



**ERASMUS+ PROJECT: INNOVATIVE
TOOLS FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT
SPECIALISTS [NETWORK OF SES]**

Compendium of best practices in supported employment process

2017-1-PL01-KA202-038400



COMPENDIUM OF BEST PRACTICES IN SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROCESS

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INTRODUCTION

Project: Innovative tools for supported employment specialists - NETWORK OF SES, was funded by EU Erasmus+ programme and was realized from 01/12/2017 until 30/11/2019.

AIM OF THE PROJECT:

Supported Employment Specialists working in the partners institutions indicate the value of non-formal learning contexts as significantly more important for the development and acquisition of competencies than formal learning contexts. Within the non-formal learning contexts, the value of one's own occupational practice in the current field of practice was judged with the highest relevance, indicating the importance of a formative introduction of new practitioners in the field, in the sense of "learning by doing" or "reflective practice".

Network of SES objectives:

1. broadening the knowledge about the socio-occupational functioning of people with disabilities,
2. learning about the effective and proven method of professional activation of people with disabilities - supported employment,
3. updating skills and qualifications of supported employment specialists (SES) in partner countries, exchange of best practices between SES,
4. Expressing SES opinions on the functioning of the social-occupational activation system for people with disabilities in partner countries.

Target group: Supported employment specialists (SES); trainers interested to become SES; training providers; policy makers; people with disabilities.

Results:

1. Platform with project information in partners languages
2. Compendium of Best Practices in SE process gathered in all partner countries;
3. 4 face to face staff trainings in each partner countries on all 5 stages of SE addressed to SES and potential SES to observe work-based setting of SES in partner countries.

The Compendium was written by experts working in partner institution according to each partner expertise. Each unit is describing the supported employment process for different disability type:

UNIT 2. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (SPAIN)

UNIT 3. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES (BULGARIA)

UNIT 4. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH VISION DISABILITY (ITALY)

UNIT 5. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DEAF AND HEARING IMPAIRMENT (POLAND-RES-GEST).

We hope this way we are giving valuable information to supported employment specialists and/or job coaches/mentors who work with people with disabilities and their insertion in the labour market.

UNIT 1. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT MODEL in Europe

According to the definition presented by the European Union for Supported Employment - "supported employment is support for people with various disabilities or people excluded in gaining and maintaining work on the open labour market".

1. Employment (work) for remuneration - people with disabilities should receive remuneration commensurate with the work done. If the amount of the minimum wage is determined in a given country, the person with disability should receive at least its equivalent or salary in accordance with the rate adopted for a given position.
2. Open labour market - people with disabilities should be ordinary employees with the same remuneration and employment conditions as well-qualified employees in the public, private and non-governmental sectors.
3. Continuous support - refers to the broadest understanding of support during paid employment. Support is individual and is based on the needs of both the person / employee and the employer.

Definition of the World Association of Supported Employment - World Association of Supported Employment (WASE) - „supported employment is paid work performed by people with disabilities in the open labour market, with constant support from other people. Paid work means the same pay for the same work as non-disabled people do. "

Principles and values that should accompany Supported Employment:

Individuality - in supported employment, each person is perceived as a unique individual, with their own interests, preferences, conditions and life experience. Respect - activities undertaken in the context of supported employment are always adjusted to the age of the person with disability, strengthen their sense of dignity and aim to improve her situation.

Self-determination - supported employment helps people with disabilities to develop their interests and preferences, make their own choices and define their plan of employment and life plan, in accordance with personal premises and specific circumstances .

Empowerment - supported employment helps people with disabilities to make decisions about lifestyle and participation in social life.

Confidentiality - information provided to a service provider by a disabled person covered by the supported employment program is confidential.

Flexibility - the staff and organizational structures can change depending on the needs of the beneficiaries.

Availability - people with disabilities have full access to services, facilities and information offered in the context of supported employment.

6 main rules describing the idea of supported employment:

1. **Zero rejection** - in the supported employment model, support is available to all persons with disabilities regardless of the type and degree of their disability (including intellectual disability to a high degree) and no matter how broad the scope of assistance provided to them.
2. The guarantee of the success of supported employment and individual implementing this model is to provide the person with disability with **appropriate, personalized support in the right environment**.

3. Emphasis on potential, not disability - according to this principle, in order to properly support people with disabilities in getting a job, specialists who deal with it should thoroughly know and name their skills, and then introduce them to the employer. Then a person with a disability will become a candidate for a job with clear qualifications for the employer.

4. Rejection of the concept of "readiness" for work - the traditional approach to the issue of training in the workplace assumes that the employee's professional skills can be trained to the specific level required in his / her position. This concept does not work in the case of people with intellectual disabilities who do not achieve the "full readiness to work" condition and require systematic training.

5. Real wages and benefits - according to this principle, people with disabilities should not only be rewarded in the same way as healthy people, but also receive the same social benefits from the employer.

6. The most important is the person and his/her individuality - in the past, supported employment also included a group work model, now the focus is primarily on the individual model - that is, the inclusion of one person at one workplace.

In our trainings we have used EUSE (European Union of Supported Employment) model of SE which consists of five-stage support process:

1. Client engagement – it is based on the key values of availability and choice based on knowledge.

2. Vocational profiling - empowering the person throughout the whole process.

3. Job finding - self-determination and conscious choice based on knowledge are key values of supported employment.

4. Employer engagement – Availability, flexibility and confidentiality are key values that must be protected throughout the process.

5. On and off job support – flexibility, confidentiality and respect are the main elements of effective support. Support measures apply especially when a person with disabilities is employed for remuneration. Such measures are implemented by providing a carer / job coach.

UNIT 2. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING (INTELLECTUAL) DISABILITY

2.1 Short description of learning (intellectual) disability

Intellectual disability is a condition which is characterized by significant limitations in both the way the intellect tends to function and the scope and ability of behaviour that can or should be adapted so that it is conducive to formal situations and social norms which encompasses many common social and practical skills. This disability very frequently has an onset before the age of 18.

Intellectual functioning also known as intelligence refers to general mental capabilities such as learning, reasoning, problem solving, and so on. There are many ways to measure intellectual functioning and one of the most common is an IQ test. In general, a low IQ test score of around 70 or as high as 75 could indicate a limitation in intellectual functioning, however, there are exceptions to this statement. It is also important to mention is the collection of conceptual, social, and practical skills that are learned and performed by people in their everyday lives which can also be called adaptive behaviour. Conceptual skills language and literacy; money, time, and number concepts; and self-direction most of these are assessed in an IQ test. Social skills interpersonal skills, social responsibility, self-esteem, gullibility, naïveté (i.e., wariness), social problem solving, and the ability to follow rules/obey laws and to avoid being victimized. Practical skills activities of daily living (personal care), occupational skills, healthcare, travel/transportation, schedules/routines, safety, use of money, use of the telephone. Standardised tests can also determine limitations in adaptive behaviour.

Additional Considerations

When defining and assessing intellectual disability, the following factors must be taken into account, such as the community environment typical of the individual's peers and culture. Professionals should also consider linguistic diversity and cultural differences in the way people communicate, move, and behave.

Finally, assessments must also assume that limitations in individuals often coexist with strengths, and that a person's level of life functioning will improve if appropriate personalised supports are provided over a sustained period.

Only on the basis of such many-sided evaluations can professionals determine whether an individual has intellectual disability and tailor individualised support plans.

2.2 Stage I – Client engagement: practical information how to reach people with learning disability, barriers on the labour market, family involvement

Getting in contact with people with learning disability

The first phase of supported employment concerns getting in contact with the potential clients, in this case people with learning disabilities. Different strategies can be used in this regard, however the contact with educational institutions, hospitals and rehabilitation services is fundamental. Participating and organising events with stakeholder could be a useful method to establish **informal**

links that can make the service known to the general public, but more specifically to professionals that work with people with learning disability. Moreover, the last period of **compulsory education** constitutes a very strategic moment to get in contact with people with intellectual and learning disabilities. Indeed, it is possible to define an adequate and personal strategy for the insertion in the regular labour market of these young people, which might include any kind of further training and education. In particular, at this young age, people with disabilities can be followed and guided through a new and important phase of their lives, thus connecting education with the open labour market in a smooth way and taking into consideration their interests, individual characteristics and motivation (DownGranada.org).

The **first meeting** with the person with intellectual disabilities is aimed at informing him/her about the service of supported employment and provide an overview of its objectives, methodologies etc. In case the person does not accept to participate in the process, it is important to respect this decision and understand the reasons of the decision and whether there are viable alternatives (Pérez et al., 2018, p. 36). Once the clients have been contacted, it is important to use adequate strategies to **communicate** with them. Some good practices that can be implemented at this stage are: communicate directly with the person and not his/her accompanying person in a way that is appropriate to their age, but adapting communication to their abilities; make sure to be natural and respectful, for instance avoiding a paternalistic approach; use a simple and clear language; ensure that contents have been understood; use examples and demonstration when necessary; maximize the possibilities of non-verbal communication and use any kind of other support to facilitate the dialogue; pay attention to the other person's way of communication to be ready to adapt the communication style; try to understand non-verbal communication techniques of the client which might indicate an expression of a message (Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad, 2012; Instituto Foral de Bienestar Social).

Barriers to the labour market

Supported employment can be extremely helpful with this target group since studies have shown that people with learning and intellectual disabilities are **more likely to experience discrimination** on the labour market compared to people with other kinds of disabilities. In particular they are **perceived by employers as lacking skills and training** (Kocman, Fisher and Weber, 2018, p. 124). The principal barriers to the labour market for this target group have been identified. First, employers often are not aware how to support people with learning disabilities to integrate into the workplace, which leads to missed opportunities in the effective and optimal use of their capabilities. There is also a widespread idea about the presumed high cost that accommodations would require and the fear that the general productivity would decrease. Secondly, **stigma** can also be a factor that prevents employer from hiring people with learning disabilities, especially when they had previous disappointing experiences. Moreover, hiring techniques and the ways interviews are carried out might not always be best suited for people with intellectual disabilities. Indeed, they could constitute a discrimination that prevents those people from being selected despite their actual expertise. Thirdly, the general late access to vocational training can limit the capacity for people with learning disabilities to develop job related skills and enter in contact with the working environment. This issue is also related to the lack of continued support and training to maintain a position, which for instance, could be mitigated through job coaching (Khayat-zadeh-Mahani et al., 2019, pp. 4-5). On top of that, it has been noticed that employers are mostly inclined to believe that barriers that refrain people with intellectual disabilities

from accessing the labour market are the lack of suitable jobs, the high requirements necessary for certain positions and recent changes connected to new technologies and digitalization of work, which make it easier to perform activities but more difficult to use them (Kocman et al., 2017, pp. 126-127).

How to involve the family

Finally, it is important to remember to include the family of the client since the very beginning of the process. Indeed, it will hold an important role all over the process through constant communication so to make sure to implement **joined actions** that can ease and improve the working path of the person with intellectual disabilities. The fundamental skill that the specialist in supported employment must have in this phase is demonstrating **empathy** with the various member of the family so to establish positive relations. Understanding the reasons of certain behaviours without trying to judge them is the key to develop and agree on action plans. However, it is important to remind the family that they can offer support and help, but the person that needs to take the **decision** is the client himself/herself (Pinilla et al., 2017, p.66). Lastly, the specialist in supported employment can rely on **interviews** with family members in order to get more information about the client, his/her expectation and past experiences. Nevertheless, this is only possible if the client agrees to include the family in this process (Pérez et al., 2018, p.37).

2.3 Stage 2 – Vocational profiling: practical information on preparation of the client and his/her vocational preferences, questions to ask, questions to avoid, example of form to collect all the information, individual action plan and what should include.

How to carry out vocational profiling

The phase dedicated to vocational profiling is helpful for the supported employment specialist to identify and gain information about education and training, motivation, interests, professional experiences, expectations, and competences. All these elements must be collected in a way oriented towards the design of an individual action plan in order to support the clients towards labour inclusion and to make them **discover what their talent and potentialities are** (Pérez et al., 2018, p.39).

The next table provides some of the most common issues that can emerge when the supported employment specialist is interviewing a client with intellectual disabilities. At the same time, possible solutions to mitigate and tackle this limitation are also provided, such as formats of questions that should or should not be used (sources: Hollomotz, 2018; Tassé, Schalock, Thompson, & Wehmeyer, 2005; lexiconlimited.co.uk, 2004)

Difficulties	How to deal with them
Different communication skills and different levels of depth can be achieved during the interview according to the personality and capacities of the person with intellectual disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailor the questions in a way that is suitable for the person at stake. If necessary, ask for advice to other practitioners that already work with the client. • Do not use a fixed format, but try to adapt it to the extent the client is able to communicate.

The client might experience frustration, anxiety and sense of unease when he/she is not in familiar context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take some minutes before the interview starts to enable the client to relax, for instance, asking questions about other matters not related to supported employment. • Introduce yourself and explain what you are going to ask to make sure that it is understandable what the item considered is.
Language can be offensive .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a 'person-first' language without any unnecessary references to disability. • Offer support in a sensible way.
Limited concentration spans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check if the person wants to have breaks. • Divide the interview in multiple occasions if necessary, but avoiding to let too much time pass between the meetings.
Limited capacity to identify intentions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid "why" questions.
Difficulties in understanding metaphors and abstract concepts .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid ambiguous expressions and always refer to concrete concepts. • Avoid questions that require a high level of social understanding (e.g. what to others like about you?) • Make references to the client's experiences, concentrating on one issue at time. • Use reference points that are connected to individual experiences when you want to refer to time and frequency. • Use concrete reference tools such as cards, vignettes etc. as support and starting point for a conversation.
Limited listening skills and processing capacities .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a simple and clear language. • Check if the person needs assistive technologies or other forms of support. • Ask to repeat the answer if you do not understand. • Restate the answer with your own words to make sure you understood it correctly. However, give particular importance to the client's reaction since he/she might not feel comfortable correcting you. • Ask short questions that require a yes/no answer.
People with intellectual disabilities can be prone to be follow more others' opinions .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let the client speak, without rushing to complete the answers for them.

Tendency to acquiescence , namely the bias towards affirmative responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid negatively worded questions. • Rephrase questions in a more explicit ways (e.g. it is better to say “do you hate ...?” instead of asking “don’t you like...?”). This might sound weird with references to some concepts, but it might prove helpful in certain circumstances.
Memory difficulties can lead to repeating the same answers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the client with a written form where he/she can follow the interview.
Underestimation or overestimation of their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In case the answer does not seem satisfactory, check whether this is the case by contextualizing the question and use concrete examples.
Lack of responsiveness and tendency to always choose the last option in multiple choices questionnaires (recency).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand that this might simply be caused by the unwillingness to answer instead of lack of ability to express themselves. • Use close-ended questions with binary options, such as yes or no. • In case multiple-choices questionnaires are used, it is better to provide them in a written format.
People with intellectual disabilities might not provide a full description of the context, which leads the interviewer to lack of understanding .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use cross verification from additional sources (triangulation). This is possible if the client agrees to have their family or other specialists interviewed about him/her. • Ask other people that are in contact with the client to contextualise the information.

Activities to collect information

In order to collect information and prepare a vocational profile, it is possible to use different activities and forms in addition or complementary to those provided by the European Union of Supported Employment (available at the following link <https://www.euse.org/content/how-to-guides/VocationalProfiling-18Aug.pdf>).

The **first activity** is aimed at understanding the client’s attitudes and to what extent they are developed/how often they are demonstrated. They could be: constant, resistance to working routine, willingness to work, perfectionism, perseverance, patience, calm, optimism, organization, dialogue with others, respect, sociality, empathy, tolerance, responsible, cooperative, diplomacy etc. (Iturbide Rodrigo and Serrano Mujika, 2004, p. 155-156). This analysis could prove quite difficult for the client, therefore the supported employment specialist can prepare in advance a series of possible examples to describe more clearly how those attitudes are implemented in a real context. On the basis of such answers, it is possible to go more in depth and identify the specific tasks that the clients likes and, together with the help of the supported employment specialist, a list of professions connected to such

actions can be mentioned. This is the objective of the **second activity**. In order to carry it out, the supported employment specialist can make a generalized and standardized list of activities that relate to different fields. For instance, the one about the activities that are performed outside and mostly in the gardening and farming sector could look like the following (Iturbide Rodrigo and Serrano Mujika, 2004, p. 159).:

Outside – gardening/farming

- Plant trees
- Work in the botanic garden
- Make flower bouquets
- Beekeeping
- Take care of animals

The client him/herself or the supported employment specialist can cross the activities that the client prefers. To make communication simpler, the supported employment specialist can also prepare a series of images or pictures that represent the listed activities, so that the client can better understand what he/she is talking about. As mentioned before, this could also provide further help to make the client express his/her preferences. In this phase it is also relevant to define the availability of the client and his/her working preferences. Therefore, a **third activity** could be very similar to the one just mentioned, but the main items to be analyzed are: working day, distance from home, dimension of the company, remuneration, contract, type of work. After this process, it should be possible to limit the choices of the client to a smaller number of professions. However, one must remind that his/her preferences must be respected. Hence, as **fourth activity**, the supported employment specialist could provide the client with the description of a couple of professions that could be suitable for the person. In case the candidate already has an idea about the work that he/she would like to perform, it is advisable to analyze that profession. Such a description should provide the main tasks to be performed, required skills, personal characteristics, employment conditions, possible disadvantages and similar options. In case the client demonstrates a sufficient level of autonomy, he/she can also be asked to fill these indicators with the support of the specialist in supported employment, otherwise this could be done going through a pre-designed module. The final aim of this activity is to understand whether the profession is actually suited or not for the client.

The individual action plan

Once all the necessary information has been collected and the vocational profile has been completed, it is possible to design an individual action plan in cooperation with the client. It must be **focused on what the person** with intellectual disabilities can do and on his/her preferences (ILO and WASE, 2014, p. 10). In fact, the plan must be elaborated with the client, who has to set his/her goals and make **autonomous decisions**. The action plan should be **revised regularly**, so to provide feedbacks and decide whether some aspects require any modification.

Some of the elements that must be included are:

- Actions and goals;
- Deadlines;

- Support strategies;
- Agreements with other stakeholders that are relevant in the process (Pérez et al., 2008, p. 39).

2.4. Stage 3 – job finding: sectors with possible employment for this target group; how to involve the client in job search; formal and informal way of job finding.

People with intellectual disability in the labour market

Despite the differences that might exist with jobs performed by people with intellectual disabilities, the majority is employed in sectors where **high skills are not required** and they have **low positions**. However, the area of work can range from shops to offices, from the food industry to manufactory (Ellenkamp et al., 2015, p. 4). Data about Spain demonstrate that a good amount of people with intellectual disabilities that participate in supported employment programs end up working as office assistants or as sale assistants in shops. Smaller percentages also work in restaurant as waitresses or helpers in the kitchen (Down21.org). Other entities also report that more than half of the people assisted by their services was finally able to get a job in the administrative sectors, and 20% as different kinds of assistants. It is however interesting to note that, although in much smaller percentages, other people were able to work in other different sectors as well (Fundación Prodis, 2019). This shows that, although it might be more difficult, no sector of employment should be excluded beforehand if the client is particularly interested in that working field. Despite these data might provide some general indications about sectors where people with intellectual disabilities are usually employed, it must also be pointed out that the specific context where the service of supported employment takes place and the specific characteristic of the local job market can highly impact the results.

The client as active protagonist

One of the principles of supported employment is to include the client in the decision-making process about what he/she wants to do in terms of job. It is therefore essential that the client's interest is taken into account and that he/she takes an active role in the job finding process. Hence, the client is responsible for his/her choices and is the one that takes final decisions; however, the supported employment specialist is in charge of the **analysis** of the task performed and **facilitate the contacts** with the company. At this moment, it is necessary to be realistic and understand what the client can and cannot do in this process. This makes possible to limit the support provided to the tasks that are actually really hard for the client, in a way that empowers him/her. Possible ways to include the person with intellectual disability in this process concern providing him/her with **information** about different types of contracts and employment, **training** on how to consult job offers, organize the job finding process, prepare motivation letters and CVs, undergo a job interview, etc. (Becerra Traver et al., 2012, p. 14).

Searching for a job

Different methodologies, both formal and informal, to look for a job can be used. The most common are: design a CV, apply for open vacancies and offers, contact companies (in writing or by phone), participate in job shadowing activities for a limited period of time, create contacts with companies. On top of that, the model of supported employment relies on **labour prospection** activities with the aim to get an interview. In order to do so, a **list of various companies and entities** must be elaborated using different sources: contact with socio-economic realities, information exchange with other

organization, communication means, job offers, databases (LantegiBatuak, p.11). If possible, the client can be asked to provide and complete the list with the names of possible companies he/she would like to work in. Instead, a list of jobs that the client would like to engage in should already have been defined in the previous phase. Indeed, creating a good **network of contacts** is also important. This can be achieved through business people's circles that gather together in a more or less structured way, rotary clubs and other groups of this kind. Providing information at employers' meeting or through visits in the company can work as promotional events to make the supported employment service know to them and possibly find new opportunities for the clients (ILO and WASE, 2014, p. 18). Once the contacts and all the relevant information to contact the company are collected, the supported employment specialist can reach out to their human resources department and employers. In case the first contact is a phone call, only the necessary information must be disclosed in order to keep the responsible person in the company interested in the service of supported employment and willing to meet in person to discuss more in depth (LantegiBatuak, p. 12).

2.5 Stage 4 – Employer engagement: practical advice and tips on different support for this target group; adaptation of work place, how to gain trust of the employer, etc.

Starting to work

Before starting at the work place, the supported employment specialist must carry out an **analysis** of the tasks that will be performed in order to understand whether they match the skills and capabilities of the client. Two techniques can help to ensure that employers' needs are also taken into account. The first one is identifying the **extra tasks** performed by the others employees that could be carried out by the person with intellectual disability, such as data entry, simple administrative tasks, inventory work etc. In this way, it would be easier for more skilled workers to focus on their job exclusively on their principal tasks and optimize their time. The second possibility is to use **job (re)design**, which implies substituting some tasks from a position or creating a specific position tailored for the potential employee with intellectual disability. When tasks, duties and expectations are clearly defined, this strategy can be helpful in matching employee's capacities with employer's needs (ILO and WASE, 2014, p. 20-21).

In the first part of labour integration, **intensive support** is usually required for one to three months. It means that the supported employment specialist follows almost constantly the client during his/her work to improve the adaptation and autonomy in the working place. Moreover, the supported employment specialist intervenes directly to help the worker to learn the tasks and develop the necessary skills and abilities (Becerra Traver et al., 2012, p. 14). Some elements have been identified as the most relevant to take into account when supporting a person with intellectual disabilities, they are: establish **clear tasks**, **adapt** the tasks to the capacities of the worker, let he/she perform a **useful and necessary work**, maintain a **permanent relation** between the company and the service of supported employment, and make sure that the **family** is supporting the client all over the process (Cabezas Gomez and Escobar Aguilar, 2008). Lastly, the aim of the service should be to allow workers with intellectual disability to gain the same level of **autonomy** of other workers and ideally to be also included in the company's social life through the help of the so-called "natural support", which will be discussed in the next stage (Inclusion Europe, 2019).

Material and human support

The principal difficulties that people with intellectual disabilities experience at the work place are linked to their cognitive problems, and they tend to rely more on human support. Factors that are useful to tackle the needs of people with intellectual disabilities, more than people affected by other kinds of disabilities are: job redesign, modified schedule, and human support. In addition technical support, accessible transportation, and accessible environment can also facilitate their labour insertion, as it is the case for other kinds of disabilities (Crawford, 2011, p. 16).

The most relevant practical strategies that can be used to support a person with intellectual disabilities to integrate in the work place and develop the necessary competences are:

- Use of **plans** to improve localization and orientation
- **Avoid/limit the use of memorization** to remember information
- Use different **complementary formats** to present information (audio, visual etc.)
- Provide only the necessary information, **without exceeding**
- **Structure information** according to its importance to avoid confusion
- Use **planning instruments** to manage a calendar with the assigned tasks
- Use **accessible tools** that are easy to access, use a logic and simple structure, divide the process in smaller steps, have icons (Pérez et al., 2018, p. 63).

Any tool, infrastructure and material that can be used to compensate the difficulties caused by a disability and to facilitate integration in the workplace have to be considered as **material resources** for job support. Technical tools that can facilitate people with intellectual disability in their working tasks are **visual supports** in paper. For instance, agendas, schemes, pictures describing a process, plans, photos and other visual indicator can be used. Post-it and other material such as **schedules for daily activities** can help him/her to organize daily activities and to communicate with the rest of the personnel. On top of that, illustrations that **describe the various passages** that are needed to carry out a specific task make the worker more efficient and independent (Becerra Traver et al., 2018, p. 50). In fact, this material does not require the use of any technology and it has been demonstrated that it is even more effective than verbal instructions provided by other colleagues in helping the person with intellectual disability to carry out his/her tasks and self-evaluate whether they have successfully accomplished them (Becerra Traver et al., 2014, p. 24).

Intellectual disabilities often result also in difficulties in establishing relations with the colleagues and in adapting in a new environment. This is why the supported employment specialist must dedicate some time also to the development of client's **social skills**, such as communication abilities, participation in social situations, use of transportations, basic information concerning consumes and money management, security behaviours etc. The process that could help in training people with intellectual disability in social skills is constituted by the following steps:

- 1) Verbal **instruction and discussion** about the definition of the behaviour to be learnt, importance and relevance, how to apply it.
- 2) **Modelling** of the behaviour various times and with different people.
- 3) **Practice** through role plays and then in real life situations, for instance at work.
- 4) **Feedback** on the progress achieved. Firstly by mentioning what has been positive and then what could still be improved.
- 5) **Discussion** about the difficulties that have been encountered and how to overcome them (Becerra Traver et al., 2018, p. 54).

Supporting employers and co-workers

At the same time, the supported employment specialist must also be a resource that is present for employers and co-workers. In certain occurrences, employers and co-workers might feel the need to consult him/her. In the initial phase the supported employment specialist can help them **familiarize** with the new colleague. However, keeping communication open can also be useful in case of adoption of **new equipment** so that the worker with intellectual disabilities can receive the additional training required to use it, and if **problems** with co-workers cannot be dealt successfully with at the work place which might be due to external motivations such as family problems (ILO and WASE, 2014, p. 23). Therefore, the supported employment specialist might provide some **practical tips and advices** at least to the colleagues that will work more closely or directly with the person with intellectual disability. The major characteristics that co-workers might encounter when relating to the client should be identified beforehand, so to provide them with tailored and useful information. The supported employment specialist should therefore **explain** what are the conditioning factors of the disability, the level of management of the working environment etc. (Pinilla et al., 2017, p.69).

Convincing possible employers that people with intellectual disabilities are actually capable of performing certain tasks is extremely important due to the barriers that are caused by lack of knowledge that were identified in the previous chapters. Nevertheless, in order to gain the trust of employers, one cannot only expect to use the argument that people with intellectual disabilities have also a right to employment, instead it should be underlined that they can be **skilled, useful and motivated workers** as well. In addition, it is fundamental to understand what are the uncertainties of employers with regard to hiring a person with intellectual disability. Once these elements have been identified, the supported employment specialist can start to persuade them more effectively, by explaining how these issues can be tackled. A good preparation and the possibility to provide **data**, figures and concrete examples is helpful in this process. The choice of employers that are available to work with the service of supported employment must also be taken into consideration. Indeed, it is advisable to cooperate with employers who care about the company's image and working culture, and with companies or organizations that are already involved in the field of disabilities (Inclusion Europe, 2019). The fact the employers that have worked with the service of supported employment in the past can **share their successful experiences** can help to convince those who are more hesitant to hire a person with disabilities (ILO and WASE, 2014, p. 18).

2.6 Stage 5 – On and off job support: how to support and monitor the client at work; how to separate from the client steadily to empower the client and help him/her to become independent; role of the family in this stage of SE.

The need for natural support

As identified in the previous section, in the first part of the integration process, the supported employment specialist should reach out to the client's future colleagues. In fact, this process is particularly relevant to ensure that the person with intellectual disability can count on some form of **natural support** in his/her workplace, especially once the supported employment specialist will reduce his/her functions (Pinilla et al., 2017, p. 70). In fact, any person that will work closely with the client in the workplace and will help and supervise him/her is considered a "natural support". This kind of support is beneficial for the professional performance and **efficiency** of the person with intellectual disability, his/her **integration** in the workplace, and his/her capacity to establish and maintain

interpersonal relations. The more natural support is involved in the training and monitoring phases, the more it will be efficient (Becerra Traver et al., 2018, pp. 47-48).

The role of the supported employment specialist

The support that the supported employment specialist provides can be distinguished in two categories: direct and indirect support. **Direct support** includes any kind of physical help, verbal indication, and close supervision that is carried out while the person with intellectual disability is carrying out a task. Instead, **indirect support** concerns any strategic indication about how to realize or plan a certain activity and periodical evaluations, that are not provided while he/she is performing the particular task. In addition, this category includes also any advice and indications that are addressed to the client's natural supports (family, co-workers...), so that they can then provide any sort of direct support (Rey de Sola et al., 2016, p. 17). The first kind of support is used especially in the first phase of labour integration, while the latter one will become predominant in the monitoring phase.

The supported employment specialist should act as a **mediator** between the company and the client. Thus, any communication that is strictly concerning the various task that the client is required to do in the company must be directed to the person with intellectual disability and not to the supported employment specialist (Pinilla et al., 2017, p.70). However, the supported employment specialist can play an important role in providing suggestions on how to effectively explain information to his/her client, in making sure that communications have been understood, and in intervening as an intermediary between the colleagues/employers and the person with intellectual disability. On the one hand, a person acting as natural support is indeed fundamental when it comes to train the client on specific professional activities, that require the intervention and explanation of a qualified co-worker. On the other, the colleagues lack the knowledge and skills to fully understand the implications of the disability. In addition, as seen in the previous chapter, **adaptation** of the workplace is another function of the supported employment specialist. When dealing with people with intellectual disability, it is possible for the supported employment service to cooperate with co-workers and design specific visual instruments that show the different steps required to complete a task through images or in other understandable and intuitive ways that are appropriate to the client's characteristics (Becerra Traver et al., 2018, pp. 49-50).

From supporting to monitoring

Other than helping the person with intellectual disabilities in the phase of adaptation in the work place, the supported employment specialist must also take care of the following part of **monitoring**. In the monitoring phase, the support will be aimed at evaluating and monitoring the level of integration in the workplace and it will become **indirect or intermittent** (Becerra Traver et al., 2012, p. 15). This means that the supported employment specialist will not support the client every day and in a consistent manner, but he/she will intervene only in case of necessity. The gradual separation from the client should increase the **independency** of the person with intellectual disabilities and promote the creation of a **network of natural support** (Becerra Traver et al., 2018, p. 48). In order to guarantee a **smooth withdrawal** from the client, the supported employment specialist, the client, and the responsible person at the company must carry out an **evaluation** of the adaptation to the workplace. In case that shows that some needs have not been addressed sufficiently, the constant support at the workplace will continue. Otherwise, if it demonstrates positive outcome, the supported employment specialist can gradually diminish his/her presence at the workplace and move from a permanent to an

intermittent support. In this process it is also important to establish **communication strategies** with colleagues and employers so that they can rely on the supported employment specialist in case his/her help is needed (Pinilla et al., 2017, p. 70). Such an evaluation can be facilitated through the use of a **journal** where the supported employment specialist notes regularly his/her thoughts about the activities that the person with intellectual disability is doing, with special reference to the mistakes made, the required help, and the reinforcement used. However, in order for this strategy to be successful, it is necessary to clearly **organize material support**, define and tutor those people that will act as natural support. Furthermore, the supported employment specialist will also be engaged with the client's on-going and **lifelong training**, both inside the working environment and in other context so to carry out complementary educative actions (Becerra Traver et al., 2012, p. 14). Thus, any action should be based on a **plan** that defines how the supported employment specialist will keep in contact (in person and/or by phone) with the company, the client and the family. This will be relevant in case new necessities (such as doubts, changes, etc.) occur, since he/she will be asked to intervene once again and provide the necessary support, which could be for instance a re-training process (Pinilla et al., 2017, p. 70).

Cooperation with the family

The support of the family is considering a fundamental element for the success of the labour integration through the system of supported employment. For this reason, they must be **informed** not only about the different phases of the process, but also about the company where the person with intellectual disability will be integrated (Pinilla et al., 2017, p. 66). In this last phase of the process, they can be involved in different actions, such as contributing to all the information that is relevant for the technical evaluation of the process, and **stimulating and supporting** the client to participate in lifelong training. It is important that the family understands that the final aim of supported employment is **maintaining a job** and not only to get one, therefore the supported employment specialist should advise the family to encourage the participation in training activities aimed at tackling any potential issue that can be encountered, and to rely on the supported employment service when their child needs support (Molina and Gonzales-Simancas, pp. 56, 58). In addition, the following actions can be implemented to make sure that the potential of the family as natural support is optimized and that misunderstandings are avoided.

- Make sure that the family is **involved**, believes in the process, and follows the indications provided by the supported employment service;
- Include the family all along the process as an **agent of support**;
- Establish a **relationship of trust** with the family and convince them to perceive the company as an ally in the integration process;
- Create **training programs and networks** where family can share their experience and exchange support (Molina Jover, 2016, pp. 29-30).

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UNIT 3. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

3.1. Short description of the physical disability

Disability is a condition of limiting the possibilities of a person to interact with the surrounding environment, which creates social, intellectual, physical or moral difficulties. The very person who is in this state of limit is called a disabled person. In contemporary world the number of disabled people is about half a billion and is growing steadily. In most countries, at least 1 in 10 people has physical, mental or other serious defects. As a problem this issue affects at least 25% of the population.

A risk factor is the lack of sufficient information on the subject of inclusion of people with various abilities on the labor market. The public and the employers are of the opinion that many people could not carry out specific activities because of a particular type of a disability.

For example: Persons with physical disabilities could not carry out any work. **It is a myth.** The majority of people with physical disabilities have exceptional intellectual capacity that remains completely intact, even as a result of an accident or illness, which are the cause of their functional divergence. Accordingly, the person may deal with any intellectual activity, as well as with other professions, in accordance with the level of his mobility.

Physical disabilities-broken fine or gross motor ability of body parts associated with the violation of orthopedic, neuron-muscle, cardio-vascular or pulmonary functions. They can be congenital or acquired as a result of trauma, muscle-dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cerebral paralysis, amputation and others. People with physical disabilities often have to use for moving special devices, such as wheelchairs, crutches or prostheses.

Some physical disabilities, such as respiratory disorders and epilepsy, are hidden and difficult to spot from people around.

Many of the disabled/ physically and others want and can work, but unfortunately a large number of talented people cannot fulfill their dreams and aspirations. People with functional differences can be programmers, Web designers, accountants, HR specialists, stock traders, dental technicians, call center operators, market specialists, advertisers and much more. What they need are the skills, knowledge, and, what is most, equal access to career start and accessible environment. In this way we put a focus on the experience and qualities of the candidate. It is necessary for the business to open its doors to give a chance to people with functional differences to develop their full potentialities and thus a vast human capital to be harnessed on the labour market. Only in this way the corporate sector will initiate a positive change.

3.2. Stage 1 - Client engagement.

The negative factors that contribute to a rise in people with disabilities as a risk group on the labor market are compounded by the firmly rooted negative stereotypes in society, the lack of adapted workplaces and access to them. The built-in limitations of the environment create ever higher barriers to social inclusion—indeed, much more difficult to overcome than any functional disability. The most common barriers for people with physical disabilities are accessibility to buildings – entrance, ramps, elevators, wide doors, thresholds, inadequate toilets. This very often hampers them to reach an Office and to start working in it.

The main barriers to the implementation of a successful communication, integration at the workplace and a career start for people with different abilities, originate in the lack of sufficient information among the public and business circles. It is the information that could break the prejudices against people with functional differences.

Identify strategies youth with physical disabilities perceive will optimize their engagement in goal pursuit in life skills and transition programs using an engagement framework involving affective, cognitive, and behavioral components.

Analysis generated eight strategies youth with physical disabilities considered effective.

These were categorized under the three components of engagement. Affective strategies:

(1) building a relationship on familiarity and reciprocity; and (2) guiding the program using youths' preferences and strengths. Cognitive strategies:

(3) assisting youth to envision meaningful change; (4) utilizing youths' learning styles; and (5) promoting awareness of goal progress. Behavioral strategies:

(6) ensuring youth access to a resource network; (7) providing youth multiple decision opportunities; and (8) enabling youth to showcase capabilities.

Service providers together with youth are encouraged to consider the role of context and self-determination needs in order to optimize youth engagement in goal pursuit.

Comprehensive frameworks of engagement are essential to generate knowledge on the range of strategies service providers can use to engage clients in rehabilitation services.

Because supported employment emphasizes the person's abilities and not the disability, parents and family have an active and decision-making role. Parents have to learn to play this new role. Their participation should not begin at the moment when final decisions have to be made, but should be part of an ongoing process. Parents unaccustomed to this approach may need support to fulfil this role.

During the stage of client engagement families could range from being very involved to being less involved. Those that are less involved have limited communication from SE staff and are concerned that the SE staff are the "experts" and do not want to get in the way. Family members have considerable insight about the job seeker, and can contribute a great deal to the process of planning for work without getting in the way. They should see themselves as an important resource during the supported employment process. The family should keep communication with the supported employment specialist for they also have valuable resources to offer. The family should share personal or professional networks with the SES so that there is a wider net available to help the disabled job seeker find job. The family must not get stuck on what the disabled family member can't do, but focus on what s/he can and/or wants to do, and what supports will be needed to make this happen. The family can help the disabled explore his/her options, extend his/her networks, and make informed decisions about jobs. This should be done together with the SES. Acknowledging everyone's expertise and building relationships between the family, individual/disabled, and SES will help individuals/disabled to use all of the resources available to them to find meaningful and fulfilling jobs.

3.3. Stage 2 - Vocational profiling:

The vocational profile and the profile meeting should be considered a process not a form.

The Vocational Profile strategy is an information gathering process... a guide which suggests questions to ask in order to discover information about an applicant. In addition, the time spent with the applicant and the relationship that is formed provides a facilitator the knowledge and insight into the life experiences and contributions of the applicant. These life experiences and contributions provide direction for employment. This approach differs from traditional assessments in that it doesn't measure anything, and it supports utilizing involvement and interaction with the applicant in natural settings rather than in test settings. More importantly, it provides a complete picture of an applicant, rather than looking at one or two skill areas. A specific job can then be identified consistent with the person's entire life, not merely from an instance of performance.

The relationship between the person who gathers the information and identifying a good job match is directly related. The most appropriate person to assist in finding employment, is the person who knows the applicant the best. Conversely, the person developing the job, must be the person gathering the Vocational Profile information.

The Profile Meeting relates the information that is gathered to an individual job. It brings together the people most significant to the applicant, asks them to read the completed Vocational Profile and then come together in a meeting to provide assistance by linking the information of the applicant to

a job. During the meeting, the applicant, with the assistance of the other people at the meeting, is asked to define an ideal employment situation based on his or her contributions, preferences and conditions. Using the definitions as a framework, job types and specific employers are identified that encompass aspects of the definition. People at the meeting are asked for assistance in using their knowledge of the applicant and their knowledge of the community. This results in a list of specific employers whose jobs match the interests and abilities of the applicant. A job developer will leave this meeting with a plan and specific contacts.

Vocational Profile Activity the Vocational Profile form is to be used as a guide in getting to know an applicant in order to assist in identifying his or her interests and job preferences. This activity is best completed by the person who will be doing the job development with the applicant. The more familiar a job developer is with an applicant, the easier it will be to facilitate a good job match. This is not merely a form to be completed, but a process to get to know the applicant well enough that the information will lead to a job.

The Vocational Profile Meeting is the culmination of the entire Vocational Profile process and is the tool that will lead to a job match. The purpose of this meeting is to clearly define an "ideal" employment situation based on all of the information gathered from the Vocational Profile. This information is then used to match the employment situation with actual employers in the community.

This process results in a clear list of prospects for the job developer to use in beginning the job development phase, prospects that are specific to the applicant. The applicant needs to continue to be involved in each step beyond this point.

3.4. Stage 3 - job finding:

Challenges to people with disabilities on the labor market

Until now, the main means to search for a job for people with different abilities are the standard applications in mass online platforms for work. In general, quite often people do not mention that they have impairment in their CV. There are only few cases when meetings and interviews continue after the employer learns about the existence of a disability. This leads to a high level of isolation from society, and also to the self-isolation of the people. The lack of equal access to a qualitative education and the accumulation of skills and competencies also lead to an uncertainty and embarrassment. The important role of the business is to promote the development of people with disabilities, to create working positions for them, to offer training opportunities in order to provide additional qualification for the candidates for the job.

Investments should be made in the development of the potential of people with different abilities. Many of them want and can work, but unfortunately a large number of talented people cannot fulfill their dreams and aspirations. People with functional differences can be programmers, Web designers, accountants, HR specialists, stock traders, call center operators, market specialists, advertisers and much more. What they need are the skills, knowledge, and, what is most, equal access to career start and accessible environment.

The methods that can draw the attention of people with disabilities are different in relation to the type of their disability. Respectively, the different methods must be in accordance with the following details:

- Online advertising, social media sites, job listings, career forums;
 - Use a mediator dealing with recruitment /Recruitment agency;
 - Direct recruitment;
 - Press/TV/radio advertising
- ✓ The ad may not be fully accessible;
 - ✓ Work with a third party does not always guarantee that the recruitment agency will have an experience in working with people with disabilities;
 - ✓ It is possible that the company may not be ready and aware of the specific matters when working with people with disabilities;
 - ✓ Inaccessible advertising materials

The most adaptable for people with disabilities is IT and the financial sector. And candidates with physical disabilities are easily implemented in manual labor. For people with physical disabilities, in general, heavy physical labor is contraindicated. They can practice all professions that meet the requirements set out in the expert's decision to disable them.

Recently, there is an interest from employers in employing people with disabilities in the lower limbs to work remotely using information technology and communication technology.

During the job finding stage there should be an active application process with a high involvement of the job seeker and a range of applications to vacancies submitted.

There should be a successful and positive two-way interaction and cooperation between the Supported Employment program and companies on the open labor market who actively support the Supported Employment program.

The SES plays a great role in the job-finding process, namely: addresses companies who have launched calls for vacancies; conducts clear and upfront conversations with the employer about the job seekers strengths and weaknesses; builds a good network and database of companies and tries to hold contact; makes a list of suitable companies in the region and calls each and every one; attends business fairs and seizes every opportunity to make contacts with employers.

3.5. Stage 4 - Employer engagement:

The problems obscure the benefits

Although many organizations understand the need to provide jobs for people with disabilities, both employers and people with disabilities still face serious challenges and barriers. The main barriers to the implementation of a successful communication, integration at the workplace and a career start for people with different abilities, originate in the lack of sufficient information among the public and business circles. It is the information that could break the prejudices against people with functional

differences. The integration of people with disabilities is a mutual process and access to the labor market should be seen as a responsibility for both parties. The removal of the physical barriers before people with disabilities is the less significant problem. A much bigger issue is that most managers often do not know how to or are simply apprehensive of communication with people with disabilities, despite being the first with whom applicants for work meet. In order to properly train this group and ensure that the benefits of diversity are well understood, firmly rooted practices and strategies for employing people with disabilities are necessary.

General guidelines when conducting an interview with a disabled person/job-seeker

Above all, keep in mind that people with disabilities are people - like everyone else.

It is good not to treat all people with the same type of disability in exactly the same way. If you do not know what to say or do, let the person with disabilities help you. Instead of making guesses, it's better to ask what and how to do, what kind of communication to use, what help to offer. The disabled person himself is your best adviser.

Before you rush to help him, ask him if he needs co-operation. You can offer your help, but do not insist. Let the person with a disability choose to refuse or explain what he needs.

Label for introduction and conversation - when communicating with a person with physical disability

- When talking to a wheelchair user, it's good to watch and talk directly to him rather than on his or her companion.
- Try not to speak high but to stand at the level of your interlocutor's eyes, for example by sitting.
- Before your interlocutor arrives, arrange a proper layout in the room to allow enough room for a wheelchair user to move.
- When meeting someone with a wheelchair, it is good not to put a chair in the place where you want, he/she to stand. Keep in mind, however, that sometimes people who use wheelchairs may want to move from the wheelchair to a chair.
- When you offer to hold a coat or umbrella, it is unacceptable to want a man's cane or crutches unless you are explicitly asked to do so.
- Do not try to move or push the wheelchair without being asked for it or without explaining your cause and intent in advance.
- When you notice that a person using a wheelchair does not move alone, it is better not to drop heavy items (folder, phone) into his/her hands.

Specifics of Working with People with Functional Differences

The recruitment process is long and sometimes involves many different stages. When it comes to working with people with disabilities, the employer needs to know the needs of the individual groups in order to tailor the whole process (tasks, questionnaires, criteria) to their needs so that they can do their best and show what they are capable of. Only in this way the employer will have the opportunity to judge their real skills.

- ✓ The employer must be familiar with people's profiles; must provide for the physical accessibility of the building you are in – are there access ramps, an elevator, toilet s/WC/ for people in wheelchairs.
- ✓ The employer has to ask whether the applicant needs a guide how to get to the Office – not all can drive and it would be great to orientate him. The employer can also ask whether the person needs something extra to ensure his comfort. The employer has to be prepared to use alternative methods – it could sometimes take a bit longer than the standard time for an interview.
- ✓ The introductory process is extremely important at the beginning. People with disabilities should not be treated differently, nor underestimated. The golden rule here is to treat the candidates in the same manner as you would like to be treated, because they are human beings and are equal to everybody else.
- ✓ The employer should not worry to ask about the disability, as it is important to provide everything necessary for his future employee in order to be able to feel himself comfortable and adequate in the working environment. In most cases the applicants are very open to tell their story and can speak freely on this subject.
- ✓ Feedback

The employer should make sure that has given his feedback to the unsuccessful candidates. It is possible that one of them is not suitable for this company at the time, but receiving the employer's guidance, he can improve his skills and develop himself and therefore he can soon start a career elsewhere.

Physical disabilities

the most

common barriers for people with physical disabilities are accessibility to buildings – entrance, ramps, elevators, wide doors, thresholds, inadequate toilets. This very often hampers them to reach an Office and to start working in it. When meeting them it is important to shake hands with them and then sit down on a chair to talk and thus to be on one and the same level. In this way no one would feel uncomfortable. If the hand is missing and there is prosthesis in its place, you must not feel uncomfortable, just greet him. Sometimes the candidate would not be able to sign and fill in a form due to the tremor of his hands. In such a case it is necessary to assist him.

On the basis of the existing experience in the integration of employees with various abilities, the diversity at the workplace leads to many positive sides in the team building. The other members become a tight-knit group; they join the newly arrived fellow, act with understanding and sympathy and begin to assume life in a more positive way. People with different abilities are much more loyal to employers, and the turnover is very low, as it is an extreme recognition for them that someone has backed and supported the start of their career development. In this way the company reduces its costs for staff recruiting and it is much easier to create sustainable human capital. We should not forget that employees with disabilities are as productive and reliable as employees without disabilities, and most of them even do not need any training, since they have certain experience in similar job areas.

3.6. Stage 5 - On and off job support:

Accessible working environment and complete use of potential

It Should be

checked up what accessibility devices will be needed when the new employee with functional differences starts work.

First of all, it is important for the company employer to be fully aware of the needs of the person with different abilities in order to make a plan for the type/types of gadgets that will be needed – access ramp, toilets, PC software, etc. It is required to evaluate the effectiveness – the extent to which it will eliminate the challenge to the man, how long the implementation will take, accordingly, and whether there will be a need for training for the operating with the improvement?

What investment funds would be needed; can the company afford it? All this should be in accordance with the working environment for the rest of the employees of the company, without violating their health and comfort.

After conducting this study, it should be preceded with the implementation of the improvement for the employee to begin doing his job.

Integration

For the majority of people with different abilities starting a new job means an appointment to a first position in their entire life. It brings a lot of uncertainty and worry to them, since they have to face a series of unfamiliar challenges. Different individuals need a different period for their integration; therefore, it is very important for them to have the adequate support and understanding on the part of the employer and the team. People with disabilities have tremendous motivation and desire to perform their activities, but they need some time to get used to the dynamics and the culture in the Office. During this period the supported employment specialist should be always at the disposal of both sides – employees and companies - for any advice and assistance.

Training the staff of the company

Sometimes challenges arise from a current employee of the company – an embarrassment about how to communicate with people with different abilities, feelings of discomfort, resentment and others. This is why it is important, again a team expert, a corporate psychologist or other professional to conduct the training of the team of the enterprise/organization and the chief of the team which the newly appointed employee with different opportunities has joined recently. These are normal reactions, as due to a lack of experience and information, people often react rashly, worried and need assistance to deal with a particular case.

Key components applicable to employers, supporting the inclusion of people with different abilities on the labor market. These components contribute to lay the basis of a culture of diversity at the workplace.

- ✓ Engagement – how your organization promotes its commitment to people with functional differences and the removal of barriers for people with disabilities, both internally among employees, and externally to clients of the company, customers and other parties concerned;
- ✓ Know-how — how the organization trains its staff in advance, to make sure that they will feel at ease and confident, they will know how and what to do when communicating with persons with disabilities;
- ✓ Adaptation of the working environment – how the Organization welcomes and responds to the needs of people with different abilities; how the very process of necessary adaptations turns into an effective example;
- ✓ Selection of staff – how you attract and recruit disabled people, giving access to the widest range of talents at any level;

- ✓ Retention of staff – how the organization estimates its employees, including those with different capabilities or have received damage during a working process; how you would be committed to their retention and development;
- ✓ Products and services – the way in which the Organization estimates its customers and users with disabilities and meets their needs when developing and delivering its new products and services;
- ✓ Suppliers and partners – the way in which the organization engages vendors and corporate partners to reflect and to enable them to fulfill their commitment to the use of best practices in the field of integration of people with functional differences;
- ✓ Communication – how the company is possibly best inclusive when communicates with people with different abilities and, even, when necessary – there are individual communication solutions for individuals;
- ✓ Premises – what is the degree of accessibility of the premises of the Organization for people with disabilities and, where necessary, what adjustments are made regarding some individuals;
- ✓ Information and communication technologies (ICT) – how we ensure that the company's ICT are accessible and usable by people with different abilities and that, if necessary, there is a possibility of any adjustment to them.

The role of the family at this stage

Family members have considerable insight about the job seeker, and can contribute a great deal to the process of planning for work.

Real life cases

Yordan Iliev, 38 years old

Yordan was born in the town of Yambol. At the age of 16, as a result of an accident, he falls and hits his spine. He remains paralyzed from the second vertebrae downwards. His everyday life passes in front of the computer. He successfully writes with the help of his speaking program. When he turned to us before three months requesting assistance and finding a job, he told us that he would be endlessly happy if he could get involved with a video surveillance activity. At first we did not really believe that we would be able to cope so fast as JAMBA is still developing its business mainly in Sofia. It was literally the next day in our platform that we received a new ad, which was precisely a position in the particular sector and the location was Dolni Lozen. We immediately contacted the owner of the company and Dancho already enjoys his first work experience in life.

Everyone can be useful with their skills, knowledge and qualities. Everyone has the right to feel complete and to develop. To do this, businesses have the responsibility to support people with different opportunities to give them a chance to show their potential.

Maria 47 age

Maria is 47 years old and she has paralysis of her legs. She was working as an accountant. She had a husband and a child.

She "lost" her legs in a car accident 15 years ago. When she left the hospital, she started rehabilitation program. After a few weeks it became clear that she won't walk again. Unfortunately, her husband left her and took away their kid. The reason was that she wouldn't be able to look after the family.

Right after she divorced, she moved into her parent's house. She needed help because she couldn't take care after herself. After long months of rehabilitation, she felt better, so she decided to start working with a psychologist.

Psychotherapy, in conjunction with the rehabilitation granted excellent results: Maria returned to her profession. She got a job at a Center for the disabled. After some time, she took the most serious decision in her life – asking for the adoption of a little girl. After all the administrative procedures passed, she became mother for the second time.

Although it was a difficult endeavor Maria didn't give up. Little by little she learned to care for the child, despite her disability. During this time, she worked as an accountant in the center from her home. With the help of their parents, she again returned her faith in life and managed to avoid the depression that necessitates the following tragic events.

Today Maria is working in the center and she had found a foundation for supporting victims of car accidents. Her daughter is 16 years old and her son is 20 years old. Both of them are helping her with the foundation as volunteers.

Elena, 35 years old

Elena is 35 years old. She lives in a town in BG. There is an expert decision (a panel of medical experts) with 71% incapacity, lifelike-paresis of the right hand. She graduated from the Economics School with specialty Accounting. She was registered at the Labor Office. She said she wanted to work as a technical assistant in an office.

In 2006 she worked under the national program for subsidized employment in a company as Operator of data input.

From 2007 to 2010 she worked under the national program for subsidized employment in "Business Center -Pazardzhik" Association.

In 2011, she worked for 6 months under a Measure from the Employment Promotion Act for unemployed people with permanent disabilities as a Technical Assistant in the Business Center - Pazardzhik Association.

In 2012, through the labor office, she has been trained and has acquired a professional qualification - Administrative services.

From 2012 to 2015 under the national program for subsidized employment she worked as a Social Worker at the Social Assistance Directorate.

During her visits to the Labor Office, she was interested in jobs for people with disabilities. She was holding her right hand close to the body covered with the garment. She was writing with her left hand.

Under the national program for subsidized employment, they announced places for Social Worker's Assistant to the Social Assistance Directorate and for a Concierge at the Municipality of Pazardzhik.

I called Elena on the phone to inform her, I called repeatedly but did not answer. I visited the Social Assistance Directorate, where she had already worked and talked with her former colleagues. I asked them to look for her too. Everyone was very impressed with her.

The next day, Elena came to the Labor Office. I suggested that she get back to the Social Assistance Directorate, but she refused. She said work is very busy for a healthy person, and even more for a person with a disability. She preferred to point her to a janitor to Pazardzhik Municipality but was refused by the employer. Another candidate was preferred.

After a while, a company that deals with the retail of medical and orthopedic goods announced a job for a sales consultant.

In a conversation with the employer, he explained that he would hire a person with a disability. The work was more about making documents on the computer. I told him about Elena and he was interested.

I invited her to come to the Labor Office. I informed her about the job. She wished to meet the employer. A few days later she began work in the company.

Valeri, 28 years old

28-year-old Valeri lost 80% of his hearing as a child because of a medical mistake. Seven years ago, he started from Dimitrovgrad to Sofia to study. He desires to be a teacher of physical education. But in his words no one is looking for a person like him because they do not believe he can handle it.

After being unemployed for a period of two years, he opens the non-governmental organization "Jamba". Four months ago, they found him a job as a sales consultant in a large sporting goods store.

Now Valeri feels at home. He works with colleagues and often walks together with them on a mountain.

37 unemployed persons with disabilities start working in the municipality of Gotse Delchev

Gotse Delchev Municipality started the implementation of the important social project "Training and Employment from the Operational Program" Human Resources Development"(Feb.2019).The program provides employment for 24 months to unemployed people with permanent disabilities. There will be ensured employment of 37 persons who will work in kindergartens, social homes and other municipal sites. Their positions are tailored to their disabilities in order to be as complete as possible in the performance of their duties. 17 of these persons will work in the town of Gotse Delchev and the other 20 in the villages of the municipality.

The project is extremely important for people with reduced working capacity, who have difficulty in realizing the labor market. With this socially significant project, they will be able to work for two years, and this will be of great help to most people as they are in pre-retirement age.

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8 INSPIRATIONAL PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

<https://www.sunrisemedical.co.uk/blog/famous-people-with-disabilities>

Posted: 04/07/2017 | By Sunrise Medical



If these **famous people with disabilities** share something, besides their professional success, it is their **ability of self-improvement**. The lives of most of them have not been easy and precisely because of that, they are an example and inspiration.



1. Frida Kahlo

Frida **suffered polio** during her childhood and, according to some sources, also **had spina bifida**, which caused dysmetria in her right leg. In addition, her **spinal problems** were aggravated by an accident suffered in her adolescence, which left her with physical issues for her entire life. Frida spent much of her life in bed suffering from severe pain. Even so, she became one of the most famous artists of all time and an icon of the twentieth century.



2. John Nash

Another example of a celebrity with a disability who broke the mould is John Nash, an American mathematician whose life, marked by **acute paranoid schizophrenia**, is known to us thanks to the film "[A Beautiful Mind](#)". Aware of his illness, Nash fought against it and **developed a successful academic career** that earned him the **Nobel Prize in Economics** in 1994.



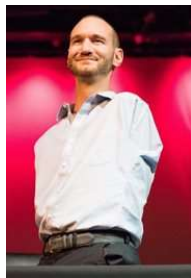
3. Stephen Hawking

A theoretical physicist, astrophysicist, cosmologist, and eminent scientist, Stephen Hawking was **diagnosed with ALS at age 21**: he was given 2 more years to live. He lived until he was 76-years-old.

He had been **paralysed from head to toe for over thirty years** and used a voice synthesiser to be able to communicate, and a wheelchair that he operated through slight movements of the head and eyes.

None of this prevented him from developing his activity as an **exemplary researcher and professor**, and intense personal life that allowed him to make his illness known to the world.

Becoming one of the most recognisable celebrities of our time, his story was taken to the cinema in the film "[The Theory of Everything](#)".



4. Nick Vujicic

Nick Vujicic is another world-famous celebrity with a disability, and **founder of Life Without Limbs** - an organisation for people with physical disabilities.

Vujicic was **born in 1982 with no limbs**. He claims that as a child he suffered ridicule and discrimination, and tried to commit suicide but, with time, he learned to see his own potential.

He is currently **giving motivational talks around the world**, has written several books and is a regular on talk shows and TV programs. He became very famous when starring in the touching short film "[The Butterfly Circus](#)".



5. Andrea Bocelli

Tenor, musician, writer and musical producer of Italian origin, Andrea Bocelli has sold more than 75 million records.

He was born with **congenital glaucoma** that left him partially blind, something that did not prevent him from taking piano lessons until the age of six.

However, at age 12 he suffered a blow during a football game that left him **completely blind**.

Endowed with a spirit of innate improvement, he decided to focus entirely on music, specifically on singing. He also studied Law.

Boccelli has received numerous awards of international prestige and even has a beach named after him on the Adriatic.



6. Michael J. Fox

The protagonist of "[Back to the Future](#)" was **diagnosed with Parkinson's** in 1991 when he was only 29 years old and his career was in full success.

He was told that he should withdraw from the stage, but he did not cease to be an actor. Although at first it was not easy to accept his illness (he fell into depression and alcoholism), in the last decade he has not stopped working and his foundation has already **raised \$233 million for Parkinson's research**.

After more than 25 years and with the disease in a very advanced stage, Michael J. Fox continues to maintain his **spirit of improvement**.



7. Alex Zanardi

After several years competing in F1, Alex Zanardi suffered an accident in 2001 in which **both legs were amputated**. Three years later he was on the track again driving a BMW for which he himself had adapted some prostheses.

He won four World Touring Car Championship (WTCC) victories. However, in 2007 he decided to focus his sporting efforts on **adapted cycling**.

The tricycle he rides has also been designed by himself and, to date, he has **won three Paralympic golds**.

8. Aaron Fotheringham

In addition to being one of the **most inspirational disabled celebrities**, Aaron



Fotheringham is also one of the **most famous skaters in the world**.

His specialty? **Wheelchair skating**.

During his childhood, Aaron underwent several failed hip operations that forced him to use a wheelchair permanently. Even so, he continued to practice a sport which he was passionate about adapting to his disability.

In 2005, Aaron Fotheringham landed a great jump with a 180° turn, and in 2006 made the first somersault in wheelchair history. Since then, his achievements and challenges are an example for thousands of people.

These are some of the best-known personalities at the international level and with the most famous histories of improvement, but every day, there are many similar stories surrounding us that we do not know about.

Having the right equipment can make all the difference! Check out our range of [manual wheelchairs](#) and [powered wheelchairs](#) over on our website.

UNIT 4. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH VISION DISABILITY

4.1. Short description of disability – visually impaired (blind and partially sighted)

4.1.1 Definition

The definition of blindness and partial sight, as well as their registration criteria, vary from one European country to another. First of all, it is important to understand the terminology: the term visually impaired is used to indicate blind and partially sighted people together.

The European Blind Union adopts in principle the definitions used by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for blindness and partial sight:

Distance vision impairment:

- Mild – presenting visual acuity worse than 6/12
- Moderate – presenting visual acuity worse than 6/18
- Severe – presenting visual acuity worse than 6/60
- Blindness – presenting visual acuity worse than 3/60

Near vision impairment:

- Presenting near visual acuity worse than N6 or M.08 with existing correction¹.

Some ophthalmologists use a different set of criteria to determine if a person can be considered visually impaired:

- if they can only read the top letter of the optician's eye chart from three meters or less, then they are considered blind;
- if they can only read the top letter of the chart from six meters or less, then they are considered partially sighted.

Some people also experience deaf blindness, a condition that combines both hearing and sight loss. People living with this condition are at a higher risk of isolation and exclusion.

4.1.2 Some data

Over 30 million blind and partially sighted people live in geographical Europe. An average of 1 in 30 Europeans experience sight loss in their lifetime.

Some people are born with reduced sight whilst others may acquire an eye condition later in life, such as retinitis pigmentosa, that deteriorates with age. Others may lose their sight in an accident, or because of diseases like diabetes or arthritis. However, age-related eye conditions are the most common cause of sight loss in Europe. Eyesight in seniors may be affected by conditions such as macular degeneration or cataracts. In low income countries, millions of people suffer sight loss caused by preventable diseases. These types of vision loss are called 'preventable blindness'.

The average unemployment rate of blind and partially sighted people of working age is over 75 percent. Visually impaired women are more likely to be unemployed.

¹ <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment>

Sight loss is also closely related to old age: almost 90 percent of visually impaired people is over the age of 65².

4.2. Stage I – Client engagement: practical information how to reach people with visual disability, barriers on the labour market, family involvement

It's very difficult for visually impaired people to find a job that falls out of stereotyped, fixed categories. They have the highest rate of unemployment among disabled groups³: this trend enables isolation and social exclusion. But is being constantly overlooked by business owners or hiring managers

However, according to a survey conducted by the Danish Blind Society, prejudice can be even more crippling than visual impairment itself: apparently, one in three Danish workers appears to be skeptical about having to work with a visually impaired colleague, because they think having a visually impaired colleague means more work for themselves – even if there isn't any data to support this belief. It's also very common to think that blind people are on social benefits and that, if they perform any kind of work, it's a volunteer job.

Thorkild Olesen, chairman of the Danish Blind Society, explains: "There is in general a great uncertainty about what blind people can do. One of my favorite examples is about one of my blind friends. In a job interview she was asked whether she needed help to go to the toilet. This is just one of the things that people think we can't do".⁴

On the other hand, it is crucial for visually impaired people to take the active approach: the attitude they display in their job quest is not without significance. Some might be afraid to be lose their pension or disability allowance; others might be afraid of being the only blind or partially sighted person in a certain workplace, fearing a lack of understanding from their colleagues, or a lack of services specifically designed according to their needs. The first step would be to take the time and reflect on themselves, who they are and who they want to be, what they can do and what they would like to do: after having defined their professional objective, they can start looking for a job. Then, once they have defined their skills and knowledge, they should concentrate into building an effective CV and motivation letter. In addition to these general questions, it's fundamental for visually impaired people to ask themselves: what difficulties may I encounter in pursuing my professional objective, considering that I have a visual disability? They should also research information regarding the national employment situation regarding people with disabilities: there may be differences regarding employment laws and benefits from one country to the other – and also differences in the support of disabled people in the workplace. The best thing people can do is, if in doubt, to ask their blind or partially sighted colleagues what they need. They also shouldn't be

² <http://www.euroblind.org/about-blindness-and-partial-sight/facts-and-figures>

³ <https://www.hloom.com/blog/career-assistance-blind-vision-impaired/>

⁴ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/health-consumers/news/workplace-prejudice-keeps-blind-people-out-of-employment/>

offended if their blind colleagues don't want to talk about their sight conditions: it's a personal decision. For this reason, it's important to ask personal questions with sensitivity.

4.3. Stage 2 – Vocational profiling: practical information on preparation of the client and his/her vocational preferences, questions to ask, questions to avoid, example of form to collect all the information, individual action plan and what should include.

The interview is a fundamental tool to identify work abilities and preferences, noting the past, the present and the future desired by the disabled person. This is useful not only for the visually impaired job-seeker, but also for the interviewer, who should explore family circumstances, medical history, leisure time, reference ethical values, cultural background and detailed information on education and training.

The interviewer should concentrate on what the visually impaired can do, rather than not do, and their ability to be active citizens and be involved in the choices they make. It is becoming increasingly clear that it is not necessary to develop special methodologies: all the typical psychological dimensions explored during the interview of a person with typical development (self-efficacy, self-determination, needs, satisfaction, interests, etc.) can also be considered for a visually impaired person. This approach is relatively new; traditionally, disability has always been characterized in terms of "lack"⁵.

Of course, we cannot forget that visual disability differs from one person to another, so, when evaluating, we should consider specific elements related to specific disability, in particular:

- The pathology that has determined the visual disability, its chronicity, and the eventual progression;
- Functional skills (autonomy in moving, overall independence of the person, technological abilities in connection with the usage of assistive technology);
- Specific skills and competences (professional competences);
- Adaptive skills, since the presence of behavioral alterations can interfere with adaptation to the work environment.

In order to create a successful professional profile, that would avoid placing the visually impaired job seeker in a position not related to their field of study or competences, or where they would feel out of place, the interviewer should use tools like checklists, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, other than prompting them to think about their own skills and vocation.

Creating a professional profile is a dynamic process that requires constant review and updating. It should always include:

⁵ Salvatore Soresi, Laura Nota & Michael L. Wehmeyer (2011) Community involvement in promoting inclusion, participation and self-determination, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15:1, 15-28, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2010.496189

- The personal characteristics (skills, abilities, skills and aspirations);
- Professional desires and ambitions (related to the field of work or a preferred professional position).

It is, however, important for supported employment specialists to be aware that there are some situations in which a visually impaired person cannot be included in any kind of work-related activities. In particular, they should be able to assess and distinguish between:

- persons who are able to perform a job like any other worker, despite their disability;
- persons who are able to exercise their skills like any other worker in certain environments (for example, if there are not technical and architectural barriers are overcome, or if they have the aids they require);
- persons who can work, even if not at the levels of operation of their colleagues, if they are placed in the best possible conditions;
- persons with severe disabilities who can exercise an activity in protected/sheltered environments, if properly assisted;
- persons who, depending on the type and severity of their impairment, cannot be included in any work activity, other than for "therapeutic" purposes.

Last but not least, it is the supported employment specialists' task to raise awareness of companies, so that they can appreciate the disabled person as someone who is adding value to the company, and not the opposite.

4.4. Stage 3 – job finding: sectors with possible employment for this target group; how to involve the client in job search; formal and informal way of job finding.

“What kind of jobs can visually impaired people do... if any?”. This question probably pops up in people's minds all the time, especially those who are not acquainted with visual impairments at all. It is hard to imagine jobs that don't require seeing.

Fortunately, there are many jobs that visually impaired people can aspire to nowadays, especially as a result of the development of new technologies.

In Italy, for example, a lot of blind people currently in the national work force prefer to work in fields that are traditionally associated with the blind community, such as:

- Switchboard operators, for private companies or the police;
- Physiotherapists;
- Teachers, both in mainstream and specialist schools.
- Engineering jobs in the public administration or IT companies.
- Translators or interpreters.

All these professions are particularly suitable for VIPs, as they mostly focus on the written and spoken word, rather than on visual inputs. However, it's important to notice that more and more visually impaired people are not letting their disability pick their profession for them.

Either way, it is clear that visually impaired people have more difficulties to find a job than sighted people. Fortunately, there are some structures and tools specialized in supporting them in their quest. For example, some companies offer specific training opportunities for disabled people. They can be either long-term, in order for the employee to better integrate in the company, or short-term, in order for that person to discover which job may match his/her expectations and skills. Moreover, in some countries, public administrations employ people with disabilities belonging to the so called "protected categories" on the basis of competitive entry examinations where blind persons can benefit from special time adjustments and use their adapted assistive technologies: this is the case, for example, of Italy⁶, where P.A. and private companies employ persons with disabilities belonging to the "protected categories" following a well-established quota system, which sets progressive percentages on the basis of the number of non-disabled employees. 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.

As you may already have guessed technology has made a great progress also when it comes to people with visual impairments. Nowadays, visually impaired persons can use: computers, smart phones and other common devices such as mp3 players, tablets, e-book readers etc. just like any sighted person. And all of this, that goes without saying, has empowered them like never before. Technology has revolutionised the lives of visually impaired people, even when they are looking for a job. Online job-searches and applications are becoming more and more popular and common, therefore, knowing how to search and apply for a job is necessary to succeed in the current labor market. However, not every website is designed to be accessible for visually impaired people.

People with visual impairments usually utilize job boards, which are websites where you can find a series of available positions that are collected directly from employers and companies. In general, one can apply directly through the website or send a candidature to the specifically stated e-mail address. In most cases, job boards allow you to register and create a profile where you can post your CV so that employers can see it. On the contrary, job search engines, also called "job aggregators", show (or link you to) job offers that were previously offered in other websites. Both types of websites can be generalist or specific (also called "niche job sites"). The first ones collect a wide range of employment opportunities in different fields and that require various kind of education. Instead, the second ones are dedicated to a specific profession or a specific category of people. Some examples of websites with job offers for

⁶ Law 104/1992.

people with disabilities are www.wheelit.be in Belgium, www.jobmetoo.com in Italy and www.portalento.es in Spain.

4.5. – Employer engagement: practical advice and tips on different support for this target group; adaptation of work place, how to gain trust of the employer, etc.

It is important to stress that, in order for a person with sight loss to work independently, it is of great importance that the work environment is designed towards inclusion for all – both in relation to the necessary adapted technology and the physical environment. Employers should make sure that blind and partially sighted people feel at ease in their workplace, providing specific services and aids such as:

- A camera at the entrance, providing audio information about the building;
- Yellow and blue contrast painting on the pavement leading towards the building;
- Tactile identifications strips on external and internal doors;
- Tactile map in the hallway providing an overview of the building;
- Information on alternative print formats;
- Assistive technology, such as screen readers on computers.

In Italy, assistive technology is financed by the National Healthcare System insurance. However, the covered amount and the technical aids that can be reimbursed can vary drastically from region to region. It often happens that a specialist in assistive technology pays a visit to the workplace of visually impaired employees. This work-based assessment aims to evaluate the technical support already provided and to check whether something (equipment, software etc.) needs to be adjusted to better enable a visually disabled employee to carry out the tasks. Furthermore, visually impaired employees must attend trainings focused on new assistive technology and to learn how to adapt the equipment at their disposal to their specific needs. In Italy, it is the Italian Union for the Blind which performs the assessment. Visually impaired employees are entitled to assistance both in terms of mobility (to reach their place of work) and of technical equipment provided by the employer.

Several countries in Europe have a quota system which compels employers (private companies or public administrations) to engage a certain percentage of disabled persons in their workforce. In France, for example, to fulfil this legal obligation, the employers can choose between four possibilities:

1. actually employing disabled staff ;
2. the provision of work, by subcontracting to protected centres;
3. payment of a lump sum contribution to a fund for the employment of disabled workers, the amount of which is calculated according to the size of the company and the number of disabled people employed;
4. reaching an agreement with a relevant trade union organisation around recruitment, training or job retention where there is a risk of dismissal for incapacity.

The different set of choices given to employers enables them to diversify their approach to the employment of people with visual impairments, and allows them to fulfil their legal obligation on their own terms.

In France, like in many other European countries, associations representing disabled people are represented on funding boards alongside trade unions and employers. Funds made available through this system can then be used to pay for:

- Adapting the work environment to the needs of disabled workers;
- Supported trainings/apprenticeships;
- Awareness-raising amongst employers in the business sector;
- Attribution of start-up grants enabling disabled people to create their own jobs⁷.

Even though the integration of blind and partially sighted people into schools, further education, university, and business is so important, Vocational Retraining Centres are still a fundamental institution in France. Vocational Retraining Centres are especially relevant to newly diagnosed people, who lost their sight due to illness or an accident.

Before beginning their training, people are offered an 'adaptation' course which allows them, if necessary, to learn Braille, mobility techniques, and how to use adaptive computer technology.

The training courses provided can vary from physiotherapy to telecommunications and manual work. The running costs of the centres are covered by the Social Security System which also pays the accommodation costs of the trainees. In these centres, trainees receive also the psychological help that they so often need and also benefit from social services, sight specialists and employment specialists who work together as part of a multi-disciplinary team. Teaching methods are adapted to individual needs: for example, documents are produced in braille or large print and accessible software and hardware is available for trainees who need magnification or audio.

VIPs and entrepreneurship

If up until a few years ago, the work of the visually impaired was categorized by a single mass profession, the switchboard operator, we now need to realize how this perspective is becoming increasingly scarce due to a more globalized labour market.

As we analyzed, blind and partially sighted people can basically choose their profession just like any other person. However, some dilemmas arise spontaneously: is it possible to be competitive as a blind person within a labour market that is not protected by special laws? Would it be possible to become individual entrepreneurs instead?

⁷ EBU, (2018) Good practices on blind and partially-sighted persons' employment in Europe, retrieved from http://www.euroblind.org/publications-and-resources/guidelines#_Employment

The answer is, obviously, yes. There are many examples of successful blind or partially sighted entrepreneurs.

Srikanth Bolla was born in India in 1992, in a family of farmers. He has been visually impaired since childbirth. He was denied admission to the Indian Institute of Technology because of his blindness, so he applied to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he became the first international blind student. When he was 19 he co-founded the Samanvai Center for Children with Multiple Disabilities in 2011: the Center has started a Braille printing press and it provides educational, vocational, financial and rehabilitation services to students with multiple disabilities, with the aim of making them independent. In 2012, Bolla started Bollant Industries, providing employment to hundreds of people with disabilities, most of which were uneducated and unskilled. Bollant produces eco-friendly recycled Kraft paper from municipal waste or soiled paper, and other products from natural leaf and recycled paper; it also recycles waste plastic⁸. Srikanth is also the director of Surge Impact Foundation, founded in September 2016, which aims to raise public and institutions' awareness for India to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Daniel Williams, from Cardiff, the director of *Visualise Training and Consultancy*, together with Ryan Compton, from Manchester, the director of *Centre for Resolution*, both registered blind from a very young age, have developed a course to introduce the concept of self-employment to others. Being themselves successful entrepreneurs, and having had to overcome many architectural and cultural barriers to establish their own companies, they realized how the lack of information and support often prevents people from starting their own business. Their course is aimed at single mums, ex-offenders, people with disabilities and students.

Raul Pietrobon, a blind entrepreneur, founded Cambratech in 2001: its headquarters are located in Cameri, in the province of Novara, Italy. Cambratech designs and sells products for visually impaired people to achieve autonomy and independence in their daily lives, while keeping prices accessible for everyone.

It's fundamental that supported employment specialists keep themselves updated about calls for proposals or assistive technology, in order to pass on the information to visually impaired job seekers or future entrepreneurs: Italy, for example, has an annual call for proposals for blind or partially sighted aspiring entrepreneurs. The latest assistive technology for visually impaired entrepreneurs include AIRA, a service that connects blind and low-vision people to highly trained, remotely-located agents. Through a mobile app, or through a pair of Horizon Smart Glasses, AIRA delivers instant access to visual information – enhancing everyday efficiency, engagement, and independence, in blind people's personal and professional life.

⁸ <https://www.thebetterindia.com/51264/ceo-fifty-crore-blind-srikanth-bolla-bollant-industries/>

UNIT 5. EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTED FOR PERSONS DEAF AND BEING HARD OF HEARING

5.1. Short description of disability - deaf and hard of hearing persons.

According to the definition of 1980 adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO), disability means limitation or lack of ability to perform activities in a manner or to the extent considered normal for humans, resulting from damage and impairment of body functions.

Disability of hearing and / or speech is one of the types of disability. Within this disability, we distinguish a deaf person - a man whose loss or significant impairment of the hearing aids prevents the human hearing from being understood and for which the hearing has no practical meaning at work and in any task of life. Within this definition, we also distinguish a hearing-impaired person, i.e. a person with hearing loss who can master speech in a natural way.

Deaf people are encountered in our daily lives. They are part of the society in which we live. Often, however, are for us as "absent-invisible" both physically and in terms of knowledge about them. Only direct contact, often unintentional by us, causes any reactions in us. However, this does not change the fact that we pass them on the street, in the shop, we see them at the doctor's, etc. Hardly anyone wonders where this disability comes from. In Poland, the problem of hearing loss affects a very large number of people, it is estimated that there are between 60,000 and 100,000 people in Poland. deaf. Despite such a large representation of deaf people in our environment, the knowledge that society has about these people is very low, sometimes even negligible, and yet, according to the maxim of Frederic C. Schreiber, "Deaf can do anything that hears, except hearing", it does not determine its lower value on the labor market at all, on the contrary, the deaf people have a lot of potential and readiness to take up employment, they just have to get a chance, like any of us.

The issue of disability in social policy is becoming more and more important not only because of the scale of the phenomenon and its social consequences, but also because of the favorable political climate (legislative changes, EU funding of integration programs) and social (changes in the mentality of able and disabled citizens) . Hidden so far in the shadow of stereotypes, prejudices and ignorance, disability comes out slowly into the light of day and becomes a familiar element of everyday life. It is worth taking advantage of the prevailing revival to create a coherent, comprehensive and effective system of overcoming barriers to the integration of deaf people.

5.2 Stage 1 - Customer engagement: practical information on how to reach deaf people, their barriers on the labor market, family involvement.

Problems with finding a job result, among other things, from common stereotypes. Deaf people are perceived as "strange", isolated, having problems in dealing with others and performing more difficult tasks. It is a harmful image that cannot be covered in reality. Deaf people have better

developed other senses, such as sight or touch, and their possible isolation usually does not result from their own will, but from the attitude of society. In addition, the very fact of "otherness", which is deafness for some, discourages employers. It is usually a problem to obtain a medical license for work. It results from restrictive regulations concerning, among others, machine operation, as well as from the fact that employers do not inform in the referral for research on adaptation of the workplace to the needs of deaf people. This situation makes it very difficult for deaf people to obtain a certificate authorizing employment.

When looking for a job, one of the basic criteria is education. Deaf people have to overcome many barriers in relation to education, a large part of which ends their education at the professional level. According to statistics, the majority of the employed are junior high school graduates, technicians, vocational schools, and much less often studies. Unfortunately, it should also be noted that the threshold of possibility of vocational examinations among deaf people is very low, which indicates poor preparation for the profession. Thus, deaf people usually perform jobs that do not require high qualifications (e.g.: farmer, industrial worker). Thus, in the event of a crisis, they are the first to be released. Difficulties also occur during the training or the aforementioned medical examinations, because at the time of contact with a doctor, it is rarely ensured that an interpreter is present, and vocational courses are rarely translated into sign language.

The attitude of some deaf people is not without significance. They are afraid of losing various benefits (e.g. pensions), as well as the need for continuous training. It also discourages the fear of being the only deaf person, which would affect contacts with colleagues, the possibility of free conversation. A great role is also played by factors that are unfamiliar to hearing people, such as the shift of work, long distance from home, fear of responsibility.

Deaf people need encouragement and energy that drives them to work, as well as their efficient associates. As a rule, motivation immediately after joining the company's staff remains at a high level, but then gradually decreases. It is in the best interest of every employer to stop such a decline, or even to keep it as high as possible, which will translate into results and results of work.

Research carried out by TNS OBOP for the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People in 2010 shows that 9/10 employees considered the most important for the employer to correctly understand the limitations imposed on them by a given disability. If they have such a feeling and the duties imposed on them are feasible, their motivation to work increases and for a long time remains at a high level that is both satisfactory.

Many of the respondents also pointed to the need to receive clear, understandable guidelines and expectations of the employer, as well as - which is extremely important - to receive feedback as to the work they do. These can also be critical comments. It is important, however, that they should be communicated in a friendly way that does not violate the dignity of the employee and, above all, in a way that is understandable to them

In the common understanding, what motivates money the most is. Adjusting the amount of salary paid to the scope of the employee's duties as well as the time devoted to their implementation is not enough, but the financial issue is not everything. Wage motivation is worth supplementing with what we call non-wage motivation. It is based mainly on increasing the employee's sense of security and emphasizing affiliation to a given workplace, which should make them feel an important part of

the essential whole, a part that creates a team of people who find themselves in the right way in the work they do.

The experience of deaf people in the labor market is very often not very positive, many times people say such words about failures, not caused by lack of competences, but more often - caused by lack of tolerance among employees towards their disability. Many times, they mention the broadly understood mobbing and discrimination in the workplace, which in the end very often leads to depression, breakdown and neurosis. In such cases, the support of family, friends who once again allow the person to believe in themselves, regain their value as a man and an employee, to be able to trust others and return to the labor market, is irreplaceable. To a large extent thanks to the family, friends, the deaf person is able to believe in himself, believe that he is valuable, able to find himself in the labor market and who can offer a lot to the employer. The family allows such a person to focus on its virtues, while the disadvantages resulting from its disability can be explained.

Family support for each person is very important, while for a disabled person, especially deaf.

5.3 Stage 2 - Occupational profiling: practical information on customer preparation and his / her professional preferences, questions to ask, questions to avoid, an example of a form to gather all information, an individual action plan and what should be included

Appropriate profiling, functional diagnosis of the potential, preferences and skills of a person using the support of a career counselor is the basis for employment.

The adviser should be open, respectful of others and free from prejudice and stereotypes. He must be able to combine individual approach to the client's needs with knowledge of external factors that affect his or her fate, choice and decisions.

In the first stage of meetings with a vocational counselor through an interview, you should know the client's expectations and preferences regarding the professional direction, working conditions and the idea of your future. Information on development, education and careers should be collected. This is preparation, specifying expectations and looking for personal resources. The conversation with the client should be flexible but systematized. First of all, it's about making contact with the client. There must be some trust, understanding and cooperation between the adviser and the client.

The next step is to learn the skills, interests, strengths and limitations of the person, including practical exercises. An important aspect is also taking into account the environment of the profiled person, ie the family situation, place of residence, the environment in which he / she resides.

Individual counseling is aimed at helping a person in general development, arranging a career path and dealing with the current situation, i.e. unemployment. The position of work is an important aspect in human life, affects its psychological development, sense of security and values. A vocational counselor helps the client to understand his professional interests, translate them into a goal and adjust the strategy to its implementation.

Applied methods:

- Getting to know and assessing interests, abilities, qualifications, personality
- Making a diagnosis
- Collecting information on occupations and the local labor market
- Planning and monitoring your career plan through optimal actions

Through diagnosis, you can understand the skills that contribute to interacting with the environment, i.e. communicativeness, motivation, assertiveness, and assessment of one's own abilities.

Each advice should be created and adapted to the individual needs of the client.

However, there is a pattern of questions that can be used for each participant to get to know him better. There are questions in it, e.g.

- My interests and abilities,
- My values (what is the hierarchy),
- Personality traits, among others Strengths and weaknesses,
- What would you like to do?
- In what profession do you see?
- What skills can be useful in this profession?
- What activities would you like to do at work?
- Objects / tools with which you would like to work,
- What benefits would you like to achieve?
- My career vision, what do I have to do to achieve it?
- Educational path,
- What courses / trainings,
- What is important,
- What are your achievements,
- What would you like to achieve,
- What should you do to increase your chances?
- What are your barriers?

The next step is to specify the career objective along with setting the implementation schedule. This is to prepare the client to achieve the goal by taking individual actions and steps. Issues regarding personal development, activity and moving around the labor market should be addressed. Creating a professional profile includes a comprehensive diagnosis of a person's potential, aimed at determining: professional predispositions, level of social competences, skills, strengths and weaknesses, preferences. It is important to define the priorities in the planning activity and the so-called "B" plan, which is an alternative. It can be used, for example, for the time of raising or changing qualifications, acquiring experience.

Information meetings also concern occupations, the education system, the possibility of changing or raising their qualifications, sources of information on current job offers on the market. Making the client aware of the competition along with the activities and responsibilities associated with the performance of a given profession helps to specify their own career path. The adviser should indicate methods of looking for a job, i.e. a source of searching for offers, own activity, seeking information from friends / family, personal contact with the employer, etc.; and help create application documents for the position. In addition, the class should prepare the client for an interview - indicate the correct behavior (body language), give examples of questions that may arise or even simulate such a conversation. An important aspect is the analysis of strengths and practical skills in order to use them during the conversation and later in the work environment. Conducting classes in the field of soft skills, "extracting" them from participants through exercises is to increase self-confidence and their abilities. Customer engagement, cooperation and activity are essential

The main institutional and legal support in the country are Labor Offices, which according to the Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labor market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2018 item 1265, as amended) is the reduction of unemployment and professional activation of office clients through various forms of support, i.e. job placement, career guidance, forms supporting the improvement of qualifications, cash benefits, reimbursement of equipment costs or retrofitting of the workplace.

Organizing traineeships for participants in various projects is a very good tool for improving and acquiring new skills in the profession. In addition, there is also the possibility of training at the workplace by familiarizing the person with the duties and activities at given positions by showing the correct way to perform activities. It must be done under the supervision of an assigned guardian who supports and controls work. After such practical classes, progress, possibilities and difficulties are discussed.

5.4 Stage 3 - finding a job: sectors with possible employment for this target group; how to engage the client in the search for a job; formal and informal way of looking for a job.

In Poland, deaf people generally work in auxiliary and physical positions. There are at least several reasons: a communication barrier, lower education and vocational skills of deaf people and

harmful stereotypes regarding this group. Most often, we can meet deaf employees in various types of warehouses and production plants while performing the following activities:

- folding,
- entering data into a computer,
- packing,
- assembly of elements,
- labeling,
- stocking the shelves,
- wrapping,
- quality control (goods inspection),
- weighing,
- completing orders,
- sorting,
- palletizing,
- packaging,
- counting money.

More and more often it will meet deaf people in the following professions: computer graphics, employee and payroll, teacher including an academic teacher, researcher, psychologist, educator in the boarding school, sign language teacher. There are also deaf people who practice: mime, hairdresser, designer and clothing designer, aqua fitness instructor and WOPR lifeguard, film editor, specialist in computer databases. It is worth emphasizing that among the deaf there are also more and more people with higher education as well as specialists and entrepreneurs.

5.5 Stage 4- Employer's involvement: practical advice and tips on different support for this target group; adaptation of the workplace, how to gain the trust of the employer.

Considering the personality traits of a deaf person applying to work, it is worth remembering to avoid generalization and comparison - each deaf candidate has a different personality. One deaf person will be calm, balanced, slow but precise, while the other will be cheerful, fast and energetic. One person will want to develop in their professional work, and another one will need to do exactly the same activities for several years. We can meet deaf people who are very reliable employees, and

those who do not work well enough. In this context, deaf employees are not different from hearing people.

Employers who have decided to hire a deaf person may stand before the so-called dilemma of the assessment. What does it mean? In a situation where the employer is not satisfied with the results and quality of the deaf employee's work, a question arises about the reasons. The dilemma of the assessment is a situation in which it is not entirely clear whether the failure to meet expectations results from the personality of the employee (eg unreliability or low motivation) or factors related to deafness (eg misunderstanding of instructions or comments). The most common cause of the dilemma is the lack of explicit expectations. In this situation, the employer does not know what to refer to in order to justify his assessment.

Due to the limited knowledge of Polish grammar, it may happen that the deaf person's response will seem completely incomprehensible. When planning the employment of deaf people in a company, it is worth knowing the perspective of the other side and, if possible, take it into account in the company's policy. Employment needs vary and relate to many areas.

Deaf people as an excluded and stereotyped group also need supportive activities and raising their self-esteem and independence.

As part of the vocational rehabilitation system, which may also be used by deaf people, there are many instruments activating disabled people professionally. Among them is the opportunity to take, for example, trainings, internships, adult vocational training, interventions or studies, as well as support instruments for people with disabilities interested in taking or running a business, such as:

- one-off funds for starting a business, agricultural activity or contributing to a social cooperative, co-financing up to 50% interest rate on a bank loan contracted for continuing this activity, reimbursement of social security contributions for people with disabilities who run a business or agricultural activity

In addition, there are also instruments to support the employment of people with disabilities, addressed to employers who employ or intend to employ such persons. These are monthly subsidies for the salary of a disabled employee - a deaf person - this is the most popular instrument among employers employing people with disabilities, to whom the largest amount of PFRON funds is allocated.

Co-financing amounts:

- a) PLN 1,800 - for persons with disabilities classified to a significant degree of disability;
- b) PLN 1,125 - for persons with disabilities classified as moderate disability;
- c) PLN 450 - in the case of disabled people classified as slightly disabled.

Despite numerous forms of activation and support, the location of deaf people and their situation on the labor market is still very difficult. It should be possible for them to have freer access

to certain occupations, to care more about their sense of comfort in the workplace. It is necessary to conduct research and analysis of the development of the situation, as well as training for employers and employees. In addition, stereotypes should be combated, the employment of persons with hearing impairments should be promoted and their free capacity to be extended, for example by translating sign language courses. It is also important to ensure the presence of an interpreter during medical examinations or certain professional matters.

A person with a hearing disability does not have to mean a problem for the employer. Just a bit of empathy, support and commitment. Deaf people struggle with many adversities, and the opportunity to take up a job can improve their mental health, restore faith in their own abilities. Let us put ourselves in their situation, help with our own capabilities.

5.6 Stage 5- support in the workplace and outside it: how to support and monitor the client at work; how to separate yourself from the client to strengthen the client's position and help him become independent; the role of the family at this stage of the SE

Deaf people who function in sign language reality, in learning about the world, use pictures rather than words. Sometimes a given word in a Polish language cannot be associated with a deaf person or taken away ambiguously. An example is the word ZAMEK That is why it is very important to properly present to the person a deaf character and position. It is worth to write down exactly the scope of duties and activities performed on a given position - so that everything is clear and understandable for the candidate.

Individual deaf people, of course, have different preferences, but it is important to pay attention to these aspects when preparing a job description or presentation, because they are subject to evaluation by a deaf person.

For the most part, deaf people are satisfied with the work they do, and they are very confident about the permanence of employment. In addition, people with hearing disabilities rarely use exemptions for medical examinations. Unfortunately, deaf people are often unaware of the rights and benefits they are entitled to, and hence they do not fully use them. Nonetheless, deaf people are generally positive about the possibility of working full-time, but it is of little importance to them whether the profession is interesting.

An important role in the professional activation of deaf people is played by the family. Due to the fact that the family often assumes responsibility for making decisions for a deaf person - it may be successful to get to it properly. Often, parents in good faith for their adult children deprive them of social and professional activity, especially if they receive permanent government support in the form of financial pensions. Fear of losing a benefit means that they are deprived of access to training, courses or job offers. Therefore, family support consisting in motivating and encouraging change in one's professional situation is an important element of the entire support system. It is often the case that deaf people will not find out about the possibility of changing their situation by participating in a project activating these people, because family members limit their access to information, for example because they do not know sign language.

In this situation, it is important to conduct educational conversations with family and the deaf - preferably in sign language. These conversations can help to overcome fear and fears of further functioning of the deaf person and facilitate her gradual becoming independent.

In order to facilitate the deaf person in a given workplace, it is necessary to introduce sign language elements among colleagues. The most beneficial form is the participation of one or more employees in the sign language course, which in the future will facilitate the flow of information with colleagues and the employer.

To sum up, deaf people are worth recommending for employees who, with the right adjustment to their support, can do many jobs and occupy positions previously unavailable.

This will be possible when both deaf people, members of their families, employers and vocational counselors will cooperate with each other in order to support some of their professional activity on the labor market.

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