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# ANNEX B

## - EU REPORT -

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### FOCUS GROUPS REPORT (IO1)

**BRIDGES – Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue  
of Disability, Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders**

Agreement n. 2019-1-PT01-KA204-061388



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# IO1 FOCUS GROUPS

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## NATIONAL REPORT – FOCUS GROUP (IO1) – PORTUGAL

**ATLÂNTICA – Escola Universitária de Ciências Empresariais, Saúde, Tecnologias e Engenharia**

**BRIDGES – Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue of Disability, Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders**

**Agreement n. 2019-1-PT01-KA204-061388**



## BRIDGES IO1 – Report on the focus groups - PORTUGAL

### FOCUS GROUP 1: OPERATORS

<p>Number and type of participants</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Session on June 2, 4 pm-5.30pm</b></p> <p>10 participants with technical, guidance, training and / or professional training in the area of socio-professional integration of people with disabilities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Director General CERCICA - Cooperativa para a Educação e Reabilitação de Cidadãos Inadaptados de Cascais, and Diretor of FENACERCI - Federação Nacional de Cooperativas de Solidariedade Social</li> <li>2. Technician and Responsible for the Professional Training area of FENACERCI;</li> <li>3. Technician responsible for monitoring the professional integration of people with disabilities in the CERCICA labor market;</li> <li>4. CERCICA Vocational Training Coordinator;</li> <li>5. Social Service Technician at the Resource Center of the Employment Center of Cascais, based at CERCICA.</li> <li>6. Psychologist, Psychomotor Rehabilitation Technician, Training Technician and Psychosocial Area at SEMEAR Academia - Terra de Oportunidades.</li> <li>7. Technical coordinator of the Porto Delegation of ASSOCIAÇÃO SALVADOR.</li> <li>8. Occupational Activities Technician of CREACIL - Cooperative for Rehabilitation, Education and Animation for the Integrated Community of the Municipality of Loures.</li> <li>9. Sociocultural Animator and Psychosocial Rehabilitation Technician of Psychosocial Rehabilitation of Forum Socio Ocupacional (Oeiras) of ARIA - Associação de Reabilitação e Integração Ajuda.</li> <li>10. Social Service Technician of APD - Associação Portuguesa de Deficientes.</li> </ol>
<p>Main topics discussed</p>	<p><b>Needs of training for technicians working with people with disabilities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a clear reference that the level of training in this area, compared to other European Union countries, is lower. At the EU level, we have partners such as France, where technicians have annual training financed by the French system and in Portugal that training is not as well structured as in these European countries;</li> <li>- Lack of training is visible with little supply for technicians</li> </ul>



	<p>and professionals in the area. When looking for training in this area, there are only small workshops that do not go to the root of the problem of integrated themes in the field of action, do not focus on the problem from a practical perspective, but only theoretical, there is very superficial training, poorly structured, with very little offer;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The technicians' learning is done mainly in the daily work they develop, in the professional network work it is assumed to be very rich in experiences, sharing and learning with other technicians from different associations, with different backgrounds, different experiences and where a lot is acquired sharing, information and knowledge;</li><li>- Need for training that allows career progression, with connection to university / academic education that allows professional development and access to more advanced qualifications, with recognition of the experience and qualification of professionals and technicians in these areas and that also allows the acquisition new qualifications on a continuous and systematic basis;</li><li>- There is a lack of more knowledge and support in terms of legislation: a more functional support line, a space and / or service would be necessary where clarifications and technical / specialized support may exist in view of the doubts that arise about the legislative component and daily issues. , recurring, assigned to this area. There is a clear lack of knowledge about the nuances related to the laws, with recurring doubts in the daily experience of technicians, professionals and users in this area;</li><li>- Despite the specialized and university training of all the technicians present in this session, it is noticeable that many difficulties are felt in the orientation process with people with disabilities in terms of the management of motivations, expectations, self-esteem, etc., of this target population by technicians;</li><li>- The question of analyzing the right person for the right place to do the right task is fundamental. But this analysis has to be carried out with new methodologies, approaches and multidisciplinary teams that allow the analysis, reflection and adaptation of places and functions in view of the skills and objectives of people according to their deficiencies. This type of training is sorely needed nowadays, integrating the component of innovation and technology in the development of themes related to this area.</li></ul> <p><b>Necessary skills, structure and contents identified at the level of these new training courses for those working with</b></p>
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**this target population:**

- Cross-cutting skills for employability are essential. There is a need for grids (for verification and validation) and support legislation that state what are the specific and necessary skills for people with disabilities;
- Integrate the importance of work related to Maturity, Motivation at the level of scales, essential information to be able to integrate and discover the right person for the right place;
- New Work Methodologies that make possible a new systematization of methodologies, of accompaniment for the population with different disabilities (motor, intellectual, visual, etc.). There are some works done in this area but there is a lack of a larger academic component, with more studies / publications carried out to understand which methodologies work and which works better, this type of academic work is necessary and relevant;
- Coaching training is essential both with the trainees and with the companies that integrate them;
- Difficulty in selecting the trainees themselves. Knowing how to be, be / how to behave and attitudes to be adopted in the workplace are very relevant in terms of training and preparation of this population. It is important to include fundamental criteria for employability and a direct relationship with the selection of candidates / trainees themselves.

**Good Practice Examples:**

- Project called “EMPLAY” of the municipal chamber of Cascais includes an agenda, game and manual on skills for employability. The project allows the use of several tools that can be used by job seekers, employability technicians, animators, social educators, among others. Need for adaptation for people with disabilities;
- RUMO (highly regarded association) with specific training for the training and development of techniques in the field of employability;
- The City of Professions project that has been developed by the Cascais and Porto City Council, with several short workshops (2h) and themes aimed at all people but also for people with disabilities;
- Efficiency Project (D) ”promoted by the Porto Chamber, (IEFP), Portuguese Business Association (AEP), Cerebral Palsy Association (APPC), Association Salvador. University of Porto, Polytechnic Institute and an entity in the field of Consulting that work together on employability, networking, training



	<p>and integration of professionals with disabilities in the labor market. They train pitching as a form of presentation to the job market;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Peer2Peer Project at Universidade Nova has a technical program for preparing for the job market specifically aimed at people with disabilities. It brings together different realities based on a dynamic between peers, university students and people with disabilities looking for work, allowing contact with different realities, enhancing an inclusive community;</li><li>- CERCICA's participation in a European project (ICONE), with other European countries, which are developing new tools for conducting online training aimed at people with disabilities;</li><li>- CERCICA / FENARCERCI are aware of the existence of an organization at European level that every year launches a bulletin of good practices at the level of employability of people with disabilities at European level. The last brochure has the presentation of ten success stories that show adaptation strategies, training strategies and that is inspiring for the work developed in this area;</li><li>- Need to integrate the area of New Technologies (ICT), the creation of new tools adapted and directed to this target population in the component of integration in jobs. Much of what is still done manually can be done with computer tools, even in a more simplified way in the daily lives of those who are placed in companies. There is not much offer in this regard, as most of these platforms require some level of adaptation for this target population.</li></ul> <p>What obstacles exist at national level on the part of public services (central and / or local government) related to the labor market of people with disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Difficulty for companies to open doors at the level of integration / hiring of people with disabilities. The first contact with companies is always a challenge because it is difficult to assimilate and see beyond the first contact and the difficulty associated with people with disabilities. This view is very much associated with prejudice / stigma that still exists globally;</li><li>- When companies are receptive, the issue becomes related to the management of expectations about the integration of this target audience. Mismatch between the expectations of companies and the real perception about the capabilities and performance of these target populations. Training and follow-up is essential from the head, to the teams, the whole welcoming organization must know how to deal with the</li></ul>
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	<p>reception and integration of these employees, with measures at the level of inclusive hiring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- It is therefore essential to have awareness-raising and information actions, which can lead to the sharing of good practices, and success stories, in terms of hiring and job integration, which will allow us to show, in a global way, that people with disabilities they also have talents and abilities with other people, they just work differently but with great work capacity as well.</li><li>- Most companies are unaware of information about legal measures / legislation;</li><li>- High delays, constraints and bureaucracy in terms of measures / processes that exist throughout the existing mechanisms in the request for hiring a company and response from public bodies / services;</li><li>- Accessibility both to the buildings and to the jobs themselves. Adapting to indoor and outdoor access is very important. Also, access and use of public transport turns out to be very relevant as they are still scarce;</li><li>- Need to update the areas of vocational training and adapt the time of practical training in companies so that there is a sustained relationship between the host organization, training performance and responses for possible subsequent integration.</li></ul>
Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>.- Clear need for training and qualification for technicians, professionals and organizations that work directly with people with the most varied disabilities;</li><li>- This necessary training must be more specific, specialized and must exist on an ongoing basis;</li><li>- Provide the possibility of academic training that allows progression and recognition of qualifications developed in daily activities;</li><li>- There is a clear need to frame and consider the subject of legislation, measures and support for better clarification and operational performance of these professionals in the field. There must be an equal and synergistic understanding of the issues related to this area that end up involving this target audience, technicians and recruiting companies;</li><li>- Adapt professional training to the real needs of the labor market, integrating new areas of training, changing the time allocated to the practical component in a real work context,</li></ul>



	<p>with an intervention focused on the needs and expectations of people with special needs, privileging autonomy, self-determination and quality of life of this target audience;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Importance of Job-matching, ensuring a good compatibility between the needs of companies, of a specific function or job, as well as the identification of the candidates' skills. This process encourages professional integration based on individual skills, overcoming the barrier of prejudice and preconceived ideas;</li><li>- Adoption of methodologies related to Supported / Protected Employment, combining the needs of the business fabric and the needs of this target population in the creation of a professional and social path that is based on the identification and crossing between the needs of companies and the skills, interests and needs disabled person as a professional and active member;</li><li>- Active, continuous and synergetic monitoring between public organizations / bodies in this area and recruiting companies at different levels of action (support in terms of information, assessment and guidance for professional integration; support for placement and post-placement monitoring);</li><li>- Promotion of information and awareness actions with society in general, and in particular with companies and recruiting entities.</li></ul>
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**FOCUS GROUP 2: STAKEHOLDERS**

<p>Number and type of participants</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Session on the 3rd of June, from 5 pm to 6:30 pm</b></p> <p>8 Participants with technical direction, coordination and management functions in the area of socio-professional integration of people with disabilities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinator and Technical Responsible - Resource Center for Qualification and Employment at CERCICA.</li> <li>2. Coordinator of Vocational Training at CERCICA ..</li> <li>3. Employability Area Coordinator at SEMEAR Academia - Terra de Oportunidades.</li> <li>4. Direction of Fundação ADIF Diferença.</li> <li>5. Technician in the area of Rehabilitation and Employability at Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional - Cascais Employment Center.</li> <li>6. Director of the Professional Training and Rehabilitation Center at IEFP Alcoitão.</li> <li>7. Coordination Porto Delegation of ASSOCIAÇÃO SALVADOR,</li> <li>8. Technical Director of the Socio Ocupacional Forum of Oeiras of ARIA - Association for Rehabilitation and Integration Ajuda.</li> </ol>
<p>Main topics discussed</p>	<p><b>Does Portugal offer good conditions for the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace? What are the difficulties, positive / negative aspects?</b></p> <p>-There is a positive evolution of legislation on the theme of inclusion that has accompanied the needs of people with disabilities;</p> <p>- There is a great opening of companies, but the difficulty associated with the integration of people with disabilities in the labor market is due to the enormous bureaucracy, a long time to respond to requests for applications from companies and public bodies / services assigned to this areas of activity. answer . Therefore, this articulation between company requests, responses from the civil service, timings and actual placements should be reinforced as it is not optimized;</p> <p>- There is a lot of prejudice associated with the admission of people with this profile to work. Many companies still have this stigma / prejudice about the integration of populations with some type of disability, which has hampered the process of enhancing employability.</p> <p>- Another difficulty is the architectural barriers / accessibility. Not only in work spaces (such as buildings) but also in</p>



	<p>supporting people themselves in terms of transport and conditions associated with real placement in the workplace;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Need to promote the creation of a more inclusive, community culture to promote inclusion within the organizational culture of the companies that hire. Adoption of measures such as job sharing, adaptation of working hours, adjusting the reality of work to the needs and capabilities of this population in line with the needs of recruiting entities;</li><li>- There is a lot of fear that people with disabilities reveal in losing the social benefits / subsidies that they already have in case the placement and professional experience does not go well;</li><li>- Importance of Employment Centers, Resource / Inclusion Centers, Organizations working in the areas of guidance, training and training to continuously monitor the integration of people with disabilities in companies. This allows for the enhanced promotion of existing programs / measures as well as monitoring at the level of employability;</li><li>- The need for highly synergistic collaboration between the public and private sectors, as both experience difficulties and constraints from different perspectives;</li><li>- The existing training areas do not meet the real and current needs of the labor market. There is a clear job offer in the area of Information Technologies and there are many people with disabilities who can perform these types of functions with a computer, provided they receive structured and specialized training in specific areas of Informatics. However, the offer of training areas is reduced and outdated in view of the needs of the business community (with only 22 training references that have existed for 10 years without alteration / adaptation in this area).</li></ul> <p><b>What is the biggest type of prejudice on the part of recruiting companies? What is at stake when we talk about prejudice in this area?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The issue of social support. Very bureaucratic, complicated and with a long wait / response time which demobilizes the interest and will of companies regarding the hiring of people with disabilities;</li><li>- Prejudice and stigma associated with hiring people with disabilities;</li><li>- Lack of knowledge and awareness that there are cases of success in terms of the professional integration of this target population. It is necessary to disseminate successful cases</li></ul>
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(through platforms such as “Design the Future”, existing in Sweden, for sharing and presenting successful cases in the integration of these people in the labor market;

- The management of Expectations versus Reality with companies and teams involved within these recruiting entities. Often, the existence, or not, of deficiencies that are visible vs. invisible can limit the vision / idea about the real performance of that person (it is hyper or undervalued in terms of performance). Sometimes he has the idea that the person may or may not have a performance adjusted to the condition that he presents. It is possible to adjust the functions, location and the work itself to the person for a good performance. Such support and technical monitoring must exist;

- Difficulty in the existence of organizational cultures that treat professionals with disabilities as another person equivalent to other / other employees;

- The importance of reinforcing the existing image about people with disabilities, overcoming the idea of “poor people”, of people with less skills and competences. The presentation of successful cases and professionals who are already successfully integrated is essential;

- Constraints on development at the level of open mind of teams that often also have prejudice very present. There may be a lot of goodwill by the management / company to integrate and contract a person with a disability, but there is also a team that will welcome the person with a disability. This issue needs to be addressed in advance, as there is a lack of knowledge about the real abilities / skills / talents of these people. There is a need for more information, awareness raising actions with companies;

- Evaluation of the contractors themselves, people with disabilities, who, in close collaboration with the companies, can and should carry out an analysis / evaluation on the best conditions to perform a certain function / job in the face of their disability / incapacity;

- Monitoring before, during and after hiring by resource / employment centers, organizations, technical personnel is essential to welcome these people, being seen as a positive and highly valued aspect.

**Type and training needs for intervention technicians / organizations, companies and public bodies:**

- Training for this target population should be more the measure of the candidates as this is essential;

- The formation of companies is also essential because it is



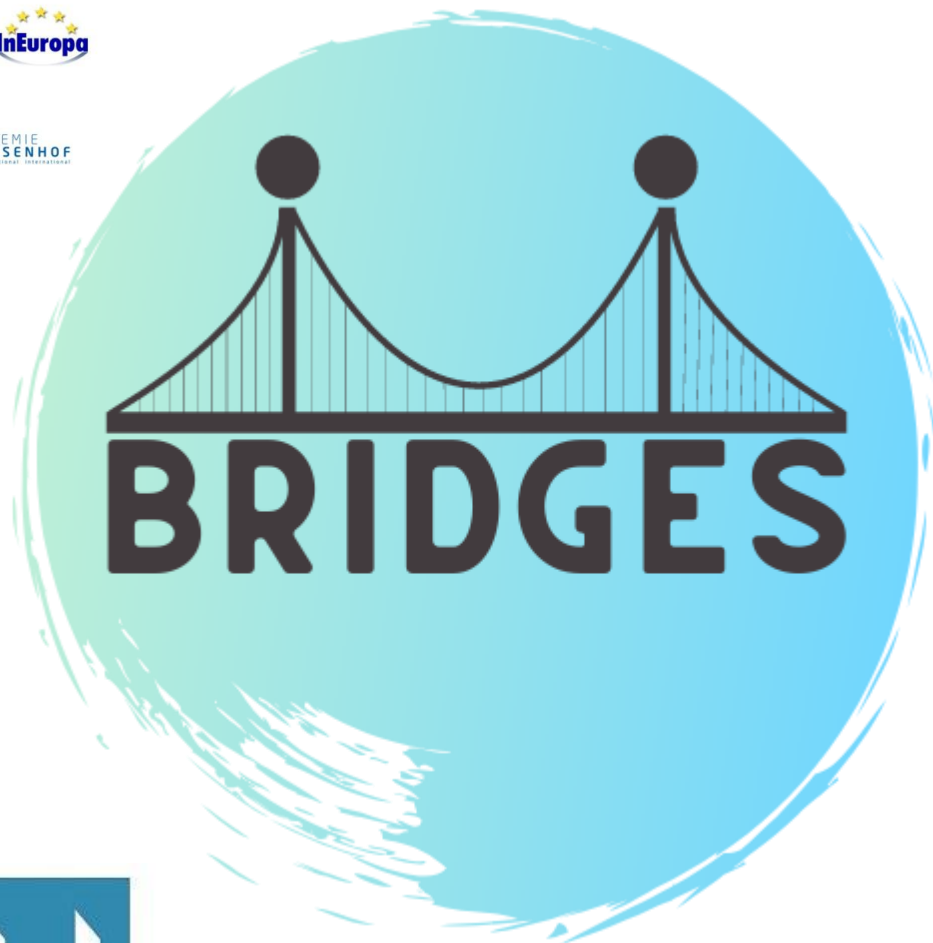
	<p>important to train who will receive these people. It is even requested by companies, training like stairs, training for directors, then training for managers, then intermediate managers, etc;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Need for specialized, more structured, practical and academic training for technicians / professionals. Training that can recognize and give the possibility of professional progression. There are, above all, continuous training activities, very general and not very technical / practical;</li><li>- Training needs for all those involved in the process of information, training and integration of people with disabilities (with direct and / or indirect action as administrative and related personnel). All entities, counters and customer service or guidance services (public or private) must provide the same information, which does not always happen, it is necessary that they are all aligned to clarify everything in the same way, namely in matters relating to the loss of subsidies. if they start working;</li><li>-It is also necessary to provide technicians in the Human Resources area for this reality. The importance of the issue of training also for Human Resources departments and areas, namely in the interview phase, as these professionals often do not know how to conduct interviews for people with disabilities. Therefore, there must be training in this area to know how to interview and guide the processes for people in this condition;</li><li>- Need to also develop the work in the area of recognition and certification of the experience that people with disabilities have in the professional domain, as with the general population. For example, a person who has worked for 20 years in the Gardening, Administrative Services or other areas but does not have a diploma can apply for the certification of that experience / qualification based on a profile so that he can be recognized through the identification of professional skills in order to to be given certification in that area. This work in the area of Rehabilitation has to be developed and streamlined.</li></ul>
Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- There is a clear need for dissemination actions, information on legislation, measures and support, globally for the different stakeholders in the entire process of professional guidance and integration, of the users, technicians and companies themselves;</li><li>- Lack of cohesion and synergetic work between the various</li></ul>



	<p>actors in the entire training / education framework, vocational and pedagogical guidance and employment / professional integration;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The relationship between the civil service, deadlines and response / reaction times is very time consuming, bureaucratic and inefficient. This induces that companies lose interest and that users are frustrated as a process and with real inability to resolve by professionals and institutions that work with these target audiences;</li><li>- Greater openness on the part of companies and recruiting entities regarding the hiring and integration of people with disabilities but still associated with fears, ignorance and lack of real information. Existence of the issue of stigma / prejudice that restricts the search and admission of people with disabilities;</li><li>- Great lack of information and real understanding by companies of the conditions, benefits and support associated with the hiring and integration of people with disabilities. This conditions the interest, access and number of demand by companies;</li><li>- There is a lack of very synergistic collaboration between the public and private sectors, as both feel difficulties and constraints in different perspectives;</li><li>- Importance of increasing the performance of professional and / or curricular internships as a way for companies to better understand the professional performance of these candidates / professionals in the medium / long term, being able to increase the success in terms of their professional integration;</li><li>- Continuous monitoring by the organizations, public bodies and technicians involved is essential to promote the professional integration of this population with recruiting companies;</li><li>- The need to identify, refer and publicize successful cases in terms of the professional integration of people with disabilities in order to show that it is possible, real and necessary for the employability of this part of the population in the business sector;</li><li>- Clear evidence on various architectural barriers / accessibility that exist both at the level of recruiting and welcoming companies in this target population but also at the level of transport and public means offering conditions and access to real possibilities of integration in the work context;</li><li>- The need for new policies and inclusive practices and integration in the professional context where there is an</li></ul>
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	<p>adjustment in the working conditions of this target population (reduction of working hours, sharing of functions between 2 elements based on the concept of mutual help, organization and reformulation of practices and functions);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The offerings of the current training areas do not meet the real and current needs of the labor market, there is a clear mismatch;</li><li>- Training needs more tailored / personalized for this target population according to the real needs of the market;</li><li>- Training needs for technicians, professionals with direct but also indirect intervention, so that there is greater congruence, compatibility and information with all the actors and actors in this process of training and professional integration;</li><li>- The need for training with companies and recruiting entities for greater information, awareness and real and structured knowledge of reality on the part of not only organizations that welcome people with disabilities but also teams, colleagues and professionals who work directly with them.</li></ul>
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# IO1 FOCUS GROUPS

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## NATIONAL REPORT – FOCUS GROUP (IO1) – GREECE

**Xenios Polis. Culture, Science and Action**

**BRIDGES – Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue of Disability,  
Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders**

**Agreement n. 2019-1-PT01-KA204-061388**



## BRIDGES IO1 – Report on the focus groups - GREECE

### FOCUS GROUP 1: OPERATORS

Conducted on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020 through Zoom (due to COVID-19 restrictions)

By Vassilis Bokolas, Scientific Director, XPCSA

<p>Number and type of participants</p>	<p><u>8 attended online (Zoom):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kokovakis Manolis – Experienced Special Teacher in Primary Special School</li> <li>● Kostenis Eleftherios – Experienced Special Teacher in Primary Special School</li> <li>● Noula Fotini – Psychologist, Family Advisor, ENEEGYL Peristeriou</li> <li>● Papagewrgiou Eirini – Social Worker, Counseling and Support Centers of the Ministry of Education</li> <li>● Papakonstantinou Eirini – Teacher in Primary Special School of Lavrion</li> <li>● Petresi Hrysa - Teacher in Primary Special School</li> <li>● Sofogianni Anastasia – Social Worker in Special Vocational High School (Attica region)</li> <li>● Tsintari Lena – Special Educational Staff, Deputy School Nurse in a primary school of general education</li> </ul> <p><u>2 replied in written due to technical problems (low internet connectivity):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kouraba Ifigeneia – Special Educational Staff in Primary School</li> <li>● Mandellou Theodosia – Experienced Special Teacher in Primary School</li> </ul>
<p>Main topics discussed</p>	<p><b>1. Training opportunities regarding the professionals for the disabled people</b></p> <p>One participant pointed out that there are training opportunities for the professionals. These opportunities are originated from the private sector with fees. Another participant added that there are the annual training seminars/ programs organized by private bodies and the scoring educational programs of special education offered by the Universities and INEDIVIM (Youth And Lifelong Learning Foundation) but with the financial assistance of the interested parties.</p> <p>The other participants did not know any specialized training action focusing on developing skills for the executive/heads of organizations and organizations with disabilities / difficulties. However, they all agreed that there are some individual informational and educational seminars that take place from time to time in Greece (almost</p>

exclusively in Athens).

## **2. Participation in any form of training**

One participant highlighted that she has participated in a professional seminar for the psychoeducation of parents with children on the autism spectrum in order to understand and manage their behavior. The seminar lasted two days, provided educational material, as well as final exams for the certification of professionals.

Another participant underlined that there are countless seminars that one can attend. Indicatively, she has participated in workshops of Special Education Counselors where she was invited, by group, to a case study of a student with autism and considering his opinion to suggest a studying plan, teaching methods and skills. The same participant has attended the PECS seminar which includes alternative forms of communication.

## **3. Necessary skills for people working with disabled people**

Most of the participants pointed out the importance of communication skills. It is of high importance to be able to communicate effectively with the disabled people in the context of their education. More specifically, 3 of the participants put emphasis on the crisis management as a useful condition for the development of relationship between the educator and the “student”.

An experienced teacher of children who face disabilities/ difficulties highlighted that an educator working with vulnerable social groups should practice on how to raise the confidence of these people.

Participants also mentioned:

- Value of work
- Teaching the disabled people to demand their rights
- Advising skills
- Constant updating concerning the training programmes regarding the disabilities/ difficulties
- Cultivation of alternative ways of communication
- Adequate professional preparation of all in various working conditions
- The development of problem-solving skills

## **4. Examples of good practices regarding the education of disabled people**

An example of good practice that aims at the professional integration of people with disabilities/ difficulties is COISPE, as 2 participants mentioned. COISPE (Social Cooperatives of Limited Liability) are social businesses that employ staff with disabilities. The individuals are trained and then work in the company and they participate in the sustainability process, as well. Additionally, most of participants



	<p>pointed out the café Myrtillo. It is a Social Welfare Special Purpose Enterprise, whose 90% of employees belong to the vulnerable groups of people with disabilities.</p> <p>Also, a would-be good practice is the professional orientation for people with disabilities/ difficulties in schools, in order to have a clear interpretation of the labor market and the recognition of their abilities to combat professional marginalization, as another participant mentioned.</p> <p><b>5. Gap or shortage in the existing training framework regarding the skills and competences needed for working with disabled people</b></p> <p>It is widely believed that our current education system does not contribute effectively to the vocational training of people with disabilities and others towards the development of a fruitful cooperation. In this context, there is no proper information and awareness towards people with disabilities / difficulties.</p> <p>The main gaps are the understaffing of structures, the lack of educational materials, the inappropriate building infrastructure. These students need special treatment and the corresponding framework should be organized accordingly.</p> <p><b>6. Obstacles in job inclusion for the people with disabilities/ difficulties</b></p> <p>The main obstacle is the non-acceptance of diversity and the underestimation of the skills and abilities of people with disabilities. One participant pointed out that most people believe that people with disabilities do not even need to work because of the special benefits they receive. The state must ensure that all the citizens, have the equal rights, regardless of label.</p> <p>A participant underlined that even when the person manages to find a job, most of workplaces (buildings) are not adapted to accept people with disabilities, this can act as a deterrent to getting the person to work where they want.</p> <p>Other participants also mentioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of auxiliary technologies</li> <li>- Health insurance</li> <li>- Pay gap between the disabled people and the other employees</li> </ul>
<p>Conclusions</p>	<p>In Greece, there is no sufficient legislation concerning the educational framework of people who deal with disabilities/ difficulties and their inclusion in the labor market. Prejudices and stereotypes against this social group prevail, while there is no proper information and empathy on the part of other employees. As a result, the disabled employees are not given the appropriate opportunities and remain</p>



	<p>excluded and uninvolved.</p> <p>In addition, people with disabilities themselves do not receive the proper vocational training, while they are not also provided with the necessary communication skills, crisis management, and perception of the general professional context. At the same time, the majority of businesses in Greece (even multinational companies) do not possess adequate professional experience and training in this field. Consequently, they cannot cope with the special needs and abilities of each person with disabilities / difficulties. However, there are random training opportunities mostly in the private sector that attendees must pay for their participation. The training programs should take place regularly at a corporate level in order to achieve the elimination of discrimination.</p> <p>The multiple obstacles could be addressed with innovation and flexibility of work environments, systematic and comprehensive training of all employees and implementation of practical methods that would effectively help people with disabilities / difficulties.</p>
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## **FOCUS GROUP 2: STAKEHOLDERS**

Conducted on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020 through Skype (due to COVID-19 restrictions)

By Vassilis Bokolas, Scientific Director, Xenios Polis

<p>Number and type of participants</p>	<p><u>6 stakeholder representatives online:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bouzioti Stefania – Mother of a disabled person</li> <li>● Brouvali Anna-Maria – Special Educator</li> <li>● Grammata Ria – Mother of disabled person</li> <li>● Karaiskou Vasiliki – Experienced Special Education Teacher</li> <li>● Kourkoulou Ioanna – Social Worker</li> <li>● Tzanetos Lambros – Communication, Media, and Culture Student, New York University</li> </ul> <p><u>3replied in written:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kokovakis Grigoris – Officer of Health Sector Department</li> <li>● Kokkini Maria – Music Teacher (expertise in special education)</li> <li>● Maraki Styliani – Experienced Special Educator</li> </ul>
<p>Main topics discussed</p>	<p><b>1. Programs for the integration of the disabled people in the labor market</b></p> <p>All the participants agreed that there are only a few opportunities for people with disabilities/difficulties in order for them to have a regular professional inclusion in the labor market. Two participants named the café Myrtillo, which is a private initiative and recruits almost exclusively people with disabilities.</p> <p>The two mothers with children with disabilities agreed that all the effort regarding the professional life is absorbed by family. There are no sufficient programs that undertake these people’s job inclusion.</p> <p>The student of Communication Studies pointed out that Greece offers real employment opportunities to people with disabilities. People with disabilities/ difficulties are often marginalized in the workplace. In addition, there is lack of infrastructure regarding the movement and daily facilitation of people with disabilities. Having studied in a US university and having lived in New York for the last two years, he underlined the huge gap between the two countries, even when it comes to the most obvious aspects. Indicatively, he mentioned the transportation of people with kinetic disabilities. In Greece, most of workplaces lack the necessary infrastructure such as ramps, automatic doors, etc. Consequently, these persons are deprived of full integration into the workplace.</p> <p><b>2. Obstacles to job inclusion of people with disabilities</b></p> <p>The main obstacle for the inclusion of people with disabilities/ difficulties in the workplace is the lack of information and</p>

infrastructure. If society does not begin to actively share the needs of people with disabilities, there will be no long-term positive change. The special educator highlighted that the main obstacle to these people's job inclusion is the state agency. She stated that the relative laws don't cover the full scope of the project. In this way, stereotyping is prolonged and it's impossible to see significant improvements. The social worker responded that we will see no significant difference in this field if we don't change our way of thinking. She added that the mentality change, especially when it comes to an important social issue like this, escalates from the individual to the entity.

Also, the participants mentioned:

- Transportation to the workplace
- Lack of proper and specialized training
- Lack of infrastructure/ auxiliary technologies etc.

### **3. Elimination of prejudices about disabled people**

A mother of a disabled person stated that the only way to stop prejudice is to teach children at an early age to accept these people into society, to visually incorporate images of such people into the books.

The social worker pointed out that prejudices about people with disabilities / difficulties can be reduced through raising awareness and creating both appropriate infrastructure and specially designed programs that will be accessible for everyone.

The special educator highlighted the importance of the education in the configuration regarding the people facing disabilities/ difficulties. She added that it is of high importance to see the disability / difficulty as one of the traits belonging to these individuals but not as the only one. It is essential, then, to cultivate awareness, as the potentiality for integration of these individuals emerges.

All the participants agreed that people with disabilities should be provided with courses of vocational orientation, in order to discover and compete for the professional field of interests and learn some tips of presenting themselves (pitching themselves, attend trainings/ seminars, participating in interviews etc.)

### **4. Improvements of the integration of disabled people in the job market**

Everyone agreed that it should be mandatory for each company to meet specific criteria regarding the facilitation of people with disabilities / difficulties in the workplace. Under these conditions, the existence of appropriate transportation infrastructure and basic needs would certainly be present.

The special educator pointed out that education and employment are of paramount importance for the social integration of people with



	<p>disabilities. She also stated that it is imperative to develop intervention policies in these areas. In order to improve their integration into the labor market, it is necessary to improve the education provided and of course to take into account the particular traits of each individual, such as the type of disability / difficulty, age, gender, in order to understand the state of the individual in its true dimension.</p>
Conclusions	<p>People with disabilities experience significant discrimination in the workplace, despite their right to employment and equal treatment. There is a significant gap between the unemployment rates of people with disabilities and the percentages of unemployment concerning the other people. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Greece does not offer these individuals real employment opportunities, but instead of it, our country places them in public sector jobs. However, efforts are being made to protect people with disabilities and their professional integration. The participants of the focus groups suggested the boosting of legislation regarding the job inclusion of disabled people. Additionally, they focused on the importance of the educational field for the elimination of the prejudices and the discrimination towards people with disabilities/ difficulties.</p>



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# IO1 FOCUS GROUPS

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## NATIONAL REPORT – FOCUS GROUP (IO1) –CYPRUS

CSI - Center for Social Innovation Ltd

**BRIDGES – Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue of Disability,  
Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders**

**Agreement n. 2019-1-PT01-KA204-061388**



## BRIDGES IO1 – Report on the focus groups - CYPRUS

### FOCUS GROUP 1: OPERATORS

Conducted on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020 through Skype (due to COVID-19 restrictions)

By Vaggelis Gettos, Project Manager, CSI

<p>Number and type of participants</p>	<p><u>11 attended online (Skype):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Memnia Theodorou</b>- motivational speaker, student of positive psychology dentist</li> <li>• <b>Irimi Georgiou</b>- social worker, Hope For Children CRC Policy Center</li> <li>• <b>Noni Skoteinou</b> - music therapist</li> <li>• <b>Andry Eracleous</b> - dance therapist, self-employed</li> <li>• <b>Elena Demetriou</b> - social worker, Hope For Children CRC Policy Center, former volunteer in various organisations supporting disabled people</li> <li>• <b>Maria Gavrielidou</b> - music therapist, self-employed</li> <li>• <b>Rafaella Foti Pieri</b> -social worker, Hope For Children CRC Policy Center</li> <li>• <b>Andrea Tziorta</b> - psychologist, self-employed</li> <li>• <b>Nikoletta Vasiliou</b> - Pancyprian Organization of Rehabilitation, Head of Advisory Services</li> <li>• <b>Emily Katalanou</b> - music therapist- self-employed</li> <li>• <b>Sophia Rossou</b> - social worker, Hope For Children CRC Policy Center, former teacher at special education</li> <li>• <b>Jenny Kazakeou</b> - social worker, Pancyprian Association for People with Autism</li> </ul> <p><u>3 replied in written due to technical problems (low internet connectivity):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maria Charalampous</b> - Dance Movement Psychotherapist, self-employed</li> <li>• <b>Efi Vasilaki</b> – Social Worker at Hope For Children CRC Policy Center, Coordinator of Foster Care Department</li> <li>• <b>Angelina Eftychidou</b> – speech therapist</li> </ul>
<p>Main topics discussed</p>	<p><b>1. Training opportunities (either formal, informal or non-formal) aimed at developing skills for operators working with</b></p>



## **disabilities.**

One participant mentioned that she is currently being trained at the Brief Systemic Dialogical Therapy Institute of Nicosia. The professional training comprises developing skills while working with people with heavy psychic disabilities, like schizophrenia. This programme is strictly addressing mental health professionals. She mentioned that the programme highly helps managing the stress of the families of disabled people. This participant also mentioned that especially regarding art therapists, their basic education reaches up to a certain point, thus, they absolutely need further training. The other participants. No other participant mentioned any other training programme for professionals. It is notable that one more participant referred to training programmes for disabled people, as direct beneficiaries- something which shows that even when a first line professional hears the term “training”, he/she will may think of training for disabled people and not for him/her. In general, the vast majority of participants were unaware of relevant training programmes.

A participant who is a dentist mentioned that regarding health professionals, there is no structured institutional framework of training on working with disabled people and that it is up to the professionals personally to go through training.

## **2. Participation in any such training**

Only one participant has taken place in training programmes regarding autism. These are usually external like conferences. This type of training opportunities is random, based on the occasional offer of the opportunity and they do not constitute a regular practice, though. No other participant has ever taken part in any kind of training on working with disabled people.

## **3. Gap or shortage in the existing training framework regarding the skills and competences needed for working with disabled people**

One participant pointed out that there is a huge gap between the public and private sector. In the public sector training opportunities are very poor. Even supervision in a



multidisciplinary group or individually does not exist as a practice and this is an obstacle against the further development of skills among professionals. She also mentioned that professionals are rarely trained not only on new but also on traditional technologies. She namely mentioned digital sharing of information on a specific disabled individual between the members of the multidisciplinary team who manage a disabled person's situation.

Another participant named the lack of training regarding receiving consent from a disabled people, an issue, as she said which she considers very important when working with this category of the population. In general, health professionals lacked very basic training due to -as she said- the absence of a National Health System until recently. She expressed the hope that following the implementation of the System, certain basic policies will be applied regarding this issue.

Another participant remarked that disable people should be helped as students to identify their career goals. As well as to connect them with local resources but also to teach them how to search for jobs. A collaboration between the family, the employers and the co-workers is essential.

One participant referred to the lack of online training courses. As she said, while working in the field, physically attending a training course is usually difficult. The same participant pointed out the lack of awareness among the general public regarding the disabled people's situation.

**4.Skills needed to help disabled people in job inclusion. Ideal structure, content and included tools of an online training course to improve skills for job inclusion of disabled people.**

Participants mentioned:

- How to find information regarding programmes which support disabled people who seek to integrate labor market.
- How to motivate disabled people to not be content with governmental allowances and become active in the labor market.
- How to explain to disabled people their rights.



- How to empower families and fight their fear of economic repercussions because of abandoning the allowance “safety net” in favor of the active role of their members in the labor market.
- How to better cooperate with the family
- How to enhance the psychic/emotional stamina of family members who support family members who are disabled.
- Skills evaluation
- Advising skills
- How to inform SMEs on the hiring opportunities
- Finding alternative solutions for employers to adapt work management to the disabled people’s needs difficulties.
- Crisis management skills for professionals
- Professional development, career advancement, performance management
- Assistive technologies
- Stereotyping
- Proactivity against burn out
- Good practices from abroad
- Case studies

**5. Do you feel you have adequate knowledge of the legislation in this field?**

Only two participants admitted being familiarized with the legislation in this field. Only one out of them was able to thoroughly present some basic points of the legal framework.

**6. Examples of good practices aimed at the job integration in for people with disabilities**

One participant mentioned that at her organisation, the Pancyprian Organization of Rehabilitation, a specialised VET programme for disabled people is being planned at the moment. Within the framework of the specific programme, a trainer will form 8 groups of disabled people who will be allocated to specific vocational fields, according to their skills and preferences. For the allocation of people, the trainer assesses the results of a Diagnostic Test (<https://bit.ly/3aNPULT>).

Another referred to the training blind people receive at the



School for Blind People in order to get a job at call centers. They are get hired at hospitals or large-scale services and big companies. At the School, disabled people also receive training on arts and crafts.

One participant informed the group about a training programme for disabled people offered by the Department of Social Integration (governmental agency). This training is VET-based. Disabled people are invited to express their personal interests and skills. The aim is to empower them as future employees but also as future business owners. Special attention is given to combat the potential exploitation of disabled people by their families, siblings and friends (see below under “Obstacles to job inclusion of people with disabilities”).

Another participant who is working at the Pancyprian Association for People with Autism referred to the achievements of her organisation. As she said, disabled people who received support by the Association, have achieved to get hired in SMEs or bigger companies (like call centers) while being guided by the Association’s staff and multidisciplinary groups. The multidisciplinary groups assess the individual’s skills, interests and preferences. The Department of Social Integration also assists the newly hired throughout their work pathway. Still, no official guidelines have been set by the competent Ministries or other relevant authorities. The guidelines are set by the multidisciplinary group and are tested through their experience.

Another mentioned that the government has provisioned a financial support to businesses which hire disabled people and a percentage of 10% for disabled people in the public sector.

A lot of super-markets offer work opportunities (cashiers, arranging products on selves, filling plastic bags with products) to disabled people, as a practice. In general, there is no official protocol or any kind of widely agreed framework in the private sector.

## **7. Obstacles to job inclusion of people with disabilities?**



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Stereotypes, prejudice, racism against disabled people. Specifically, the false impression that disabled people cannot be productive.</li><li>- Special difficulties arise in the countryside which is an even more difficult environment both for the application of rights of disabled people but also labor opportunities and standards.</li><li>- There is a particular situation regarding exploitation by families and siblings, in Cyprus. Disabled people are usually “hired” by companies who belong to siblings or friends of the family, but they are not paid, thus, they are exploited. This situation is a serious obstacle towards a smooth and regular integration of disabled people in the labor market.</li><li>- The size of the employing business. SMEs do not have the same capacity as big corporations do.</li><li>- Disabled people are not easily socially accepted in the workplace.</li><li>- Limited promotion of an integration culture from the part of competent organisations and authorities through advertisements and large-scale campaigns.</li><li>- Transition to the workplace was also another obstacle. There should be a systematized solution to address this issue.</li><li>- Lack of information on specific VET training for disabled people.</li><li>- Lack of flexibility from the part of employers.</li><li>- Lack of information offered to employers regarding their obligations and training opportunities.</li></ul>
Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- In the case of Cyprus, according to the professionals’ opinions, we could not say that there is an intersectional systematized framework for the integration of disabled people. One can find scattered practices in the public and private sector but it depends mostly on the good will of employers and not on an organized and well structured framework which persistently promotes the employment of disabled people.</li><li>- Family is a core field where a lot of obstacles but also a lot of possibilities arise. Due to the social structure of the Cypriot society, family members play a highly important</li></ul>



	<p>role on the development of disabled family members. More attention should be given to this field so as to liberate both the family's and the disabled member's active and creative dynamics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- There is an obvious lack of structured lack of training among professionals. Professionals mostly learn by doing. Official guidelines by competent authorities are also absent. This is a crucial point given that professionals across the sector do not follow a common framework but evaluate their performance and the results of their efforts through experience.</li><li>- Cyprus is investing more into financial support of disabled people and their families than in developing disabled peoples' skills towards their integration in labor.</li><li>- As a result of all the above, integration of disabled people in the local labor market and workplaces could be characterized as a "lonely sport" as it depends on isolated cells of organisations, employers and individuals.</li></ul>
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## FOCUS GROUP 2: STAKEHOLDERS

Conducted on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020 through Skype (due to COVID-19 restrictions)

By Vaggelis Gettos, Project Manager, CSI

<p>Number and type of participants</p>	<p><u>11 stakeholder representatives online:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lenia Georgiou</b> – art therapist, “Nefeles” space.</li> <li>• <b>Dimitris Lambrianides</b> – President of the Cyprus Paraplegics’ Organisation</li> <li>• <b>Stavros Parlalis</b> – University Teacher at Frederick University, social worker</li> <li>• <b>Marios Solonos</b> – life coach, disabled person</li> <li>• <b>Nasia Dionysiou</b> – lawyer</li> <li>• <b>Katerina Andreou</b> – HR specialist /recruiter, CEO of HR Innovate</li> <li>• <b>Stella Eftychiou</b> – Dance Movement Therapy specialist</li> <li>• <b>Eria Athanasiou</b> – Pancyprian Association for People with Autism, social worker</li> <li>• <b>Ioanna Georgiou</b> – Pancyprian Association for People with Autism, social worker</li> <li>• <b>Angeliki Yassemidis</b> – Founder of the Montessorian School of Nicosia, psychologist</li> <li>• <b>Katerina Mavrou</b> – University Teacher at the European University of Cyprus, special education specialist</li> </ul> <p><u>2 replied in written:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Theodoros Kyprianides</b> – MK Prosopsis, assistive equipment specialist</li> <li>• <b>Andros Georgiadis</b> – President of the Pancyprian Organisation of Rehabilitation for Disabled People</li> </ul>
<p>Main topics discussed</p>	<p><b>1. What do you know about programmes to integrate the disabled people in the workplace? Do you believe that your country offers real possibilities of integration in the workplace to disabled people?</b></p> <p>The HR/recruiter stated that despite being properly registered to the official pool of HR agencies, they have never received any information by the competent authorities on this topic. Though,</p>



she mentioned that since 2006, her company has never received a request from a disabled person.

One of the disabled people's rights activists referred to the governmental support programmes which sponsor companies in order to motivate them to hire disabled people. The duration of these programmes is usually from 1 to 2 years. He remarked that a lot of disabled people remain at their positions even after the end of the governmental sponsorship. He also referred to request that his organisation receives requests for employees from the tourism industry. He characterized the sponsorship framework.

The art therapist referred to the training programmes for disabled people which are implemented by "MERA" center for psychic disabilities ("day" in Greek). At this center, a multidisciplinary team supports the disabled people towards their integration into employment and labor. Though, as she said, very few out of the total number of beneficiaries achieve to move forward to the next steps of integration.

In addition to the above, the dance movement specialist explained that only the disabled people who are characterized as functional by the occupational therapists can benefit from the integration programmes of that specific day center.

Students in special schools who go through post-high school vocational programmes is not recognized by any other education degree or institution. So, in this case, these students cannot pursue higher studies based on their prior education or training.

According to one of the disabled people's rights activist, a new legislation is currently discussed in the parliament regarding social entrepreneurship. He was informed that the law provisions protected forms of employment which will benefit people with disabilities.

Another one mentioned that job placement support provided by voluntary welfare organisations can help potential employers to understand the needs of people with disabilities and guide them on the accommodations needed for a successful placement. He

added that Cyprus does offer possibilities of integration in the workplace to people with disabilities and that special courses in various parts of technology and/or other subjects are also provided.

The lawyer referred to the 10% percentage of placement in the public sector (see above “Focus Group with Operators”). She also referred to the Individualised Support Services of the Labor Department which are offered to disabled people looking for a job.

**2. In your opinion, what are the obstacles to job inclusion of people with disabilities?**

- Absence of training for disabled people so as to capacitate them to work in different sector to the one they used to work in before they got the disability. This is highly important given that most members of the organisation were not born with the disability.
- The sustainability of job positions offered to disabled people mostly depends on the good will of the employer and not on a systematized and governmentally-monitored legal framework.
- Lack of investments for developing accessible and flexible jobs.
- Lack of support to disabled persons to make good use of their skills/abilities or develop more.
- The reaction of the families against the possibility of loss of financial benefits in case their disabled member gets a job (once a disabled person who receives a governmental allowance gets a job, he/she loses the right to this allowance). The government demonstrates reluctance against this phenomenon.
- Lack of centralized guidance and procedures which horizontally sets a common framework for operators.
- Bureaucracy arises also as another obstacle, according to several participants. The system of integration lacks continuity and a lot of misunderstandings arise between different governmental agencies
- Children with disabilities face special issues regarding not only the integration in employment but in several aspects



	<p>of life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lack of a universal designing of inclusive education which will address the disabled children's needs but also the need of operators for vocational training.</li><li>- The ethics of local employers. The employers' community is not educated to accept and adapt their company's working culture to the needs of people with disabilities.</li><li>- The accessibility of the working area and/or the transportation from and to the working area.</li><li>- People with psychic disabilities are even more discriminated than the people with other types of disabilities. This happens due to the more intense stigmatization of psychic disabilities.</li><li>- Financial cost of readapting premises or work place according to a disabled person's special needs.</li><li>- Lack of information directed to the disabled people regarding assistive governmental services or opportunities.</li></ul> <p><b>3. How do you think prejudices about disabled people can be reduced?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- By investing in the change of culture. Instead of focusing on the disabilities, we should focus on the abilities, skills and competences of the disabled people. This can be done by starting to educate children from kindergarten to primary school about equality and through boosting the perception of inclusive education and the right to equal education opportunities for all.</li><li>- Increased level of awareness regarding the definition and understanding of disabilities, its social dimension and the barriers which prevent disabled people from developing their skills and put their productivity in the service of society.</li><li>- Accept and assist the people with disabilities with all proper training from experienced people.</li><li>- By training people with disabilities in the appropriate way to be able to submit their CVs where there is a hiring demand in the job market.</li><li>- Disabled people must intervene at every level and upon every decision which affects them through their associations and unions.</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- As for Media, to stop transmitting stereotypes and cultivating prejudice. They could be encouraged to play an active role in change cause.</li></ul> <p><b>4. What do you think should be done to improve the integration of disabled people in the job market?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Employers should also be able to pursue training opportunities which do not exist in Cyprus.</li><li>- Training on awareness regarding disabled people's rights should also be offered to the general public.</li><li>- The governmental sponsorship/support to employers should have a date of expiration. The disabled employee should be encouraged to prove his/her productivity like the other employees.</li><li>- Special attention should be paid on the preferences and interests of disabled people instead of offering them offer-based ways. The vulnerability of this category of the population should be seriously considered.</li></ul>
Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- In Cyprus, there is a common concern among different stakeholders about the intervention of the governmental services and authorities in the field. Almost all participants wait a lot more from the part of the central state agencies so that guidance is provided to the private sector, the employers, the families and the operators.</li><li>- Cyprus, according to the vast majority of participants who took the floor, lacks a holistic system of addressing the needs of operators, employers, disabled people and their families for training. Relevant opportunities come out of scattered initiatives rather than a culture which has been established in the local society.</li><li>- To convince the employers that disabled people can be as productive as the non-disabled ones. In this way, employers will be more motivated to hire disabled people.</li><li>- The establishment of a social culture is a very crucial factor for promoting the integration of people with disabilities into employment and workplaces. Without common principles and ethics, it is very difficult for isolated actors to work this aim out.</li></ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Special attention should be paid at motivating the employers to hire disabled people. Employers are not that prejudiced but they are concerned regarding the productivity of disabled people as none of the governmental authorities inform or train them in regard to that.</li></ul>
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# IO1 FOCUS GROUPS

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## NATIONAL REPORT – FOCUS GROUP (IO1) –ITALY

**InEuropa srl**

**BRIDGES – Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue of Disability,  
Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders**

**Agreement n. 2019-1-PT01-KA204-061388**



## BRIDGES IO1 – Report on the focus groups – ITALY

**Virtual focus groups held:** 3 (29th and 30th April, 6th May 2020) and one individual meeting (18th May 2020)

**Total Participants:** 20

**Italian regions involved:** 10 (Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Abruzzo, Umbria, Lazio, Lombardy, Piedmont, Trentino Alto-Adige, Veneto, Sicily)

### Participant profiles:

1. 1 healthcare professional
2. 1 socio-pedagogical educator and volunteer
3. 1 educationalist working with families for parental support
4. 1 personnel manager in a cooperative working with people with disabilities
5. 1 head office contact person at a training institution running projects for disabled young people
6. 1 president of a social cooperative
7. 1 coordinator of a consortium of cooperatives offering services to people with disabilities
8. 1 personnel coordinator in a social cooperative
9. 1 social cooperative educator
10. 1 Italian Red Cross volunteer and relative of a person with disabilities
11. 1 labour market operator at a social cooperatives' consortium
12. 1 educationalist and business consultant on training and learning
13. 1 university student (degree course in Healthcare Services' Monitoring and Evaluation)
14. 1 neurologist and EASPD network representative
15. 1 cognitive-behavioural psychotherapist engaged in paths of integration and professionalization of disabled people
16. 1 representative of Confindustria (Italian Industry Confederation) and training consultant
17. 1 employment centre operator
18. 1 coordinator of training projects for disabled people
19. 1 European project manager in social cooperative
20. 1 university student with visual and hearing impairments (degree course in Sociology)



## INTRODUCTION

The focus groups of the BRIDGES project were conceived as an opportunity to meet operators and stakeholders who directly and indirectly deal with the employment of people with disabilities, aimed at discussing the state of the art in this sector. The goal was to encourage open discussion in order to share good practices, problems and gaps related to services for the job placement of people with disabilities, identify which skills are needed and should be developed/strengthened to ensure a targeted and sustainable placement, as well as investigate which digital tools and distance learning methodologies are considered most effective and suitable for online training.

The focus groups are part of the Intellectual Output 1 of the project which consists of: a research of the best practices of job integration for disabled people in the partner countries; the administration of a questionnaire to the sector operators to identify their training needs; the organization of focus groups in each country to deepen these issues through an open discussion. According to the project, each partner had to carry out 1 meeting with 10 operators and 1 meeting with 10 stakeholders.

The result of this initial research are meant to guide the construction of the online training program within Intellectual Output 2.

The focus groups, initially planned to be in presence, have been converted into virtual meetings on Google Meet, due to the Covid-19 containment measures imposed just before the launch of the focus groups. This unexpected circumstance could represent a complication due to the organizations' difficulties in carrying out normal work or the suspension of certain activities. Actually, the conversion of the meetings into virtual mode allowed any operator to participate regardless of their physical location, extending the territorial coverage of the focus groups and the diversification of the professionals involved. Moreover, this difficult and particular moment has somehow encouraged operators to welcome the possibility of a confrontation with colleagues from other realities also in search of ideas, reflection and collaboration. In total, **36 people expressed interest** in participating in the focus groups, although some of them eventually could not participate. **Three group meetings and one individual meeting** were organised **with 20 people** from **10 different regions**, including a representative of the European EASPD network.

This took the comparison from a local to a **national level**, giving a **much wider scope** to the discussion than would have resulted from the local focus groups initially planned. The focus groups were more numerous than the 2 established by the project, to meet the different needs of the stakeholders. In addition, the groups brought together operators and stakeholders instead of separating them in different sessions, giving a **multidisciplinary and transversal** character to the discussion which saw the participation of operators of the national association of families of people with disabilities, social workers, educators, psychologists and pedagogists, consultants, labour market operators, volunteers and others.



## CONTENTS SUMMARY

### How does job placement work in the different regions represented?

**Emilia-Romagna:** good organization and well-tested institutional mechanisms. At the social and health district level there are the **Job Placement Services (SIL) of the municipalities** that outsource the management of these services consisting of orientation and integration for disabled people who are not ready for a job and therefore need to engage in activities to approach the work dimension.

There are also **active labour policy projects** funded by the European Social Fund or other channels, always on a district basis, where the target group is the disabled or fragile population. The difficulty is to link the personalization of the service according to each individual with the monitoring aspect, which is very standard and rigid as it must follow the management rules of the funded projects.

There is a new **convention** in force for **job placement in social cooperatives**, former Art. 22, now **Law n.68/1999**: a for-profit company, which cannot hire a disabled person, can outsource a job order to a social cooperative employing disabled people. A commercial relationship is therefore established between the company and the cooperative with multi-year agreements.

**Training internship:** different types – extracurricular with precise rules, or more of a socio-relational type, milder and longer-lasting.

Alongside all this there are the **regulations of the Local Healthcare Units** that implement **Socio-Rehabilitation Pathways for long-term therapies**.

**EQUAL projects:** born within the European Employment Strategy and co-financed by the European Social Fund 2000-2006, they promoted the experimentation of innovative approaches and policies to combat discrimination and inequality in the labour market.

The Region tries to trace everything back to the training internships. Cooperatives are a place of transit where the person acquires skills and then enters the profit world, except for those who really have difficulties.

**Criticalities reported:** lack of job offers that are really accessible to disabled persons because of the high level of skills required. The users are in extreme difficulty to apply also because little work has been done on their autonomy. Moreover, there is a certain ease for companies to fulfil their legislative obligation by paying a fine or adopting contractual tricks rather than hiring a disabled person on a permanent basis. As far as the Northern part of Modena's territory is concerned, there is a lack of structures able to meet the job placement needs (which unfortunately has grown in recent years) and able to offer a real job opportunity to a disabled user with a purpose of continuity and career.

**Abruzzo:** in the past there have been EQUAL projects for training to accompany towards a work experience. It's an industrial and artisan territory but big industries struggle to recognize the disabled people as workforce to be hired. There is no path of accompaniment of the individual within the company. Problems in involving families. Public bodies do not support the disabled person, the right to work is not guaranteed.

**Umbria:** similar to Emilia-Romagna for the division in 10 social zones and the job placement through insertion services is managed by each lead municipalities. Intellectual and relational disability is the most excluded. The territory is made of micro-enterprises, the difficult mediation between the productive environment and the needs of the individual is only compensated for by cooperatives that favour job placement projects ("type B" cooperatives). Experience supported by the Justice Fund about 5 years ago for extracurricular traineeships for people with autism spectrum disorders. Families try to



form social cooperatives to promote job opportunities by exploiting the agricultural and touristic reception potential of the region.

**Lombardy:** great openness towards the employment of disabled people. Advanced structures and projects. Companies must hire people with disabilities in proportion to the number of employees. There are many voluntary activities that help both for recreation and work placement.

**Veneto:** the Region is investing in this field. Initially it has run training projects and job placement through apprenticeships. Since 2018, through the Regional Disabled Fund (particularly rich - 14 million euro) there has been a strong interception of disabled people (500 in Rovigo and about 1000 in other provinces). Activation of internships directly in the company and development plan for targeted placements. Internship are supervised by previously trained partners. Greater integration of services and increased performance. Good but still low numbers. Well-structured type B cooperative ecosystem. Private companies tend to place people with less complex disabilities, but there is also strong surprise when they meet structured professional profiles (graduates, etc.).

**Lazio:** the Region has many ministries and therefore it fairly respects the working quotas of disabled people even if they are often relegated to elementary tasks. It is therefore necessary to push on professional preparation and career advancement prospects.

**Sicily:** In the Region there are active associations born from family members to implement socio-occupational interventions. Job placement activities are rare also for a lack of opportunities due to the economic fabric of the territory. Networking between the different services dealing with disability and work has not yet started.

### **Terminology**

According to WHO guidelines, the expression Person With Disability (PWD) is now recognised - not "autistic" but "person with autism". Expressions like "mental retardation" are no longer used. Disability belongs to society and not to the person with disabilities.

Anglo-Saxons use the term "client" and in Italian we can say "user".

The expression "differently abled" is not always accepted by people with disabilities themselves, as it carries a risk to diminish the disability aspect and subsequently also the recognition of the rights linked to it.

### **How did you find the world of work in welcoming people with disabilities: were you helped?**

The work environment makes it very difficult to consider the person with disabilities as a participating actor. The difficulty is to see him or her as a carrier of value, although there are principles and regulations that govern the system. For a worker with disabilities it is difficult to feel welcomed, the environment is not trained to include employees with limitations, there are no tools to facilitate the inclusion of someone who has different skills and peculiarities, who is unique. Traineeships are not always converted into work projects with a real salary.

### **What professional skills operate in the services and what training do they have? What skills need to be reinforced?**



What is missing is a debate to try to determine, without caging them, which professions are useful to take care of disabled people and how to integrate them, both in the school-work transition and then between guidance and the achievement of employment goals. Companies and operators are not able to dedicate the necessary time to taking care of people with disabilities in order to make an accurate assessment of their potential and possibilities within the productive contexts. A first example of a professional figure is the **occupational therapist**.

Now, in Veneto, there are **accredited labour market operators without direct experience with disabled people**, they are only unemployment experts. In other regions different types of operators have been identified (educators, psychologists, counsellors). A training path with professional experience with disabled people, volunteers and family members is needed.

On the other hand, those who work with people with disabilities are often well trained on **relationships with people** but have **little ability to read the reference context related to "work"** to help individuals - businesses - families. Instead, this ability to read the demands of the job world and corporate organizations is fundamental. If we refine the ability to assess what skills are put in place in the job placement process according to the user's characteristics, we could make a more effective matching. This deficiency is strong in the centres that institutionally deal with this and that still carry with them the concept of "placement" instead of "supply-demand match".

The operator must be aware of the skills that the person with disabilities has. He/she must be at the same time **psychologist-educator-labour market/orientation expert**. The work path includes different moments: preparatory moments in which the competence related to the world of work is less needed and others in which it is more. In the proximity of integration in a company or in a social cooperative, **the coexistence of skills in the field of disability and of labour regulations is fundamental**. 80% of successes occur when the operator is able to speak the language of the company and **make people understand that hiring that person with disabilities is an opportunity**. The compulsory placement is in fact experienced as an imposition; the operator needs to know how to mediate with the company.

Communication is another important element and subject of study in recent years. There is a need for **shared modes of communication between the host cooperative, operators, disabled users and families**.

The skills to be developed for an operator are many, from emotional intelligence to soft skills, not only administrative aspects and procedures (there are already services in charge of this), there is a lack of **soft skills**. It is clearly necessary to know the disabilities because each one has particular characteristics and needs. Then there are innate skills, there is a **human factor** that goes beyond any training. Listening, mediation, study, cultural aspects, personal ethics come into play. It takes an ability to make the person with disabilities understand the value, the importance of being able to do a job in order to use it in life.

The role of **"mediator"** is fundamental, a **"job coach"** who not only **knows disabilities** but can also **mediate the needs of the company and the person** who generally has a low level of skills. A mediator is needed who works constantly with the company and the social and health services, who knows how to network between the different actors involved in the job placement, reliable for both poles, and who establishes a bond of trust and seriousness. Once a person with disabilities is hired, the company must be followed up, not abandoned, supporting the other workers in managing the relationship with their disabled colleague. The result is not achieved by placing the person but by guaranteeing assistance and a continuous reference point every time the user has moments of difficulty, in order to



create a favourable condition for maintaining the job and possibly for a professional growth in it. On the one hand, it is necessary to **promote the culture of the company** by making people understand the specificity of the disabled worker and his/her potential, fighting prejudices which are often due more to inadequate knowledge and perplexity towards the process.

Another important aspect is to **train disabled people**, strengthening their **responsibility, autonomy and sense of duty**, because they have grown up in a welfare system that kept them passively assisted and has not helped them in this sense. Education in punctuality, respect for rules, precision, cleanliness is very important. A weakness found is the lack of proactivity of the disabled person in managing autonomously contacts that can give access to job opportunities (e.g. applying for a job advertisement, making themselves visible on the web, etc.).

For example, the diversity management project in Tetrapack (Modena) created an alliance among family-worker-company whose absence was leading to the exclusion of disabled workers. This allowed workers not only to stay but also to acquire value, to become a resource, even within a highly digitalised and sophisticated company. The alliance with the family serves to make the expectations of the family itself real with respect to job integration outcomes.

**IPS Individual Placement Support** is a new figure that helps people with disabilities to understand what they want to do and to achieve individual goals, without starting from preconceptions about what a person might be able to do. It should never be the practitioner who lowers the level of people, but he/she set high goals even for those who will have more difficulty in achieving them. The disabled person must have the same chances of working as others, must be put in the same conditions of choice because work is a fundamental social aspect and the disabled person must be stimulated to reflect on the skills and opportunities he/she has and can develop. Attention should be paid first and foremost to the needs and wishes of the individual.

EUSE - European Union of Supported Employment, a European association dealing with employment for people with disabilities, has created a specific profile for professionals who have to act as mediators or surveyors of employment opportunities for people with disabilities so it can be very useful for the profile we have to create.

### **What kind of online training is most suitable for these operators?**

Given the complexity of the professional profile necessary to promote the effective employment of people with disabilities, a training approach linked **to experiential and transversal learning is needed**. A place of **confrontation and exchange is needed** because the work in question is also emotional.

The **flipped classroom** can be an interesting methodology allowing learners to study the material individually in advance and then using the training time to compare and process the learning in groups.

The use of **case studies, concrete experiences**, activities that attract attention and interest is largely preferred.

In the case of **video tutorials** it is preferable to foresee the presence of a trainer rather than just slides and voice, trying to find a person who can convey the beauty of what he is teaching even through a screen.



Another way to set the path may be to deal with knowledge that should be shared by all those involved and that lends itself to online training, i.e. **knowledge of procedural and political-programmatic aspects**. A path that helps to understand the **institutional tasks** of each person without running the risk that the *procedure* of taking charge prevails over the *individual* taken in charge (formal aspects rather than relational dimension).

Two participants believe that online training **is not suitable** for this type of profession.

One can also imagine **training paths for families** to accompany them as they are often very involved in the process of training, orientation, placement of the person with disabilities.

## CONCLUSIONS



The **ecosystem of job integration of people with disabilities** is very diversified among the regions represented, with stronger and more effective systems especially in the North and, in any case, in territories where profit cooperation has historically been strongly rooted and where, as a consequence, it was possible to develop a significant social cooperation. Even within the most "virtuous" regions, however, there are different speeds among different areas of the same territory, where some report a scarcity of concrete job opportunities for disabled people and a less effective process of supply-demand match making.

Where services are weaker, the role of cooperatives and associations, also made up of family members of people with disabilities, is strong and aimed at creating employment opportunities based on the characteristics of the territory (small businesses, crafts, agriculture and reception...)

The **profile of the operator** who is able to accompany the disabled person in the training-orientation-placement path has taken the shape of a "**mediator**" between the disabled person, family members and the company. The mediator is able to understand the needs of the individual, with whom to set stimulating objectives that encourage him/her to improve and be autonomous, intercept job opportunities that offer a sustainable and growth perspective as much as possible. The mediator will also be the one who weaves a relationship of trust with the company, promoting a culture of inclusiveness, accompanying it in understanding the needs of the new worker and his/her potential, offering a continuous reference point for any criticality that may arise.

For this profile, the **necessary knowledge and skills are multiple**: knowledge on regulatory and procedural matters, in-depth knowledge of the world of work, knowledge and direct experience with disabilities, transversal and "soft" skills such as listening, attention, empathy, communication.

The **online training** for this profile should be based as much as possible on an experiential approach, using the latest methodologies such as flipped classroom and avoiding the static and frontal/narrative approach of the video tutorial.

#### **Attachments:**

- List of participants
- Photos of the 4 meetings






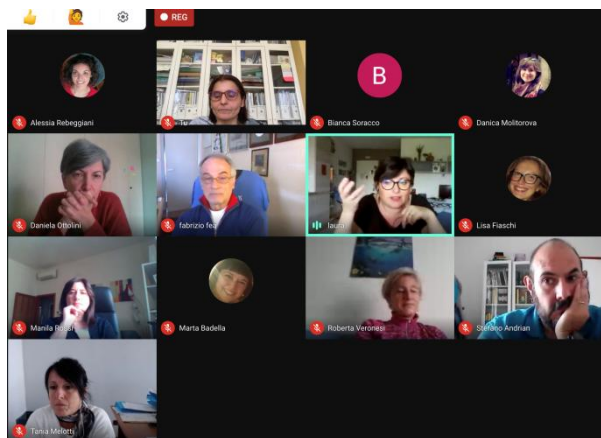
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 Project number: 2019-1-PT01-KA204-061388

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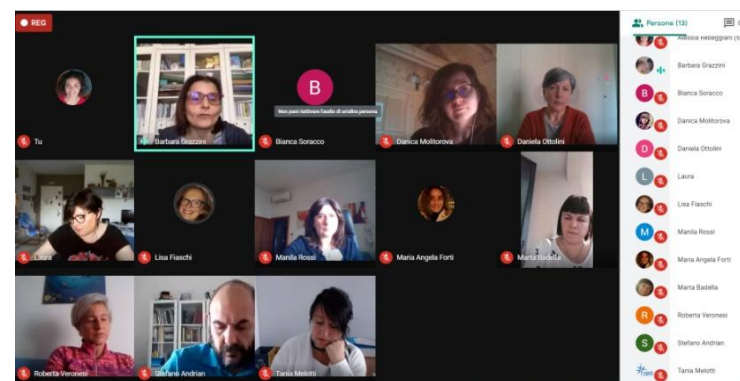


  								
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FOCUS GROUP - 30.04.2020								
DATA:	Nome:	Cognome:	consenso privacy	Occupazione:	Ente:	Ruolo:	Email:	Regione:
30.4.2020	Laura	Peruzzo	SI	Impiegata	C. C. S. Consorzio Cooperative Sociali	Coordinatrice	laura.peruzzo@reteccs.org	Veneto
30.4.2020	Stefano	Andrian	SI	operatore del mercato del lavoro	CCS - consorzio cooperative sociali	operatore del mercato del lavoro	stefano.andrian@reteccs.org	Veneto (Padova)
30.4.2020	Manila	Rossi	SI	Coordinatore del personale	Nazareno Work Soc. Coop. Soc.	Coordinatore del personale	manila.rossi@nazareno-coopsociale	Emilia Romagna (Bologna)
30.4.2020	Fabrizio	Fea	SI	Direttore Sanitario e responsabile progetti europei	Associazione Scuola Viva onlus - EASPD	Direttore Sanitario - Vice Presidente	f.fea-aise@mclink.it	Lazio (Roma)
30.4.2020	Tania	Melotti	SI	libero professionista	Zante Consulting di Tania Melotti	libero professionista	melotti.tania@gmail.com	Emilia Romagna (Modena)
30.4.2020	Matteo	Corbo	SI	Psicoterapeuta	Fondazione Mondoaltrò	Impiegato	mcorbo@caritasagrigento.it	Sicilia
30.4.2020	ROBERTA	VERONESI	SI	educatrice	CONSORZIO SOLIDARIETÀ SOCIALE	EDUCATRICE INSERIMENTI LAVORATIVI	robby.veronesi@gmail.com	Emilia Romagna (Carpi)
30.4.2020	Marta	Badella	SI			coordinatrice genitoriale	martabadella@gmail.com	Lombardia

(image 2: List of participants 30.04.2020)






screenshot1\_focusgroup\_30042020\_call



screenshot2\_focusgroup\_30042020\_call



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FOCUS GROUP - 06.05.2020								
DATA:	Nome:	Cognome:	consenso privacy	Occupazione:	Ente:	Ruolo:	Email:	Regione:
6.5.2020	Matteo	Corbo	SI	Psicoterapeuta	Foadazione Mondoaltro	Impiegato	mcorbo@caritasagrigento.it	Sicilia
6.5.2020	Mario	Bolzani	SI	Libero professionista	Bolzani Ing Mario	Fondatore studio professionale	bolzani.mario@gmail.com	Piemonte
6.5.2020	Mirna	Cremonini	SI	Impiegata	centro impiego castelfranco emilia	Impiegata	mirna.cremonini@gmail.com	Emilia-Romagna
6.5.2020	Claudia	Artioli	SI	coordinatrice progetti	ForModena		clartio89@gmail.com	Emilia-Romagna
6.5.2020	Carlotta	Sabbalini	SI	progettista	Cooperativa Nazareno		carlotta.sabbatini@nazareno-coopsoc	Emilia-Romagna

(

image 3: Lists of participants 06.05.2020)






screenshot\_focusgroup\_06052020\_call



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 Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders  
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<b>BRIDGES – Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue of Disability, Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders</b> Agreement n. 2019-1-PT01-KA204-061388 <b>FOCUS GROUP - 18.05.2020</b>								
DATA:	Nome:	Cognome:	consenso privacy	Occupazione:	Ente:	Ruolo:	Email:	Regione:
18.5.2020	Xheka (Giona)	Haxhiraj	SI	studentessa	n/a	studentessa	xheka.haxhiraj@studenti.unitn.it	Trentino- Alto Adige

(image 4: List of participants 18.05.2020)



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# IO1 FOCUS GROUPS

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## NATIONAL REPORT – FOCUS GROUP (IO1) – SPAIN

**Asociación Caminos – Asociación para el intercambio educación y desarrollo social**

**BRIDGES – Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue of Disability, Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders**

**Agreement n. 2019-1-PT01-KA204-061388**



## BRIDGES IO1 – Report on the focus groups - SPAIN

### FOCUS GROUP 1: OPERATORS

<p>Number and type of participants</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Focus group</b> (5 participants)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inma Jurado</b> - Project Manager in inclusion programmes for disabled people in <i>Asociación Almenaras</i> and creator of <i>In The Shoes</i> project. Occupational therapist in <i>Asilo de los Ángeles</i> and in <i>To en Casa</i> project</li> <li>• <b>Fernando David Cortés Díaz</b> - Employment consultant for <i>Andalucía Orienta</i>, worker in <i>ASPACE Andalucía</i> (an association that provides services for people with cerebral paralysis)</li> <li>• <b>Aitor Rando</b> - Manager in directing disabled people inclusion programs in <i>Asociación Almenaras</i> and creator of <i>In the Shoes</i> project</li> <li>• <b>Mónica Escolano López</b> - Psychologist working with children with development disorders in <i>ACTEA</i></li> <li>• <b>Ramón Quintas</b> - Professional trainer for young people from special education, working in project of labour inclusion for disabled young people in Austria)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Interviews</b> (2 participants)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Elena Nieto</b> – Psychologist, educator and project manager at <i>Asociación Cívica Para la Prevención (ACP)</i></li> <li>➤ <b>Cristina Ordóñez Martín</b> – Social worker. Unemployed. Used to work with disabled children in <i>Santa Rosa de Lima</i> school (Málaga)</li> </ul>
<p>Main topics discussed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Training opportunities, participation and experience in such training</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A participant mentions 6 month-long social dynamization course for elderly people.</li> <li>➤ Participants mention Erasmus courses and the existence of thousands of free online talks during the COVID-19 crisis.</li> <li>➤ <i>CRE Alzheimer</i>: A centre from <i>Imsero</i> (Social Security entity responsible for social services for elderly people), that offers different courses related to dementia.</li> <li>➤ <i>Atención Integral a la Dependencia</i>: A course for</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<p>working with elderly people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <i>You Can</i>: Association that works with people with ASD through animal-assisted therapy.</li><li>➤ <i>In The Shoes</i>: A project to give tools to professionals to work with disabled people.</li><li>➤ <i>Let's Gardening with the Elders</i>: a project in which young people from different countries collaborate with elder people with the aim of them staying active</li><li>➤ A participant mentioned Inclusive Pedagogy Studies taken in Austria: a study group of people from different backgrounds which was really enriching.</li><li>➤ <i>Gender and functional diversity intersectionality course</i>: a very interesting course related to this double discrimination (gender + disability discrimination) that many people suffer.</li><li>➤ A participant talked about a <i>Professionalism certificate to work with disabled people in residential contexts and in daily life</i> done in <i>EUROFORMAC</i>. Her experience in this course was "very big", especially in its practical part: it was one of her first job, she enjoyed it, but she found a lot of hardships because she didn't obtain specific training, having to use her own skills. In the course they wrote a dossier with all the existing resources of the city of the disabled participants. Within the course she also wrote a project on relaxation techniques for disabled people.</li><li>➤ There are courses related to working with disabled people offered by the <i>Social Work College</i>.</li><li>➤ <i>Fundación Maria José Jove</i> offers courses to work with disabled people.</li><li>➤ <i>FAMF COCEMFE</i>: Association that works for the inclusion and the participation of people with physical and organic disabilities. They offer training courses for professionals and for disabled people.</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Gaps/shortages in existing training frameworks, skills needed to help disabled people and knowledge on legislation</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ The key skill is to know how to put oneself in the disabled person's place, to talk and to listen.</li><li>➤ Active listening is needed so the disabled person can explain their barriers and what kind of help they need. Professionals need too know how to ask: "how can I help you?"</li><li>➤ Sometimes professionals are paternalistic and try to take decisions for the disabled people. Empathy,</li></ul></li></ul>
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	<p>communication and trust are needed to understand their feelings, their needs and to understand how they feel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ The problem is how things are designed. In education, if we need to follow a specific curriculum which is the same for everyone, it is impossible to have a real inclusive space. This creates an important barrier for disabled people. This problem is also present in labour, economy and society (e.g. kindergardens, parks, etc)</li><li>➤ The problem of barriers for disabled people (physical barriers, nutrition barriers, etc) is part of the culture. It's something that must be understood by the culture.</li><li>➤ Many barriers are related to the attitude of society. If the attitude is not inclusive it is very difficult for an initiative to have results.</li><li>➤ There is always a lack in practical training. There could always be a bit more practical training. Many professionals have a lot of theoretical experience but little practical experience. A participant suggests role playing activities.</li><li>➤ There is a lot of theory but not enough practical experiences when engaging in professional training. People who train to work with disabled people don't actually know how to work with them because of this lack of experience. Example: the only way to work with people with ASD is experience, because each case is unique. It is not possible to only read about it.</li><li>➤ Interventions in the family context are not so included as others.</li><li>➤ To help disabled people it is very important to like the work with the collective, to be flexible, to have the adequate training, to know how to adapt, to be very creative, to have family counselling abilities.</li><li>➤ One participant knows the Federal Law No. (29) 2006 in relation to disabled people's rights but does not know if it has been updated.</li><li>➤ Some participants consider that they have knowledge of the legislation, though some consider that they don't have enough. Information on the legislation can sometimes be hard to obtain, many disabled people don't know their rights and the legislation is constantly changing, which makes it challenging to always be up to date.</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Structure, contents and tools that an online training course should have</b></li><li>➤ A participant suggests webinars with self-assessments for online trainings. They are more interesting and active than just reading a text. She suggests group dynamics as a good tool too.</li><li>➤ A participant mentions an online training she is currently doing that gives the participant small exercises to do on a platform that only opens an exercise when the previous one has been done.</li><li>➤ It should include guidelines to do the process of analysing the person: context, potentials and gaps that should be compensated to be able to make a good conclusion and adapt the person to the workplace he/she aspires to work in. If a person cannot adapt to the job, it should suggest how to adapt the job to the person.</li><li>➤ An online course should be very specific and concrete. It should specify the collective, the problem and the activity (e.g. catering). A course could analyse what is needed to be a waiter and how to adapt a specific target group to this job.</li><li>➤ A course should treat an aspect that has not been covered by previous courses.</li><li>➤ A basic course that includes what kind of professional (e.g. psychologists) you must refer different cases to is enough. The most basic training is enough, but if the training is going to offer direct support the professional has to be well prepared/qualified, it is much more complicated.</li><li>➤ It could include different points like gender, economy...</li><li>➤ A good online training should begin explaining the labour market in general and its accessibility.</li><li>➤ A course should include an explanation of the concept of functional disability.</li><li>➤ It could include group dynamics</li><li>➤ Skills of validation and qualification to communicate to disabled people that they have the abilities and the rights to access the labour market.</li><li>➤ In a training, workers should become conscious of paternalism towards disabled people when they can engage on many kinds of jobs and activities. Professionals should learn to “not look after” disabled people. A good training should show professionals how to motivate disabled people</li></ul>
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	<p>instead of looking after them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ It should somehow work on breaking social stereotypes of disabled people.</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Examples of good practices</b></li><li>➤ From <i>To en Casa</i> they work a lot with ADECCO, who promote the acquisition of skills for disabled young people to promote labour inclusion.</li><li>➤ <i>Plan Fermenta</i>: this project aims to prepare the work place for people with psychic disabilities.</li><li>➤ <i>Vida Independiente</i> association planned a café for people with disabilities to work in.</li><li>➤ <i>Asociación Arrabal</i> has a lot of activities to support disabled people.</li><li>➤ <i>Eurodiscap</i>: orthopaedic centre that has technicians that try to adapt work environments to disabled workers. In general, they try to promote inclusive environment.</li><li>➤ <i>Decathlon</i>: this company collaborates with associations that work with people with down syndrome for their labour inclusion.</li><li>➤ <i>Centro Juan Maria</i>: Centre that provides attention to disabled people.</li><li>➤ <i>Asociación Síndrome de Down de Vigo</i></li><li>➤ One participant talks to a project where he collaborated in Austria. It was a farm where young disabled people lived for a week and learnt new professions like cooking, cleaning or farming. It was a method very focused on practice.</li><li>➤ <i>Andalucía Orienta</i> did a competition on good practices in career guidance.</li><li>➤ <i>Technical assistance in cultural environments course (University of Málaga)</i>: this course collaborated with many museums of the province of Málaga towards the insertion of disabled people. As well, the course gives disabled people an opportunity to enjoy and be part of the university environment.</li><li>➤ <i>Asociación de la Exclusión Laboral</i>.</li><li>➤ <i>FAISEM</i> association has a work inclusion program, through which people with psychic disabilities were placed in various photocopying shops.</li><li>➤ <i>ASPAYM</i> association promoted a tourist advisor training for people with spinal cord injury.</li><li>➤ Within <i>ASPROMANIS</i> association, a participant learnt how different disabled candidates were selected for adapted job positions (e.g. a car wash) taking into</li></ul>
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	<p>account their abilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Within <i>Down Málaga</i> association, there is an employability programme for young people that worked with car washing services and protected flats. In the programmes of Down Málaga, the families of the disabled people are always included as in a strong and stable network.</li><li>➤ The <i>Rodilla</i> restauration franchise mainly hires disabled people and is known for this</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Adequacy, obstacles and possible improvements of job placement services</b></li><li>➤ In 2016, there was only one big association that was working with disabled people. Since 2017 more have appeared.</li><li>➤ Orientation programmes are very limited. They have specific aims and they can't give services to a lot of people. For example, ASPACE has two labour technicians. More entities and workers are needed.</li><li>➤ The data indicates that there are still a lot of disabled people that are unemployed. They are a collective that is very affected by general unemployment</li><li>➤ Orientation to disabled people should be more individual and less based on rules.</li><li>➤ Disabled people are over-protected. Because of this, in many cases they have not developed personal interests and their development has not been reinforced. They have not experienced many personal processes of normal life.</li><li>➤ There are not a lot of labour supplies and means, and these are not very varied. Different people have different needs and different processes towards the labour market and need a more individualised attention.</li><li>➤ One participant believes that all the services move through associations and not through public services. She thinks that within the public services, it would be interesting to create a guidance programme to create more working places for disabled people. She mentioned that in her association 4% of the staff are disabled people.</li><li>➤ A participant identifies the "stigma" of disability as the main obstacle for professional inclusion of disabled people.</li><li>➤ A participant recommends more training in counselling abilities with disabled people for workers.</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Disabled youngsters should be more trusted and given more responsibilities within education so they become more independent</li><li>➤ People without social training are not so conscious of disabled people issues</li><li>➤ One participant mentioned the problem the children with ASD had during the COVID-19 lockdown (parents walking with their children following professional prescription were discriminated and in some occasions assaulted by neighbours who believed they were not following the laws). This happened, in part, because the general population doesn't know the rights and needs of people with ASD.</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Additional information</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Reflection based on COVID-19 pandemic: sustainable development, respect, circular and local economy will generate social value and more work places for everyone (because it is needed). These changes would indirectly affect the inclusion and accessibility to certain jobs.</li><li>➤ We should start to give more importance of quality over quantity. We should stop talking about numbers and more about individual facts.</li><li>➤ The connection between professionals that work with disabled people and businesses is important to be able to convince disabled people about what they have to provide, their strengths and their skills.</li><li>➤ If we want to help other people, we need to be able to "walk in their shoes". We should stop "doing things for" other people and start "doing things with" them.</li><li>➤ It is very important to correctly evaluate the person that will undergo professional guidance to prevent frustration and the person abandoning the job. The job must be adapted to the persons skills and limitations.</li><li>➤ Working on the labour insertion of disabled people should be vocational. One must have patience and be conscious that the process is going to be different, slower and that it will require additional support.</li><li>➤ General society should be made conscious of different realities that exist. This is one of the main steps to making the labour market more accessible to disabled people.</li></ul></li></ul>
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Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <b>Training opportunities, participation and experience in such training</b></li><li>• <b>Gaps/shortages in existing training frameworks, skills needed to help disabled people and knowledge on legislation</b></li></ul> <p><u>Gaps and shortages:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Since education, there is a curriculum that all students need to adapt to, which means that people with any kind of diversity will always be in a disadvantaged situation. This condition applies to the whole of our culture, including the labour market.</li><li>➤ General non-inclusive attitude of society towards disability represents another barrier</li><li>➤ Lack of practical training in existing courses</li><li>➤ There is knowledge about the legislation but it is constantly evolving, making it very challenging to stay up to date.</li></ul> <p><u>Necessary skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Empathy</li><li>➤ Communication</li><li>➤ Trust</li><li>➤ Active listening</li><li>➤ Validation</li><li>➤ Understanding the needs and the feelings of disabled people without a paternalistic approach (e.g. taking decisions for the other person)</li><li>➤ Flexibility</li><li>➤ Adequate training,</li><li>➤ To know how to adapt,</li><li>➤ Creativity</li><li>➤ Counselling abilities.</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <b>Structure, contents and tools that an online training course should have</b></li><li>➤ <u>Tools and Content:</u> webinars, group dynamics, online exercises, personality analysis guidelines, trainings in communication skills, motivation skills, methods of breaking stereotypes, suggestions of how to adapt a person to a job...</li><li>➤ <u>Structure:</u> Some participant believe that an online</li></ul>

	<p>training should be very general, while some believe it should be very specific (directed to one kind of disability). In the case of a basic training course, it should include the kind of professionals that a disabled person should be derived to (e.g. doctors, psychologist, labour counsellors, etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Good practices</b></li> <li>➤ Projects that aim at social/labour insertion of disabled people (<i>To en Casa, Plan Fermenta...</i>) from a training perspective</li> <li>➤ Projects aimed at promotion of disabled people (ASPAYM)</li> <li>➤ Projects that insert the people directly into labour (E.g. <i>Decathlon</i> collaborates directly with associations to hire disabled staff, as well as the <i>Rodilla</i> restoration franchise).</li> <li>➤ There is an Austrian project in which disabled people lived for a week on a farm developing useful skills like cooking, communication, collaboration, cleaning, farming...</li> <li>➤ <b>Adequacy, obstacles and possible improvement of the job placement services</b></li> <li>➤ Participants and companies are very limited and can only give specific services. Their staff is also limited.</li> <li>➤ Rule-based guidance and not very individual nor adapted, again running into the barrier of a curriculum that must be followed. It should be the other way round</li> <li>➤ Over-protection towards disabled people, which limits their personal development. They should be trusted to be more independent</li> <li>➤ Social “stigma” of disability is the main obstacle to labour inclusion. In this same topic, a participant reminded one of the consequences that the COVID-19 situation had on disabled people because of this stigma: parents of children with ASD where accused and even assaulted for walking outside with their children, following professional and legal recommendations.</li> <li>➤ <b>Additional information</b></li> <li>➤ The importance of connecting professionals to businesses,</li> <li>➤ The importance of a good evaluation before</li> </ul>
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	<p>proceeding to labour insertion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ The fundamental task of working with general society on the topic of disability.</li></ul>
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## **FOCUS GROUP 2: STAKEHOLDERS**

<p>Number and type of participants</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Interviews (4 participants)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Jose Manuel Blanco Morillo</b> (Coordinator of <i>Down Málaga</i> association)</li> <li>• <b>Angela Pittl</b> (Director of <i>Consultoría de Innovación Social</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Esther Gonzalez Diaz</b> (Director of <i>Magenta</i> association)</li> <li>• <b>Pedro Navarro Rul</b> (Employment consultant for the <i>Servicio Andaluz de Empleo</i>)</li> </ul>
<p>Main topics discussed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Programs to integrate disabled people in the workplace</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A participant knows of programs in Austria. In Austria an employer must employ a disabled person or pay money to the state. There is a financial bonus for organizations who hire disabled people.</li> <li>➤ <i>Acompañamiento a la Inserción</i>: a program where technicians accompany the disabled person in the process of looking for work.</li> <li>➤ <i>Inserta</i> program: Offers professionals of different associations to help disabled people to access the labour market.</li> <li>➤ <i>AproinLa</i>: Association that use supported employment methodology with people with psychic disabilities.</li> <li>➤ <i>Aspanri</i> association: one of their programs is the creation of a restaurant run by disabled people.</li> <li>➤ <i>Down Málaga</i>: They have changed one of their flats into a café for disabled people (currently closed due to COVID-19).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Possibilities of integration for disabled people in Spain</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A participant reports that she has never seen a disabled people working in a shop or an office. In other countries it is more common.</li> <li>➤ Geographical dispersion is an important problem. A disabled person that lives in a small town in the mountains has less opportunities than a person that lives in the centre of the city. The first has less resources than the first. There are enough resources, but the problem is the access to these resources.</li> <li>➤ There are programs and grants that promote the insertion of disabled people but, in many occasions, companies don't have the needed tools to properly insert the person into the job place.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Obstacles for job inclusion for disabled people</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ When including a disabled person in a business, it is important to know the person well. A participant reports of a past experience in which they hired a person that had a second disability that wasn't reported, which affected her job.</li> <li>➤ In the work place, sometimes the team feels "pity" for the disabled person, limiting their potential in their job.</li> <li>➤ It depends on the kind of disability.</li> <li>➤ Prejudice from society and from companies towards disabled people.</li> <li>➤ Many disabled people don't have the necessary motivation because of their family life and education in relation to their disability.</li> <li>➤ The presumption that many people share a person can't perform a job for being disabled. Society and entrepreneurs must become more aware.</li> <li>➤ The company always has the final word when hiring someone. Because of this, we (the associations) have to contact them.</li> <li>➤ Economical bonuses for companies should be more flexible and adapt to businesses (it should be easier to access).</li> <li>➤ There are many ways to not follow the law and hire the needed percentage of disabled staff. Companies many times look for alternatives (e.g. donations). It is to easy to accomplish social responsibility in a convenient way.</li> <li>➤ Workers with Down Syndrome suffer an early deterioration and have no way to retire in a decent way.</li> <li>➤ Not all people with Down Syndrome can work full-time, and some companies demand a full-time contract.</li> <li>➤ There are more obstacles to insert workers in the public sector than in the private sector.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Prejudice towards disabled people</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There should be trainings for workers on disability. A working team must be prepared to work with disabled people and the disabled person's case must be evaluated.</li> <li>➤ It is important to not make top-down decisions: the whole team should be taking the decision. There should be group decisions and feedback group connected to the disabled persons integration into the work place.</li> <li>➤ It is important that workers are sincere about each other when talking about problems with other employs. Without talking about the situation, it cannot be</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<p>improved. This mindset of people must be changed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ There would be less prejudice if there was more knowledge of these collectives. Direct experience would reduce prejudices.</li><li>➤ Prejudice can be reduced through education. Educating people from an early age people can learn to see disability in a different way.</li><li>➤ Prejudice disappears when companies hire disabled people.</li><li>➤ The companies must invest social profitability. This could enrich and enhance the plurality of the company</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>How to improve the integration of disabled people in the job market?</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Or an organization level, there should be a plan in an organization about how the integration of the person should work.</li><li>➤ On a political level, there should be more on the job trainings, so that disabled people have more training and experience when they arrive at a new job.</li><li>➤ On a political level, there should be campaigns and monetary aspects.</li><li>➤ Passive politics: higher bonifications for the employment of disabled people.</li><li>➤ Active politics: To promote the creation of employment centres specialised in disabled people.</li><li>➤ The main factor is to work with entrepreneurs. It's fundamental to sensitize them and let them realize the abilities and potentials of disabled people. It's much more effective than just giving economical bonuses. Disabled people need to be seen as independent workers</li></ul></li><li>• <b>Training opportunities</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ A participant knows of the existence of "on the job" trainings for young people.</li><li>➤ <i>Orientando hacia la Igualdad</i>: course offered by the public sector to employment consultants that shows the participants tools to work with disabled people.</li><li>➤ <i>COCENFE</i> association: It has many training programs for disabled people and for professionals who work with disabled people funded by the public employment service.</li><li>➤ <i>AESE</i> (Asociación Española de Empleo con Apoyo): Association that provides training for professionals that work with disabled people.</li></ul></li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <i>Down Málaga</i> offers non-formal trainings to professionals that work with people with Down Syndrom.</li><li>• <b>Other comments</b></li><li>➤ A participant talks about the important of disabled people being independent and mentions an example of a quadriplegic person doing the shopping on his own. The participant expresses that by being “taken care of” all the time disabled people never learn to do things on their own.</li></ul>
Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Programs to integrate disabled people in the workplace</b></li><li>➤ The stakeholders know of different programs for the integration of disabled people. They mention different programs. Some of them promote direct labour integration for disabled people (e.g. creation of businesses that give work to disabled people) or programs that give support for disabled people looking for work (e.g. Inserta, AprinLa)</li><li>• <b>Possibilities of integration for disabled people in Spain</b></li><li>➤ Though there are programs and grants that promote and help the insertion of disabled people in Spain but companies don't always have the means. Also, geographical dispersion (e.g. people living in small towns) makes the labour insertion more difficult.</li><li>➤ Many companies have the necessary resources for this labour insertion of disabled people.</li><li>• <b>Obstacles for job inclusion for disabled people</b></li><li>➤ Disabled people are not correctly evaluated when inserted into a workplace.</li><li>➤ Paternalistic feelings towards disabled people.</li><li>➤ Social and professional prejudice towards disabled people.</li><li>➤ Learnt lack of motivation of disabled people towards work.</li><li>➤ Many times, companies try to avoid the social responsibility and the obligations of hiring people with disabilities. Economical bonuses for hiring disabled people are not always easy to get.</li></ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Some disabled people (e.g. people with Down Syndrome) have issues adapting to normal working timetables.</li> <li>• <b>Prejudice towards disabled people</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ The stakeholders suggest on working with the team of an organization/company: to prepare the team to work with the disabled person/people and to take decisions as a group. As well, sincere communication withing the company is important.</li><li>➤ Direct experience with the disabled collective must be promoted to fight prejudice towards them</li><li>➤ Education at an early age is a key factor when avoiding the development of prejudice in society.</li></ul></li> <li>• <b>How to improve the integration of disabled people in the job market?</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ An integration plan for disabled people in the work place should exist.</li><li>➤ More “on the job” trainings.</li><li>➤ More campaigns towards the integration of disabled people, higher bonifications to companies that employ them and more promotion of specialized employment centres.</li><li>➤ It is necessary to work directly with entrepreneurs to sensitize them towards the disabled collective.</li></ul></li> <li>• <b>Training opportunities</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ The stakeholders mention different courses from private and public entities that offer trainings for professionals that work with disabled people (AESE, COCENFE, Down Málaga, etc)</li></ul></li></ul>
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# IO1 FOCUS GROUPS

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## NATIONAL REPORT – FOCUS GROUP (IO1) – IRELAND

**Meath Community Rural and Social Development Partnership Limited**

**BRIDGES – Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue of Disability,  
Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders**

**Agreement n. 2019-1-PT01-KA204-061388**



## BRIDGES IO1 – Report on the focus groups - IRELAND

### 1. Introduction

Two focus group meetings were held in Ireland in 4th March and 28th May 2020 respectively. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, it was necessary to host the second focus group meeting online via Zoom.

The focus group sessions comprised both Operators (12) and stakeholders (9) representing all of the primary target groups of the BRIDGES project. In advance of the second focus group meeting, which primarily consisted of stakeholders from across the state's employability and disability sectors, the highlighted results of the online surveys were shared to provide some background and context to the final focus group session.

Both focus group meetings were chaired by Mrs Jennifer Nolan and co-facilitated by Ms. Claire Reburn. Attendance records for both sessions are available as evidence of this activity.

### FOCUS GROUP 1: OPERATORS

<b>Date and Location</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> March 2020 at the offices of Meath Partnership
<b>Number and type of participants</b>	12 participants all working at present in labour market activation, disability supports and job coaching and counselling roles. Full lists of participants and attendance list will be uploaded to the drive in support of this report.
<b>Main topics discussed</b>	<p>As part of the focus group, we commenced by exploring the participants' experience of working with clients with a disability and the key challenges they experienced. The main observations were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overall there are fewer opportunities for people with a disability in the local employment market and often the desire of clients to take up opportunities is not matched by the availability of positions.</li><li>• Many of their clients were "stuck" in a poverty trap very much dependent on welfare supports and also having a genuine fear of losing secondary benefits such as travel and medical supports if they were to take up employment. Many live in low income households and the costs of working are never really factored in to their ability to take up opportunities.</li><li>• Many of the clients have varying support needs (high to low) and its often not possible to match these with employment or training offers; were operators have</li></ul>



large client caseloads there was frustration expressed in they are many blocks and gaps within the overall system.

**Training and Support requirements for operators:**

- 11 of the participants had attended training in the previous year under the broad theme of disability covering areas such as coaching skills, disability awareness training, rights and entitlements. 2 participants had completed advocacy training specifically related to disability and offered to share the materials to support the development of IO2 for Bridges.

- We discussed the type and range of training that operators would like and the following was preferred:

Mode of Training

- Video tutorials with scripts that can be downloaded and used as reference materials
- PowerPoints supporting the videos
- The option to attend live webinars with discussion groups with other stakeholders

Training Modules

We presented the range of modules in the online survey and asked participants to identify their top 3 plus other suggestions (post-it notes and whiteboards was used for this activity) and the results were as follows:

- Specific coaching techniques
- Workplace culture and breaking down barriers
- Problem-solving and keeping clients motivated – links with resilience training was also highlighted
- Developing realistic personal action plans for clients given their individual circumstances
- Strategies to engage with employers – how to build relationships

Many of the operators expressed the need for further training and professional development across the sector in order to help them to adopt new behaviours and practices that reflect a genuine understanding and appreciation of what an individual client needs and how provision needs to move to a more client basis around the provision of social and employment supports.



<b>Conclusions</b>	<p>Overall all participants were genuinely interested in the potential training that is to be developed as part of the project. They expressed that the training will need to be localised for each country so that it makes sense in a local/national context and there is a challenge to adapt to the nature of the disability as the disability landscape in Ireland is very fragmented and very much determined by the nature of the disability and thus the supports then available to them.</p>
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## **FOCUS GROUP 2: STAKEHOLDERS**

<b>Date and Location</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> May 2020 via Zoom
<b>Number and type of participants</b>	9 stakeholders representing the relevant Government Department, Intreo Employment Service, Meath Volunteer Centre, Citizen Information Service, Solas and the Disability Sector (Irish Wheelchair Association, Prosper Meath and Job Matters) took part in the online focus group meeting. Full lists of participants and screenshot of attendees will be uploaded to the drive in support of this report.
<b>Main topics discussed</b>	<p>The agenda for the second focus group was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Presentation of the Bridges Project</li><li>• Overview of disability supports in Ireland and progress made</li><li>• Training and support requirements for the sector</li><li>• Shared Best Practice</li></ul> <p>Presentation of the Bridges Project: Jennifer provided an overview of the Bridges project and explained the research work that had been completed to date. Jennifer also shared Meath Partnership's role in the project and discussed the relevance of this session in terms of the development of the next IO – Training Curriculum (O2).</p> <p>Overview of disability supports: each participant introduced themselves and explained the services and supports that they offer or are responsibility for in relation to the disability sector. The DEASP representatives also highlighted the existence of the <u>Comprehensive Employment Strategy</u> and some of the Department's work under this strategy. The main target in this strategy is a 15% increase in employment of people with disabilities from 2011 to 2024.</p> <p>Following the introductions, we began to discuss in general the nature of supports available to people with disabilities in Ireland and some of the barriers they face as it was noted that people with a disability are only half as likely to be in employment as others of the same working age. The reasons for this were highlighted as rather complex, and include various factors such as the level of education and skills, fears around loss of benefits, employer know-how and engagement, low expectations amongst clients, and limited</p>



	<p>reentry to work pathways that exist following the onset of a disability. It was discussed that many people with a disability have a very “patchy” employment record with many people falling into the long-term unemployment category making re-engagement often more challenging.</p> <p>We also discussed the challenges within the system especially for people with intellectual disabilities as their biggest challenge arise when they turn 18 years of age. They are immediately seen as being out of the education system, and the responsibility for their care transfer to the health system – even though they are not, in the main, sick. Opportunities for further education and development become much more limited, and the world of work can seem miles away from them. This is something that is begin explored as part of the Strategy working groups but not resolved at the moment. Finally, it was acknowledged that the system overall is making improvements to address the issue of employment of people with disabilities in the public sector but that there is alot more work to be done in engaging with the private sector as it was felt that to a considerable extent, opted out. It was also mentioned that there are many good and responsible employers out there but this is a major area that needs more work if longer terms results are to be achieved.</p> <p><u>Training and support requirements for the sector:</u> There was almost unanimous agreement that high level interpersonal skills were needed to a great extent across the sector in order to build rapport and recognise and respond to diverse perspectives and needs. Often disability support workers engaging with clients in the community or at the frontline needed more sophisticated interpersonal and problem solving skills than those working in more policy or formalised settings. As frontline workers tended to have more autonomy, and were regularly called upon to ‘think on their feet’ (often to keep a client engaged and motivated), while continuing to respect their client’s perspectives and priorities. It was suggested that in developing the training programme the learning outcomes need to be mapped onto the typical job roles found within the sector or across the support spectrum in order to be very beneficial.</p> <p>In relation to shared best practice – there were a number of positive examples shared and highlighted and those in</p>
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	attendance have agreed to share them further with Meath Partnership. This element of the meeting was shortened as time was a factor for some people in attendance.
<b>Conclusions</b>	Overall the stakeholder focus group was well attended and the levels of dialogue and engagement was very strong. The discussion tended to focus at a more policy or strategic level as many of the participants were not working directly with clients but responsible for service planning or programme development.



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# IO1 FOCUS GROUPS

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## NATIONAL REPORT – FOCUS GROUP (IO1) –GERMANY

Akademie Klausenhof gGmbH

**BRIDGES – Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue of Disability,  
Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders**

**Agreement n. 2019-1-PT01-KA204-061388**



## BRIDGES IO1 – Report on the focus groups - GERMANY

### FOCUS GROUP 1: OPERATORS

Number and type of participants	<p>The focus group 1 "operators" of the Academy Klausenhof consists of people who are directly involved in the facility with the topic of the project. Around 250-300 people with disabilities or an illness attend various courses and offers here. It is crucial that the Academy Klausenhof has the obligation for all participants in these courses to also ensure workplace integration. The rate of integration is a key criterion. This regulation applies to all providers in Germany that offer special courses for people with disabilities or in rehabilitation. Specifically, these are the measures and courses for the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unemployed people with severe disabilities / training and and integration into the labor market (if possible)</li><li>• People who have lost their jobs due to illness, an accident or a new disability learn a new profession</li><li>• Mentally ill people learn a new profession</li><li>• Young people with learning disabilities receive special support after school so that they are able to start vocational training</li><li>• Young people with learning disabilities receive vocational training in various professions.</li><li>• Projects and measures in the area of literacy, basic education and disability</li></ul> <p>The Focus Group consisted of the following members: Two job coaches, responsible in particular for unemployed people with severe disabilities; one head of department for vocational rehabilitation (retraining of adults who have to learn a new profession due to illness, severe disabilities, etc.), two psychologists (responsible for young people with learning disabilities and for the care of sick / disabled adults as well as for further training of specialists in the area vocational rehabilitation), a gardener (horticultural instructor for young people with learning disabilities), a social worker (supervisor for young people with learning disabilities), two pedagogues (projects in the areas of basic education and literacy, people with disabilities and a trained specialist for working with people with disabilities) and a teacher for commercial subjects (vocational rehabilitation).</p>
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	<p>Due to the Corona crisis and the short time, it was only possible to prepare this report based on the experience that the Focus group members have with the topic. During the said period, most of the affected institutions in the region were closed, including the BRIDGES partner institution Akademie Klausenhof.</p>
Main topics discussed	<p>In Germany, the area of education for people with disabilities and the training / further education of people working in this sector are very differentiated. The group of operators includes both people who work in this sector and those who occasionally deal with people with disabilities, e.g. the job coaches.</p> <p>If one looks at the questions that the focus group has to work on (see paper “Grid for the focus groups”), the following picture emerges: Everyone knows that there are many differentiated training opportunities in Germany. The sector is very well developed in Germany. Those who deal with people with disabilities professionally in the Klausenhof all have good training or a suitable degree and have received further training. You also received appropriate training in the Klausenhof and at previous workplaces. Everyone is also personally involved and receives informal training. The picture is different for those who sometimes deal with disabled people: They complain that they would like to continue their education but have no time to do so.</p> <p>Everyone says that they have good skills due to many years of experience in the field. However the individual cases are always very different and complex. Each one is different and must be promoted accordingly.</p> <p>Online courses are relatively uncommon in Germany. No one in the group has explicitly attended such a course.</p> <p>Since everyone involved mostly works with people with disabilities almost every day, they know their needs and problems very well. The barriers to their lifestyle and professional practice are not only found in their physical and mental state, but also wherever they are or with whom they communicate. This is especially true for those who have a visible disability (e.g. poor eyesight, physical disability). All advise their participants to deal openly with their disability and to say this whenever it is necessary and appropriate - but not to mention it if it is not relevant in the respective context. In the context of BRIDGES, the participants would particularly like seminars to help them promote the</p>



	<p>strengths of people with disabilities. Some mentioned aspects such as: What can I do in a company so that you do more for people with disabilities? How can I assert myself better as a victim? How can I strengthen my self-confidence?</p> <p>The members of the group value the classic seminar as a method using different methods (lecture, PowerPoint, working groups, individual work, online rework etc.)</p> <p>BRIDGES questionnaire</p> <p>When asked about the BRIDGES questionnaire, the Focus Group said that the questionnaire should not be used for the target group (specialists working with disabled people). They advise against this and would not approve of it being sent on behalf of Akademie Klausenhof. The specialists in Germany are very specialized and have a high level of competence. Be far too superficial, does not refer to the actual work in Germany and there are many unclear terms that probably come from a different cultural context.</p> <p>The most important part about further training is also unsuitable, as the psychologist confirms, who conceives and carries out further training for specialists in disability work. This is especially true for the list of teaching / learning methods as well as for the content.</p> <p>Elementary aspects and items are not specified in the answer options for the questions. The options offered are not relevant to the topic in Germany.</p> <p>The target group "people with disabilities" is not defined. This has to be viewed very differently in Germany.</p>
Conclusions	<p>This focus group is a good cross-section of professional specialists to whom BRIDGES can be trained. It turns out that they are very committed to the topic and to their target group. They work very professionally and therefore need professional training that they can actually use. In the area of Bridges, this is due to the best way to learn in seminars that people with disabilities can assert themselves at work, in their unemployment, in everyday life, that they develop self-confidence and deal with their disability.</p> <p>They point out that the BRIDGES questionnaire should not be used.</p>



## **FOCUS GROUP 2: STAKEHOLDERS**

<p>Number and type of participants</p>	<p>The focus group's stakeholders are members of a committee in the Wesel district (municipality of Akademie Klausenhof) who are involved in a project related to the integration of people with disabilities in the labor market. In this body are, for example, the authorized inclusion officer of the district of Wesel, Erika Morsch or those responsible from the employment agency and the service point (“Jobcenter”) for long-term unemployed who are in charge for the inclusion of people with disabilities.</p> <p>In addition, there are persons issued by educational institutions, welfare organizations and representatives of the economy, trade and craft. The Klausenhof Academy as a project partner of Bridges is also a member of this committee. The issue of integrating people with disabilities is the main task of this focus group (8 persons).</p> <p>Due to the Corona crisis and the short time, it was only possible to prepare this report based on the experience that the Focus group members have with the topic. During the said period, most of the affected institutions in the region were closed, including the Bridges partner institution Akademie Klausenhof.</p>
<p>Main topics discussed</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The section consists of experts. The representatives from the agencies, the educational institutions and the welfare organizations in particular know the various funding opportunities in Germany very well (see also the paper Desk Research Germany). Some of these projects are assigned or managed by the representatives themselves. There is less knowledge among business representatives. They indicated that they and their companies are primarily informed about how they receive funding if they hire people with disabilities. But there are often deficits here too. Knowledge of direct funding opportunities in this field is usually not well developed.</li><li>2. The participants in the group refer to the very different and diverse possibilities. People with special physical disabilities can compensate for this disadvantage so that they can do their job. For example: Computer reading glasses are even paid if necessary for work. Employers in the stakeholder group point out that there are many ways that people with disabilities or illnesses can keep their jobs. Since older employees are mostly affected, employers are usually also interested in maintaining these experienced and proven</li></ol>



employees. There is a gradual inclusion of employees in the companies, who are increasingly affected in the course of their working life. Most companies do a good job here to further integrate these people and secure their jobs. There is less and less termination due to illness, accident or disability due to illness. This is also due to demographic change. There are more and more old workers (with an illness or disability) and fewer and fewer (healthy) young workers.

3. According to the group, a bigger problem is that people with disabilities find a job.

The difficulty for young people who are looking for work for the first time is that they mostly have inherited disabilities or illnesses. This makes placement in the first job market particularly difficult. In Germany, there is the opportunity to learn simplified professions (“helpers”) for young people with learning disabilities. It can be observed here that these people find a job in the regular job market more often than ten years ago. The reason: there are fewer and fewer “normal” workers in Germany in many professions. Usually, however, these young people are accepted into workshops for the disabled or in “inclusion companies”. When mediating young people with physical disabilities, this depends on the disability: if the type of disability can be integrated into the workflow, then starting training is not a major problem for most employees. However, the experts in the group say that the interests of the company take precedence over most companies. Additional costs are normally not borne. All circumstances have to fit. “Companies are not a social enterprise, they have to make profits”.

4. All participants in the stakeholder group have very good knowledge of the topic and contacts to people with disabilities. Prejudices exist especially when there is no direct contact. Above all, the inclusion officer pleads for more visible inclusion to actually take place, as the UN Disability Rights Convention also provides. There is still a strong exclusion in Germany. Most people with disabilities have their own environment (education and training, the world of work, dormitories, etc.). In their opinion, this needs to be changed. Then prejudices can be resolved. Above all, it must be clear to the non-disabled that people with disabilities are very diverse and heterogeneous. “Normal” people always think that there is “the typical handicapped” and mostly have the mentally weak wheelchair user in view. Even in the



	<p>group of this focus group you have e.g. concerned with the various forms of disability and found that most disabilities, for example from a specific project to integrate people with severe disabilities, have permanent back disease, followed by people with a mental illness. Of the approximately 700 participants in the project, there were only 3 wheelchair users.</p> <p>5. As already mentioned under point 3, the experts point out that, as an employer, one should first try to keep people who become severely disabled in the course of their working lives employable. The workplace itself, the cooperation in the company, the opinions of superiors and colleagues, the tasks, working hours etc. should be designed in a way that these people can keep their jobs for as long as possible. When it comes to further training, topics such as bullying, a disabled- friendly climate at the workplace, flexibility, opportunities for home office etc., maintaining health, sports activities, relaxation techniques, work-life balance, etc. are also relevant topics. All of this contributes to better integrating people with disabilities and diseases into the workplace, or even better: to minimize disabilities or diseases. Everyone here believes that prevention is an important issue.</p> <p>The experts in the group confirm that when it comes to hiring staff who have a disability or illness, prejudices still play a role in many HR managers. Dismantling this is not easy, because employing people with disabilities does not bring any particular advantages before an operation and only disadvantages for the respective HR manager (= problems). The members of the group see a good approach in the model of diversity management, which sees all members in a company with different competencies, whether disabled or not. Especially in smaller companies, in shops, restaurants, craft businesses etc., prejudices against the attitude of people with disabilities are widespread.</p> <p>6. At this point, everyone referred to a wide range of training opportunities. Above all, those who are professionally involved with the topic are trained themselves. They don't see any deficits in the offer. Above all, they lack their own options (especially time).</p>
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<p>Conclusions</p>	<p>For Bridges, the focus is on what benefits a new learning tool could have for society and the economy. In connection with the online questionnaire, which the Klausenhof Academy for Bridges also created, the assessment of the discussion on this question shows the following picture: Knowing more about people with disabilities is necessary for everyone. However, this cannot be done through theoretical education. We need concrete encounters. That is why the way to make society more inclusive is right. If Bridges develops continuing education for people working in the field of handicapped work, what content should be conveyed? Accordingly, these would primarily be political and communicative competencies in order to take this path of inclusion.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do you organize training for people with and without disabilities?</li><li>• How can I ensure that offers in my city are also accessible to people with disabilities?</li><li>• How do I write plain language texts?</li><li>• What are the accessibility laws?</li><li>• What does the UN Disability Rights Convention contain?</li><li>• How do I set up a political advocacy group for people with disabilities?</li><li>• How do I organize a union for people with disabilities?</li></ul> <p><b>The main topics are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empathy with the world of people with disabilities</li><li>• Respect and mastery of your own body language</li><li>• Dealing with the values and images of people with disabilities: humanity and justice</li></ul>
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# IO1 FOCUS GROUPS

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**NATIONAL REPORT – FOCUS GROUP TEMPLATE (IO1) –  
<COUNTRY>**

**<NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION>**

**BRIDGES – Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue of Disability,  
Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders**

**Agreement n. 2019-1-PT01-KA204-061388**



## BRIDGES IO1 – Report on the focus groups (max. 3 pages per focus group)

### FOCUS GROUP 1: operators

Number and type of participants	
Main topics discussed	
Conclusions	



## FOCUS GROUP 2: stakeholders

Number and type of participants	
Main topics discussed	
Conclusions	



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# IO1 FOCUS GROUPS GRIDS

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## FOCUS GROUP GRIDS TEMPLATE (IO1) –

**BRIDGES – Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue of Disability,  
Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders**

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## BRIDGES IO1 - Grids for the focus groups

### FOCUS GROUP 1: operators

1. Please briefly describe the institution you are representing, its main activities and your area of responsibility (optional, Partners decide).
2. Are you aware of any training opportunity (either formal, informal or non-formal) aimed at developing skills for operators working with disabilities? Have you ever participated in any such training and if so, can you share what it was and what is your experience about it?
3. Do you see any gap or shortage in the existing training framework regarding the skills and competences needed for working with disabled people? Which skills do you feel are needed to help disabled people in job inclusion? Do you feel you have adequate knowledge of the legislation in this field?
4. Imagine you attend an online training course to improve your skills for job inclusion of disabled people. What kind of structure, contents and tools should this course offer to you?
5. Can you give any example of good practice aimed at the job integration in for people with disabilities?
6. Do you think the existing job placement services for the disabled are adequate in your area? In your opinion, what are the obstacles to job inclusion of people with disabilities? What improvements could be made?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add that you think important for the development of skills for supporting disabled people in job inclusion?



## **FOCUS GROUP 2: Stakeholders**

1. What do you know about programmes to integrate the disabled people in the workplace?
2. Do you believe that your country offers real possibilities of integration in the workplace to disabled people?
3. In your opinion, what are the obstacles to job inclusion of people with disabilities?
4. How do you think prejudices about disabled people can be reduced?
5. What do you think should be done to improve the integration of disabled people in the job market?
6. Are you aware of any training opportunity (either formal, informal or non-formal) aimed at developing skills for operators working with disabilities?