change4inclusion

Meeting Report

Participants: Ellen van de Velde, Patrick Ruppol and Wannes Marivoet, <u>GTB</u> (Belgium); Seline Somers and Steffi Van Kwikkelberghe, <u>GRIP</u> (Belgium); Kimberly Desie, <u>Pulso Europe</u> (Belgium); Dace Kalteniece, Dagnia Gabusteina, Katrina Sevruka and Laile Daugavine (Laile on day 1 only for the welcoming session), <u>SIVA</u> (Latvia); Claudia Serrano and Pablo Sánchez, <u>Fundación INTRAS</u> (Spain); Loredana Martínez and Mathias Maucher, <u>EPR</u> (Belgium).

Guests: Beatriz Jiménez, <u>Spanish National Agency for ESF</u> (on both days); Agnese Marejeva, <u>Riga City Transport Company/Rīgas Satiksme</u> (on day 2 for Round Table); Inga Krima and Anastasia Maulvurfa, <u>State Employment Agency/Nodarbinātības Valsts Aģentūrā</u> (NVA) (on day 2 for Round Table); Linards Zvaigzne, <u>Latvian Employer's Confederation/Latvijas Darba Devēju Konfederācij</u>a (LDDK), Riga Region (on day 2 for Round Table)

Day 1: Tuesday, 29 March 2022

1. Welcome and short introduction

Katrina welcomed all the participants. She showed a presentation video of SIVA's installations and services. Laile added some words of introduction. The SIVA staff presented themselves. Katrina gave a short overview on the employment situation of people with disabilities in Latvia. Mathias asked all participants to introduce themselves. Mathias Pablo, Patrick and Wannes introduced their organisations. All four colleagues also elaborated on the reasons why they are interested in the methods used and in the planned outcomes of the C4I Project.

2. Introduction: Key items & objectives of the meeting & Conceptual framework and vision for inclusive enterprises/organisations & Instruments/toolbox

<u>a) Recapitulation of project's design, objectives and progress made so far</u>

=> *Reference document: PPT Presentation Patrick [GTB Inclusive Entrepreneurship](#) (Part 1: Slides 1-6)*

- Patrick presented GTB's organisation, services, and programmes.
- He explained GTB's objective to move from sheltered employment towards supported and inclusive employment. To facilitate this, GTB offers range of services to employers to support them with adapting their workplaces to promote diversity and inclusiveness.

- Patrick referred to **[Talentoscoop](#)** (webpage in Dutch): The initial project – focusing on practical aspects to make enterprises/organisations and workplaces/jobs more inclusive – aimed at supporting employers by taking away worries in their human resource processes by focusing on diversity in employment and inclusive entrepreneurship. Talentoscoop these day works with about 100 companies of all sizes in Flanders and offers them solutions to their problems – not all dealing with setting up inclusive workplaces – by offering a needs analysis and structured interviews.
- Patrick underlined that compared to the Talentoscoop project (2018-2019) and its outcomes and deliverables, the **Change4Inclusion** Project is strongly oriented towards **moral and motivational questions related to inclusiveness** as it aims at developing tools and at organising both awareness raising and cultural change processes to support employers to shift towards and implement an inclusive organisational culture.
- Patrick recapitulated the **progress made so far – including tasks soon to be finalised – in the first development phase** of the project (01/02/2021–31/05/2022):
  - ➔ Inclusion measurement:
    - ○ Conceptual framework & set of criteria
    - ○ Existing materials
    - ○ What to develop and test?
  - ➔ Experience experts (used to introduce the inclusive mindset in the organisations)
    - ○ Profile of competences
    - ○ Training possibilities for experts by experience (PwD)
  - ➔ Mentorship
    - ○ Profile of mentor's role
    - ○ Conceptual framework & set of criteria on what is good mentorship
    - ○ Training possibilities for mentors
  - ➔ Process evaluation

b) Understanding and measuring inclusion and the concept of inclusive workplaces

- Difference between **diversity and inclusion**: The colleagues arrived at the conclusion that many enterprises, organisations and/or employers don't fully understand the difference between the concepts and thus often refer wrongly to both concepts. This is also one of the reasons for running the C4I Project dealing with inclusive employment.
- Partners noted that – e.g., in Belgium and Spain – bigger and/or multinational companies, as a rule, are more interested in becoming more inclusive workplaces. **How can thus employers of medium and small companies (SMES) and enterprises in rural areas be also better convinced** of being more inclusive and of hiring (more) people with disabilities (PwD)? In Spain, essential points are the availability of benefits a company can obtain if they hire a PwD and the reputation (or reputational damage) that they can obtain. Another decisive criterion is the type of disability, with more hurdles when it comes to the VET and labour market integration of persons with intellectual disabilities. Spain has a legal employment quota of 2% for PwD. Public support is also offered to work integration social enterprises (WISE) producing goods and services.
- Relevance on **uniqueness and belongness**: The participants agreed that if employees have the feeling of belonging, they'll more likely stay in a job. If it's just for the money the probability that they will quit is higher. Based on those two "insights",

one can also agree for the need for managers to invest more into inclusion and a courageous and wholehearted shift towards inclusive enterprises and workplaces.
- What should not be forgotten when looking at policies, initiatives, and tools to support employers to increase the retention and employment of PwD is the need to also support financially pathways towards self-employment of (young) PwD.

c) Instruments/toolbox to measure inclusive organisations and inclusion at the workplace

=> *Reference document: PPT Presentation Kimberly [PULSO Change 4 Inclusion](#)*

Kimberly explained that Pulso Europe had done research into existing **tools to measure the extent to which enterprises/organisations are already inclusive** in Belgium – in other words have a mindset and structures to support and realise inclusiveness. What mainly exists and is in use are strategies, initiatives, and tools to support workforce diversity.

In the context of the C4I Project, the initial idea was to elaborate a teaser which would have informed organisations about how inclusive they already are based on a self-assessment. This idea, however, had to be abandoned.

An alternative instrument has been/will be developed for which GTB will explore if – based on their networks and contacts – they can attract attention to it by a sufficient number of employers. Based on **ESF Paper "inclusief ondernemen**" (in English: inclusive enterprises) written in 2021 by Bart Moens et al. the concepts of inclusion and motivation will be presented to employers in a digestible way. A new tool, the **"Inclusion Barometer"**, will be put together. It builds on two validated questionnaires. The first by Nishii (2013) to capture the benefits of a climate for inclusion – in its original design focusing on gender-diverse groups, the other by Chung et al. (2020). Kimberly explained more in detail the domains covered – 3 for the first (equitable employment practices; integration of differences; inclusion in decision making), 2 for the second (uniqueness; belonging) – and the focus of the two measurement instruments – organisation/management/resources for the first, intergroup behaviour and attitudes between colleagues for the latter. The ultimate goal of the whole exercise still is to create interest in inclusiveness and to make them motivated to take (first) steps to make a workforce mix work. Kimberly concluded by underlining that the domains covered by the two questionnaires (as well as the items they use) can well be translated into the 6 domains relevant and decisive for an organisational climate for inclusion and inclusive enterprises/organisations elaborated by Peter Vlerick, namely 1) involvement colleagues, 2) involvement management, 3) risk awareness, 4) resources, 5) leadership, and 6) communication.

After Kimberly's presentation partners arrived at the following "conclusions" and next steps:
- In order to be able to achieve organisational change, one always needs to start with a and to get commitment from the top management, like was also seen in Talentoscoop.
- Procedure to address enterprises in Flanders: GTB to send an invitation to about 100 companies to see if they're interested in the topic. The Flemish project partners, back in Belgium, will decide if they will invest more time and energy in making the "Teaser" or rather immediately focus on the development of the "Inclusion Barometer", i.e., the instrument to measure the degree of inclusiveness in an enterprise/organisation.
- How to reach out to and make SMEs interested and motivated?

➔ For smaller companies the procedure to get into contact as well as the tools must be simpler and direct.
➔ The teaser has to be the tool for the employers to understand what their problem is. It needs to be conceptualised as a tool focusing on issues to solve a problem.
➔ Employers have to understand why it is beneficial and relevant to measure how inclusive a company/organisation is and what are the considerations behind the inclusiveness approach. This implies that the starting point is to create awareness and that the tool eventually used has to clearly state the added value for employers to get interested and to engage on a transformation.
➔ Elaboration of "Inclusion Barometer": The project partners from Latvia and Spain are invited to give feedback to the questionnaire. It will focus exclusively on inclusiveness and not on diversity (and concepts such as "diversity management") It is important that the 6 domains proposed (in line with Prof. Vlerick's concept) are solely based on scientific facts. Wannes will look into the interviews dones in the context of the Talentoscoop project to see if additional items/indicators can be identified.

3. Deepening of work on mentoring/internal job coaches (vs. external job coaches) and the related tools, etc.

=> *Reference document: PTT Presentation Seline and Steffi* [GRIP Expertise by Experience Change4Inclusion](#)

Seline and Steffi introduced what GRIP does and which services the offer for PwD. People working with GRIP are volunteers who are themselves "experts by experience".

On the topic of the project meeting, they explained the **concept of "experience-based expertise"** and how it should be best included in the C4I Project. Seline and Steffi also elaborated on how GRIP has used it and set up a training module (5 half days training) and on the benefits and best opportunities to use the storytelling method.

More generally, based on substantial input by GRIP, the participants exchanged on **ways to set up an effective involvement by PwD in the role of "experts by experience"** (Pablo suggested that, as INTRAS does this, the term/concept "peer expert" could be alternatively used), about the **benefits (and limitations) of this approach** and **experiences with "experts by experience" in their own organisations**.

The final part of the session "Deepening of work on mentoring/internal job coaches (vs. external job coaches) and the related tools" was dedicated to collecting input and to **deciding how the project partners in Latvia and Spain would bring in experts by experience into the C4I Project**. This comprised an exchange on the **core tasks of experts by experiences**, how to recruit them in Latvia and Spain and which role and training to provide to them.

4. Mutual learning on involving service users and peer mentors as experts by experience

=> *Reference document: PTT Presentation Pablo [Fundación INTRAS Presentation](#)*

Pablo and Claudia explained the **INTRAS Project 'Peer2Peer'**. It is a vocational training course whose aim is to support the recovery of people with intellectual disabilities and/or mental illness through peer support training and employment. The organisation also measures the workload of the expert by experience/trainee.

Katrina explained that in **SIVA** they don't have peer-to-peer projects, but they do support their clients when employers request them for something. In Latvia often the employers take the initiative if they want to recruit a PwD. In SIVA they want to change the way of thinking to make the labour market more inclusive. However, they are struggling to motivate employers to hire the SIVA clients. To sell this idea they would likely have to speak more about the moral side.

Conclusions/insights form the exchange of the project partners on advantages employers have from hiring a service user with a disability:
- Opportunity: A hired PwD can support the hiring and training of other PwD
- Use of awareness campaigns and storytelling to sell the idea to the employers
- Need to take into account the different employment cultures and ways how to deal with disabilities, impairments, etc. in each country
- As the N° 1 priority of employers is to get and retain a productive employee, the focus of the tools should be on the talents of PwD. Recruitment implies a risk. It's better to talk about own skills, talents and on what you are good rather than to highlight that you have a disability
- In this context, Talentoscoop pursues approach and promotes a "We can save your problem" type of support.

Wannes provided some final reflections to wrap up on a number of topics addressed:
- The starting point and focus should be to make a change in the mindset of the employers. This means that we need to have answers to questions such as "How to best involve the management and to get a commitment from them for inclusiveness?" and "What public policies and support tools (Public Employment Services, partial coverage of salary costs; social benefits; tax reductions) can I use"?
- Which experience does an internal "expert by experience" in her/his role as employee of an enterprise/organisation have which could be used to support the change of mindset and organisational culture? Which training do they need? What is their role compared to external job coaches (i.e., e.g., GTB staff)?
- Which toolkits do organisations such as GTB have to elaborate and which services do they have to offer when reaching out to and trying to convince employers to promote inclusiveness and the act on a clear shift towards inclusive workplaces?

Day 2: Wednesday, 30 March 2022

5. Quality Assurance Plan and Project Evaluation

=> *Reference document: C4I-TPM-1-Jūrmala-29.+30.03.22-EPR-DRAFT-QAP-30.08.21-MM*

Mathias presented the **Quality Assurance Plan** (QAP). No particular feedback was received. He invited the project partners to share any comments and proposals for improvements by 15 April 2022, otherwise the DRAFT QAP would become the QAP until the end of the project.

Mathias also informed the project partners that he would reach out to Pulso Europe, responsible for the content evaluation of the project to come up, prior to the next meeting, with a concept note on the project evaluation. EPR's role in the C4I Project is the process-related evaluation.

He also announced that he would elaborate and updated overview on the outstanding tasks, meetings, events, and deliverables and share it, again, prior to the next meeting.

6. Communication and Dissemination Plan

=> *Reference document: PTT Loredana EPR Communication & Dissemination Presentation*

Loredana introduced the communications activities done so far (based on the project webpage, the project's Facebook page and the project's Twitter account)

She listed and explained the forthcoming tasks which were agreed with the project partners:
- 8 articles in EPR's LinkedIn: 3 articles to be done for the next TPM in Valladolid and 4 by the end of the project. GRIP and Fundación INTRAS agreed to produce some.
- 2 articles in Specialised Media to reach employers: GTB, Fundación INTRAS, SIVA and GRIP announced that would explore which media they could contact and when.
- Infographic proposal: 1) Completing Talentoscoop's infographics. 2) Adding information on the C4I Project.

7. Project Action Plan: Presentation and agreement on next steps in project

=> *Reference document: PPT Presentation Patrick GTB Inclusive Entrepreneurship (Part 2: Slides 14-18)*

Patrick recalled the initial project plan and juxtaposed it to a **proposal for the adapted activities**:
- Create an C4I Action Guideline focusing on priority actions need to change the climate of an enterprise/organisation towards inclusion/inclusiveness. This exercise will be done by using the 6 domains proposed by Prof. Vlerick's. Responsible project partner: Pulso Europe. First/revised draft should be ready in May.
- Empower experienced experts from the I-level to the We-level by using the storytelling method (inspired by INTRAS). GRIP will train and work with 6 new experts by experience. Responsible project partner: GRIP. The adapted competence profile for

the experts by experience should be done before the summer. In case the training for them needs to be rearranged, this should be best done by the end of September.

- Use of experts by experience from the We-level in the work with employers. <u>Responsible project partners: GRIP & GTB</u>
- Use of experts by experience and peer support (job seekers & employers) by introducing the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) in the workplace? This was never tested on a bigger scale. Wannes suggested this could be an action/included in the job coaching
- Elaborating a business case in 5 Flemish organisations. <u>Responsible project partners: GTB (contents/concept) & Pulso Europe (evaluation)</u>. In this context it is essential to know about the legislation, policies and services in place – this institutional setup is very different from country to country, here when comparing Belgium, Latvia and Spain. Summarising the experiences and insights from this task could become an article.

Patrick underlined that the **product validation needs to be done in January 2023** as the **end of the project** is (now) **28 February 2023**. He suggested to invite experts to assess the project's products and to put aside some budget to disseminate the results of the project.

The project partners agreed to have the second Transnational Project Partner Meeting on 13 and 14 September (half day) in Valladolid. 12 September has to be blocked as travel day.

8. Round Table "Opportunities and challenges of transitions to inclusive enterprises /organisations – Steps, resources and innovations needed – Experiences so far"

Mathias – as moderator – recalled the idea behind and the aim of the **Round Table with guest speakers from Latvia and Spain**, thanking them for their interest and availability.

Beatriz explained the role of the **regional public administration and the ESF Agency in the Spanish region of Castilla y Leon** in relation to employment for PwD and other socially vulnerable groups. She further elaborated on policies and initiatives to support their life project, such as social-occupational insertion itineraries for PwD comprising job placement services and support at the workplace, including reasonable accommodations. These programmes are jointly managed by them and third sector entities such as INTRAS, a model Beatriz characterised as successful public-private collaboration. Since 2017 two new lines of grants are available, one to support autonomous/independent living of PwD through the funding of adapted housing as well as their social and labour insertion itineraries, one to train personal assistants for PwD.

Agnese explained how the **Riga Municipal Transport Company** aims at creating value for the society, including by employing PwD, and how they cooperate with SIVA. This is also done to improve their own reputation and to be entitled to grants from the state.

Linards elaborated on the **ESF Project "Participation of students of vocational education institutions in work-based learning and work placements in companies**" (for more information see his *presentation* and *summary information* on the project.) It aims to increase the number of qualified students of vocational education institutions after their participation in work-based learning or work placements in undertakings. They don't differentiate between trainees with and without disabilities. The project promotes the implementation of the concept

of work-based-learning by means of various incentives such as monetary compensation for employers, compensation for the provision of personal-protection equipment.

Anastasia talked about the instruments at the disposal of and the initiatives supported by the **State Employment Agency**. Financial instruments include grants for the adaptation of the workplace, a subsidy for the staff responsible to guide PwD in the company, subsidies for salaries when employing PwD. The social contributions are at the charge of the employer. Their duration varies from some months (e.g., over the summer) to one or two years. The State Employment Agency employs career counsellors and counsellors for the use of ESF project money. They offer in-person and online meetings with employers.

Points raised in the exchange amongst the participants when reacting to the contributions and to questions by the moderator (Mathias):
- **In Latvia, there is no legal obligation to hire people with disabilities**. How can Latvian employers in this context best organise the support of PwD in the company?
  - ➜ They normally don't work with an external or have an internal career counsellor
  - ➜ They need financial help from the state/municipality to integrate PwD at the workplace and to adapt the training and workplaces
  - ➜ Employers have more problems working with people with intellectual disability, if it's physical they can easier make adaptations.
- There is a need for a support for VET and a more targeted approach for students and employees with disabilities. There should be a **programme with peer mentors to support inclusive enterprises and workplaces**. Latvia could likely get inspiration from the C4I Project.
- There is a **need to make the visions of the enterprises broader in a way that they would not need that many adaptations, but rather start with a universal design**, i.e., to build a building and to design a workplace which is already 'adapted'. Examples for such adaptations are PPT technically providing support for all students with dyslexia or employers offering flexible working hours and telework options for everyone. This would in turn help in particular PwD who, as a rule, need to go more often to the doctor. **Everybody is treated in the same way from the start, no ex-post adaptations are needed**.
- Comparison of **rules in place in Belgium, Latvia and Spain for the hiring of personal assistants for PwD**:
  - ➜ In Belgium, when there's more support needed for the training of a PwD, employers receive a grant that allows them to hire "support employees". PwD also receive a subsidy to hire a personal assistant.
  - ➜ In Latvia, PwD as a rule prefer to use the subsidy available for hiring personal assistants to pay family members.
  - ➜ In Spain, PwD entitled to financial support for personal assistants are not allowed to hire a family member.