



TOOLS FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SPECIALISTS

Designing quality and training tools for competence profile of supported employment specialists



CONSOLIDATED SURVEY FINDINGS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

Supported Employment is a well-elaborated method of provision of career support services for people with disabilities to provide access and maintain paid employment in the open labour market¹. The European Disability Strategy (EDS) 2010-2020, “A renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe”, (European Commission, Brussels, Nov. 2010) defined employment and accessibility of labor market as one of the 8 areas of immediate actions. On this basis member states are required to offer measures which facilitates better access to the labor market for people with disabilities and provide support for this target group to be able to earn their living on the open labour market. Some of the European member states have introduced the concept of Supported Employment coming from North America during the late 1980s slowly into their systems discovering the power and effectiveness of this approach in ensuring better access and equal opportunities on the labour market.

The values and principles underpinning Supported Employment (SE) are completely consistent with the concepts of empowerment, social inclusion, dignity and respect for individuals. People with disabilities are the most disadvantaged group with regards to employment and they will directly benefit from the SE implementation by well-qualified SE providers such as coaches, mentors, counsellors, job specialists etc.

There are existing vocational training and unemployment programmes to support people with disabilities to access to open labour market in European Countries. The high supply of labour resources and the low demands reduce the possibilities of people with disabilities to find jobs in the open market and limit the chances of successful support programmes and projects.

The project aim to produce learning outcomes based curriculum and training materials in connection with the ECVET² system. Therefore dedicated need analysis and survey implementation were developed in Turkey, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Portugal.

¹European union of supported employment – handbook for SE implementation

²ECVET – European system for credit transfer in vocational education and training

This report consists of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the national findings related to SE providers training needs and gaps in recognition and assessment of their competencies, individual needs of obtaining them, relevant methodologies and pedagogical approaches in terms of SE provision etc. On that basis will be designed the logical framework for the development of EQAVET system for validation and assessment of the gained competencies by SE specialists. The need analysis process was support by the development of dedicated questionnairesdistributed to the following target groups engaged in the SE process:for SE providers; for VET centers; for employers; for Public Bodiesand for NGOs.

Despite the fact that around 1000 people had been reached, a total number of 232 people participated in the survey from four countries – Turkey, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Portugal.The reason might be that the concept of "Supported Employment for people with disabilities" is a very new concept and participants probably do not have much information about this concept yet.

This consolidated findings report consists of eight main chapters: In the first chapter, the scope of the survey is presented. Barriers, challenges and difficulties that people with disabilities faced in terms of employment are evaluated in the second chapter. Areas of support that SE specialists needare discussed in the third chapter. In the fourth chapter knowledge, skills and competencies of the SE specialist are dully analysed. Roles and responsibilities of the SE specialists are discussed in the fifth chapter whilewillingness for participation to further studies is given in the sixth chapter. Recommendation for the development the intellectual outputs 2 (EQAVET system for recognition, validation and certification of SE providers), 3 (Instructions guide for the system of competencies monitoring in the SE service) and 4 ("Tools for SE Specialist" VET training programme) are concluded in the seventh chapter.

RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

The data consolidation and analysis are included in the following summarised conclusions:

- In terms of area of support that the SE specialist needs the following components are equal in the partners' countries:
 - “Assessment of independence, capacity & ability of the person with disability to perform certain everyday activities and to identify possible limitations” seems to be the most needed issue to support for people with disabilities.
 - The second important issue is the “Assessment of potential social barriers (architectural, transport, informational etc.) which the person with disability may encounter in their work environment and on their way to work, as well as the methods and strategies to overcome them”.
 - “Provision of guidance in terms of using assistive technologies which may help them to work independently” comes as the next important issue that is needed to be supported by SE specialists.
- With regards to the necessarily knowledge, skills and competencies which the SE specialist should have” the responses of all participants from the four countries concludes on:
 - “Knowledge related to different types of disabilities and limitations of the abilities as a result of the disability” answer is given most, showing that this is the most necessary knowledge that SE specialists should have.
 - “Ability to support a realistic view of people with disabilities on strengths/abilities in different working fields with regards to particular occupation” is the second important competence.
 - “Ability to apply a person-centered approach to each person with disability” is the third component showing the knowledge, skills and competencies that SE specialists should have.

Considering the results of the survey the training tools which are aimed to be prepared should be in accordance with the following necessities for SE specialists;

- SE specialists should know have detailed awareness towards the independences, capacities and abilities of people with disabilities.
- SE specialists should improve strategies for the difficulties that people with disabilities may come across in the working fields or on their way to work.
- SE specialists should have knowledge about the assistive technologies that might facilitate working lives of people with disabilities.
- SE specialists should know the types of disabilities and the special needs and limitations of these disabilities.
- SE specialists should have the ability to support people with disabilities who may work in different fields.
- SE specialists should have the ability to apply person-centered approach for each person with disability.

It is concluded that the training modules that will be prepared according to the results of surveys should contain the following issues:

- **Barriers and challenges caused by the disability:**In general the results of the surveys have shown that the awareness about the problems faced by people with disabilities still needs improvement. One of the major issues that SE providers should be well informed is “Knowledge related to different types of disabilities and limitations of the abilities as a result of the disability” according to the survey results. Consistently in the training modules the barriers and challenges that people with disabilities face should be an important issue to cover.
- **Assessment of potential social barriers:**In the surveys conclusions the assessment of potential social barriers are related to the architectural, transport, informational barriers which the person with disability may encounter in their work environment and on their way to work, as well as the methods and strategies to overcome them.

- **Provision of guidance in terms of using of digital assistive technologies:** it may help people with disabilities to work independently. From one hand the SE specialists should be aware of existing assistive technologies which may support the work duties of people with disabilities while from the other hand increasing the awareness of people with disabilities towards those technologies is really necessary and it is an important issue to be covered in training modules of SE specialists.
- **Quality tools for the provision of a coaching process:** The results of surveys has shown that almost all of the participants (95%) thinks that well-trained SE specialists will contribute to the increase of workability (labour productivity) of people with disabilities. Therefore it is priority to establish quality practical tools for the provision of a coaching process.
- **Supported employment concept:** Surveys shows that the concept of supported employment is a new concept especially in Turkey and in Bulgaria. Therefore, the concept of supported employment would be clarified and training content should be prepared in this context. The know-how and experience from Portugal and Slovenia will be taken into account.
- **Career guidance implementation:** According to the surveys, when the people with disabilities are supported by SE specialists, they can be regained to the society and also to the business life. Almost all of the participants stated that career guidance is a very important issue which the SE specialists should be able to provide to people with disabilities.
- **Labour market and business trends:** SE specialists who will support people with disabilities should be aware about all the trends in the labour market and connected business sectors. This is also a very important issue that should be covered in the training modules of SE specialists.