

## **BEST PRACTICE WITH REGARD TO EMPLOYMENT SCHEMES FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY**

### **Research and Library Service**

#### **Introduction**

In Northern Ireland, more than 21% of population has a disability<sup>1</sup> and people with disabilities are one of the groups who are disadvantaged in most countries as regards participation in the labour market.

A balance of international case studies with regards to employment schemes for people with a disability are selected for this research briefing which Northern Ireland might take examples of good practice<sup>2</sup>.

#### **The Republic of Ireland**

Access Ability in Dublin is an EQUAL Development Partnerships with the mission to maximise employment opportunities for disabled people by addressing the structural, attitudinal and policy issues which currently prevent employers from recognising the abilities of individuals. It has created a comprehensive package of services for employers that enables them to take on a person with a disability without any attendant concerns or administrative inconveniences by providing a complete package of training and consultancy services.

#### **"Back To Work Scheme"**

Under the Irish "Back to Work Scheme" managed by the Irish Department of Social and Family Affairs, people on long-term illness and disability payments are allowed to retain a portion of their social security payment, in addition to their wages, when they move into full-time employment. The scheme is designed to provide a financial cushion to people getting long-term illness and disability payments who return to work for a minimum of 20 hours a week. In addition to their wage, participants can retain a percentage of their weekly social security payment for up to 3 years (75% in the first year, 50% in the second year and 25% in the third year). Secondary benefits may also be retained, subject to certain conditions. People taking up self-employment can retain their social security payment for a 4-year period (starting at 100% for the first year).

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<sup>1</sup> Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2007) First Report of the Northern Ireland Survey of Activity Limitation and Disability (NISALD), NISRA: Belfast.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Development and Coordination, Disability mainstreaming in the European Employment Strategy.  
[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/disability/emco010705\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/disability/emco010705_en.pdf)

### **FAS's grant**

The Irish public employment service FAS manages a grant scheme for job seekers who are deaf or who have a speech impairment and are attending job interviews. These job seekers may apply for funding to have a sign language interpreter to attend the interview.

A special grant is available from the Irish public employment services FAS for employers in the private sector to re-train workers who acquire a disability in the course of their working lives so that they can continue to work in the same company. The grant is supported by a significant national media advertising campaign.

### **Hungary**

The Hungarian Ministry of Employment and Labour supports so-called 'model programmes' that are essentially pilot programmes developed in close co-operation with non-governmental organizations and research activities related to the rehabilitation and employment of people with disabilities. Co-operation ensures that the results of these pilot programmes are channeled into mainstream policy-making and experiences are used for changing and improving measures.

### **Hungarian labour centres**

Hungarian labour centres can launch so-called integrated labour market programmes based on local needs and promoting the employment of disadvantaged groups, including people with disabilities. These programmes build upon a synergy of employment services and other active measures, and allow for a flexible combination of training, subsidised employment and psycho-social support services adapted to the needs of the target group.

### **State support of adult training for people with disabilities**

The normative state support of adult training for people with disabilities is twice as high as the general normative support. Accredited training institutions that design and organise training courses for disabled persons can apply and receive this state support. The Ministry of Education organises each year a communication campaign to increase the number of students with disabilities taking part in higher education.

### **Belgium**

The new Unizo (Flemish Federation of SME) service point promotes diversity plans which are a subsidy measure of the Flemish Community. Diversity encourages employers to review and adapt the traditional business policies in the field of recruitment, welcoming and training. The aim is to stimulate the work floor in its human resources management towards persons with disabilities, elderly people and persons with a different ethnical and cultural background. Furthermore, all questions about diversity management can be addressed to the 'diversity consultants' of the service point. The consultants also organise training for managers of SMEs and translate the extensive literature on diversity management for the SME manager.

### **Latvia**

The project "Developing entrepreneurship among women with disabilities in the Baltic States" managed by the Latvian Association of Disabled Women aims to promote the economic empowerment of women with disabilities in the Baltic States through the development of a small enterprise development strategy which specifically targets

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this group. The preliminary phase of the project involves the commissioning of a situation analysis on women with disabilities in small enterprises or those who wish to enter small enterprises in the selected countries. In addition to the situation analysis, case studies of successful women entrepreneurs with disabilities will be compiled.

### **Austria**

As part of the activities of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for the EU Year of Persons with Disabilities (2003), department II conducted a survey in November 2003 on the topic of "vocational training for young people". The aim of this survey was to hold a public discussion between school and extra-school partners on the existing possibilities in educational establishments and enterprises for providing disabled young people with the skills they need in order to exercise an occupation. A panel discussion will give social partners, representatives of schools and school authorities, organisations representing disabled people and ministries the opportunity to air their views on how models of choosing an occupation, vocational training and placement can help to improve the chances of disabled young people on the labour market. These models will be presented in more detail and discussed with a group of experts from education and business circles in the ensuing study groups.

### **Czech Republic**

A 9-day course for training employment consultants in the Czech Union for supported employment organized by the Training and Information Centre of the Czech Union for supported employment aims at improving the skills and competences of employment consultants in counseling disabled people.

### **Lithuania**

The recently adopted Lithuanian law on social enterprises aims to improve employment opportunities for persons from disadvantaged groups. 40% of employed workers in social enterprises should be persons from disadvantaged groups such as lone parents, older people, disabled people, long-term unemployed, etc. The wage compensation is 50% of the gross salary and 60% for people with severe disabilities. This support is limited to one year except for people with disabilities who may receive it for longer periods. Social enterprises with no less than 50% of disabled workers can have the status "social enterprise for disabled" and in this case can receive additional State financial support, notably for the adaptation of work premises, for administrative expenditures and transport costs and for personal assistance.

### **Spain**

In Spain, income tax credits are granted to disabled workers.

### **Denmark**

THE Danish 'Flex jobs' scheme permits disabled employees with reduced capacity to work to integrate into the labour market on a equal basis with non-disabled workers.

**Greece**

The Greek public employment service the Hellenic Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) provides subsidies for new self employed persons. The amount of the subsidy is increased for persons with disabilities.

Ergonomic improvements have been incorporated in the new certification system for vocational training centres in Greece (responsible authority: Greek Ministry of Employment and Social Protection). The objective here is to meet the requirements of today's vocational training needs and in particular to implement the mainstreaming principle for people with mobility problems and disabilities of the sensory organs in accordance with the Ministry of Environment's regulation on "Designing for all".

**Germany**

In Germany, the joint initiative "JOB – Jobs ohne Barrieren" ("jobs without barriers") has been launched. The German Government, employers, trade unions, disability associations and organizations, institutions responsible for rehabilitation and other institutions and authorities at the regional and national level cooperate to promote the training and employment of people with disabilities.

**Sweden**

In Sweden, 'folk high schools' arranged 'adjustment courses' to provide social and practical skills training for disabled adults and 'activation courses' in cooperation with disability organisations. The Swedish National Agency for Special Educational Support provides annual funding for the folk high schools and higher educational establishments. This is supplemented by grants for disabled students and a special programme 'Added Value' which is a Development Partnership with EQUAL funding: it deals with all disadvantaged groups but gives particular attention to disabled people Under this scheme, social enterprise workplaces are created to provide work-related experience to enhance employability.

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