employment Centres, which carry out productive work and ensure remunerative employment, regularly participating in market operations;
3. Supported Employment, which is employment in the open market with ordinary companies but with the necessary supports inside and outside the workplace provided (there have recently been significant developments in supported employment¹⁶);
4. Ordinary Employment, i.e. employment in normalized companies, the public sector and self-employment where most workers do not have disabilities.

In order to promote the labour integration of people with disabilities, several legal instruments for positive discrimination have been implemented. These have been designed to foster employment in the ordinary labour market. For example, employers can receive a subsidy of up to 3,906.5 euros for every person with disabilities they take on indefinitely. In addition, there is a company tax subsidy for such employers of 4,808 euros for each additional person with disabilities they take on. Other existing measures include the reserve quota (2% for companies with more than 50 workers) and its alternatives, measures for job adjustment, funding of instruments to prevent specific risks in the workplace and provisions to promote the access to

employment in public agencies (adaptation of aptitude tests). It is noteworthy that incentive regulation for the promotion of Supported Employment is almost non-existent.

Consequently, actions in this area are mainly financed through European funds and donations from associations and foundations. However, the announcement of aids and subsidies for the implementation of programs aimed at normalized integration of people with disabilities seems to forecast future co-financing of innovative projects which would ensure transition from sheltered to ordinary employment, such as supported employment and other methods.

WORK-BASED LEARNING (WBL) EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

FPE (FIRST PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE) is based on the idea that learning in a real work environment can be an effective alternative to education or employment alone, especially for those young people who do not adapt well to formal education or cannot access suitable work for themselves. On this basis, the programme offers work-based learning in which the most significant factor is the time spent in the workplace.

This approach has had a proven positive effect on the participants, providing them with:

- An introduction to the world of work and to a particular industry and company and an understanding of workplace culture
- General and job-specific skills and knowledge in the workplace and occupational networks, all of which increase their possibilities for employment after completion
- A sense of progress and accomplishment and the perception that they can make choices, fostering their confidence and commitment
- The motivation to work towards a formal qualification or engage in further training

The initiative aims to complement on-the-job training, which is important for meaningful learning, and off-the-job-training, which allows reflection on workplace practices. This is carried out through soft-skills workshops and interviews with an educational mentor. The programme's professional development element is intended to support the trainees dispelling any misconceptions they might have about the workplace and to reach positions from which the participants can learn and benefit from the placement.

DUAL TRAINING (ESMENT ESCOLA PROFESSIONAL) is an idea by the Amadip Esment foundation: an organisation that attends to people, detects their needs, offers support to meet such needs and is committed to society and the common good. Esment Escola Professional shares these values.

Why Esment Escola Professional? <https://www.esmentescola.es/en/dual-training/>

Dual Vocational Training is aimed at youngsters aged between 16 and 29 who want to learn a profession on the job, as well as companies that are committed to young people and want to help train the professionals

of the future. A new kind of education that, right from day one, combines training and paid employment in a company.

We've been focusing on schools with special needs pupils for some years now. We adapt training plans to improve learning and personal skills. We guide and support people in their training and in their search for work, as well as monitoring their progress individually. We provide support at all times and in all areas of their lives.

And we're observers. We look at the situation and ask ourselves "what else could be done?". For several years now, we've focused on young people with a passion but no opportunity to develop it. We look for commitment with and from them. Esment Escola Professional is committed to providing them with training, companies are committed to giving them a job to develop their passion and the government is committed to creating the framework to make such collaborations possible. Esment Escola Professional is an integrated training project within a business environment and has its own Job Placement Agency to help match the needs of both companies and workers.

BEST PRACTICES ON PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF WBL EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

A. THE STRENGTH OF THE TECHNICAL COMPETENCES WITH AN INTERNATIONAL VISION

The keys to this project would be the following:

- Aimed at people with intellectual disabilities without prior qualifications in the technical areas;
- The objective is to provide a Professional Certificate of level 1 to the youngsters that allows them to better access the ordinary labour market with a qualification.

The principal professional certificates adapted for students with intellectual disabilities are:

1. PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE LEVEL 1 IN AUXILIARY ACTIVITIES IN RETAIL

In 2015 started the first professional certificate. Three students got a job in ordinary companies. They did their internships in different companies.

2. PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE LEVEL 1 IN WAREHOUSE AUXILIARY ACTIVITIES

In 2015 started the first professional certificate. Three students got a job in ordinary companies. They did their internships in different companies.

3. PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE LEVEL 1 IN AUXILIARY OPERATIONS OF INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

In 2017 started the first professional certificate in Auxiliary Operations of installation and maintenance of electrical and electronic Equipment doing their internships in companies of the sector.

4. PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE LEVEL 1 IN AUXILIARY OPERATIONS OF MACHINE MANUFACTURE

In 2017 started the first professional certificate in Machine Manufacture doing their internships in companies of the sector in Italy (ERASMUS+)

5. PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE LEVEL 1 INAUXILIARY ACTIVITIES IN NURSERIES, GARDENS AND GARDEN CENTRES

In 2017 began the first professional certificate in Auxiliary activities in nurseries, gardens and garden centers doing their internships in companies of the sector in Finland (ERASMUS+)

6. PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE LEVEL 0 IN SOFT SKILLS

All the professional certificates are complemented by this training that combined social skills, communication skills, character traits, attitudes, career attribute, social intelligence and emotional intelligence.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMPANIES: STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

Since 2016 we have been collaborating with some companies offering them new opportunities and training programs about technical competences for their employees with mental disabilities or mental illness. Reinforcing this initiative, the students can go abroad to do the internships in companies of the sector.

B. WORK PLACEMENTS ABROAD FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUNGSTERS

Our project Aurrerantz+ has evolved, grown and adapted to the new needs that our students have demanded. As an example of that we could point that this year we have decided to include a group of students with a new profile. Since 2016 we haven teaching "professionalism certificates" to students with intellectual disability who already are working in protected companies and they need to get their training accredited. We believe that doing their work placement abroad will help them to improve their self-esteem and autonomy, both at a professional and personal level. Likewise, we have considered this is the right moment to add to this internationalization process a new dimension. We have included our teachers in our mobilities so that all this process does not finish with our students. To accomplish this task we will count with our European partners, who offer our students, and now, also our teachers, the chance to extend their academic training in other countries.

We want to offer to the participants an European work experience that enables them to improve their professional competences and increases the opportunities to get a job. We have chosen different types of mobilities in each case:

1.- VET students who will have their work placement in companies abroad. The students will be divided according two different profiles:

a.- Young people between 16 and 21 years old, mentally handicapped enrolled in a program that combines basic training with specific training carried out in workshops of different specialities.

b.- Young people between 15 and 19 years old who have not reached the minimum goals in ESO (compulsory secondary education) in their centres of origin and attend the Centro San Viator. These

students come to us with serious self-esteem issues and dragging problems (social, cognitive...) that have prevented them from getting their degree.

2.- VET students who will have a study period abroad, theoretical + practical. They are students who are studying VET Middle Degree (EQF3). Most of these students come from a VET education and therefore have already suffered school failure and have or have had risk of social exclusion.

CHANGES regarding the participants' profiles:

3. Students with intellectual disability who are already working in protected companies and are studying/have studied at our school to get the professional certificate (in different areas) completely accredited. They will do part of their work placement abroad and we are sure that it will help them to improve their self-esteem and autonomy.

4. VET teachers who will get the chance during a week to know, via job shadowing, the best educational methodologies in schools that have years developing them.

The long path this project has done, starting in 2007, has allowed us to know that the participants with special needs and the students at risk of exclusion cannot be alone during the mobilities; and we cannot forget that some of them will be minors. That's why we need that two teachers from the school travel with each group, so they can monitor and support the participants during the whole period.

The number of carers has not been arbitrarily done, it has been analysed and carefully studied. Just a carer would not be enough, if something happened with a participant and he/she had to be accompanied (to the hospital, doctor, etc.), the rest would be alone. But we also understand that more than two carers would be unreasonable. Experience also allows us to see that from an organisational point of view more people often cause a logistics problem, as for example, a minibus can only sit 9 people.

We are aware that this project aims to allow the participants to acquire autonomy, but we cannot ignore that some of them need a planning and supervision of daily tasks as hygiene, feeding, means of transport...

In 2007 our project Aurrerantz started to ease the mobility of 8 intellectually handicapped students (and 2 carers) while they were doing their work placement. Through all these years the project has developed including participants from other different sections of Centro San Viator. So in this new call we apply for the mobility of 81 participants (with 12 carers) during two school years with different approaches:

- Work placement
- Training in VET schools + companies
- Job shadowing for teachers.

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Country Report: ROMANIA

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE MEASURES TO FACILITATE JOB INSERTION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

In Romania, legal principles regarding the protection of persons with disabilities and the protection of children are contained in the Romanian Constitution. The National Authority for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities and the Department for Social Assistance and Child Protection, organised within the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection, are authorities which coordinate the activities of special protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities and of children, respectively.

The special Law – no. 448/2006 – regarding the protection and rights for disabled persons, actualized, promotes the rights of people with disabilities; so the public authorities have the obligations to sustain/to create all the conditions to choose and exercise their profession, trade or occupation, to acquire and maintain a job, and to promote them in a professional point of view, of course, in concordance with their professional training and in collaboration with information from handicap certificate. So, sheltered employment is one of the ways that promote employment for persons with disabilities. Also, the provisions of the special law promote the protected places on the labour market (both open and sheltered employment). Law no. 1/2011 regarding the national education is the main legal act regulating national system of education. It contains an entire section (Articles 48 to 56) on the special educational system for children with disabilities.

According to the national programs and measures addressed to encouraging the employment of disabled persons and law 448/2006, each employer (public or private) with more than 50 employees is required to hire disabled persons in order to fulfill a minimum share of 4% of the total number of employees. If the employers don't hire the persons with disabilities, according with the provisions of law, they have the following solutions:

- they can buy products or services made by people with disabilities employed in Protected Units authorized, based on partnership, in an amount equivalent to the amount owed to the state budget.
- to pay monthly to state budget an amount representing 50% of the basic salary minimum gross wage multiplied by the number of jobs that have not hired persons with disabilities.

The provisions of special law: the employers of persons with disabilities have the rights:

- deductions in calculating the taxable amounts they relate to employment protection and acquisition of machinery and equipment used in the production process by the persons with disabilities;

- deductions in calculating taxable profits, costs of the transport of persons with disabilities from home to work place and the costs of transporting raw materials and finished products to and from the residence of the persons with disabilities who work from home;
- settlements from the unemployment insurance budget expenditure specific training, vocational guidance and training and employment of persons with disabilities;
- a subsidy from the state (as provided national legislation).

According with our legislative process, the actual measures intend to encourage the active life, including the growth on active employment. So, the persons with disabilities who benefit from a special amount, in concordance with type and degree, can work, and receive money for that, and still receive all amount of money according with type and degree/disability.

WORK-BASED LEARNING (WBL) EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

A major challenge for education and training systems in Romania is to monitor people with disabilities who have access to various forms of education and training. The main sources of national statistical information on people with disabilities are ANPD, ANPDCA, INS, MECS.

Studies show a reduced participation in school of children with disabilities, highlighted by their sub-registration at different levels of education, as well as through a wide range of phenomena of non-schooling and drop-out. The information provided by the NIS highlights, in the last five years, the relative constant of the number of children and pupils in special pre-university education - from pre-school to post-secondary education. MECS data on children and pupils with disabilities and ESCs in mass education note a steady but slow increase in this category.

Special professional schools offer four-year VET programs, (one year in addition to mass education) that lead to an occupational qualification at EQF level 3. The extensive work-based learning (WBL) in these programs is based on practical training contracts concluded between the student (or legal representative), the school and the company where the training is organized.

Weekly practice is integrated into the specialized modules of the curriculum differentiated according to the field of training and professional qualification (unitary level national for that qualification). The curriculum for practice internships is developed in a curriculum in local development, in collaboration, by the school and practice partners, thus facilitating adaptation to specific requirements expressed by potential employers.

Duration varies depending on the class / tuition level. It includes only practical training hours that can take place at the business unit or in the school workshops. If the student practices his / her practice with the economic agent, a tutor is appointed by him / her and his / her activity is checked by the instructor of the

class. There is a close collaboration with economic agents, students face real situations that can occur at work, the whole activity facilitates the transition to the job of the graduate future.

Since 2003, the labor code has included provisions for apprenticeship; contracts have been defined as a special type of labor contract involving both work and vocational training at the workplace.

The legal framework for apprenticeships was revised in 2005-13 to improve their organization and the quality of WBL, and to ease the certification process for trainers in enterprises.

Vocational training for adults is offered by private and public bodies, including vocational training centers and individuals certified as VET providers.

Many companies lack motivation for WBL, they see mostly paperwork and waste of time and resources. Some companies interested in WBL are mainly thinking of cheap employees and at getting financial resources or fiscal benefits from the Government.

BEST PRACTICES ON PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF WBL EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

Our school initiated a partnership with SME in order to create integrated internships (3-6 weeks per academic year), those learning periods during which students have only practical training in the company without any theoretical courses.

The practical activities in companies make the students' transition from school to active working life easier, offering opportunities to employers to carefully select of future graduates as potential employees, and so strengthening the partnership between school and the labor market, and adapting professional training programs to the labor market requirements.

Through the internship periods delivered at the company, students are offered the opportunity to become familiar with the peculiarities of the company and the organization of the business.

The practical training internship is an opportunity for students to show their skills and to prove to the employer that they might be good employees. The merged internships delivered in the company can provide the student with the advantage of having had maximum work experience.

The activity of students' practical training aims to familiarize them with the business and the performance requirements relating to the activities carried out by real companies in their training facilities.

Thus, to ensure the proper implementation of the students' practical training, our school appoints a teacher supervisor who will provide planning, organization and supervision of the development of the internship. The company, as the school's partner, appoints a tutor who will coordinate students throughout the intern-ship and will ensure compliance with their training requirements and the acquisition of the planned professional competences by students.

The stages of the merged internship are as follows:

- Introducing the students to the internship venue
- Placement of students at workplaces according to technological work processes, so that they make contact with all aspects of the production line
- Completion of practical training and students' assessment.

The students undergoing internships in companies have the following obligations:

- To be present throughout the internship at the internship partner's institution and to comply with the agreed work programme.
- To carry out the activities specified by the tutor in accordance with the practical training portfolio, in compliance with the legal framework on workload and difficulty (Health and Safety).

Professional German School Kronstadt SPGK is an example in which for the practical training of students, the economic partners organized workshops training in the company equipped with equipment at the level of the current technologies, and for the phase of initiation and training of basic skills have been provided for the school's workshops and labs. Of practical training of students in companies is the responsibility of the tutors (employees of the respective companies). On besides tutors (who have overall responsibility for preparing students within the firm), some companies also involve trainers (who train students in training workshops in firm) and mentors (specialists who guide and form students during practice on the lines of production).

Businesses offer students scholarships, prizes and other facilities (e.g. work equipment, transport to the place of practice, lunch for practicing students, accommodation and meals supported by companies for students accommodated in boarding schools, etc.). Economic agents are represented in structures leadership of the school within a Managerial College (with competences delegated by the Council of Europe) School Administration), thus having an important role in all school-related decisions development strategy, recruitment of human resources (teachers, instructors, management school), organizing student enrolment and selection, organizing the training process, insurance quality, etc. Economic agents are effectively involved in monitoring school outcomes and frequency students. For all absences (even those that are motivated), a recovery program is organized, and for pupils with learning difficulties, "after-school"). For all pupils enrolled in SPGK there is the prospect of attractive jobs in competitive companies, proven by employing over 94% of the graduates of the two promotions until now of the school.

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Country Report: BELGIUM

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE MEASURES TO FACILITATE JOB INSERTION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

Formal legislation and structures against discrimination

The Federal Anti-Discrimination Act of 2007, the Flemish Decree for Equal Opportunities of 2008 and other regional laws formally prohibit any form of direct and indirect discrimination in the fundamental areas of life. Employment issues are also often related to equality and non-discrimination, and in particular, when it comes to the hiring process. Participating in the regular labor market is a right and has the advantage that it contributes to welfare state financing. But the job of a person with a disability is still considered too much of an act of solidarity, especially to improve the social image of a company.

At the inter-federal level, the Inter-federal Center for equal opportunities (UNIA) is responsible for raising awareness and monitoring the implementation of the legislation concerning discrimination, equal opportunities and reasonable accommodation. The Center collaborates with regional institutions to report discrimination. It functions as a point of contact, expert, legal arbitrator or moral authority. The Center also receives and processes complaints of discrimination. Most disability-related complaints relate to goods and services (including transport, financial services, housing, etc.) and employment.

Regional decrees have also been issued in support of this policy, as employment falls within the remit of the regions and the legislation is available on the UNIA website.

Since the institutional reform of 1980, legislative and executive powers have been redistributed. There are three types of legislature: Federal, responsible for promulgation of laws and Royal Orders Community, for the Flemish, French and German speaking communities, responsible for decrees Regional legislature (Flanders, Walloon region and Brussels), also responsible for promulgating decrees. Decrees have equivalent legal force but are in force in a limited area. 'Community' is a cultural term, while 'regional' is geographical. The regions are responsible for their own socio-economic policy, including housing and

employment policy (but many aspects of employment policies remain federal). The communities are competent in all matters of a cultural or personal nature and social assistance; the latter includes many, but not all, aspects of policy for disabled people. In Flanders, a single authority is competent for both community and region. In 1993 the responsibility for community affairs for the French-speaking inhabitants of Brussels was transferred from the French Community executive to a special commission in Brussels (Commission Communautaire Française de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale). Among the national (now termed 'federal') responsibilities transferred, in the early 1980s, to the communities under the institutional reform was the Fund for medical, social and educational care of disabled people (the 'Fund 81'). In 1991 the National Fund for Social Rehabilitation of Disabled People, the body responsible for a wide range of social and vocational integration services, was dissolved and most of its functions were passed to community funds. An important part, medical and functional rehabilitation, became part of the federal health insurance, however. The Flemish community decided to amalgamate the Fund 81 with the devolved National Fund for the Social Rehabilitation of Disabled People. The new fund is the 'Vlaams Fonds voor de Sociale Integratie van Personen met een Handicap' (created by a decree of 27 June 1990). The German-speaking community also chose to co-ordinate assistance to disabled people in one office (Dienststelle der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft für Personen mit einer Behinderung, established by a decree of 19 June 1990), covering institutional accommodation, occupational and day centres and general guidance, as well as employment-related functions. Special education remains a separate responsibility for the communities, however. The advantage to the disabled person is having needs met through a single agency, rather than two, and having to make a single registration. The German fund serves a population of around 70,000 people. The French fund (the 'Fonds Communautaire', established under a decree of 3 July 1991) took over only the employment-related functions - vocational guidance, vocational rehabilitation, employment and individual support; functions relating to the other (care) institutions became part of the French community administration. This fund was split into two following a decree of 22 July 1993. A Brussels fund (Fonds Bruxellois Francophone pour l'Intégration Sociale et Professionnelle des Personnes Handicapées) was accordingly established for the French-speaking inhabitants of the Brussels region (under a decree of 17 March 1994); although its functions under the same authority, this fund remains distinct from the medical, social and educational provisions in Brussels. A Walloon fund (Agence Wallonne pour l'Intégration des Personnes Handicapées) was set up for the remainder of the French-speaking territory (under a decree of 6 April 1995), and included responsibility for medical, social and educational provision. With this split, the responsibilities for these policies have been transferred from the French Community to the executive of the Walloon region and a special commission in Brussels (referred to above). The new arrangements came into effect on 1 July 1995.

COMPULSARY EMPLOYMENT: Compulsory employment provisions for the integration of disabled people in open employment apply only to people registered with the funds. Compulsory employment does not play a significant part in Belgian policy.

Public sector: In 1972 a Royal Order established that 600 civil service posts should be reserved for people covered under the 1963 Act. The number was increased in 1977 to 1,200 and the jobs to be provided were shared out among the ministries, etc. This arrangement was facilitated by a committee responsible for determining posts to which a disabled person could be appointed, pointing out adaptations that would suit the candidate and supervising the person in a probationary period. The decrees passing responsibility to the communities allow their Executives to fix the number of disabled people who should be employed by public administration and other public bodies. After an employment conference in the early nineties, the Flemish government endorsed the principle of employment equity. The principle of proportional representation of 'at risk' groups (among which the disabled) was first applied to some employment programmes that receive funding from the Flemish government.

Private sector: The quota for compulsory employment of people with disabilities does not apply to the private sector.

FINANCIAL MEASURES:

Support for employers

Financial measures include wage cost subsidies, subsidies for retention of employees who become disabled and grants for modifications to the workplace. Wage cost subsidies The principal arrangement for compensating employers in use in Belgium is what is known as 'Collective Agreement No. 26' of 1975. This applies in the private sector only. Under this arrangement, disabled people receive a full wage but the fund compensates the employer for the difference between wage and actual performance. A time limit of one year applies, but fresh applications can be submitted if diminished performance continues. The maximum permissible payment is 50 per cent, but in most cases 30 per cent is awarded.

Grants for modification of the work place have been available since 1965. Financial aid is limited to recompense for the cost difference between standard equipment and an adapted model. The grants do not cover non-physical adaptations to the work environment, such as reducing and/or adapting working-hours and breaks, redistribution of tasks, and in an exceptional case providing a co-worker.

Support for disabled people

Grants for work expenses: Disabled workers (registered with a fund) are entitled to grants to offset the costs of work tools or clothing required because of disability. They are also entitled to a contribution to the extra costs of personal transport to work. This latter provision was subsequently more narrowly targeted. In the French-speaking region, the applicant must be either unable to use existing transport unless

accompanied by another person, or a user of a special light car, or unable to walk more than 300 metres (Ministère d'Affaires Sociales et al., 1996).

Funds also have discretion to assist with purchase of clothing, aids or adaptations to help with daily living. Combining benefits with work For disabled and chronically ill people the administration of the health and invalidity insurance, through local offices of non-profit organisations ('mutalités'), also plays an important role in employment counselling, financing of training, and especially in stimulating return to the workplace. A system of progressive return to work allows disabled people to combine the insurance-based allowance with a wage for a certain time and to a certain level.

SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT

The aims of sheltered workshops are to provide opportunities for useful and remunerated work, and for occupational rehabilitation, and to offer a chance to progress to open employment if possible. The Flemish and French decrees, despite their new definitions for eligibility to the services of the funds, retain the requirement for access to sheltered workshops: 'disabled people who, owing to the nature or severity of their handicaps are temporarily or permanently unable to engage in any occupation under normal working conditions'. Sheltered workshops have been viewed as a means of ensuring that 'the largest possible number of disabled people are gainfully employed', giving consideration to those who are incapable of holding their own in a normal firm, either temporarily or permanently (Council of Europe, 1990, p.199).

Employees are categorised A, B or C according to medical diagnoses. The categories are very detailed but, in brief, 'A' mainly refers to physical impairment; 'B' primarily to sensory impairment; and 'C' mainly to learning difficulties.

Most people in workshops have a normal labour contract (a few have a training contract or a contract as a home-worker). This entitles them to all the rights of a non-disabled worker in the private sector, with the exception of the minimum wage.

OBSTACLES

The biggest question for the disabled people is why to enter the labour market?

If a disabled person makes the decision to go to work, s/he makes the decision to give up her/his safety. The alternative is to remain dependent on allowances, which means that the person in question is unlikely to develop. When a disabled person has a partner with a clean salary, the employment trap is even greater, and at the same time, it brings risks for the disabled person. If the spouse receives a high income, this places the disabled person in a situation of great financial dependence on her/his partner. Moreover, in case of separation, the disabled person is strongly penalised.

At the same time, because of the complexity in defining disability and determining entitlement to certain benefits, allocation systems create a sense of inequality among a number of active persons with disabilities. Not all people with disabilities feel capable of committing to a full-time job, but a part-time job equals a

lower salary. Even those who accept a full-time job often have to settle for a lower salary range. Therefore, on the one hand, unemployment benefits seem anyway more attractive and on the other hand, people do not dare to take risks.

The 2015 reform concerning job-seekers and un-employment benefits, may potentially have a negative financial impact for people with disabilities, from whom it was not expected until 2015 that they made special efforts to find a job. Some of these people have had this status for years and do not necessarily want to find a job because of their disability. With the reform, despite the fact that it was nothing expected of them in term of procedures, they risk being "suddenly" excluded from unemployment in the same way as other job-seekers, even though they are not in the same situation because of their living conditions, abilities, expectations, opportunities, etc.

Another aspect of the lack of clarity concerns the independent(self-employed) entrepreneurs: Despite a provision in the Flemish policy for self-employed entrepreneurs who became disabled after September 2008, the wage subsidy system is exclusively directed towards employees and that entrepreneurs with a disability cannot make use of, while they too face potential yield losses. Thus, it discourages people with disabilities wanting to start their own business as well as entrepreneurs who have become disabled.

Also, companies hiring people with disabilities via an office of Interim (via service vouchers) receive only a partial payment, or nothing at all, of the wage subsidies. In this tripartite professional relationship, the interim office is officially the employer and, in so doing, the beneficiary of the bonus. The Interim office client(the company) who is the one who actually hires the disabled person and who therefore suffers from a potential loss of performance (e.g. due to the fact that the person in question is working more slowly) is dependent on the good will of the Interim office which could grant a discount on the invoice equal to the amount of the wage premium.

WORK-BASED LEARNING (WBL) EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides clearly in article 24 inclusive education. Inclusive education must be the rule and specialized education the exception. It is clear that there is no legal consensus on what is "inclusive education".

Technological progress also presents new opportunities in the field of inclusive workplaces and reasonable accommodation, but at the same time this progress creates barriers (OECD, 2010, Zanoni, 2011, Samoy&Waterplas, 2012). The current reforms of the social economy by the "Maatwerkdecreet" in Flanders (Decree on tailor-made work) (Vlaams Parlement, 2014) and the recommendations made in Wallonia (Altéo, 2011, AWIPH, 2013) try to address these difficulties and at the same time, to present solutions to deal with the consequences of the economic crisis employment and the position of people with disabilities in the regular labor market. This revised policy has been most visible since the year 2000, since

when the focus is on equal opportunities for participation, equal rights and non-discrimination (Samoy, 2013b). In Flanders, skills related to hiring people with disabilities have been transferred to Vlaamse Dienstvoor Arbeid in Beroepsopleiding (VDAB) (Flemish Service for Job Search and Vocational Training).

Assessment, vocational rehabilitation, vocational training and (to some extent) placement in open or sheltered employment are among the functions of the funds. Access to these services is available only to people who are registered with the fund. For the purposes of registration, people must apply to their fund and undergo assessment to meet its conditions. Once registered, an integration programme is drawn up. People of at least 18 who missed out on school education and follow a day-time educational curriculum to prepare for the open labour market can in some circumstances get a living-allowance from the funds. This rather exceptional measure is taken when the education is considered as a professional training. Special apprenticeship contracts are an individualised training initiated by the fund with employers who provide on the job training; the employer is not committed to taking the person on after a contract of a year duration (or extended) but employment often is the result. The name 'special apprenticeship' is no longer in use but the employer-based, on-the-job training offers the same service.

Special centres recognised by the fund include specialist guidance centres and specialist vocational training centres. There are support measures for entry or return to open employment, and for sheltered employment. In the Flemish region, and from 1997 on, the specialist guidance centres will be integrated with other services (for example, specialist training centres and sheltered workshops) in new structures for route-counselling. In the same region, reforms are due to take place in the specialist training centres. Emphasis is to be placed on 'job coaching'; support in ordinary, not segregated, environments; and a modular training system that is more responsive to the needs of disabled people. In the French-speaking region, individual payments made by the funds to people undergoing training include an allowance in lieu of salary, and an additional subsidy. The Brussels fund sets the allowance at 40 per cent of the average minimum monthly salary, increasing to 60 per cent for disabled people with non-earning dependants. The Agence Wallonne also takes the disabled person's family situation into account when calculating the allowance, and also deducts 75 per cent of other income. In both funds, the additional subsidy is the same as for trainees undergoing occupational training. The Flemish fund sets the allowance at the level of unemployment benefit for the head of a family and adds the same additional subsidy as in the other funds. Other training activities do not directly involve the funds. In the French-speaking region, an initiative by the Enterprise d'Apprentissage Professionnel (EAP) provides individual support and vocational training in its own small competitive enterprises for young people with learning difficulties. The French Community formally endorsed EAP by law in 1987 (Van Calster, 1992). Similar structures exist in Flanders. In the so-called 'social workshops', meant for training and employment of the 'hard to employ' (long-term unemployed with a low level of education), some 25 per cent of the nearly 1,000 participants are disabled persons.

Regional employment agencies play a key role in general employment training. In the Walloon area, for example, some disabled people undergo training in a centre that is open to the population as a whole. The Flemish employment agency, for its part, organises initial training courses (of one year's duration) for long-term unemployed people; the courses are mostly organised in collaboration with private non-profit agencies. Other training initiatives were carried out in the Flemish region for people who are hard to employ. Most of these employment programmes are co-financed by the European Social Fund. Disabled people are thus able to benefit from measures intended for wider groups. Within the Brussels fund, there is a belief that disabled people should ideally be able to undergo training in a centre that is open to the population as a whole. The inclusion of disabled people in 'at risk' groups in both national and regional employment programmes has been an important change in the 1990s.

The Belgian Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan coordinated by VDAB, Flanders: The Regional Ministry of Education supports projects for disabled student in which the guidance to work starts already in school (in context of a good and quick transfer from education to the job); Realise more work experience initiatives: the system of learning and working and alternated learning (both kind of dual learning systems) will be strengthened with f.e. more work experience places for so it will be an equal choice. For example, introduce obligatory internships in the technical and vocational secondary education, more use of labour market instruments within the school context (f.e. schools can use the infrastructure of the vocational training centres of VDAB and partners ('72-hours arrangement'), 'do-day's in vocational training centers for students from 1st and 2nd degree, learning trajectories in which education and VDAB together guide to an educational qualification,...).

BEST PRACTICES ON PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF WBL EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

ECOGARD project: aiming to improve the (pre-) qualification of long-term unemployed people (including those with disabilities) who have similar existing educational background in the field of gardening, seeds and crop fields and would like further to extend it; to set up and implement guidelines for social entrepreneurship possibilities through which the people with disabilities could be self-employed or to start-up their own business perspectives in the Eco-vegetable gardening area; and to offer a sustainable employment of the people with disabilities and to enable their transition from being passive members of society to active citizens on the labour market, <https://ecogardening.eu/> and PhoenixKM BVB (BE) focused towards the integration of people with disabilities in every aspect of daily life, incl. entrepreneurship and self-employment, <https://phoenixkm.eu/>

Noord-Limburgs Open Atelier, www.openatelier.be

It offers temporary work experience for the "at risk" group aged up to 25.

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