

Online Public Affairs Event

From Care to Employment; Practices and Policies

2nd December 2020

Report

Background

This year the annual event was held virtually and show-cased practices supporting people with disabilities transitioning from care to employment. A call went out to all EPR members to submit practices which were then analysed in a study, and were also considered as entries to the EPR prize. The study gathered information on success factors, methodologies used, the impact of services and the implementation of innovation as well as successful policies supporting return to work programmes. As part of the prize porches, all members were asked to vote on the programmes, covering issues such as stakeholder engagement, participation and potential for transfer between countries.

This report is a summary of the webinar including brief overviews of the services included in the study and highlights from the panel discussion including challenges, solutions and recommendations for policy making. Over 50 participants attended the event. The presentations are also available online.

Introduction

Sabina Lobato (EPR Vice Chairperson) launched the event drawing attention to how this year's study reflects examples of practice which implements the European pillar of social rights and the UN convention on the rights of people with disabilities. Laura Jones (EPR Secretary General) reminded us of the activities of EPR which include organising training seminars, study visits, mutual learning, public conferences and working on EU projects on topics such as labour market inclusion, mental health and autism.

Overview of the Study

Katrina Sevruka, Senior Expert from the Social Integration State Agency Latvia and one of the study's authors presented an overview of the practices in the study from 5 different countries. These included:

- 1. SIVA, Latvia**, a government agency focused on social rehabilitation via 26 different training programs. Clients are supported via input from a variety of specialists who devise an individual plan to support people into the labour market.
- 2. Cedar Foundation (Inclusion works), Northern Ireland**. A person centred service supporting people to find solutions to barriers to employment. Inclusion works supports people with different diagnoses including people with a brain injury and works closely with local employers.
- 3. Institut National D'assurance Maladie-Invalidité, Belgium**. The agency responsible for administering Belgium's compulsory national schemes for health insurance and disability benefits and management of compensation funds for medical accidents. It has run a pilot project for people with

mental health issues using the Individual Placement and Support methodology, which incorporates the place then train approach.

4. Fundacion Ramon Rey Ardid, Spain. Their service featured supports clients with a disability to gain employment and acts as an intermediary between the client and employer. The service utilizes the person centred methodology and provides input via group work and individual sessions to help develop social skills, CV preparation etc.

5. Heliomare, Netherlands. This service, which was awarded the runner up prize, provides early intervention for economically inactive musculoskeletal clients. The service assesses the client and identifies a return to work program combining individual and group work with a physical rehabilitation focus. Future plans are for employers to contribute more to the vocational rehabilitation process. If after 52 weeks the client is still out of work the employer will need to start paying. They have a very high success rate, as evidenced in various studies.

WINNER OF EPR PRIZE

6. GTB, Belgium “We Go to Work”

This year’s EPR prize winner, We Go to Work, is an outreach service supporting people with disabilities/health needs find work via input by a job coach. It was voted most highly among the practices submitted for the study and prize, across all criteria.

Sheena Dens, an outreach coach, provided an overview of her job with a client with mental health issues and autism. Their approach focuses on understanding the client's dreams and strengths and which environments supported them to thrive. The work involved collaboration with the client’s mother and involved individual and group work where clients share experiences. Clients are encouraged to compile a Wellness Recovery Action Plan, to be able to gain insight into factors that support their wellbeing and those which comprise it. Workshops at present are smaller than usual, in line with COVID 19 guidelines.

Common factors between services:

Services in the study had several *success factors* in common. All services were needs-driven, adopted a systematic approach, had a direct impact on their clients, demonstrated innovation and had strong stakeholder involvement. Specific common success factors included:

- A Person-centred approach
- A person acting as service coordinator for clients, such as a job coach
- Provision of aftercare and long term support
- monitoring and evaluation, including via user feedback, leading to service improvement
- Stakeholder involvement

The studies also shared *challenges* including:

- Impact of legislation
- Difficulties engaging employers
- Budget inadequacies

Expert panel discussion

An panel discussion followed during which experts were asked to give their opinions on challenges and solutions to supporting people with disabilities into the labour market. Also they were asked to highlight from their experience success factors.

Experts included:

- Frank Sioen, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, European Network for Independent Living
- Sarah Copsey, Prevention and Research Unit, European Agency for Health and Safety at Work
- François Perl, Vice-President Europe, Rehabilitation International
- Luc Henau, Director, GTB

Challenges

- **Legislation:** Experts discussed how people with disabilities are faced with legislation which results in questions such as “Are you sure you want to work as you might lose your benefits” which can demotivate people to work. Also the issue of needing to prove you are disabled to access benefits and that if you can work you might be considered as not having a disability and may lose some rights is a challenge.
- **Employer attitude and knowledge:** Experts spoke of how some employers feel people need to be 100% fit to work which is limiting people accessing work and keeping them out for longer periods. There is also the issue of lack of knowledge and understanding by employers on how to support people with disabilities with a tendency to think that it would be difficult to accommodate people’s needs.
- **Focusing on Disability V Ability:** Panelists highlighted the problem of focusing on a person’s disability instead of focusing on the person’s unique talents and capabilities and creating jobs that support their strengths.
- **Pay:** It was discussed that one challenge is people with disabilities sometimes don’t get paid for the work they do or are inadvertently paying to work when they use their benefits to attend, for example a day centre where they make craft products. Often when people don’t have a salary they find it difficult to work towards paid employment

Solutions and success factors

- **Pay:** People with disabilities should be paid for work they do. They should be supported to gain paid employment not unpaid employment and should not lose benefits if they take on part time work.
- **Employer Education:** Supporting employers to understand that there is value in diversity and that you don’t need to be 100% fit to work. This involves helping employers to understand that reasonable adjustments can be easy to implement and often beneficial for all staff. Employers having a clear health prevention policy was also seen as a solution.
- **Sharing Success stories:** Sharing stories of client successes to help employers understand the benefits of having someone with a disability as their employee was highlighted as a solution. This can help demystify the notion that it’s difficult for an employer to support someone with a disability at work.
- **Campaigning at EU level:** awareness raising to combat discrimination among the public and by consequence, employers. Highlighting the needs and the solutions to support people with disabilities with employment should be campaigned at an EU level. The right to work for people with disabilities needs to be a clear part of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Those working to support vocational rehab services such as EPR and ILO should continue to highlight the responsibilities of employers in relation to people with disabilities.

- **Mainstream Services:** There was consensus that working towards general employment agencies that job seekers more effective than specialist services. Making these services available to everyone and not treating people with a disability differently.
- **Bringing people together:** There was recognition of the need to bring stakeholders together to help with co-operation and new initiatives. For example, the now well established relationship between GTB and social security. It was recognised that this integration, including between care and employment, needs to be at a higher level, integrating budgets and policies.
- **Diversity and Ability V disability:** A shift of focus from what someone cannot do to what they can do was identified as a success factor to supporting people into work. Asking the question of the person "what do you want to become" and "how can your talents be used to meet the needs of an employer" is key.

Below is participant feedback from the breakout rooms on what funders and policy makers could do to better support people with disabilities into work and recommendations to service providers to improve their services:

What would you recommend to service providers to best support people to return to work?

Mentimeter

Listen to the needs, seek doable solutions and put person in drivers seat.	Early intervention - Personalised path - Coaching on the work place - In case of vocational training use learning environment instead of traditional classrooms	Inform in a proper way the employers and the employees who will work with the p.w.d. (disability management) - Coaching on the work place
Services developed with indepth user research and person centered services	close connection with the employer, including during the sick leave	To provide soft skills and digital trainings
Make a good assesement (intrest, expectations, personal story)Peer support- built confidence Close conection with the employer-- Employment should be intrgrated at an early stage.Support main straa	To hear and understa d the individual stories of the service users, how they percieve the situation	Focus on talent and what the person can bring.

What could funders and policy makers do to better support people to return to work and services working with them?

Mentimeter

be more flexible and supportive	For policy makers, coordinated work and coordinated policies and regulations are key.	bring them under the attention. The are also good workers. Give them a chance en listen to them. Start the story from them
Eliminate the benift gap-Break the link between disability benift and employment.Support employers with information about needs and how to support people for a policy level. Links between health and disability at work (disability manger)	Strategies to break the myths and stereotypes around jobs and jobs competencies	people needs to be supported and feel that they haven't been left alone in any difficult situation.They need to feel that they will not loose their work and that they will have the chance to shift jobs
To listen to NGO's and people's needs so that the policys	Help with collaboration between services. Sharing experinces. Showing how policies have been successful.	They may work collaboraty and consider the real needs rather than only political concerns

Recommendations to Policy Makers

- Ensure sufficient and permanent funding for services related to employment of people with a disability, including early intervention ones
- Legislation relating to employment of people with a disability should be made with user and other stakeholders' involvement
- Ensure service integration, including financially
- Promote early intervention in the support of people with disability into work
- Develop initiatives to support employers to employ people with a disability
- Act to remove poverty or benefit traps that discourage people to take up work
- Strategies to break stereotypes and myths relating to people with different disabilities and work
- Promote at European Level examples of how policies have helped real life examples and how they help the entire workplace.

Evaluation: Participants were asked to rate aspects of the webinar such as overall satisfaction and what they had learnt. The average rating was 4.2 out of 5.

Contact

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