



Best practice for inclusive employment

(CuBuFo)

Title of the best practice: “JOBstien – Job path: an employment pathway for people with disabilities in the ordinary labour market” (Aarhus, Denmark)

Company context

Organisation: Employment Department of Aarhus Municipality, in close cooperation with the Social Services Department and a network of 59 public and private companies.

Size and sector: Large Danish municipality (Aarhus is Denmark’s second largest city), operating in the public sector with partnerships across retail, services and other sectors that host participants in regular jobs or job training placements.

How do the governance of diversity and the partner network function:

- The programme is led by the municipality but is implemented in partnership with local businesses, which commit to creating suitable roles and environments for people with disabilities.
- Social services provide preparatory courses on language and communication, presentation and presence, hygiene, behaviour and body language, meeting stability, order, rules and understanding the labour market.
- A dedicated “Job path” business consultant prepares companies and facilitates dialogue between employers and individual participants. They visit the company, prepare, and inform them regarding the meaning and implications of being a person with a disability.

Problem and motivation

Denmark’s policy and legislation support the integration of citizens with disabilities into the ordinary labour market, but many people with learning and developmental disabilities were still channeled into **sheltered job placements** rather than regular employment. The municipality of Aarhus wanted to change this pattern.

The motivation for “Job path” was to **shift from sheltered employment provision** to integration in the regular labour market, increasing autonomy, income and social participation for people with disabilities. The driving force was the desire “to support the citizen in being active and participating in the community” and to demonstrate that, with the right support, even people needing substantial assistance can work in ordinary workplaces.



Governance & ownership

“Job path” is **owned and led by the Employment Department of Aarhus Municipality**, with structured support from the Social Services Department. Governance is therefore an **organisational management model** within the municipality, with clear division of roles:

- **Employment Department:** overall leadership, coordination with employers, job-matching, follow-up and workplace support.
- **Social Services Department:** design and delivery of preparatory courses for participants, focusing on work-related skills, behaviour, communication and understanding of workplace norms.
- **Business consultants:** act as the operational bridge between municipality and companies, preparing workplaces and supporting both employers and employees.

Leadership is stable and embedded in the municipal structure; the programme is described as an **implemented practice** rather than a temporary project.

Compliance & policy

The practice operates within and leverages the Danish legal framework for disability and employment, including:

- **Consolidation Act on Social Services:** allows municipalities to provide education and training courses to help citizens succeed in the labour market and to offer educational assistance directly at the workplace.
- **Act on Active Employment Efforts:** enables practical training courses in companies and provides for mentoring and other practical support at work, including “flexjobs” with adapted working hours and wage subsidies.
- **Act on Active Social Policy and the Social Pensions Act:** guarantee a basic level of income when work does not generate sufficient earnings, through social pension and social security payments.
- **Wage compensation mechanisms:** the law allows compensation to employers for wages and enables individuals to receive an adjusted hourly wage while retaining disability benefits; compensation is paid as a grant per worked hour, and “flexwages” are attached to flexible jobs.

These instruments ensure that “Job path” complies with national rules on social protection, non-discrimination and labour-market activation, while making participation financially viable for both employers and employees.



Practical approach

“Job path” is a **municipal employment pathway** that combines preparatory training, subsidised job-training placements and long-term support in ordinary workplaces.

Key elements of the approach:

- **Preparatory courses** are delivered by municipal social services to people with disabilities who want to work in the ordinary labour market. The courses cover the following topics:
 - o language and communication
 - o presentation and presence
 - o hygiene
 - o behaviour and body language
 - o meeting stability, order and rules
 - o understanding the labour market
- **Subsidised job-training placements** in companies as a starting point for each participant, allowing them to test different jobs and functions and make a choice about the nature of their future employment.
- **Close cooperation with 59 public and private companies**, which host participants in job training and employment.
- **Business consultants** who visit companies, explain disability-related issues, prepare staff and create conditions for dialogue with potential employees.
- **Ongoing workplace support** for as long as required, including mentoring and practical assistance, enabled by national legislation on active employment and social services.

The start year of the practice is just beyond the 2012–2014 national funding period. The exact number of staff at programme launch are not fully specified, but at the time of reporting the programme had a total of **five employees** - three experts supporting people in workplaces and two business consultants, providing training and information to the employers’ staff.

Reasonable accommodations process

The sources describe **types of support** but not a formal, step-by-step reasonable-accommodation procedure. What is clear:

- Participants can receive **practical support and mentoring at work**, funded under the Act on Active Employment Efforts and the Consolidation Act on Social Services.



- Employers can receive **wage compensation** through public funding and create **flexjobs** with adapted hours and tasks.
- Citizens can keep disability benefits while working reduced hours, with compensation paid by the state per worked hour.

Accessibility

Physical accessibility

The practice focuses on **integration into ordinary workplaces** across many sectors. The physical adaptations such as building modifications, evacuation procedures, workstation design are not described in detail. It is implicit that companies are prepared to host employees with disabilities and that the municipality supports them in doing so, but no concrete physical accessibility measures are listed.

Organisational/process accessibility

Organisational accessibility is addressed through:

- **Flexible job design** via flexjobs, where weekly hours can range from 1–2 hours to nearly full-time.
- **Subsidised job-training placements** as a low-risk entry point for both citizen and employer.
- **Ongoing support** to both the person and the company, enabling adjustments in tasks, expectations and communication.

Specific rules on shifts, remote work, meeting norms or formal flexibility policies differ according to the schedules at each of the different 59 partner employers.

Learning & development accessibility

The preparatory courses offered by social services are tailored to people with learning and developmental disabilities, focusing on practical, concrete skills needed in workplaces. The content is clearly adapted to the target group with easy-to-read materials, sign language, captioning where needed.

Recruitment, onboarding & career progression

“Job path” restructures the **entry route into employment** for people with disabilities:

- **Target group:** initially people with learning disabilities; later, following the positive results achieved at the start, the programme was extended to people with developmental disabilities such as autism.



- **Recruitment process:** participants are identified as citizens with disabilities who wish to work in the ordinary labour market and are then offered preparatory courses and job-training placements.
- **Job-training as onboarding:** each action plan starts with subsidised job training; participants can try different placements to explore suitable roles and functions.
- **Employer preparation:** business consultants prepare companies and staff, explain disability issues and facilitate dialogue, which functions as a structured onboarding of both the workplace and the new employee.
- **Career progression:** the main goal is **transition to permanent employment in the regular labour market**, sometimes on special terms (flexjobs or other arrangements).

Results

“Job path” has produced **significant employment outcomes** for people with disabilities in Aarhus:

- By September 2015, **144 people** had found employment through “Job path”, surpassing the original goal of 140 people by the end of 2015.
- More than **100 people with disabilities** obtained permanent employment; another **80 people** were on their way to employment through job training and other types of training.
- 114 people continued to receive support through “Job path”, while around 30 others were in employment on special terms or in sheltered employment.

The programme generated **annual savings of DKK 3.5 million** for the municipality, due to lower expenses compared to sheltered workshop employment options and the selling of the workshop building.

Qualitative results include improved social inclusion, better quality of life for participants, and positive feedback from companies (e.g. a manager describing a participant as “the best shelf trimmer”). “Job path” has shown that even persons who require considerable support on the job could be brought into the regular labour market, if of course the necessary support is provided to both the person and the welcoming company.

Outcome indicators (0, 6, 12, 24 months)

The programme is evaluated annually using both quantitative and qualitative data, including:

- number of beneficiaries
- quality and effects of the offers (training and employment)



- organisational aspects

Cost efficiency

“Job path” is financed by the City of Aarhus and demonstrates **strong cost efficiency**:

- **Total gross cost:** approx. DKK 4 million per year (about EUR 536,000).
- **Net cost:** approx. DKK 0.5 million per year (about EUR 67,000).
- **Annual savings:** approx. DKK 3.5 million, resulting from lower costs compared to operating a sheltered workshop and from the sale of the workshop building.

The programme employs **five staff members**: three who support people in workplaces and two business consultants who both create new job opportunities and support companies hosting citizens with disabilities.

The net savings indicate a positive return on investment for the municipality.

Success factors

Key success factors emerging from the description of the practice include the following:

- **Strong municipal leadership** from the Employment Department, assigned to existing structures rather than being organized as a temporary project. The sustainability vision is also demonstrated by the municipality selling the workshop building.
- **Close cooperation between employment and social services**, aligning labour-market activation with social support and preparatory training.
- **Deep engagement with employers**, including 59 public and private companies and dedicated business consultants who prepare workplaces and staff.
- **Use of national legal instruments** (flexjobs, wage subsidies, workplace support) to make employment financially and practically feasible.
- **Person-centred involvement**, with action plans developed through dialogue and multiple job-training placements to find the right match.
- **Demonstrated results and savings**, which strengthen political and organisational support.



Challenges & solutions

The challenges, which can be listed here and the solutions provided for overcoming those, are as follows:

Challenge 1: Employer attitudes and readiness: social inclusion depends heavily on companies' willingness and ability to understand specific needs.

- **Solution to challenge 1:** business consultants visit companies, provide information about disability, and facilitate dialogue to prepare staff and management.

Challenge 2: Transition from sheltered workshops to ordinary employment: moving away from a long-standing model of sheltered (protected) work requires organisational and financial change.

- **Solution to challenge 2:** the municipality reallocated resources, closed the sheltered workshop and used national schemes (flexjobs, wage subsidies) to support ordinary employment.
- **Solution to challenge 2:** the municipality has created a new programme in Aarhus thanks to 'Job path' - an OCN (Open College Network) based job-training programme: Labour Preparatory Course. The OCN is a movement developed to recognise informal learning achieved by adults. Here is a link to the programme as it was created in Denmark, following the example of the first organisation of this type, which was created in 1981 in Manchester, UK: <https://ocn-danmark.dk/>

Sustainability

"Job path" is described as an **implemented practice** that has been operational for several years and is being implemented "with success". Sustainability is supported by:

- **Stable municipal funding** from the City of Aarhus.
- **Integration into existing legal frameworks** (social services, active employment, social policy and pensions).
- **Ongoing support on the job** for as long as required, ensuring that placements can be maintained over time.
- **Strong tripartite cooperation** between citizens, businesses and the public sector, with a focus on creating the right match and ensuring necessary support.

Transferability

"Job path" is part of a **national effort** in Denmark to create jobs for people with learning disabilities, funded at national level from 2012–2014. Similar offers exist throughout Denmark, indicating that



the model is **transferable within the country**. We can extrapolate that similar legal conditions and tripartite collaboration models in other countries can also easily adopt this practice.

Elements that support transferability:

- Use of **national legal schemes** (flexjobs, wage subsidies, workplace support) that are available to all municipalities.
- A clear **operational model** combining preparatory training, job-training placements, employer engagement and ongoing support.
- Demonstrated **economic benefits** and positive social outcomes, which can be persuasive for other local authorities.

Sources & contacts

Primary practice description:

- European Social Network case study: "JOBstien – Job path: an employment pathway for people with disabilities", Aarhus Municipality, Denmark.

Key legislative and policy context (Denmark):

- Consolidation Act on Social Services in Denmark (support, education and workplace assistance for citizens with disabilities).
- Act on Active Employment Efforts in Denmark (practical training, mentoring, flexjobs and workplace support).
- Act on Active Social Policy and Social Pensions Act in Denmark (income security and disability benefits).

Contact (from original practice description):

E-mail: policy@esn-eu.org

Other links:

<https://disabilityin.org/global-directory/denmark>

<https://www.businessanddisability.org/countries/denmark>

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