



# Research and collection of inclusive VET and employment success stories

## Report on the national systems and best cases in Romania and Portugal

Ofensiva Tinerilor

### 1. Aims of the research

The aim of this research is to better understand how vocational education and training (VET) can become more inclusive, accessible and relevant for young people who face different barriers to participation in education and employment. From the perspective of **Ofensiva Tinerilor**, a youth NGO working closely with young people, schools and local communities, the study seeks to highlight practical approaches that help young learners — especially those with fewer opportunities — successfully transition from education to the labour market.

Through the analysis of inclusive practices in VET education and employment contexts, the research aims to identify the key factors that support participation, motivation and professional development among young people. Particular attention is given to students with special educational needs, those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, and youth who may face structural barriers when accessing training opportunities or employment.

Another important goal of the study is to explore how cooperation between schools, NGOs, employers and community organisations can strengthen inclusive learning environments and work-based learning experiences. By documenting successful examples and practical solutions, the research aims to provide inspiration for educators, policy makers and youth organisations that want to improve access to VET opportunities for all young people.

Ultimately, the research hopes to contribute to positive changes in both **VET practice and employment pathways** by promoting more flexible, learner-centred and inclusive approaches. These changes can help ensure that vocational education does not only provide technical skills, but also supports confidence, autonomy and real opportunities for young people to build meaningful careers and active roles in society.

### 2. Scope and Definitions of the Research

#### 2.1 Scope and Definitions as far as VET education is concerned (VET types, age, disability categories)

This research focuses on the role of **Vocational Education and Training (VET)** in creating inclusive learning environments that allow young people with diverse backgrounds and



abilities to develop professional skills and successfully transition to employment. From the perspective of **Ofensiva Tinerilor**, the study looks at how VET institutions, together with youth organisations and community partners, can create supportive pathways for young people who may otherwise face barriers to education or work.

The scope of the research includes **initial VET education provided by vocational schools, technical high schools, and professional training institutions**, as well as complementary learning opportunities such as work-based learning, apprenticeships, and international mobility programmes (for example Erasmus+ VET mobilities). These environments are important because they combine practical training with real work experience, helping young people build both professional and social skills.

The research mainly considers **young learners aged approximately 14 to 25 years**, reflecting the typical age range of students involved in secondary vocational education, professional schools, and early stages of labour market entry.

Particular attention is given to **learners with disabilities and those with fewer opportunities**, including young people with special educational needs (SEN). Within the scope of the study, disability or SEN may include learning difficulties, cognitive or developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, sensory impairments, or socio-emotional challenges that can affect participation in education or training.

The research also recognises the broader concept of “**young people with fewer opportunities**”, as defined in European youth and education programmes. This may include learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, young people living in rural or marginalised communities, members of ethnic minorities, or students who face barriers related to access to resources, mobility, or social inclusion.

For the purpose of this study, **inclusive VET** refers to educational and training approaches that adapt teaching methods, learning environments and support systems to the diverse needs of learners. The goal is to ensure that all young people, regardless of their background or abilities, have equal opportunities to participate in vocational training, gain professional competences, and prepare for meaningful employment.

## **2.2 Scope and Definitions as far as inclusive employment is concerned**

This research also explores **inclusive employment practices**, focusing on how workplaces can create fair and accessible opportunities for young people, including those with disabilities or fewer opportunities, to enter and remain in the labour market. From the perspective of **Ofensiva Tinerilor**, inclusive employment is not only about hiring individuals from diverse backgrounds, but also about creating supportive environments where everyone can develop their potential and contribute meaningfully.

The scope of the research includes **both public and private sector organisations**, that provide employment, internships, or work-based learning opportunities. Particular attention is given to sectors that commonly cooperate with vocational education providers, such as services, retail, beauty and wellness, textiles, forestry, and other practical professions connected to VET training pathways.



The study considers 3 organisations of **different sizes**. This approach helps to better understand how inclusive employment practices can be applied in diverse organisational contexts, including workplaces with limited resources.

In terms of beneficiaries, the research focuses primarily on **young people entering the labour market**, particularly VET graduates or trainees aged approximately **16–30 years**, including those transitioning from vocational training to employment.

The study also examines employment opportunities for **persons with disabilities or special educational needs (SEN)**. Within this research, disability may include physical disabilities, sensory impairments (such as visual or hearing impairments), learning disabilities, cognitive or developmental conditions, or socio-emotional challenges that may influence a person's access to employment or workplace participation.

Another important concept considered in the research is the category of **people with fewer opportunities**, a term widely used in European education and youth programmes. This includes individuals who may face barriers related to socio-economic background, ethnicity, geographic isolation, limited access to education, or other social factors that can affect their ability to secure stable employment.

For the purpose of this study, **inclusive employment** refers to workplace practices that promote equal access to jobs, fair recruitment processes, adapted working conditions, mentoring and professional development opportunities. These measures help ensure that employees with diverse abilities and backgrounds are supported, valued and able to participate fully in the workplace.

### 3. Criteria for Selecting Good Practices

In this research, the selection of good practices in inclusive vocational education and employment was based on several key criteria that reflect both educational quality and real impact on young people. From the perspective of **Ofensiva Tinerilor**, a good practice is not only an interesting initiative, but an approach that demonstrates clear benefits for learners and can realistically be applied in other contexts.

One important criterion is the **proven positive effect** of the practice. The selected initiatives should show visible results, such as increased participation of learners with fewer opportunities, improved learning outcomes, stronger motivation among students, or better transition from vocational education to employment. Evidence include feedback concrete examples of learners who successfully developed skills and entered the labour market.

Another key element considered is the presence of **inclusive and flexible learning approaches**, particularly those aligned with the principles of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**. Good practices demonstrate that teaching methods, learning environments and workplace experiences are adapted to the diverse needs of learners.

The **sustainability of the practice** is also an important criterion. The initiative is not a one-time activity but part of a longer-term strategy within an organisation. Sustainable practices



are those that can continue over time, supported by commitment, trained staff, partnerships with employers, or integration into existing educational programmes.

Another aspect taken into account is **transferability**. A good practice is possible to replicate or adapt by other VET providers, NGOs, or organisations working with young people. Practices that rely on clear procedures, strong partnerships, and flexible methodologies are more likely to be successfully implemented in different regions or educational systems.

By applying these criteria, the research aims to highlight practices that are impactful, inclusive and practical, offering useful inspiration for organisations that want to strengthen inclusive VET and employment opportunities for young people.

#### 4. Study Design and Sampling

The research was designed as a **qualitative and practice-oriented study**, aiming to explore real experiences from vocational education and employment environments that promote inclusion. From the perspective of **Ofensiva Tinerilor**, the intention was not only to collect theoretical information, but also to understand how inclusive approaches are implemented in everyday educational and workplace contexts.

The study focused on identifying and analysing **examples of good practices in inclusive VET education and employment**. Data was collected through structured questionnaires addressed to organisations working in vocational education, training, and employment support. These included vocational schools, and NGOs that provide work-based learning opportunities or employment for young people, including those with disabilities or fewer opportunities.

The sampling approach was **purposeful**, meaning that participants were selected based on their direct involvement in inclusive education, vocational training, or employment initiatives. Particular attention was given to institutions that have experience working with learners with special educational needs, disadvantaged backgrounds, or other barriers to participation.

The cases included in the research represent **different educational and organisational contexts**, such as VET providers that implement inclusive teaching practices, institutions that organise international mobility or work-based learning programmes, and organisations that actively support the transition from education to employment. By including these diverse perspectives, the study aims to capture a broader understanding of how inclusive systems function in practice.

Through this design, the research provides a realistic overview of inclusive practices, highlighting both successful approaches and lessons that can inform future development of vocational education and inclusive employment initiatives.



## 5. Data Sources and Tools

To better understand inclusive practices in vocational education and employment, the research used a combination of **qualitative data sources and practical data collection tools**. From the perspective of **Ofensiva Tinerilor**, the goal was to gather information that reflects real experiences from organisations working directly with young people, learners with disabilities, and individuals with fewer opportunities.

One of the main tools used in the study was **structured research questionnaires** addressed to vocational education providers and organisations involved in inclusive employment. These questionnaires collected information about institutional practices, inclusion strategies, learning environments, support mechanisms for learners with special educational needs, and approaches that facilitate the transition from education to employment.

In addition to questionnaires, the research also relied on **document review and analysis**. Relevant documents included policy frameworks, institutional reports, project descriptions, and existing examples of good practices in inclusive VET and employment initiatives. Reviewing these materials helped provide a broader understanding of how inclusive principles are implemented within educational systems and workplaces.

The research also considered **practical examples and case descriptions** provided by participating organisations. These examples offered valuable insights into how inclusive methodologies are applied in real educational and professional settings, including the organisation of vocational training activities and work-based learning opportunities.

These data sources and tools allowed the research to collect descriptive, providing a clear picture of how inclusive approaches in vocational education and employment can support young people in developing their skills and accessing meaningful work opportunities.

## 6. Best practices for inclusive VET

Through the research carried out in Romania, two relevant examples of inclusive practices were identified that demonstrate how vocational education and training (VET) and employment environments can successfully support young people with diverse needs. From the perspective of **Ofensiva Tinerilor**, these practices highlight the importance of cooperation between educational institutions, community organisations and employers in creating real opportunities for inclusion, skill development and transition to employment.

### **Best Practice 1: Inclusive Erasmus+ VET Mobility – Liceul Tehnologic „Francisc Neuman”, Arad**

The first identified best practice comes from **Liceul Tehnologic „Francisc Neuman” in Arad**, a vocational education provider that has developed a strong inclusive approach within its Erasmus+ VET mobility programmes. The school works with a diverse student population, including learners with special educational needs (SEN), students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, and young people belonging to minority communities.



In response to these realities, the school adapted its mobility selection and preparation processes in order to ensure that students with fewer opportunities have real access to international training experiences. Inclusive selection criteria were introduced, offering additional support and opportunities for students facing barriers such as SEN status, socio-economic disadvantage or limited access to extracurricular activities.

Students participating in mobility programmes receive personalised preparation, mentoring and continuous support during their placements. The activities are adapted to their individual learning pace and abilities, while host organisations are carefully selected to provide safe and supportive working environments. Through this approach, learners are able to develop vocational competences, increase their autonomy and self-confidence, and gain valuable international work experience that improves their employability.

The results of this initiative show that inclusive mobility programmes can significantly contribute to both professional development and social inclusion. Students who participate in these experiences often demonstrate higher motivation, improved teamwork and communication skills, and a clearer perspective on their future career paths.

### **Best Practice 2: Inclusive Work-Based Learning and Supported Employment – Portugal**

The second best practice identified through the research comes from **Portugal**, where vocational training providers and social organisations collaborate to support the integration of young people with disabilities and fewer opportunities into the labour market through inclusive work-based learning programmes.

This practice focuses on creating **structured pathways from vocational training to employment**, particularly for learners who may experience barriers when entering the labour market. Training institutions cooperate closely with local companies, social enterprises and community organisations to provide internships, practical training placements and supported employment opportunities.

A key element of this approach is the presence of **mentoring and personalised support** during the transition from training to employment. Participants receive guidance from educators, workplace mentors and support professionals who help them adapt to the work environment, develop practical skills and build confidence. In many cases, workplaces adapt tasks and working conditions in order to better match the abilities and learning pace of the participants.

Another important aspect of the Portuguese model is the strong emphasis on **collaboration between education providers, employers and community organisations**. This cooperation ensures that training programmes respond to labour market needs while also supporting the social inclusion of participants.

The results show that this model can significantly improve employment opportunities for young people with disabilities or fewer opportunities. Participants gain valuable professional experience, strengthen their social and communication skills and develop greater independence. At the same time, employers become more aware of the benefits of inclusive workplaces and more open to hiring individuals from diverse backgrounds.



## 7. Best practices for inclusive employment

A relevant example of inclusive employment identified in Romania comes from **Davima Clinic SRL**, a healthcare provider that has introduced inclusive recruitment and workplace practices aimed at creating equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities and diverse backgrounds.

The initiative, titled “**Inclusive Employment and Equal Opportunities**”, focuses on improving access to jobs by implementing more transparent and inclusive hiring processes. The clinic reviewed and adapted its recruitment procedures to ensure that candidates are evaluated primarily based on their **skills, competencies and professional abilities**, rather than personal background or potential limitations. Job descriptions were rewritten using neutral language, interview procedures were standardized, and the recruitment process was designed to ensure fair and equal access to employment opportunities.

An important element of the practice is the **skills-based recruitment approach**, combined with structured interviews and alternative formats during the hiring process. This approach helps reduce barriers for candidates with disabilities and encourages a more inclusive workplace culture.

A concrete example of the impact of this initiative is the successful integration of **two visually impaired massage therapists** into the clinic’s daily operations. Through adapted onboarding, supportive management and flexible scheduling, these employees were able to fully participate in the clinic’s activities. They received practical guidance, mentoring and gradual introduction to responsibilities, allowing them to build confidence and independence in their work.

The results of this practice have been very positive. The employees involved reported **increased job satisfaction, improved confidence and strong engagement at work**, while maintaining stable productivity levels. At the same time, the inclusive work environment has contributed to better collaboration within the team and high levels of patient satisfaction.

This example demonstrates how inclusive employment practices can successfully integrate professionals with disabilities into the labour market when organisations focus on **skills, supportive onboarding and inclusive workplace culture**. It also shows that relatively simple organisational changes in recruitment and management practices can create meaningful employment opportunities and strengthen diversity in the workplace.

## 8. Ethics and Data Protection

The research was conducted in accordance with ethical principles and data protection regulations, ensuring that all participants were treated with respect, transparency and confidentiality throughout the study. From the perspective of **Ofensiva Tinerilor**, ethical research practices are essential when working with organisations and professionals involved in vocational education and inclusive employment, especially when the research touches on topics related to disability, social inclusion and equal opportunities.



Participation in the research was **voluntary**, and all organisations involved were informed about the purpose of the study, the way the information would be used, and the expected outcomes of the research.

To ensure **confidentiality**, personal information about individual participants was not collected or disclosed in the report. The research focused mainly on organisational practices rather than personal data. When examples or case descriptions were included, they were presented in a way that protects the identity and privacy of individuals involved.

By applying these ethical and data protection measures, the research ensured that all participants could share their experiences safely, while maintaining high standards of transparency, responsibility and respect for diversity.

## 9. References

During the research process, interviews and questionnaire responses were collected from organisations involved in vocational education, training and inclusive employment in **Romania and Portugal**. These institutions shared valuable experiences and examples of practices that support the inclusion of young people and persons with disabilities in education and the labour market.

### Romania

#### Institutions interviewed:

- Liceul Tehnologic „Francisc Neuman” Arad
- Davima Clinic SRL

#### Best practices shared:

- “**Inclusion in Erasmus+ VET Mobility Projects**” – Liceul Tehnologic „Francisc Neuman” Arad  
(An inclusive vocational education practice supporting students with special educational needs and fewer opportunities to participate in international mobility and work-based learning experiences.)
- “**Inclusive Employment and Equal Opportunities**” – Davima Clinic SRL  
(An employment practice focusing on inclusive recruitment and workplace integration, including opportunities for professionals with disabilities.)

### Portugal

#### Institutions interviewed:

- Escola Profissional Amar Terra Verde (EPATV)

#### Best practice shared:



- **General practice on inclusive VET in the environment of the school**  
(An inclusive employment initiative supporting the transition of individuals with disabilities or fewer opportunities into the labour market through mentoring, workplace adaptation and employer partnerships.)

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