

# TRANSITION PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

From school or training into employment:  
Good practices and success factors

December 2022



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# Easy to Read Summary

## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

The European Platform for Rehabilitation is a group of organisations that provide services to persons with disabilities and other people. For short we call it EPR.

This document explains what the good practices and transition programmes are which are provided by some of these organisations to help young people with disabilities, YPWD for short, to find a job or to start a professional training. It gives some recommendations to service providers on how to improve their activities with YPWD. It also suggests to people who make laws how to improve the laws for YPWD.

We use the word “good practice” to describe a service or a programme that is good and that produces good results.

We use the word “transition programme” to describe a group of activities to support YPWD in finding a job or a professional training course.

This document is useful for people who work for service providers to improve programmes that support YPWD in their country or organisation. In the document there are information on what worked well and was successful

## WHO WROTE THE DOCUMENT AND WHO HELPED TO WRITE IT?

This study was written by people working for EPR. Some professionals from the group of service providers in EPR who are experts on supporting YPWD in finding a job or a training responded to a questionnaire prepared by EPR on the topic. They worked together to develop the document, adding text and ideas from their experience.

They found good practices about the programmes which work very well and have good results and a positive impact. They thus are a good example to follow. These good practices can be found in the part of the document called the “annex”.

## WHAT DOES THE STUDY SAY?

Many young people with disabilities do not have a job. They have difficulties to find it. The COVID 19 pandemic and the economic crisis worsened the situation and the professional perspectives for this group in the last years.

Many organisations working for EPR organise activities to help YPWD who want to find a job. The support is given before, during and after that the YPWD found a job.

The transitions programmes and good practices collected in this document are for people between 16 and 29 years, often young people with intellectual disabilities or with mental ill health or psychosocial disabilities. The YPWD who participated in the transition programmes improved their skills and competences and thus their chances to be employed. They have more self-confidence and many of them found a job.

The staff involved in the programme is made of people who are experts to help design and support the transition of YPWD (such as job coaches, occupational therapists, social workers etc.). Usually, the work of the staff of the service providers which are members of EPR is done in close and regular collaboration with other organisations, like schools, employers, Public Employment Service etc.

Employers are involved in the process, too. Job coaches provide them information and advice on how to best employ of YPWD. The employers become more aware of the needs of YPWD in the workplace. They understand better what the benefits of the transition process are and what are the tools to support YPWD they can use.

YPWD who participated in the programmes learnt how to identify their personal and professional goals and capacities. They also learnt how to apply for a job and how to prepare themselves for a job interview.

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## About the publication

In recent years EPR members have expressed their interest to collaborate and organise a mutual exchange and learning exercise on services for and the work with YPWD. The joint work started off in December 2020 at the National Awareness Raising Event (NARE) in Germany where a number of EPR members presented their services and programmes in this field. Between 2019 and 2022 EPR led two Erasmus+ projects with members focusing on services for YPWD, [Jump2Job](#) and [TransitAction](#). For 2022 the members involved in the WG Youth had decided to have transition programmes and services for YPWD as one thematic focus throughout the year. This choice was to be seen in the context of EPR's bi-annual theme on pathways to employment, too.

This report includes a collection of good practices and the identification of success factors. The list of criteria to identify the good/successful/innovative practices proposed was non-exhaustive. We applied the same as the one used for the [EPR Study 2021 "Service provision for people with disabilities during COVID-19"](#)<sup>1</sup>. They refer to the conceptual approach taken, to professional qualifications needed and to professional roles, to innovative features of the practice, and to cooperation structures and/or partnerships between stakeholders. The report also contains recommendations to social service providers and policy makers. It updates the good practice examples from the EPR Study "[Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities](#)" (2014) and revisits its success factors. It thus also complements EPR's work on services for young people with disabilities (YPWD) as the coordinator of the two Erasmus+ projects [Jump2Job](#) and [TransitAction](#).

## Introduction

Adolescents and young adults, especially those with a disadvantaged background and fewer opportunities (e.g., due to disabilities, migration, risks to fall into poverty and social exclusions etc.), are facing barriers in accessing the labour market and becoming economically independent.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic downturn have a negative impact on these groups, leading to new challenges and an urgent need to provide adequate individual support. The design of successful pathways for young people with disabilities (YPWD) to successfully transition from school or inactivity or vocational education and training (VET) into employment is highly relevant across Europe, given high unemployment and inactivity rates in particular for more vulnerable groups or socially or economically disadvantaged individuals.

The European Commission welcomed the political agreement between the European Parliament and the Council to declare 2022 the “European Year of Youth”, not least as one key aim and focus was to improve the opportunities to shape a green, digital and more inclusive future for young people and the EU.

## Summary information on 2014 EPR Transition Study

The “Transition Study” published by EPR on 2014 – more information is contained in the [article](#) on EPR’s website and in the [report](#) – dealt with services to support the transition from school (secondary education) into vocational training, employment and/or the community for young people for disabilities (YPWD). It looked into programmes and approaches that EPR members have been using with transition age youth (ages 14 to 24 and beyond) to increase their independence and inclusion in the labour market and in the community, and to make observations and recommendations. It contains one chapter on the methodology and the Study Protocol, one chapter presenting the findings (organised by sections of the Study Protocol<sup>2</sup>) and one chapter with concluding observations and recommendations for future directions.

Amongst other key insights, the study highlighted 1) that most of the programmes use selection criteria that are linked to educational and behavioural characteristic, 2) that the focus of the transition interventions is on “soft skills” (such as identifying employment opportunities; interviewing; resume development; demonstrating appropriate behaviours while working), 3) that a mix of internships, trial work experiences, on-the-job training and related work transition efforts is used to improve the employability of YPWD and 4) that some of the programmes include the development of independent living skills and community self-sufficiency.

## Thematic focus and objectives of the 2022 EPR Good Practice Collection

The **three main aims** of this exercise organised between June and November 2022 were to

- 1) collect good practices used by EPR members in relation to transition programmes and services from school or inactivity or vocational education and training (VET) into employment;
- 2) provide information on the main objectives of the good practices, on the methodological approach(es) used, on the target group(s), on staffing and workforce needs (e.g., as to qualifications, teamwork, etc.), on innovative elements, on the outcomes of the intervention, on success factors identified (and where possible on success rates, results, etc.), on the prevailing challenges and problems, and on the interaction with related services and/or actors;
- 3) to collate recommendations for service providers (management; professionals/staff) and policy makers (at different levels).

We list below the **target groups** of the good practices presented in this report. These are YPWD between 16 and 29, often YPWD with intellectual disabilities or mental health issues. In the case of Austria, Germany and Spain, the employers are an additional target group:

- YPWD 16-19 in their final year at secondary school – *Northern Ireland*
- Users with special needs at working age – *Estonia*
- Young people with special needs (up to 29 years) – *Slovenia*
- Users with intellectual disabilities, mental health issues or socio-pedagogic support needs (in Austria: up to 24 years) – *Austria & Germany*
- Young adults with intellectual disabilities and/or on the autism spectrum – *Greece*
- Users with a mental illness and intellectual disabilities – *Spain*
- Employers/(Social) Enterprises – *Austria, Germany and Spain*

The **type of organisations** delivering the service or programme covered in this report are not-for-profit social service providers, partly they are social enterprises.

Looking at **staff-related issues** and at the **qualifications of the professionals** involved in the transition programmes and services for YPWD in EPR's membership, the dominant "figure" is a job coach. Respondents also highlighted the positive effects on the outcome of the programme or service stemming from a close cooperation of professionals in teams and/or from an interdisciplinary approach where the expertise of different professions can be pooled and mutually complemented. We list below the detailed information shared by the 7 EPR members providing the information about the function and/or the job title of the staff involved in their transition programme or service:

- **Job coaches** having worked in the economic sectors in which the YPWD have started employment or are to be retained in a job – *Austria*
- **Job coaches** with social work background – *Estonia*
- **Job coaches & Job prospectors** – *Spain*
- **Social workers, educators and occupational therapists** – *Germany*
- **Transition officers** – *Northern Ireland/UK*
- **Interdisciplinary group:** social workers, educators, occupational therapists, psychologists and technicians – *Greece*
- **Team approach** (5 colleagues: social worker, psychologist, specialist medicine doctor for work, traffic and sports, occupational therapist and rehabilitation technologist) + potential employers of the YPWD and teachers – *Slovenia*



The EPR members highlighted the following aspects as innovative features of their practice:

- Close **dialogue and interaction with employers** to raise awareness on people with special needs – *Estonia* – or to support the **identification of personal goals**, of a **competence profile**, and of the **work integration and retention in the job** – *Austria*
- Trainees finalising their training in a higher educational institution and in a programme in the HORECA Sector for the first time in GR as YPWD can receive (and have actually obtained) a **certificate** which proves which competences, skills, qualifications, etc. the YPWD has successfully learned and can apply in the labour market – *Greece*
- **Multidisciplinary nature** of the work in the transition programmes or services: Work with families, Special Education Needs Coordinators Committee (SENCO) in the schools, Local Education Authorities, Transition Officers (employed by CEDAR Foundation), social workers, etc. – *Northern Ireland/UK*
- **Cooperation** with primary, secondary schools, faculties, potential employers, occupational, transport and sports medicine – *Slovenia*
- **Attainment of jobs in the open labour market**, through training and capacity building directly on the job prior to hiring, and not in protected / sheltered employment – *Spain*

## Success factors

Looking into the transition programmes, a range of success factors was identified by EPR's membership involved in the WG Youth. Some success factors came up in a recurrent manner, other success factors were only relevant in the context of a specific service design or programme.

**Person-centered approach** to support the identification of personal goals of YPWD, the elaboration of competence profiles, work integration and retention in the job.

**Improved skills and qualification levels** of YPWD, combined with more confidence in their own capacities, also to ultimately obtain employment in the mainstream labour market.

**Quality of the team of professionals** involved – and these professionals also being well-resourced and trained – and use of a **multidisciplinary approach** when cooperating with the relevant external stakeholders such as schools, employers, the Public Employment Service (PES), etc.

**Integrated service offer** to young people, ranging from the identification of personal and professional goals and capacities, social support to increase the

employability of YPWD as well as coaching and training of YPWD (covering both specific knowledge & job application training) to support services for YPWD to enter and stay in employment and support of YPWD at their workplace by job coaches.

**Coordination of different services** as part of a comprehensive service package to support both YPWD in relation to their work and their social inclusion and employers, including in view of job placements in social enterprises.

**Work in partnership**, including a close dialogue and interaction with employers to raise awareness about young people with special needs, providing information, advice and continuous support for employers to manage successful transitions from school or inactivity or vocational education and training (VET) to employment for YPWD.

The good practices from Austria and Spain show well that the probability to provide effective support to YPWD for their transitions into the (mainstream) labour market is higher if the **job coaches (or similar professions) have a good knowledge of the companies and have first-hand knowledge about the economic sectors in which the YPWD should find employment.**

Colleagues from Northern Ireland/UK highlighted the higher chances of getting long-term funding for programmes and services for which the **achievement of positive outcomes and impacts, i.e., improved competences and higher transition rates into employment can be measured.**

## Recommendations

Assessing the potential and strengths of their good practices, the EPR members also formulated recommendations for the design of transition programmes and services for YPWD from school or inactivity or vocational education and training (VET) into employment. They are addressed to social service providers and policy makers (at different policy levels). We complement the main common points for both the recommendations to employers and to decision makers with specific items formulated by EPR's members.

### Recommendations to social service providers

Roll out **comprehensive** (work-related; addressing psycho-social needs) **and/or integrated service offers**.

Pursue a **holistic approach** that promotes the positive health and social and emotional well-being of the young people.

**Support** young people with special needs **throughout the whole job finding phase and once they have started a job**, based on a range of tools and services provided by job coaches (or similar professional profiles).

**Provide quality and continued training** to the job coaches and enrich their functions/roles.

**Inform employers about the potential of employing YPWD** and about the available **accompanying measures** (including financial support), encourage them to support the recruitment of YPWD and accompany them during the first phase of employment.

**Cooperate closely with Public Employment Services (PES) and employers**, including social enterprises.

The Greek colleagues referred to their good experiences regarding **benefits from the cooperation with external partners as this could enrich their existing programmes and services with new educational approaches** and keep them up to date regarding the demands of the labour market.

The Slovenian colleagues underlined in addition that **using a broader range of tools and being creative** with the YPWD had a consistently positive impact on their transitions from school or inactivity or vocational education and training (VET) to employment.

The Spanish colleagues underlined the **need to regulate in Spain on the national level the new job profile and “figure” of a “labour prospector”**, not least to have clarity on the specific qualifications needed to well perform the task.

### Recommendations for policy makers

Set up **regulatory frameworks** to support the transition of YPWD from school or inactivity or vocational education and training (VET) to employment.

Design, organise and adequately fund **comprehensive and/or integrated service offers**<sup>3</sup> which link social services, labour market inclusion services and which effectively support employers in line with their needs.

Invest in practical measures supportive of inclusive enterprises and oriented towards the **changing the mindsets of employers** vis-à-vis YPWD and of the organisational culture.

**Increase fines** for employers who do not meet their legislative obligations, e.g. based on quota systems, to hire PWD.

Promote and fund programmes based on **supported employment**.<sup>4</sup>

Overcome a deficit-based logic and shift to strengths-/capacity-/competence-based and **“whole-person” approaches** in policy frameworks.<sup>5</sup>

**Adequately fund the scaling up** of successful and positively evaluated EU-funded transition projects in line with the success factors set out above.<sup>6</sup>

## Annex 1: Template for the description of the service/ programme identified as good practice and of its success factor(s)

1. Main objective(s) of programme/service
2. Target group(s) of programme/service
3. Conceptual approach(es)/methodologies used
4. Staffing/workforce (covering aspects such as professions/professionals; specific qualifications; staffing requirements; teamwork/interdisciplinary approach)
5. Innovative elements (if any) and/or potential of programme/service (e.g., allowing for better relationship with and involvement of employers to support successful transitions and retention at the workplace; cooperation/interaction with other key actors)
6. Success factors of programme/service
7. Measurement of success/outcomes/results (indicators/how?; evaluation?)
8. Persisting challenges/problems with of programme/service (e.g., qualifications, competences and/or motivation of YPWD; family support; lack of adequately trained staff; lack of sustainable financing; mindset of/interest by/access to employers, etc.; support by public employment services/PES; availability of social benefits; situation on labour market).  
*You can also add here any suggestions for improvements of the programme/service*
9. Interaction with other services or actors
10. Funding/financing of programme/service

### B) Recommendations for service providers (for management, professionals/staff, etc.)

*Please specify for which level (local; regional, national; EU) the recommendation is!*

### C) Recommendations for policy makers

*Please specify for which level (local; regional, national; EU) the recommendation is!*

## Annex 2: Good practice collection: Description of the service/programme and identification of success factors

*N.B.: In Annex 2, we reproduce the templates filled in by the EPR members from Estonia, Greece, Northern Ireland/UK, Slovenia and Spain. In the case of Austria and Germany, information has been included by EPR staff based for selected items only, based on documents provided by Chance B and Mariaberg in German.*

### 1) Austria: ChanceB

#### Network of Vocational/Occupational Assistance (*Netzwerk berufliche Assistenz*)

This combination of measures is set out in the National Action Plan for People with Disabilities and is implemented by various institutions. The “service package” designed by the [Netzwerk berufliche Assistenz](#) (NEBA) includes 6 different components/modules which are well integrated and complement each other.

- The service offer which also covers young people with special educational needs, learning disabilities or social and emotional impairments up to the age of 24 starts with youth coaching (*Jugendcoaching*). The youth coaching provides advice for the transition from school to work and is open to all young people, including those young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET) and those searching for education, employment and development (SEED). Depending on the needs, different levels of support intensity are possible.
- Should a young person not yet be ready to start an apprenticeship and still needs time to develop basic skills, then the module “Fit for vocational training” (*Ausbildungsfit*) comes into play. Social and intellectual skills are trained, and comprehensive career counselling is offered. Participants spend several months in an appropriate training course. A job coach assesses the progress made with the trainee/apprentice every 3 months and provides support and accompaniment in training courses to test certain workplaces/jobs/professions.
- When it comes to starting an apprenticeship, then the vocational training assistance (*Berufsausbildungsassistenz*) is needed. This module supports apprentices to successfully complete their training. The vocational training assistant is a mediator/facilitator between the company and the apprentice. She/he tries to protect the apprentice's interests and also organises appropriate learning support for the apprentice.
- The work assistance (*Arbeitsassistenz*) – as fifth module – has the task to get people with disabilities into work or training or to maintain them in the labour market/employment. Impairments of at least 30% are required to be eligible for this service. In job coaching, participants receive direct support at the workplace (up to 3 months). Following an initial interview, a decision is made about the admission to counselling or job accompaniment or a referral to other supportive measures. The work assistance includes a social and professional analysis, the elaboration of the support goal, a first contact with a company/an employer and the elaboration of an aptitude and suitability profile. If need be, additional work training or further qualification measures can be initiated.
- The job coach (*Jugendcoaching*) is at the workplace and acts both as a mediator between the company and the employee and to assist in the correct execution of the work. This service also includes mobility training and the possibility to obtain a driver's license.
- Finally, the company service (*Betriebsservice*) as 6<sup>th</sup> service module has the role to establish the contacts with companies and to inform employers about potential candidates for employment.

The Employment Services Department of Chance B offers all of these services, with the exception of the module “Fit for vocational training” (*Ausbildungsfit*) and building on a multidisciplinary staff team.

## 2) Estonia: Astangu

Astangu presented 2 main approaches we have for supporting young people's (and overall clients in our center) transition from VET to employment. One of them is the **support from job coaches starting from the internship process to employment** and the second one is **3 party internship feedbacks**.

### 1. Main objective(s) of programme/service

**Support from job coaches** - the main aim is to start giving the support and information about open labour market in the beginning of VET or another course.

**3 party internship feedback** - to give our clients the opportunity to openly discuss the internship outcomes and for employers to get more information and support

### 2. Target group(s) of programme/service

In our center we have clients with special needs that are in their working age and support all of them but the support system idea is really good to implement on young people especially.

### 3. Conceptual approach(es)/methodologies used

**Support from job coaches** - our job coaches use work oriented interviewing to find client's dreams and objectives related to working. According to this dream/objective they will create together the action plan. Throughout the course client together with job coach will find ways how to reach the goal. They will try to find the best internship places for client's, visit the companies, will support client in the interview and throughout the internship, will try to find together the job afterwards. Our job coaches have enough time for each client to make sure they can find the best opportunities for them.

**3 party internship feedback** - that's the method we developed and created interview topics. It's good way for young people to get their first experience to get feedback about their work. According to this feedback from employers our clients can learn some things more/take into consideration some topics. As usually employers don't give that much of feedback for interns afterwards, it's good way to get the idea how the internship went. It's also good for the center to see what we need to improve for example in our study process and curriculums.

### 4. Staffing/workforce (covering aspects such as professions/professionals; specific qualifications; staffing requirements; teamwork/interdisciplinary approach)

For both we have qualified job coaches, who have social work background and know the basics of goal oriented and empowering interviewing aspects.

### 5. Innovative elements (if any) and/or potential of programme/service (e.g., allowing for better relationship with and involvement of employers to support successful transitions and retention at the workplace; cooperation/interaction with other key actors)

Being in close contact with employers gives them the opportunity to ask about different special needs and how to deal with it. In Estonia there is still a lot of stigma around people with special needs, especially considering labour market, so it gives an opportunity to decrease some fears from employers side as well.

### 6. Success factors of programme/service

All our clients find internship places every year. 89% (statistics from 2021) of our clients are some way active (it doesn't have to be open labour market, can be studying or sheltered workshop as well. It is important for job coaches to find some kind of suitable activity for each person).

### 7. Measurement of success/outcomes/results (indicators/how?; evaluation?)

We have internship feedbacks from where we know that the 3 party internship feedback is important for all parties. We have our graduates feedback, from where we see if they are active or not and what exactly they are doing.

### 8. Persisting challenges/problems with of programme/service (e.g., qualifications, competences and/or motivation of YPWD; family support; lack of adequately trained staff; lack of sustainable financing; mindset of/interest by/access to employers, etc.; support by public employment services/PES; availability of social benefits; situation

on labour market).

To implement it somewhere, where there is less staff and time to give for each person, it is hard to manage both approaches.

Also in Estonia there is still a lot of stigma (as noted above) around people with special needs and their integration to open labour market. That's the hardest part.

9. Interaction with other services or actors

We are working together with employers in these matters.

10. Funding/financing of programme/service

As it's more of an approach we are doing in our center, there is no additional funding.

### 3) Germany: Mariaberg

#### Services for YPWD offered by the Vocational Training and Service Social Enterprise of Mariaberg

The Vocational Training and Service Social Enterprise of Mariaberg (*Mariaberger Ausbildung & Service gGmbH*) offers a range of services for YPWD and with special support needs. It also works with employers by supporting job placements. The services focus on the improvement of work-related qualifications and skills and also address the psycho-social needs of the YPWD. A precondition to qualify for them is that the YPWD has a recognised (i.e., diagnosed and certified) level of disability/impairment.

Training is offered for professions in the fields of 1) horticulture and floristry, 2) office management, IT and commerce, 3) social care professions, 4) craft and industry (painters, carpenters, metal workers, cleaning) and HORECA and nutrition (baker, confectioner, side cook, housekeeping), financed by the Federal Employment Agency and the responsible local youth welfare office. The social support provided comprises the following aspects: 1) (psycho-social) individual counselling, 2) job orientation interviews, 3) vocational aptitude tests and assessment, 4) Job application training, 5) training (VET) and 6) support for the labour market integration, framed by enabling social services and counselling.

### 4) Greece: Theotokos Foundation

1. Main objective(s) of programme/service

Training program in 'Le monde' culinary school, to exercise cooking skills and techniques.

2. Target group(s) of programme/service

Young adults with intellectual disabilities and/or on the autism spectrum.

3. Conceptual approach(es)/methodologies used

[No information provided]

4. Staffing/workforce (covering aspects such as professions/professionals; specific qualifications; staffing requirements; teamwork/interdisciplinary approach)

An interdisciplinary group worked on this project including social workers, educators, occupational therapists, psychologists and technicians.

5. Innovative elements (if any) and/or potential of programme/service (e.g., allowing for better relationship with and involvement of employers to support successful transitions and retention at the workplace; cooperation/interaction with other key actors)

For the first time trainees from Theotokos continued their training in a higher educational institution outside the space of Theotokos, and will receive a training certification.

6. Success factors of programme/service

The participants learned new techniques and practiced new skills, they socialized, generalized their skills outside the institution space and gained more confidence

7. Measurement of success/outcomes/results (indicators/how?; evaluation?)

Before and after the program was completed, the trainees completed the world health organisation quality of life questionnaire. Interviews were also taken.

8. Persisting challenges/problems with of programme/service (e.g., qualifications, competences and/or motivation of YPWD; family support; lack of adequately trained staff; lack of sustainable financing; mindset of/interest by/access to employers, etc.; support by public employment services/PES; availability of social benefits; situation on labour market).

No challenges occurred during the programme, however it is important to have the necessary funding in order to do it again in the future.

9. Interaction with other services or actors

'Theotokos' for the first time collaborated with 'Le monde', a well-known school of hospitality.

10. Funding/financing of programme/service

Funded by the organisation 'Together for Children'

## 5) Northern Ireland/United Kingdom: CEDAR Foundation

1. Main objective(s) of programme/service

Cedar's Transitions Service aim to deliver a specialist holistic service that improves a young person's transitions readiness, when leaving school to secure socially inclusive and sustainable outcomes in their local communities. Cedar provides a regional service that fully involves young people and their families to co-produce a pathway for their life after school with regard to: education & work, community inclusion, health & wellbeing.

2. Target group(s) of programme/service

Young disabled people aged 16-19 years who are in their final year at secondary school.

3. Conceptual approach(es)/methodologies used

This is delivered through a variety of intervention levels;

- 1 to 1 Transition Readiness support
- Transition Advice Workshops
- Personal Development Support

Cedar's Transitions Service supports young disabled people aged 16-19 years to make appropriate choices when moving on from school to Further or Higher Education, training or employment ensuring they achieve their maximum potential.

The Let's Get Ready / Moving On stage of the process focus on exploring options available, site visits to providers, linking in with providers to set up supports required, completing application forms and arranging assessments. The Tracking stage part of the model offers a tracking year to ensure that the young people access their chosen provision and maintain this 6 - 9 months post leaving school. The Transition officers are also available to offer support / advice / guidance if there are any issues with the original provision.

4. Staffing/workforce (covering aspects such as professions/professionals; specific qualifications; staffing requirements; teamwork/interdisciplinary approach)

There are 4 Transitions Services currently operating within the Belfast, South Eastern, Northern and Western Trust areas in Northern Ireland and provide 252 hours each week of direct support to young people and their families.

Current staff make up per trust area is Belfast - 1 X 37 hours per worker (hpw), 1 x 25 hpw & 1 x 12hpw, South Eastern – 1 x 37 hpw & 1 x 30 hpw, Northern – 1 x 19.5 hpw & 1x 18.5 hpw, Western – 2 x 37 hpw.

Staff have a dedicated caseload within their trust area but collaborate with and support each other on various aspect of the delivery of the service e.g. workshops, personal development programme. These are offered using a



blended approach across trust areas.

Professional development is a key element of supporting staff so they have the relevant skills and knowledge to guide the young people on the service. Staff are given the opportunity to achieve the Level 4 Advice and Guidance certificate if they do not have it on starting their role.

5. Innovative elements (if any) and/or potential of programme/service (e.g., allowing for better relationship with and involvement of employers to support successful transitions and retention at the workplace; cooperation/interaction with other key actors)

The multi-disciplinary nature of the work completed by staff is very important to maximise success of the young persons' transition. The Cedar Transitions Officer will work with the family, the Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in the school, the local Education Authority Transitions Officer, social workers and any other professionals involved in the young person's life to ensure a successful transition.

The tracking year of the service is as important as the LGR/MO part of the process as this is where the Cedar Transition Officer works with the education / training provider e.g. tutors, learning support team, finance and other student services to ensure that the young person has the correct supports in place to enable them to remain in their chosen provision and succeed on their chosen course of study / training.

6. Success factors of programme/service

What makes this a successful service is the person centered approach taken by staff where the young persons' needs are at the forefront of their work. The time taken to build trust and develop good lines of communication with the young people and their families as well as the collaborative approach used which is invaluable.

Other success factors include - Quality of the team, Collaboration with relevant parties – Cedar's reputation, building relationships, trusted services, Achievement of positive Outcomes, Raising awareness of the needs of young disabled people.

7. Measurement of success/outcomes/results (indicators/how?; evaluation?)

Measuring outcomes and impact. As well as having the positive and sustained outcomes measured. E.g. numbers of young people who have progressed into a positive outcome at end of the LGR / MO process and number of young people who have sustained their positive outcome at 6 month tracking stage.

Young people also complete an annual service quality questionnaire and complete Rickter Scale interviews. Rickter is a soft outcome tool used to track progression of areas like confidence and readiness. We also get feedback following workshops and personal development programmes to ensure they are useful and worthwhile for the young people and their families.

8. Persisting challenges/problems with of programme/service (e.g., qualifications, competences and/or motivation of YPWD; family support; lack of adequately trained staff; lack of sustainable financing; mindset of/interest by/access to employers, etc.; support by public employment services/PES; availability of social benefits; situation on labour market).

Challenges especially over the last few years with Covid measures / lockdowns is the lack of motivation and engagement of young people online. The increase of mental health issues. The differences between support provided to families from children social services to adult social services. The lack of opportunities for young people with complex medical needs. Transport issues experienced by young people particularly those in rural areas and those with mobility support needs.

9. Interaction with other services or actors

Generally all parties involved are doing their best to ensure the young person achieves their goals and working in partnership with the Cedar Transition Officer increases their success rate, however the impact on social services of staff shortages, lack of funding etc. can play a major role in the success or otherwise of the young person's transition.

It is important when considering the transition of young people that the 'whole person' is considered. Many of our young people will access complimentary services within the organisation. One such service is the Youth Matters service. Youth Matters is a dynamic youth work service that supports young people under the age of 18 years with a disability or on the autism spectrum. The service supports the development of personal and social skills including self-esteem, confidence, and peer relationships through a youth work pedagogy. These 'soft skills' are often

overlooked in favour of vocational skills but are actually the foundations which allow a young person to truly flourish and create the conditions in which young people are more receptive to learning and therefore leads to a more successful transition.

Another complimentary / progression service is our Inclusion Works service – Inclusion Works supports adults with disabilities to build employability skills and experience to be work ready, then move into a paid job, college course or volunteering on leaving. Specialist physical disability, people on the autism spectrum, deaf, hard of hearing or have tinnitus and brain injury support is available and tailored to each individual and their needs.

Inclusion Works is person-centred, encouraging and supporting individuals to design their own programmes around their needs and aspirations, building confidence and independence. Following initial assessments, participants build an action plan, drawn from a menu of choices to address their personal barriers and agree solutions to meet their employability and inclusion goals. Inclusion Works offer goal-directed to support participants to progress from the service when they have achieved their goals.

#### 10. Funding/financing of programme/service

Our current funding comes from the Health and Social Care Trusts, through contracts that were awarded in the past and there has been no increase in funding awarded to match the higher cost of providing the services in recent years.

## 6) Slovenia: University Rehabilitation Institute (URI)

The Slovenian pilot project “Young people’s transition to the labour market” lasted from 2018 to 2022. The purpose of the project was to influence greater social inclusion of young people with special needs and to contribute to the creation of a unified support environment as an interface between the school and the labour market for the empowered entry of the target group into the labour market.

#### 1. Main objective(s) of programme/service

The key goals of the project are:

- acquiring the competences of young people with special needs and bringing them closer to the labour market,
- promoting the social inclusion of young people with special needs,
- encouragement of professionals in educational institutions and parents or guardians for the earliest possible activation of young people with special needs,
- establishing a unified employment network for the transition from school to the labour market and raising awareness and motivating employers to employ young people with special needs.

#### 2. Target group(s) of programme/service

The target group of the public tender is young people with special needs (up to the age of 29) who have:

- disorders in mental development,
- blindness and low vision or impairment of visual function,
- deafness and troubles of hearing,
- speech and language disorders,
- mobility impairment,
- long-term illness,
- autistic spectrum disorders and
- emotional and behavioral disorders

#### 3. Conceptual approach(es)/methodologies used

Professional workers used gadgets within their profession, and some new gadgets were also designed. The activities were aimed at identifying the individual's values, strong and weak areas, abilities, work habits and professional interests. A large part was also cooperation with schools, potential employers, occupational, transport and sports medicine, and the organization of practice tests, compulsory school internships, helping in preparing CVs and simulating job interviews.

4. Staffing/workforce (covering aspects such as professions/professionals; specific qualifications; staffing requirements; teamwork/interdisciplinary approach)

The services were provided by professional workers in the field of vocational rehabilitation, mostly social workers and psychologists, that had experience with young people with disabilities. The most common and appropriate approach was team oriented, that consist of 5 members: social worker, psychologist, specialist medicine doctor for work, traffic and sports, occupational therapist and rehabilitation technologist. A large part was also cooperation with schools, potential employers, occupational, transport and sports medicine.

5. Innovative elements (if any) and/or potential of programme/service (e.g., allowing for better relationship with and involvement of employers to support successful transitions and retention at the workplace; cooperation/interaction with other key actors)

The most successful part of the project was cooperation with primary, secondary schools, faculties, potential employers, occupational, transport and sports medicine.

6. Success factors of programme/service

The findings of the effectiveness of the Youth Transition project so far were presented, which show that young people with special needs, who were included in the project, showed a higher level of developed competences, which are related to increased employment opportunities. By participating in the project, the users gained greater insight into themselves and their own abilities and developed social skills, which also influenced their increased efficiency in a productivity-oriented environment, i.e. improving school performance.

When integrating young people with special needs into an appropriate school or work environment, the importance of multi-disciplinarity was highlighted. cooperation of professionals with various systems and institutions (e.g. occupational, transport and sports medicine, schools, employers).

7. Measurement of success/outcomes/results (indicators/how?; evaluation?)

Evaluation questionnaires for young people with disabilities, their parents, professional workers, educational institutions and employers. The content of the evaluation was linked to the impact of the project on information regarding the labour market, employment opportunities, self-image, motivation, capacities and limitations.

8. Persisting challenges/problems with of programme/service (e.g., qualifications, competences and/or motivation of YPWD; family support; lack of adequately trained staff; lack of sustainable financing; mindset of/interest by/access to employers, etc.; support by public employment services/PES; availability of social benefits; situation on labour market).

The main obstacle was the recruitment of participants. Professional workers who, in addition to the project, had to perform other tasks and programs in their institutions, were in charge of recruiting the appropriate number of participants. During working hours, we had to contact educational institutions ourselves and offer them our services. A few schools perceived this as competitive, so they did not spread information about the project to children with special needs and their parents. The location of the project within the country also proved to be a problem. Larger cities or the more centralized parts of the country are already well covered by such activities, almost oversaturated, so the participants in these places were less motivated for these services than, for example, in more remote parts of the country.

9. Interaction with other services or actors

At Occupational, Transport and Sports Medicine, we inquired to what extent certain health restrictions are in line with the individual's professional interests. We asked the parents about the functioning of young people with special needs in their everyday environment. We organized practical skills tests at potential vocational schools so that the participants could gain a realistic insight into their abilities. We cooperated with elementary schools regarding the individual's functioning in the classroom, obtained information about his abilities, social skills and work habits.

10. Funding/financing of programme/service

The project is co-financed by the Republic of Slovenia and the European Union from the European Social Fund. Project coordinator is Association of providers of vocational rehabilitation in the Republic of Slovenia.

## 7) Spain: INTRAS/Fundación INTRAS

**Name of the programme:** *“Emplea Sin Barreras”* (*“Employ Without Barriers”*): This project generates a Supported Employment service to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities due to mental illness. For this purpose, an in-depth exploration of the hiring needs of the business fabric of the territory was carried out, for the definition of niches and employment demands appropriate to the labour profiles of the people supported, allowing the successful integration and through job coaches in the ordinary work.

This program is not dedicated only to YPWD, but I consider it interesting to share with this group because the reality in the implementation of the service is that most of the beneficiaries are young people in transition between studies and employment or sheltered employment and ordinary employment. Of the 120 people served so far, more than 65% are between the ages of 16 and 31.

### 1. Main objective(s) of programme/service

Main objective: To generate a service entirely dedicated to the labour market insertion of people with disabilities due to mental health problems in the ordinary labour market through the innovative tool of supported employment.

Specifics objectives:

- Increase the number of support services provided by job coaches on and off the job support in regular companies.
- To increase the number of PWD due to mental illness assisted through the supported employment service and for ordinary labour insertion.
- Improve the percentage of persons with disabilities due mental health problems who manage to reach and apply for job offers in the regular labour market.
- Generate agreements with ordinary companies to establish a priority channel for the search of candidates and the possible labour insertion of the people with disabilities assisted.
- Enhance the percentage of PWD due to mental illness that get a work contract in ordinary companies.

### 2. Target group(s) of programme/service

We divided the target groups in two blocks:

- People of working age with a degree of disability higher than 33% due to mental illness and/or dual pathology (intellectual disability and mental illness).
- Companies that must incorporate people with disabilities in their workforce.

### 3. Conceptual approach(es)/methodologies used

The methodologies used in the implementation of the project are those established by the “European Association Supported Employment” and the “Individual Placement and Support” work model.

The objective is employment, with wages and benefits through continuous, flexible and adapted support, obtaining the social and economic inclusion of the person through placement prior to training, without discrimination, and promoting self-determination and personal development.

### 4. Staffing/workforce (covering aspects such as professions/professionals; specific qualifications; staffing requirements; teamwork/interdisciplinary approach)

The human resources that carried out the project are 5 job coaches and 2 job prospectors. They have very different functions but work coordinated between them and with the rest of resources that work with the people attended (workers of supervised flats, psychologists and the rest of the personal of the mental health network, families and social net of the people attended, etc.):

- Job coaches functions: Promotion of the service and recruitment of people, individual support and elaboration of the job profile, definition of the individual action plan and strategies for finding employment opportunities, study of jobs offered by companies, insertion and support in the workplace, mediation of working conditions and necessary adaptations, etc.
- Job prospectors functions: External relations - Business prospecting: - Collaborate in the development of a communication plan to companies to publicize the entity and the Supported employment service; - Advice on formalities, procedures and bonuses; study of the business fabric of the territory and generation of

collaboration agreements; . Encourage the generation of socially responsible business projects.

5. Innovative elements (if any) and/or potential of programme/service (e.g., allowing for better relationship with and involvement of employers to support successful transitions and retention at the workplace; cooperation/interaction with other key actors)

Supported Employment is a type of service that has been available in Spain for more than 10 years. However, its implementation with people with disabilities due to mental illness has been scarce, with few experiences outside Castille and Leon. The project is innovative because its main objective is the direct attainment of ordinary jobs (not protected, not sheltered employment), and through training and capacity building directly on the job (not prior to hiring).

6. Success factors of programme/service

This program was launched approximately one year ago (January 2022) and, to date, it has been developed as planned, meeting the expected results. A Supported Employment service has been implemented, which offers support to the needs of 120 people, enabling access to employment opportunities in the ordinary labour market, through direct prospecting and collaboration agreements with companies in the territory, and offering people all the necessary support to obtain and maintain employment. And all this, despite the fact that the aid received was 65% of the amount requested for the project initially.

Thanks to the success achieved so far in the execution of the program, the funding entity has given the opportunity to continue the program for another year. On this occasion, the budget has been increased, although the final resolution is still pending.

On the other hand, it should be noted that due to the good results, another proposal has been generated and is already being executed: “ECA Jóvenes” (= “Empleo Con Apoyo Jóvenes” = Youth Supported Employment). This second program was born from the “Emplea Sin Barreras” service and was presented to the IRPF call, being granted and currently in its first stages of development. “ECA Jóvenes” follows the same line as the good practice described in this document but focusing its attention only in young people. And in this case not only for YPWD, also for young people at risk of exclusion due to another problems.

7. Measurement of success/outcomes/results (indicators/how?; evaluation?)

There is a constant process of evaluation making from the internal department of Intras, and also a quarterly evaluation carried out by Caixa Foundation (the program's main funding entity). In the last evaluation form requested by Caixa we collected the following results:

At the present date, the number of people served by the service and foreseen in the project has been formally linked.

Professional profiles and action plans have been drawn up for all the people involved. The percentage of people who have been offered jobs in the regular market is 68% to date.

The percentage of people assisted who to date have accessed a regular job is 38.3%. Since the project's activity, it has been possible to study and deepen the relationship with more than 200 companies in the province, starting a collaboration to facilitate employment opportunities for the people assisted with more than 40 companies.

All the people who have been inserted have been able to receive the necessary support actions to facilitate their insertion, adjustment and adaptation to the job position. The jobs offered by the collaborating companies have been analyzed, and support and training within and outside the work context have been provided, according to the needs of each profile of the person hired and according to the barriers reviewed in the process of interaction with the work environment. When necessary, schedule adjustments, task organization and awareness-raising actions have been agreed upon to facilitate the best integration of the worker in the company.

8. Persisting challenges/problems with of programme/service (e.g., qualifications, competences and/or motivation of YPWD; family support; lack of adequately trained staff; lack of sustainable financing; mindset of/interest by/access to employers, etc.; support by public employment services/PES; availability of social benefits; situation on labour market).

The persisting challenges that we identify are the difficulties to find staff adequately trained to do the labor prospecting, because there isn't a concrete qualification for this workstation (job prospectors). And also the difficulties to convince ordinary enterprises to hired people with mental health problems, due to the stigma and the negative mindset around the collective, even when they know that the job coach inside the workplace is a

professional free for them supporting the person hired during the necessary time.

#### 9. Interaction with other services or actors

The service interacts with various services and social actors in the territory. In addition to the aforementioned (coordination with the public mental health network, family coordination, etc.), we have counted on the collaboration of the Junta de Castilla and León to disseminate the proposal and attract potential beneficiaries, especially through its Youth Guarantee service. In addition, we have had the collaboration and coordination with the Chamber of Commerce.

In the same way, thanks to the diffusions made, and to the work networks that Intrac has, we have been able to count on referrals from training entities not directly linked to disability that had students with difficulties. We have welcomed and helped them to process their disability degree while we started their process of creating a work profile and improving their employability, giving support thanks to the service to the search for a job and to the achievement of a real social inclusion.

#### 10. Funding/financing of programme/service

This programme is financing by Caixa Foundation and co-financing by Intrac in a 25%. The other mentioned programme (“ECA Jóvenes”) is financing by the proposal call IRPF, a call that annually collects the taxes from the income tax return of each citizen of Castilla and León that is destined to social aid, the Junta of Castilla and León (this is the term used in Spain for the Regional Government) decides where to allocate those taxes collected for social aid.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The list of criteria to identify success factors: Systematic approach (= Are the problems, the milestones and outcomes well specified?)

- Needs driven (= Does the practice address a clearly identified unmet need?)
- Practicality (= Is the initiative easy to implement and cost-effective?)
- Direct impact (= Is the impact on beneficiaries obvious and clearly demonstrated?)
- Strategic/wider impact (= Has the initiative derived important lessons learned? Can it be transferred to other centres/target groups or generalised to the sector?)
- Inventiveness/Creativity (= Does the initiative include new ways of thinking or working?)
- Stakeholders' involvement (= Is the practice centered on the client, taking a co-production approach? Do other stakeholders have a role in the initiative?)

<sup>2</sup> The survey was conducted by an external expert, Prof. Fred R. McFarlane, San Diego State University, USA, in close cooperation with EPR members. He was also the author of the report.

<sup>3</sup> This implies a joined-up approach taking into account the education and health policies needs in parallel.

<sup>4</sup> The Spanish colleagues call on the decision makers to assess the results of programmes based on supported employment and to compare them to the outcomes of “traditional” labour insertion programmes. Supported Employment, which consists of a programme for the insertion of people with disabilities directly in companies in line with the “place then train” approach, has demonstrated better employment outcomes when compared to more traditional vocational and job placement programmes. This has also been widely demonstrated in other countries and also with the group of people with mental illness (Kinoshita et al., 2013). In Spain, the implementation of ECA programmes still seems to be limited to sporadic actions, and mostly aimed at people with intellectual disabilities (Becerra Traver, Montanero Fernández, & Lucero Fustes, 2012). It should be considered that people with mental illness tend to obtain lower quality jobs, due among other barriers (discrimination, functional difficulties, pensions, etc.) to poor vocational and university training (Baldwin, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> The colleagues from Northern Ireland/UK underline that such a “whole-person” approach needs to be backed up by funding & policies and encouraged rather than solely focus on vocational transition.

<sup>6</sup> Concretely speaking, the Slovenian colleagues underlined the need to provide financial support (and to adapt, if need be, the regulatory frameworks), to scaling up successful national pilot programmes, such as the Youth Transition Project. Its sustainability can also be achieved by establishing links to the health system and to institutions to support YPWD and their families in important decisions regarding their professional training and inclusion in employment