Comprehensive transnational report on inclusive VET and workplaces.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2017, the European Council, European Parliament and the Commission endorsed the adoption of the European Pillar of social rights (EPSR). The agreement highlights the importance of the social, educational and cultural dimensions of EU policies for building a common European future. The EPSR remains a core framework guiding EU social policy, and its implementation is ongoing through the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, which sets targets up to 2030.

The first among the 20 principles of the European Pillar of social rights underlines that: “Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successful transitions in the labour market.”

As of early 2026, the EU is prioritizing a shift from standardisation to personalized, flexible VET paths, emphasizing that inclusive education is critical for addressing labour shortages. This shift directly supports the W.I.N. project's mission to promote equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship within VET and employment.

The national legislations in the EU countries are in line with the EU directives in the sphere of inclusive education with some minor specifics. The links to the national legislative frameworks on inclusive education will be provided in the respective training programme.

As far as employment is concerned, as of early 2026, the European Union's inclusive employment policies are focused on strengthening social resilience, enhancing labour market participation for underrepresented groups, and adapting to the green and digital transitions, again under the guidance of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan. The EU aims for a 78% employment rate by 2030, with specific emphasis on reducing the disability employment gap and advancing gender equality - priorities that the W.I.N. project directly addresses.

The EU's Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030 is now in its second implementation phase, with renewed focus on closing the disability employment gap and strengthening labour market access in the period to 2030.

People with disabilities in the EU have the right to equal participation, non-discrimination, accessibility, and independent living, underpinned by the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, as well as by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 aims to ensure their full equality, free movement, and access to education, healthcare, and employment across all Member States.

In accordance with the EU framework, strictly in line with all the member states’ national legislations, the W.I.N. project is presenting the current selection of best practices in the field of inclusive VET and inclusive employment.

Key takeaways for the VET sector

1. Inclusion must be designed proactively, not implemented reactively.
One of the most important lessons from the analysed practices is that inclusion is most effective when it is embedded from the beginning of programme design. Successful VET providers do not rely on ad-hoc adaptations but instead create systems where **Accessibility**, **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)**, and **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** are integrated into curricula, mobility programmes, and learning environments. This ensures that barriers are removed proactively rather than retroactively.

2. Personalised support is essential for meaningful participation.
Individual Learning Plan (ILP), **Adapted learning materials**, and **Multidisciplinary Support Team** approaches proved to be critical for learner success in all the studied best practices. VET systems must recognise that learners with **Special Educational Needs (SEN)** require differentiated approaches, and that structured support significantly improves motivation, retention, and learning outcomes.

3. Strong partnerships are key to successful transitions.
The Irish WALK PEER model demonstrates that without a formal bridge — combining work-based learning, mentoring, and long-term follow-up — many learners lose ground at precisely the moment they leave education. Real links between VET providers and employers, including structured placement pathways, are essential for improving employment outcomes.

4. Learning and working environments must be inclusive and adaptable.
Providing access to practical experience is not sufficient unless environments are accessible. Practices show that applying **Accessibility**, **Reasonable Adjustments**, and **Flexible working arrangements** is essential for enabling learners to participate fully and apply their skills in real contexts.

5. Inclusion improves the quality and sustainability of VET systems.
Inclusive approaches benefit not only individuals but also institutions. Practices that promote **Inclusive employment**, **Neurodiversity**, and **Mainstream settings** contribute to stronger engagement, better social integration, and improved alignment with labour market needs. Inclusion should therefore be seen as a driver of quality and long-term sustainability.

Key takeaways for employers

1. Inclusive recruitment must focus on skills, not limitations.
Employers should adopt inclusive hiring practices that prioritise competencies and potential rather than perceived barriers. Applying **Anonymized Recruitment**, **Inclusive employment**, and **Reasonable Adjustments** in recruitment processes helps ensure fair access to jobs and reduces bias against candidates with disabilities.

2. Workplace accessibility is a prerequisite for inclusion.
Creating inclusive workplaces requires systematic implementation of **Accessibility**, including

physical, digital, and organisational environments. Employers should ensure that tools, communication systems, and workspaces are usable for all employees, removing barriers that limit participation.

3. Individualised support increases retention and productivity.
Successful inclusion depends on providing **Supported Employment**, **Flexible working arrangements**, and tailored onboarding processes. These measures allow employees with disabilities to adapt to their roles, develop confidence, and maintain long-term employment.

4. Inclusive workplace culture drives organisational success.
Promoting **Neurodiversity** and reducing the **Disclosure gap**, as demonstrated by the Bank of Ireland, and fostering open communication contribute to a positive and inclusive work environment. When employees feel safe to express their needs, organisations benefit from higher engagement, collaboration, and innovation.

5. Collaboration with VET providers strengthens workforce inclusion.
Employers play a key role in supporting transitions from education to employment. Engaging in **Work-Based Learning (WBL)**, partnerships with **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** providers, and structured transition pathways improves recruitment pipelines and helps build a more diverse workforce.

Key takeaways from the voice of people with disabilities

1. Inclusion is meaningful only when it ensures real participation from the onset.
From the perspective of people with disabilities, inclusion is not just about being present in education or employment, but about having equal opportunities to participate, contribute, and progress in the processes behind the planning and organizing of their education and employment.

2. Individual needs must be recognised and supported.
Participants emphasise the importance of tailored support systems that reflect their specific abilities and challenges.

Tools such as **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**, **Individual Learning Plan (ILP)**, and **Reasonable Adjustments** are essential for enabling equal participation and reducing barriers in both learning and working environments.

3. Confidence and independence grow through real experience.
Access to **Work-Based Learning (WBL)** and **Supported Employment** is seen as critical for building practical skills, self-confidence, and autonomy. People with disabilities highlight that real workplace experience, combined with appropriate support, helps them transition more successfully into employment and develop long-term career paths.

4. Safe and supportive environments reduce the disclosure gap.
Many individuals report hesitation to disclose their disability due to fear of stigma or discrimination. Reducing the **Disclosure gap** requires creating environments where diversity

is accepted and supported. Promoting **Neurodiversity** and ensuring respectful communication and understanding are key to building trust.

5. Collaboration between educators, employers, and individuals is essential.
From the “triangle” perspective, successful inclusion depends on strong cooperation between learners or employees with disabilities, educators, and employers. When a Multidisciplinary **Support Team**, **Flexible working arrangements**, and inclusive practices are aligned, individuals feel supported, valued, and more capable of achieving their goals.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

This report is designed as a practical and analytical resource that can be used by different stakeholder groups involved in inclusive vocational education and training (VET) and employment. Depending on your role, you can navigate the report in different ways to access the most relevant insights, tools, and recommendations. The report deals with best practices from 12 countries, which is well beyond the 7 partner countries involved in the project, in order to have an even broader EU-wide dimension and relevance.

If you are a VET educator

You may find it most useful to focus on **Part 2 (VET)**, where the report presents both a transnational analysis and the main points of concrete good practices related to inclusive teaching and learning environments. The section on EU synthesis provides an overview of common patterns, barriers, and effective pedagogical approaches across countries, including the application of inclusive frameworks such as UDL, personalised learning, and multidisciplinary support.

The best practice examples offer practical inspiration on how to adapt teaching methods, use accessible materials, and support learners with diverse needs in mainstream settings. In addition, the conclusions and recommendations in **Section 4.1** provide guidance for designing and improving inclusive VET training programmes.

You may also benefit from reviewing the methodology section to understand how practices were analysed and how similar approaches can be applied in your own context.

If you are a manager, employer or HR professional

You are encouraged to focus on **Part 3 (Employers)**, which explores inclusive workplace practices across different sectors and organisational models. The EU synthesis section clearly outlines key barriers and enabling factors related to recruitment, workplace accessibility, organisational culture, and employee support.

The good practice examples provide concrete models of how organisations implement inclusive employment through measures such as reasonable adjustments, supported employment, flexible working arrangements, and inclusive HR strategies.

The recommendations in **Section 4.2** are particularly relevant, as they translate these findings of the study into actionable steps for organisations aiming to develop or strengthen inclusive employment practices. These insights can support both strategic decision-making and day-to-day management.

If you are a person with a disability or a support service provider

You may find the report most relevant in terms of understanding available opportunities, support mechanisms, and pathways from education to employment. **Part 2 and Part 3** together illustrate how inclusive systems operate and what types of support are available in both learning and workplace environments.

The good practice examples demonstrate real-life experiences and models that support participation, skill development, and employment. These can provide useful reference points for identifying opportunities or advocating for better support.

The recommendations in **Section 4.3** focus specifically on empowerment, personalised pathways, and the role of support services, offering guidance on how individuals and support professionals can navigate and strengthen inclusion processes.

For all readers

The report can be read either sequentially or selectively, depending on your needs. While each section can be used independently, the full value of the report lies in the connections between VET systems, employment practices, and policy recommendations.

By combining evidence from multiple countries and perspectives, the report provides a comprehensive view of inclusion as a shared responsibility between educators, employers, people with disabilities, and policy actors.

Key notions and terms have been marked with capitalization of the initial letter/s and a bold style, e.g. **Multidisciplinary Support Team**. All the definitions are listed in the respective annex.

1. FRAMEWORK AND METHOD

1.1 PURPOSE, SCOPE, AUDIENCES

The transnational report developed within the framework of the W.I.N. (Workplace Inclusion and Diversity Training and Campaigning) project serves as a central analytical and strategic document that consolidates knowledge, practices, and evidence gathered across and beyond the partner countries. Its primary purpose is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how inclusive vocational education and training (VET) systems and workplace environments currently support - or fail to support - the integration of persons with disabilities. By synthesizing national findings into a unified European perspective, the report contributes to the development of more effective, inclusive, and sustainable employment pathways.

1.1.1 Purpose

At its core, the report aims to bridge the gap between education and employment by identifying structural challenges, opportunities for innovation, and transferable good practices. It is designed not only as a research output, but also as a practical tool that informs the design of training programmes, supports policy development, and enhances institutional capacity for inclusion. In alignment with the broader objectives of the W.I.N. project, the report promotes equal opportunities, accessibility, and diversity in professional environments, emphasizing the need for systemic change across both educational and employment sectors.

1.1.2 Scope

The scope of the report is transnational and comparative, encompassing data and insights from all participating countries within the project consortium. It integrates findings from national research reports, each of which examines local contexts, stakeholder perspectives, and existing practices related to inclusive education and employment. Through this comparative approach, the report identifies both common European trends and context-specific differences, allowing for a nuanced understanding of inclusion across diverse socio-economic and institutional environments. A key aspect of the report's scope is its focus on the full transition pathway from vocational education to employment. This includes the analysis of inclusive teaching methodologies, accessibility of learning environments, and the extent to which educational systems prepare learners with disabilities for participation in the labour market. At the same time, the report examines employer practices, organisational cultures, and human resource strategies that influence the recruitment, retention, and professional development of persons with disabilities. Particular attention is given to the alignment - or misalignment - between the competencies developed in VET systems and the expectations of employers.

Furthermore, the report explores the role of cooperation between stakeholders, recognizing that sustainable inclusion cannot be achieved through isolated efforts. It investigates how partnerships between VET providers, employers, non-governmental organisations, and public institutions contribute to more inclusive ecosystems. In doing so, it highlights innovative models of collaboration, as well as gaps where stronger coordination is needed. Another important dimension of the report is the identification and analysis of good practices. These include successful initiatives, programmes, and policies that demonstrate measurable impact in promoting inclusion. By documenting and comparing such practices, the report creates a foundation for knowledge transfer and replication across countries. This is particularly relevant in the context of the W.I.N. project, which aims to generate scalable and adaptable solutions that can be applied in different national contexts.

The report also has a forward-looking dimension, as it formulates recommendations for improving both educational and workplace inclusion. These recommendations are evidence-based and grounded in the results of the research, ensuring their relevance and applicability. They address multiple levels, including policy frameworks, institutional strategies, pedagogical approaches, and organisational practices.

1.1.3 Audiences

In terms of audiences, the transnational report is designed to serve a diverse group of stakeholders who play a role in the inclusion ecosystem. Central to this is what can be described as the “triangle of success,” which brings together educators, managers, and persons with disabilities. This conceptual triangle reflects the interdependent nature of inclusion, where each group contributes distinct perspectives, responsibilities, and expertise.

Educators represent a key audience, as they are directly responsible for designing and delivering inclusive learning experiences. For them, the report provides insights into effective teaching methods, curriculum adaptation, and the application of inclusive frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning. It also supports their professional development by offering practical examples and evidence-based recommendations.

Managers and employers form the second pillar of the triangle. This group includes human resource professionals, company leaders, and decision-makers within organisations. For them, the report offers guidance on creating inclusive workplaces, implementing diversity strategies, and fostering organisational cultures that value accessibility and equal opportunity. It also addresses the business case for inclusion, demonstrating how diversity can contribute to innovation, productivity, and social responsibility.

The third and equally important audience consists of persons with disabilities themselves. The report acknowledges them not only as beneficiaries, but as active participants and contributors to the inclusion process. Their experiences, needs, and perspectives are integral to the research and analysis, ensuring that the outcomes are grounded in real-life contexts. By including their voices, the report promotes a participatory approach that empowers individuals and supports their agency in shaping inclusive environments.

In addition to these three core groups, the report is also relevant for policymakers, researchers, training providers, and civil society organisations. It provides a valuable evidence base that can inform the development of policies, programmes, and initiatives at both national and European levels.

The purpose, scope, and audiences of the transnational report are closely interconnected. The report is not merely a descriptive document, but a strategic instrument that supports the transformation of VET systems and labour markets towards greater inclusion. By integrating research, practice, and stakeholder perspectives, it contributes to the creation of a more equitable and accessible society, in line with the objectives of the W.I.N. project and broader European priorities for inclusion and diversity.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

1.2.1 Desk research protocol

The desk research conducted within the W.I.N. project followed a structured and comparative protocol designed to ensure consistency, reliability, and cross-national relevance of the collected data. This approach was based on the systematic review and analysis of secondary sources, including national reports, policy documents, organisational materials, and publicly available information related to **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** and **inclusive employment** practices. The primary objective of the desk research was to identify, analyse, and synthesise existing knowledge on inclusive methodologies and successful practices across multiple European contexts. While the core of the research was grounded in the national reports developed by the project partners, the scope of the desk research extended beyond the partner countries. In several cases, additional EU countries were included as comparative references in order to enrich the analysis and provide broader insight into diverse inclusion models and policy frameworks. This extended geographical scope allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of how inclusive systems operate across different institutional and socio-economic environments.

The research process followed a harmonised protocol agreed upon by all project partners. Each partner conducted desk research using a common analytical framework and reporting template, ensuring that the information collected was comparable regardless of whether it originated from partner countries or additional case-study contexts. The protocol required the analysis of both VET systems and employment environments, enabling a dual-perspective approach that reflects the transition from education to the labour market. The desk research relied on a wide range of data sources. These included national and European legislation on inclusion and disability rights, policy frameworks, organisational documentation from VET providers, employers, and social enterprises, as well as academic studies, previous research reports, and publicly available online resources. In addition to the core national cases, partners also examined selected practices from other EU countries in order to identify transferable models and innovative approaches. In some cases, the research was complemented by structured questionnaires or internally provided materials from organisations, further strengthening the evidence base.

A key methodological feature of the desk research was the use of comparative document analysis. All collected sources were systematically reviewed to extract relevant information related to inclusion practices, **Accessibility** measures, support systems, and measurable outcomes. The analysis aimed to identify both common European trends and context-specific variations, considering differences in national legislation, institutional capacity, and labour market conditions. To enhance analytical depth, the desk research incorporated thematic coding. Extracted data were categorised into predefined thematic areas, including governance and policy frameworks, pedagogical approaches, workplace adaptations, stakeholder cooperation, and transition mechanisms between VET and employment. This structured approach enabled a consistent comparison of practices across countries and facilitated the identification of key success factors and gaps. In several national reports, the desk research was complemented by additional qualitative methods such as stakeholder mapping, interviews, and surveys. These elements were integrated into the overall analysis where available, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of inclusion practices. Nevertheless, desk research remained the core methodological approach, providing the foundational framework for data collection and interpretation.

Where possible, findings from desk research were cross-referenced across source types — legal frameworks, organisational documentation, and published outcome data — to strengthen reliability. Practices identified at organisational level were considered in relation to national and European standards, including the EU Disability Strategy and the European Accessibility Act. Another important aspect of the desk research protocol was the use of a standardised reporting structure across all cases. Regardless of the country of origin, each practice was documented using common headings, including context, implementation approach, **Accessibility** measures, outcomes, and transferability. This ensured coherence in the analysis and facilitated the integration of findings into the transnational report.

The desk research was conducted in accordance with the quality and ethical standards defined in the project's Quality Management Plan. These include principles of transparency, consistency, and responsible use of data, as well as compliance with data protection requirements. Although most of the data were derived from publicly available sources, any additional information provided by organisations was treated with appropriate confidentiality and care.

1.2.2 Questionnaires and Interviews

In addition to desk research, the W.I.N. project incorporated primary data collection methods, including structured questionnaires and, where applicable, interviews and stakeholder input. These methods were used to complement the secondary data and provide deeper insight into the practical implementation of inclusive vocational education and training (VET) and employment practices. The use of questionnaires followed a coordinated logic across the project, aiming to ensure consistency, comparability, and relevance of the collected data. Particularly, structured questionnaires – most commonly distributed through Google Forms – were developed and shared with organisations identified as good practice providers.

These organisations included VET institutions, employers, NGOs, and social enterprises actively engaged in inclusion. The questionnaire-based approach allowed partners to collect standardised information directly from practitioners, ensuring that the data reflects real-life experiences and operational practices.

The design of the questionnaires was aligned with the overall analytical framework of the project. Questions were structured to capture key dimensions of inclusion, including organisational context, target groups, implementation methods, **Accessibility** measures, support systems, outcomes, and transferability. This ensured that the information collected through questionnaires could be directly integrated into the case study structure used within all national reports. The logic behind this approach was to minimise variation in data collection and enable meaningful comparison between cases from different countries. The questionnaires combined both qualitative and descriptive elements. Rather than focusing on quantitative measurement alone, they encouraged respondents to provide detailed explanations of their practices, including examples, challenges, and observed results. This qualitative orientation was essential for understanding complex inclusion processes that cannot be fully captured through numerical indicators alone.

In several cases, questionnaire data were complemented by additional forms of input, such as interviews, consultations, or internal organisational documentation. Some national reports explicitly refer to stakeholder engagement through interviews with managers, educators, or human resource professionals, as well as surveys targeting employees or service users. These methods provided additional depth and allowed researchers to validate and contextualise the information obtained through desk research. Furthermore, certain reports relied on direct input from organisational staff involved in inclusion processes, including educators, job coaches, and management representatives. This contributed to a more nuanced understanding of how inclusive practices are implemented in practice, including day-to-day operations, challenges, and success factors.

A key advantage of using questionnaires and interviews was the ability to access practice-based knowledge that is not always available in public sources. While desk research provided the broader policy and institutional context, primary data collection allowed the project to capture operational details, internal processes, and experiential insights from practitioners themselves. To ensure reliability, all questionnaires followed a common structure and were reviewed for clarity and relevance. The use of Google Forms facilitated standardisation, ease of distribution, and efficient data collection across different countries. Responses were analysed and integrated into the case studies using the same reporting template applied to desk research findings, ensuring methodological coherence across the project. The collected data were also treated in accordance with ethical and data protection principles. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and the use of the data within the project. Where necessary, information was anonymised or presented at organisational level to ensure confidentiality.

1.2.3 Case studies. Selection and quality

The case studies included in the W.I.N. Transnational report were selected through a structured and comparative process aimed at ensuring diversity, reliability, and practical relevance. The selection was not limited to the partner countries involved in the project. In addition to national cases developed by each partner, the research deliberately incorporated examples from additional European countries in order to broaden the analytical scope and capture a wider range of **inclusive employment** and **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** practices across different systems. This extended selection approach reflects the project's objective to identify transferable models that are applicable beyond specific national contexts. Several national reports explicitly include both domestic and foreign case studies, allowing for comparative insights between countries with different legislative frameworks, institutional capacities, and labour market conditions. For example, reports analyse parallel cases from two countries – one representing the partner context and another serving as a comparative European reference – thereby strengthening the validity and transferability of the findings.

The selection of case studies followed a common set of criteria agreed upon by all partners. First, each case had to demonstrate a proven impact on inclusion outcomes, such as improved participation in VET, successful transition to employment, increased autonomy, or measurable social integration. Second, sustainability was a key requirement, meaning that selected practices needed to be embedded in long-term organisational or institutional structures rather than being short-term or pilot initiatives. Third, the criterion of transferability ensured that practices could be adapted and implemented in other European contexts with **Reasonable Adjustments (or accommodations)**. Finally, cases were evaluated in terms of innovation and resource efficiency, highlighting approaches that go beyond basic compliance and introduce meaningful improvements in **Accessibility** and inclusion.

Another important principle guiding the selection process was the inclusion of case studies covering the full education-to-employment continuum. The dataset includes examples from both **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** providers and real workplace environments. This dual approach allows the analysis to capture not only how inclusive learning is implemented, but also how these practices translate into sustainable employment outcomes. In the reports, paired case studies were used – one from an educational setting and one from an employment context – to illustrate this transition pathway and highlight key success factors across different stages of the professional lifecycle.

Ensuring the reliability of the case studies was a central methodological concern. All cases were based on verified sources, including organisational documentation, policy frameworks, and publicly available data. In some instances, additional information was obtained through structured questionnaires or direct input from organisations, increasing the accuracy and depth of the analysis. The use of multiple data sources enabled triangulation, which strengthened the credibility of the findings and reduced the risk of bias.

Furthermore, all case studies were developed using a standardised reporting template, ensuring consistency in the type and structure of information presented across countries. The relevance of the case studies was ensured by aligning them with the core objectives of the W.I.N. project, namely promoting **inclusive VET** systems and facilitating access to employment for persons with disabilities. Selected cases address real challenges identified across Europe, such as the lack of structured transition mechanisms between education and employment, limited employer awareness, and insufficient **Accessibility** in training environments. By focusing on practical, real-world examples, the case studies provide actionable insights for educators, employers, and policymakers. In addition to being reliable and relevant, the case studies were designed to present clear and accessible information. Each case follows a consistent structure, typically including context, target group, implementation approach, **Accessibility** measures, outcomes, and transferability. This standardisation enhances readability and allows for easy comparison across different cases. The use of clear language and structured presentation ensures that the findings can be understood and applied by a wide range of stakeholders, including practitioners who may not have a research background.

A key strength of the selected case studies is their diversity and non-repetitiveness. The cases represent a wide range of sectors, organisational types, and target groups, including schools, vocational training centres, social enterprises, NGOs, large corporations, and public institutions. They also address different types of disabilities, such as **Intellectual Disabilities (ID)**, sensory impairments, and **Neurodiversity / neurodivergent employees**, as well as broader groups of learners and workers with fewer opportunities. Methodologically, the cases showcase a variety of approaches, including experiential learning models, **Supported Employment**, technological **Accessibility** solutions, **Social Cooperative (Type B)** structures, and policy-driven inclusion mechanisms. This diversity ensures that the analysis does not rely on a single model of inclusion, but instead reflects the complexity and multidimensional nature of inclusive systems across Europe. At the same time, the use of common analytical criteria and reporting structures ensures coherence and comparability, allowing the identification of shared success factors despite contextual differences.

PART 2. VET: UDL, inclusivity, accessibility in VET

2.1 EU SYNTHESIS.

Patterns across countries

The comparative analysis of national reports and selected case studies across the W.I.N. project reveals a complex yet coherent landscape of transformation in **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** across Europe. While national systems differ significantly in terms of governance structures, funding models, and institutional capacities, several converging patterns can be identified, reflecting both shared challenges and emerging solutions. These patterns demonstrate a gradual but clear shift towards more inclusive, flexible, and employment-oriented VET systems.

A fundamental pattern observed across countries is the transition from segregated educational models towards inclusive systems embedded within **mainstream classes / mainstream settings**. Historically, learners with **Special Educational Needs (SEN)** – including those with **Intellectual Disabilities (ID)** and **Learning difficulties / learning disorders –** were often educated in specialised institutions or excluded from vocational pathways altogether. The analysed case studies, particularly from Bulgaria, Ireland, and Spain, demonstrate a clear move towards integrating these learners into mainstream VET environments.

However, this integration is not merely physical. The distinction between integration and inclusion is critical: while integration refers to placement within mainstream settings, inclusion requires systemic adaptation to ensure meaningful participation. Across countries, successful practices demonstrate that inclusion is achieved only when educational systems adapt to learners, rather than expecting learners to adapt to rigid systems. This shift reflects the principles of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**, which emphasise proactive design of learning environments to accommodate diverse needs.

The application of **UDL** principles emerges as one of the most consistent and impactful patterns across the analysed practices. In many cases, UDL is not explicitly referenced but is clearly reflected in pedagogical approaches. These include the use of flexible teaching methods, differentiated instruction, and multiple forms of assessment. By providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, educators are able to address diverse learning profiles effectively.

For example, learners with **Neurodiversity / neurodivergent employee** characteristics – such as autism, ADHD, or dyslexia – benefit from structured yet flexible learning environments, while students with **Intellectual Disabilities (ID)** require simplified content and practical, hands-on learning experiences. The widespread use of **Adapted learning materials**, including visual supports, simplified texts, and digital tools, further enhances accessibility and participation.

This pedagogical shift represents a move away from standardised, one-size-fits-all models towards more personalised and responsive education systems. It also reduces reliance on reactive **Reasonable Adjustments (or accommodations)**, as barriers are addressed at the design stage rather than after they emerge.

Another key pattern is the institutionalisation of structured support systems within VET providers. As observed in all countries, analysed in this report, effective inclusion is closely linked to the presence of coordinated support mechanisms, typically organised through **Student Support Team (SST)** or broader **Multidisciplinary Support Team** structures.

These teams play a central role in assessing learner needs, designing individualised interventions, and monitoring progress over time. Their composition varies across contexts but generally includes teachers, psychologists, counsellors, and external specialists. The integration of these diverse perspectives ensures a holistic approach to inclusion, addressing not only academic needs but also emotional, behavioural, and social dimensions.

The use of **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** and **Individual Learning Plan (ILP)** further reinforces this personalised approach. These tools allow for the adaptation of curricula, teaching methods, and assessment criteria, ensuring that learners can participate on an equal basis with others. Importantly, these plans are not static documents but dynamic processes, regularly reviewed and adjusted based on learner progress.

In more advanced models, particularly in Italy and Lithuania, this approach evolves into what can be described as **Extreme Personalization**, where learning and support are tailored in a highly individualised manner. This level of personalisation significantly reduces barriers and enhances learning outcomes, although it also requires substantial organisational capacity.

A third major pattern concerns the integration of **Work-Based Learning (WBL)** as a core component of inclusive VET systems. Across countries, WBL is increasingly recognised as essential for bridging the gap between education and employment. By exposing learners to real work environments, WBL enables the development of both technical and transversal skills, including communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

In many cases, WBL is implemented in combination with **Supported Employment** approaches, particularly for learners with SEN. This ensures that learners receive continuous guidance and support during their transition to the labour market. The WALK PEER model in Ireland, for example, demonstrates how long-term support can significantly improve employment outcomes and reduce dropout rates.

The integration of WBL also contributes to reducing the **Independence Gap**, as learners gain practical experience and confidence in performing tasks independently - something particularly important for individuals who may have strong theoretical knowledge but lack opportunities to apply it in real-world contexts.

Another consistent pattern is the emphasis on stakeholder collaboration as a key enabler of inclusion. All the national reports describe successful practices as characterised by strong partnerships between educational institutions, employers, NGOs, families, and public authorities.

This multi-stakeholder approach ensures that inclusion is not confined to the classroom but extends across the entire education-to-employment pathway. For example, NGOs often provide additional support services, such as mentoring, counselling, and social assistance, while employers contribute by offering work placements and implementing inclusive practices.

The involvement of employers is particularly significant, as it facilitates the transition to **inclusive employment** and promotes organisational change. Through direct engagement with learners, employers gain a better understanding of diversity and develop the capacity to implement **Reasonable Adjustments (or accommodations)** and improve workplace **Accessibility**.

Accessibility itself emerges as a cross-cutting pattern among all analysed systems.

Accessibility is no longer viewed solely in terms of physical access but encompasses digital, informational, and attitudinal dimensions. This includes accessible learning materials, inclusive communication methods, and supportive organisational cultures.

Innovative approaches such as the "Digital Backpack" demonstrate how accessibility can be extended beyond the educational environment, ensuring continuity between education and employment. By allowing learners to retain assistive technologies and tools, these models support long-term participation and reduce barriers during transition phases.

Pedagogically, there is a strong trend towards participatory and collaborative learning approaches. Methods such as **Peer and Cooperative Learning** are widely used to enhance engagement, foster social interaction, and reduce stigma. These approaches enable learners to contribute according to their strengths and support each other's learning processes.

In Spain, the **Experts Group** model exemplifies this trend by involving learners directly in the design and implementation of inclusive solutions. This not only enhances learning outcomes but also promotes empathy and inclusive mindsets among all participants.

Another important pattern is the increasing recognition of diversity beyond disability. While many practices focus on learners with SEN, there is a broader understanding of inclusion that encompasses socio-economic disadvantage, migration background, and other forms of marginalisation. This reflects a shift towards more holistic and intersectional approaches to inclusion, aligned with European policy frameworks.

Finally, a significant cross-cutting pattern is the movement towards systemic and proactive inclusion models. Concepts such as **Inclusion-by-Design** and **Inclusion-by-Default** are increasingly reflected in practice, indicating a transition from reactive adjustments to embedded inclusion strategies.

In these models, inclusion is not an additional feature but a fundamental principle guiding the design of educational systems, curricula, and organisational processes. This ensures sustainability and scalability, as inclusion becomes part of the institutional culture rather than dependent on individual initiatives.

In conclusion, the patterns identified across countries demonstrate that effective **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** is characterised by a combination of flexible pedagogy, structured support systems, integration of **Work-Based Learning (WBL)**, strong stakeholder collaboration, and a systemic approach to inclusion. While the level of implementation varies across contexts, these elements provide a shared framework for advancing inclusive education across Europe.

Barriers

The analysis of national reports and case studies across the W.I.N. project demonstrates that, despite clear progress in policy development and practice, the implementation of **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** across Europe continues to be constrained by a complex system of interrelated barriers.

These barriers do not operate in isolation; rather, they form an interconnected ecosystem of structural, pedagogical, institutional, and socio-cultural constraints that collectively limit the effectiveness of inclusive practices.

A key observation across countries is that inclusion is often framed as a policy priority but remains uneven in implementation. This gap between intention and practice brings urgency to the need to examine barriers not only at the surface level but also in terms of systemic dynamics and interactions between different components of the education and employment systems.

Systemic and structural barriers

One of the most persistent barriers is the structural rigidity of VET systems. Many national systems are still built around standardised curricula, fixed learning pathways, and uniform assessment criteria, which are inherently incompatible with the diversity of learners' needs.

Learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN), including those with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) and **Learning difficulties / learning disorders**, often require flexible pacing, adapted content, and alternative forms of assessment. However, institutional frameworks frequently limit the extent to which such adaptations can be implemented.

Although tools such as **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** and **Individual Learning Plan (ILP)** are formally recognised, their effectiveness is often constrained by systemic factors, including time limitations, administrative burden, and lack of integration into broader institutional processes.

This structural rigidity creates a paradox: while inclusion is formally supported, the underlying system remains largely unchanged, forcing learners to adapt to structures that were not designed for them. This contradicts the principles of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**, which advocate for designing systems that are inherently flexible and accessible.

Another systemic barrier is the fragmentation between education and employment systems. While VET is increasingly aligned with labour market needs, the transition between these systems remains weakly structured.

This results in a discontinuity of support, where learners receive assistance during their education but face significant challenges when entering the labour market. The absence of integrated pathways contributes directly to the **Independence Gap**, limiting the ability of individuals to translate acquired skills into sustainable employment outcomes.

Pedagogical and instructional barriers

At the pedagogical level, one of the most significant barriers is the limited and inconsistent application of inclusive teaching methodologies. While many educators are aware of the importance of inclusion, the practical implementation of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** remains uneven across contexts.

Teachers often face challenges in designing lessons that accommodate diverse learning styles, particularly in vocational settings where content is highly specialised and practice-oriented. The lack of training in inclusive pedagogy further exacerbates this issue, leaving educators without the necessary tools to effectively support learners with complex needs.

The availability of **Adapted learning materials** is another critical factor. In many cases, such materials are either insufficient or not tailored to specific vocational disciplines. This creates additional barriers for learners with **Neurodiversity / neurodivergent employee's** profiles, who may require structured, visual, or simplified content to engage effectively.

Moreover, traditional assessment methods often fail to capture the full range of learners' abilities. Standardised testing and rigid evaluation criteria may disadvantage students who demonstrate competence through alternative forms of expression. Therefore, more flexible and inclusive assessment approaches aligned with UDL principles are needed.

Institutional and organisational barriers

Institutional capacity is another key determinant of successful inclusion. While many VET providers have established **Student Support Team (SST)** or **Multidisciplinary Support Team** structures, their effectiveness varies significantly across contexts.

In some cases, these teams are well-resourced and play a central role in coordinating support. In others, they are limited by insufficient staffing, unclear roles, or lack of coordination. This variability leads to unequal access to support and inconsistent implementation of inclusive practices.

Coordination between stakeholders is also a recurring challenge. Effective inclusion requires collaboration between educators, specialists, families, employers, and external organisations. However, in many cases, communication between these actors is fragmented, leading to gaps in support and duplication of efforts.

Institutional culture further influences the effectiveness of inclusion. In environments where inclusion is perceived as an additional burden rather than a core value, implementation tends to be superficial. Conversely, institutions that adopt **Inclusion-by-Default** and Inclusion-by-Design approaches demonstrate more sustainable and effective outcomes.

Transition and employment-related barriers

One of the most critical barriers identified in all studied national contexts is the transition from education to employment. Despite the increasing integration of **Work-Based Learning (WBL)**, many learners with SEN continue to face significant challenges in entering and sustaining employment.

This transition gap is closely linked to the lack of structured Supported Employment pathways. In many systems, support mechanisms are concentrated within educational institutions and

do not extend into the labour market. As a result, learners often experience a sudden loss of support at a critical stage of their development.

Employer readiness is another significant factor. Many employers lack the knowledge or experience required to implement inclusive practices effectively. This includes limited understanding of how to provide **Reasonable Adjustments (or accommodations)** and how to create accessible work environments.

While mechanisms such as the **Quota System (Disability Employment)** aim to increase employment rates, they often focus on compliance rather than meaningful inclusion. Without a shift towards organisational models based on **Inclusion-by-Design**, these measures may have limited impact.

The **Disclosure gap** further complicates the transition to employment. Many individuals choose not to disclose their disability due to fear of stigma or discrimination, limiting their access to necessary support and accommodations. Another proof of the importance of urgently building trust and creating inclusive workplace cultures.

Accessibility and environmental barriers

Despite strong policy frameworks, **Accessibility** remains inconsistently implemented across both educational and workplace environments. Barriers include physical inaccessibility, lack of accessible digital tools, and insufficient adaptation of learning materials.

In addition to physical and digital barriers, attitudinal barriers play a significant role. Negative perceptions, low expectations, and lack of awareness among educators, peers, and employers can limit opportunities for learners with SEN. These barriers are often less visible but have a profound impact on participation and outcomes.

Innovative solutions such as the “Digital Backpack” demonstrate how accessibility can be extended across contexts, ensuring continuity between education and employment. However, such approaches are not yet widely implemented.

Resource and capacity constraints

Resource limitations represent a cross-cutting barrier affecting all aspects of inclusion. Many institutions lack sufficient funding, specialised staff, and infrastructure to fully implement inclusive practices.

This includes shortages of psychologists, counsellors, and resource teachers, as well as limited access to assistive technologies and training opportunities. These constraints are particularly pronounced in rural or less developed regions, where disparities between institutions are more evident.

Complexity and scalability challenges

Finally, inclusion is inherently complex and requires balancing multiple, sometimes conflicting, objectives. Approaches such as **Extreme Personalization** can be highly effective for individual learners but are difficult to scale across larger systems.

Similarly, efforts to standardise inclusion may lead to oversimplification and fail to address individual needs. This tension between individualisation and scalability represents a **fundamental challenge for policy and practice.**

Tools and approaches

The analysis of national reports and case studies within the W.I.N. project brought to our attention a wide range of tools and approaches that support the implementation of **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** across Europe. These tools operate at different levels – pedagogical, organisational, technological, and systemic – and are most effective when applied in combination rather than isolation.

A key finding is that successful inclusion is not based on a single method or intervention but on the integration of multiple complementary approaches that address diverse learner needs and system-level challenges.

Pedagogical approaches and learning design

At the core of inclusive VET lies the application of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** as a guiding pedagogical framework. It emerges as one of the most influential approaches, whether explicitly adopted or implicitly embedded in teaching practices.

UDL promotes the design of learning environments that are accessible to all learners from the outset, reducing the need for reactive **Reasonable Adjustments (or accommodations)**. It is operationalised through three main principles: providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action/expression.

In practice, this translates into flexible teaching methods, varied instructional materials, and diversified assessment strategies. For example, learners with **Learning difficulties / learning disorders** benefit from simplified and structured content, while those with **Neurodiversity / neurodivergent employees'** profiles may require visual supports, clear routines, and reduced sensory overload.

The use of **Adapted learning materials** is a key tool within this framework. These include simplified texts, visual aids, digital resources, and multimodal content, enabling learners to access information in ways that align with their individual needs.

Another widely used pedagogical approach is **Peer and Cooperative Learning**, which fosters collaboration and mutual support among learners. This approach is particularly effective in

inclusive settings, as it allows students to contribute according to their strengths while benefiting from peer interaction.

The **Experts Group** model, identified in Spanish VET practices, represents an innovative extension of this approach. By involving learners directly in the co-creation of inclusive solutions alongside persons with disabilities, this model promotes experiential learning, empathy, and practical problem-solving skills.

Personalisation and individual support tools

Personalisation is a central component of inclusive VET, supported by tools such as **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** and **Individual Learning Plan (ILP)**. These tools provide structured frameworks for adapting learning objectives, teaching methods, and assessment criteria to individual needs.

In more advanced systems, personalisation extends into **Extreme Personalization**, where learning pathways are highly tailored to each learner's abilities and goals. This approach is particularly effective for individuals with complex needs but requires significant institutional capacity and coordination.

The role of **Student Support Team (SST)** or broader **Multidisciplinary Support Team** structures is critical in implementing these tools. These teams coordinate support across different domains, ensuring that interventions are consistent, comprehensive, and responsive to changing needs.

Work-based and transition-oriented approaches

A defining feature of effective inclusive VET systems is the integration of **Work-Based Learning (WBL)**. WBL provides learners with direct exposure to real work environments, enabling them to develop practical skills and gain confidence.

This approach is often combined with **Supported Employment**, which ensures that learners receive ongoing support during their transition to the labour market. This includes mentoring, job coaching, and workplace adaptation, helping individuals overcome barriers and sustain employment.

The integration of WBL and Supported Employment plays a key role in reducing the **Independence Gap**, enabling learners to apply their skills in real-world contexts and develop autonomy.

Structured transition models, such as those identified in Ireland and Portugal, further enhance this process by providing long-term support that extends beyond initial employment. These models emphasise continuity, ensuring that learners are not left unsupported during critical transition phases.

Organisational and systemic approaches

At the organisational level, inclusive practices are increasingly guided by principles such as **Inclusion-by-Design** and **Inclusion-by-Default**. These approaches embed inclusion into the core functioning of institutions, rather than treating it as an additional or reactive measure.

Inclusion-by-Design involves the intentional creation of systems, processes, and environments that support participation from the outset. This includes accessible curricula, flexible organisational structures, and inclusive policies.

Inclusion-by-Default extends this principle by ensuring that inclusion is the standard approach across all activities, from recruitment and training to evaluation and management.

In employment contexts, structures such as the Work **Integration Office** play a key role in coordinating inclusive practices. These units manage recruitment, onboarding, and support processes, ensuring alignment between individual needs and organisational requirements.

Accessibility and technological tools

Accessibility is a fundamental tool and enabler of inclusion, encompassing physical, digital, and communication dimensions. Effective inclusive VET systems invest in accessible infrastructure, digital platforms, and assistive technologies.

The concept of the “Digital Backpack” illustrates an innovative approach to accessibility, ensuring that learners retain access to assistive tools when transitioning from education to employment. This continuity supports long-term participation and reduces barriers across contexts.

Technological tools also play an increasing role in supporting inclusion, enabling flexible learning, remote access, and personalised content delivery. However, their effectiveness depends on proper implementation and alignment with pedagogical approaches.

Employment-related tools and policies

In the transition to employment, a range of tools and policy mechanisms support inclusion. These include **Reasonable Adjustments (or accommodations)**, which enable individuals to perform their roles effectively by adapting tasks, environments, or schedules.

The **Quota System (Disability Employment)** is another widely used mechanism, requiring organisations to employ a certain percentage of persons with disabilities. While effective in increasing employment rates, its impact on meaningful inclusion depends on how it is implemented.

Other tools, such as anonymised recruitment processes and structured onboarding systems, contribute to reducing bias and improving access to employment opportunities.

Collaborative and ecosystem-based approaches

A recurring theme among all tools and approaches is the importance of collaboration. Inclusive VET systems function most effectively when supported by networks of stakeholders, including educators, employers, NGOs, families, and public authorities.

This ecosystem-based approach ensures that inclusion is addressed across educational, social, and professional dimensions. It also facilitates knowledge sharing, innovation, and continuous improvement.

Stakeholder voices summary

The analysis of stakeholder perspectives across the national reports provides a critical qualitative dimension to the understanding of **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)**. While policy frameworks, tools, and practices offer structural and methodological insights, stakeholder voices reveal how inclusion is experienced in practice – highlighting both its transformative potential and its ongoing challenges.Three primary stakeholder groups, regardless of the analysed contexts, emerge as central to the implementation of inclusive VET: educators, managers (including institutional leaders and employers), and persons with disabilities (learners or employees).

Each group provides distinct but complementary perspectives, reflecting different roles, responsibilities, and experiences within inclusive systems.

Educators' perspectives

Educators consistently emphasise the importance of flexibility, adaptability, and relational approaches in working with learners with **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**. Across countries, teachers report that effective inclusion requires moving beyond traditional teaching methods towards more dynamic and responsive practices aligned with **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**.

Many educators highlight that the use of **Adapted learning materials**, differentiated instruction, and interactive methods significantly improves learner engagement and participation. However, they also note that these approaches require additional time, effort, and professional competence.

A recurring theme in educator perspectives is the central role of relationships. Teachers emphasise that building trust with learners is essential for overcoming barriers and supporting individual development. This relational dimension is particularly important for learners with **Intellectual Disabilities (ID)** and **Neurodiversity / neurodivergent employees**, who may require additional emotional and social support.

At the same time, educators frequently point to challenges related to workload and capacity. The implementation of **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** and participation in **Student Support**

Team (SST) or **Multidisciplinary Support Team** processes are seen as essential but demanding tasks.

Despite these challenges, educators generally express strong commitment to inclusion, viewing it not only as a professional responsibility but also as a core value. Many report that inclusive practices enhance their teaching skills and lead to more engaging and meaningful learning environments for all students.

Managers and organisational perspectives

Managers, including school leaders and employers, provide a more strategic perspective on inclusion. They emphasise the importance of organisational culture, leadership, and systemic alignment in achieving sustainable outcomes.

A key theme in their perspectives is the transition from compliance-based approaches to more proactive models such as **Inclusion-by-Design** and **Inclusion-by-Default**. Managers recognise that inclusion cannot be achieved through isolated measures but requires integration into all organisational processes, including recruitment, training, and evaluation.

In educational settings, managers highlight the importance of investing in staff development, establishing effective **Multidisciplinary Support Team** structures, and fostering collaboration with external stakeholders.

In employment contexts, employers emphasise the value of inclusive hiring practices and the positive impact of diversity on organisational performance. Many report that implementing **Reasonable Adjustments (or accommodations)** and improving workplace **Accessibility** leads to higher employee satisfaction, better team dynamics, and increased innovation.

However, managers also acknowledge challenges, particularly related to resource allocation and organisational change. Implementing inclusive practices often requires initial investment and cultural transformation, which may encounter resistance.

Despite these challenges, there is a growing recognition that inclusion is not only a social responsibility but also a strategic advantage, contributing to organisational resilience and competitiveness.

Perspectives of persons with disabilities

The voices of persons with disabilities provide the most direct insight into the impact of inclusive VET practices. In all reports, learners and employees consistently highlight the importance of support, opportunity, and recognition.

A central theme is the value of participation in **mainstream classes / mainstream settings**, which enables individuals to feel included, respected, and part of a broader community. Many report that inclusive environments improve their confidence, motivation, and sense of belonging.

Access to **Work-Based Learning (WBL)** is particularly valued, as it provides opportunities to develop practical skills and gain real-world experience. Participants often describe WBL as a turning point, helping them understand their abilities and build confidence in their capacity to work.

At the same time, individuals emphasise the importance of ongoing support, particularly through **Supported Employment** mechanisms. Continuous guidance, mentoring, and workplace adaptation are seen as essential for sustaining employment and overcoming challenges.

The issue of the **Independence Gap** is frequently reflected in stakeholder experiences. Many individuals report that, while they possess relevant skills, they require additional support to apply them independently in real-world contexts. Inclusive practices that address this gap are therefore highly valued.

Another important aspect is the experience of disclosure. The **Disclosure gap** remains a significant concern, with many individuals expressing hesitation to disclose their disability due to fear of discrimination or negative perceptions. This puts the stress on the need for more inclusive and supportive environments where individuals feel safe and respected.

Cross-cutting insights

Several common themes emerge across all stakeholder groups. First, inclusion is most effective when it is systemic and coordinated, rather than fragmented. Stakeholders emphasise the importance of alignment between education, employment, and social support systems.

Secondly, relationships and collaboration are critical. Whether between teachers and students, employers and employees, or institutions and external partners, trust and communication are key enablers of inclusion.

Third, flexibility is essential. Rigid systems and standardised approaches are consistently identified as barriers, while flexible and personalised approaches are associated with positive outcomes.

Finally, there is a shared recognition that inclusion benefits not only individuals with disabilities but also the broader system. Inclusive practices lead to more innovative, adaptable, and resilient organisations and learning environments.

2.2 BEST INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN VET

In this chapter you can find a collection of 9 best practices in the field of inclusive vocational education and training. They are presented following a similar logic, explaining context, problem, which is being solved by the practice, what specific steps have been taken, how the practice is based or related to UD/L, what is its potential for transferability and under what conditions it could become transferable, why it worked, what were the challenges, how do stakeholders evaluate it.

The practices are from different European countries and provide a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

BP1: Vocational High School of Forestry and Woodworking "Nikolay Haytov" (Bulgaria)

***Organisation*:** Vocational High School of Forestry and Woodworking "Nikolay Haytov", Varna

Context and stakeholders

The Vocational High School of Forestry and Woodworking "Nikolay Haytov" in Varna is the first vocational high school in the city to admit and educate students with special educational needs (SEN), beginning in 2009. The school offers vocational programmes in *Landscaping and Floristry*, *Furniture Production*, *Forestry and Hunting Management*, *Interior Design*, *Park Construction and Landscaping*, and *Restoration of Antique Furniture and Joinery*. Students with SEN are fully integrated into mainstream classes, and those who do not meet the State Educational Standard are trained under Individual Education Plans (IEPs).The school operates in a context of increasing demand for skilled vocational workers and a national policy framework shaped by the Bulgarian Inclusive Education Regulation (2017, amended 2024). Stakeholders include resource teachers, school psychologists, pedagogical counsellors, class teachers, parents, NGOs such as ASD "Vision", and local authorities. A multidisciplinary Student Support Team (SST) coordinates support and monitors student progress.

What problem it solves

For many years, students with SEN in Bulgaria faced limited access to quality vocational education. They were often excluded from mainstream schools or directed to specialised institutions, which restricted their opportunities for social integration, personal development, and future employment. The lack of adapted learning environments, insufficiently prepared teachers, and fragmented support systems contributed to early school leaving and unequal educational outcomes.

The school sought to address these systemic barriers by creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive educational environment where students with SEN could develop academically, socially, and emotionally, and acquire vocational skills relevant to the labour market.

What is done — steps

The school implements a structured, multi-layered inclusive model:

- **Adapted learning and individualised pedagogy:** Teachers create an atmosphere of calm and trust, adapt learning content to each student's abilities, and use interactive methods such as storytelling, discussion, role-playing, problem-solving, and films based on curriculum texts.
- **Resource teacher support:** The resource teacher provides additional support in both curricular and extracurricular activities, individually or in groups, focusing on learning content, intellectual development, social skills, and adaptation to the general environment.
- **Psychological and counselling support:** The school psychologist and pedagogical counsellor are present daily, offering consistent emotional and behavioural support.
- **Emotional support and motivation:** Pedagogical specialists work to build students' self-esteem, sense of security, and motivation.
- **Regular work with parents:** Systematic communication ensures monitoring of progress and alignment between school and home.
- **Student Support Team (SST):** The SST – class teacher, resource teacher, psychologist, and teachers of Bulgarian language and mathematics – meets to discuss student development and coordinate interventions.
- **Teacher qualification and training:** Continuous professional development strengthens teachers' confidence and skills in working with students with SEN.
- **Interest-based activities** All students participate in school clubs, supporting socialisation and engagement.
- **Partnership with NGOs:** For over 15 years, students have received support from social assistants from ASD "Vision", ensuring continuity and practical assistance.
- **Monitoring and documentation:** Progress is tracked through IEPs, attendance logs, exam results, SST records, and consultations with parents.

Why it worked

The model works because it is:

- **Holistic** — combining academic, emotional, psychological, and social support.
- **Collaborative** — involving teachers, specialists, parents, and NGOs.

- **Long-term** — implemented continuously since 2009, becoming part of the school culture.
- **Individualised** — adapting content and expectations to each learner.
- **Structured** — with clear roles, processes, and monitoring mechanisms.
- **Embedded in partnerships** — especially with ASD "Vision", which strengthens daily support.

The school's commitment and accumulated experience have created a stable, trusted environment that attracts families of children with SEN.

What was hard

The most persistent challenge is **transition to employment**. Despite efforts, meetings with the Employment Office, and outreach to companies, graduates with SEN struggle to secure jobs in their vocational fields. Economic conditions and administrative barriers contribute to this difficulty. Without employment, students risk losing the progress achieved during schooling.

The school also faces the ongoing challenge of maintaining staff training, adapting materials, and ensuring sufficient specialist support for diverse diagnoses, including intellectual disabilities, learning disorders, visual impairments, ADHD, cerebral palsy, dyslexia, and autism spectrum conditions

UDL link — principles applied

While the report developed by CuBuFoundation and NASOR, where this practice is included, does not explicitly refer to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), several elements of this practice align with the UDL principles:

- **Multiple means of engagement, emotional** support, interest-based clubs, and adapted tasks maintain motivation and reduce anxiety.
- **Multiple means of representation** Teachers use films, storytelling, visual materials, and adapted content.
- **Multiple means of action and expression** Differentiated tasks, practical training, and individualised assessments allow students to demonstrate learning in varied ways.

These elements reduce barriers and support diverse learners within mainstream classes.

Evidence of success

The report documents several outcomes:

- Improved access to vocational education for students with diverse SEN profiles.
- Increased academic achievement and successful completion of grades 10 and 12.
- Passing of state, matriculation, and vocational qualification exams.
- Enhanced social and communication skills.
- Greater independence in practical tasks.
- Improved emotional well-being and reduced aggressiveness.
- Better behaviour in public spaces and improved fine motor skills.
- High levels of engagement in practical training.
- Sustained parental trust and continued involvement after graduation.

Monitoring indicators include participation and retention, completion rates, progression to work-based learning, and learner satisfaction.

Transferability conditions

To replicate this model, other VET providers need:

- **Accessible physical and digital environments**
- **Trained teaching staff** in inclusive pedagogy
- **A multidisciplinary SST** with clear roles
- **IEPs and needs assessments**
- **Regular communication with parents**
- **Partnerships with NGOs and local authorities**
- **Adapted curricula and learning materials**
- **Time for planning and collaboration**

Implementation typically requires **1–2 school years** to establish a fully functional inclusive system.

Risks and limits

- **Employment barriers** may undermine long-term outcomes.
- **Dependence on specialist staff** means turnover can disrupt support.
- **Resource constraints** may limit the ability to adapt materials or provide individualised attention.
- **Variability in external partnerships** (e.g., NGOs, employers) may affect consistency.
- **Students who do not meet the State Educational Standard** cannot receive a certificate of completed secondary education, limiting further educational pathways.

Stakeholder voices

The following statements are drawn from the national report and reflect institutional perspectives documented by the research team. They are not verbatim quotes from interviews, but descriptive passages from the source document:

- **Educator perspective:** *"An atmosphere of informality and calm is created between students and teachers; a relationship of mutual trust, respect, and support is maintained."*
- **Manager/school leadership perspective:** *"The school feels responsible not only for education but also for the successful placement of students in employment afterward."*
- **Student/parent perspective:** *"Parents… do not sever their connection with the school after graduation but, on the contrary, contact the school on various issues and participate in concerts and school events."*

Links and sources

All information is taken exclusively from the report developed by CuBuFoundation and NASOR within the framework of the W.I.N. project: **"Research and collection of inclusive VET and employment success stories – Report on the national systems and best cases in Bulgaria and Ireland" developed by CuBuFo & NASOR**.

BP2: WALK PEER Supported Transition Model (Ireland)

***Organisation*:** WALK – Inclusive Employment Services

Context and stakeholders

The WALK PEER (Providing Equal Employment Routes) Supported Transition Model is an Irish initiative designed to support young people with special educational needs (SEN), particularly those with intellectual disabilities (ID), in their transition from compulsory schooling to mainstream vocational education and training (VET), further education and training (FET), and paid employment. The programme operates within the Irish inclusive education framework, where approximately 98% of students are educated in mainstream settings and 2% in special schools or classes, supported by the EPSEN Act 2004 and a continuum of provision.

The programme targets senior students aged 16 and over and collaborates with a network of 10 partner schools, including 7 special schools and 3 post-primary schools. Stakeholders include school leadership teams, families, local Education and Training Boards (ETBs), employers such as Penneys and PJ Hegarty, and the Department of Education, which funds the programme through the Dormant Accounts fund. The initiative is also supported by the European Social Fund (ESF), reflecting a cross-sectoral partnership between education, social services, and the labour market.

What problem it solves

Young people with intellectual disabilities in Ireland face significant barriers when transitioning from school to further education or employment. These include limited access to mainstream VET pathways, insufficient structured support during the transition period, and challenges in securing and sustaining employment. Traditional models often provide short-term placements without long-term follow-up, resulting in low retention and limited career progression.

The WALK PEER model addresses these gaps by offering a structured, multi-year transition system that combines Universal Design for Learning (UDL), personalised career planning, and long-term mentorship. It aims to ensure that young people with SEN can access mainstream opportunities, develop employability skills, and maintain employment over time.

What is done — steps

The programme implements a comprehensive, multi-step approach:

- **Five-year supported transition model.** The initiative spans five years, beginning during the final years of compulsory schooling and extending into early adulthood.
- **Application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).** UDL principles are used to remove systemic barriers in VET and employment pathways, shifting from reactive accommodations to proactive design.
- **Collaboration with partner schools.** The programme works with 10 schools, integrating transition planning into the school environment and engaging teachers, families, and school leadership.
- **Career and Employment Facilitators.** These facilitators provide intensive, personalised support, including career planning, skills development, and preparation for work placements.
- **Employer partnerships.** Employers such as Penneys and PJ Hegarty offer real job opportunities and training placements, enabling students to gain practical experience.
- **Three-year post-school mentorship.** After leaving school, participants receive up to three years of ongoing support to ensure job retention, workplace adaptation, and long-term stability.
- **Cross-sectoral coordination.** The programme links education, social services, and labour market actors, supported by government funding and ESF resources.

Why it worked

The model is effective because it combines several strengths:

- **Long-term support.** The three-year post-school mentorship is identified as the most important factor in turning short-term placements into sustainable careers.
- **Proactive design through UDL.** By removing barriers at the system level, the programme ensures that learners' experiences are purposeful and accessible.
- **Strong employer engagement.** Real jobs and training opportunities create meaningful pathways into the labour market.
- **Cross-sectoral collaboration.** The involvement of schools, families, ETBs, employers, and government agencies ensures coherence and shared responsibility.

- **Economic rationality.** The model is cost-efficient: although it requires an annual investment of €278,000, it reduces long-term social and health costs and supports the creation of economically active citizens.

These combined elements create a robust, sustainable transition system.

What was hard

The national report does not document challenges in the programme's own words. The following difficulties are identified by the transnational analysis team based on contextual reading of the model's structure:

- **Systemic barriers in mainstream VET.** The need for UDL indicates that existing systems were not fully accessible.
- **Sustaining long-term mentorship.** Providing three years of post-school support requires stable funding and staffing.
- **Dependence on employer partnerships.** The success of the model relies on employers' willingness to provide real jobs and training opportunities.
- **Cross-sector coordination.** Aligning schools, families, ETBs, employers, and government agencies requires continuous communication and shared commitment.

UDL link — principles applied

The report explicitly states that the programme integrates UDL to remove systemic barriers. The following UDL-aligned practices are evident:

- **Multiple means of engagement.** Long-term mentorship, personalised career planning, and real job opportunities maintain motivation and relevance.
- **Multiple means of representation.** UDL ensures that information, training, and learning pathways are accessible to learners with intellectual disabilities.
- **Multiple means of action and expression.** Practical work placements and varied training environments allow participants to demonstrate skills in authentic contexts.

The programme shifts from reactive accommodations to proactive design, aligning closely with UDL's core philosophy.

Evidence of success

The report points out several indicators of success:

- The model demonstrates **high levels of job retention and satisfaction**, attributed to long-term mentorship.
- It is **cost-efficient**, with an annual investment of €278,000 leading to reduced long-term social and health costs.
- It creates **economically active citizens**, contributing to public value.
- The programme is recognised as an **exemplary practice** for inclusive VET in Ireland due to its methodological depth and cross-sectoral approach.

Although the report does not provide numerical outcomes, it emphasises the programme's effectiveness in sustaining employment and supporting transitions.

Transferability conditions

To replicate the WALK PEER model, several conditions are necessary:

- **Cross-sector collaboration** between schools, families, VET providers, employers, and government agencies.
- **Long-term funding** to support multi-year mentorship.
- **Employer partnerships** willing to provide real job opportunities.
- **Staff trained in UDL and supported employment**.
- **Structured transition planning** beginning before school completion.
- **Integration with national education and labour policies**.

The model is transferable but requires coordinated systems and sustained investment.

Risks and limits

- **Dependence on employer engagement** may limit opportunities in regions with fewer willing companies.
- **High coordination demands** across sectors may strain resources.
- **Funding continuity** is essential; interruptions could undermine long-term mentorship.
- **Scalability challenges** may arise if staffing or employer networks cannot expand proportionally.

These risks reflect the complexity of multi-year, cross-sector transition programmes.

Stakeholder voices

The following statements are drawn from the national report's descriptive analysis. They reflect programme-level perspectives documented by the research team rather than verbatim interview quotes:

- **Programme perspective:** *"The programme functions as a critical bridge for young people with SEN… transitioning from compulsory school education to mainstream forms of vocational education and training (VET), further education and training (FET), and paid employment."*
- **On mentorship:** *"Long-term mentorship (3 years post-school) from Career and Employment Facilitators is the most important factor in transforming a short-term job placement into a sustainable career."*
- **On UDL:** *"The programme's success is due to its methodological depth – a five-year, long-term intervention that integrates Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to remove systemic barriers."*

Links and sources

All information is taken exclusively from the report: **"Research and collection of inclusive VET and employment success stories – Report on the national systems and best cases in Bulgaria and Ireland" developed by CuBuFo & NASOR**.

BP3: Experts Group – CDP La Blanca Paloma (Spain)

***Organisation*:** Fundación Docete Omnes – CDP La Blanca Paloma (La Zubia, Granada, Andalusia)

Context and stakeholders

CDP La Blanca Paloma is a publicly funded VET centre in La Zubia (Granada), part of Fundación Docete Omnes, a non-profit organisation with a long tradition in education and social care. The centre offers Basic (EQF 2), Intermediate (EQF 4), and Higher VET (EQF 5) programmes in fields such as Hairdressing, Nursing Care, Pharmacy, Social Integration, and Sociocultural Animation.

The centre serves around **360 students annually**, including **48 students with specific educational support needs (SEN)** in 2024–2025. Learners come from Granada and surrounding municipalities and present diverse profiles: early school leavers, neurodivergent students, learners with mild intellectual disabilities, working students, and those aspiring to qualified employment.

The practice is implemented within the Spanish VET framework defined by **LOMLOE (Organic Law 3/2020)**, **Organic Law 3/2022 (VET Law)**, and **Royal Decree 69/2025**, which mandate personalised learning paths and individualised support.

A key stakeholder is the **Padre Villoslada Occupational Centre**, which collaborates with the VET centre to provide real-life contexts for applied inclusive learning. Other stakeholders include VET teachers, guidance specialists, workplace tutors, companies, public and private organisations, and local Youth Services.

What problem it solves

According to the director, **standard VET regulations do not sufficiently address the diversity of learner profiles**, particularly students at risk of early school leaving, those with neurodivergent conditions, and those with cognitive difficulties.

The centre recognised the need to ensure that **all students could reach their maximum potential**, regardless of ability, learning rhythm, or personal circumstances. This required a shift from traditional teaching to **flexible, individualised, and experiential learning**.

The challenge was to create a **structured, practical model** that would allow students to experience inclusion in real contexts, aligned with Royal Decree 69/2025, which frames diversity as a structural asset rather than a set of labels.

The “Experts Group” model was developed to respond to this need.

What is done. Steps

The **Experts Group** is a structured, experience-based collaboration between the VET centre and the Occupational Centre. It applies UDL principles through:

- **Learning by doing** (workshops, real-life projects)
- **Personalised tutoring and reinforcement plans**
- **Peer and cooperative learning**, where students adapt explanations and contribute according to their strengths

The model follows a **four-phase cycle**:

Presentation of the project

Professionals from the Occupational Centre introduce the project, goals, and expectations. Students are mentored that they will act as "models" for the centre's users. Occupational Centre educators prepare their users for the activity.

Phase 1 – Initial assessment through direct observation

Students observe Occupational Centre users in daily workshop activities to identify support needs.

Phase 2 – Planning

Students develop personalised support plans for each user. These plans are validated and improved by Occupational Centre professionals and include activities aimed at social integration goals.

Phase 3 – Implementation

Students apply their plans, working directly with users in workshops and activities.

Phase 4 – Evaluation

Students assess user progress. Occupational Centre professionals provide feedback to VET trainers on student performance. Plans are adjusted as needed.

Why it worked

The practice works because it is:

- **Fully embedded** in the centre's pedagogical model
- **Aligned with UDL principles**, ensuring flexibility and accessibility
- **Experiential**, connecting learning with real social and professional contexts

- **Collaborative**, involving multidisciplinary staff and external partners
- **Supported by strong management commitment** to inclusion and student wellbeing
- **Reinforced by continuous individual follow-up** and coordinated tutoring
- **Cost-efficient**, relying on existing resources and staff expertise

The structured collaboration with the Occupational Centre strengthens learning continuity and applied inclusion skills.

What was hard

The main challenge identified is **prejudices and stereotypes**, which "cause more problems than the real ones." These were addressed through direct contact, shared activities, and structured experiences such as the Experts Group, which help shift attention from labels to abilities.

Other challenges include:

- Diverse learner profiles requiring differentiated support
- Balancing academic workload and organisational deficits (especially in Higher VET)
- Supporting students at risk of early school leaving
- Ensuring consistent coordination among staff and external partners

UDL link. Principles applied

The practice explicitly applies **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** principles:

Multiple means of engagement

- Learning by doing
- Cooperative learning
- Real-life projects
- Progressive responsibility

Multiple means of representation

- Adapted materials
- Visual feedback

- Digital tools (tablets, laptops, projectors)

Multiple means of action and expression

- Differentiated tasks and levels
- Formative assessment with rubrics
- Self-assessment and continuous feedback
- Personalised support plans

The Experts Group is a concrete operationalisation of UDL in VET.

Evidence of success

Evidence is qualitative but structured:

- **Improved engagement, motivation, and active participation**
- **Progress-focused evaluation** adapted to learner profiles
- Strengthened **peer responsibility** and applied inclusion skills
- Enhanced **learning continuity** through real-life contexts
- **Work-based learning readiness** supported by multidisciplinary teams
- **Outcome indicators tracked at 0, 6, 12, and 24 months**, including:
    - 90% participation among at-risk students
    - SEN students transitioning from Basic to Intermediate VET
    - Adaptation to work-based learning
    - Student self-perception and satisfaction

Monitoring is continuous and embedded in daily tutoring.

Transferability conditions

The model is adaptable to other VET contexts if the following conditions are met:

- Analysis of learner profiles
- Commitment to inclusive values
- Flexible teaching methodologies

- Coordinated tutoring structures
- Structured collaboration with employers and external partners
- Monitoring of placements and feedback mechanisms
- Cooperation with local Youth Services

Risks and limits

- Reliance on staff coordination and time investment
- Need for sustained collaboration with external partners
- Potential persistence of stereotypes without structured exposure
- Qualitative indicators may require complementary quantitative data
- Requires a culture of inclusion to be effective

Stakeholder perspectives

Educator perspective

"Prejudices and stereotypes cause more problems than the disabilities themselves."

Manager perspective

"The main challenge identified is that standard VET regulations do not sufficiently address the diversity of learners' profiles."

Person with disability / user-related perspective

"Activities such as the 'Experts Group'… help challenge assumptions and focus attention on abilities rather than labels."

Links and sources

Official webpage: https://cdplablancapaloma.es/

Macarena Martínez Martín - macarena.martinez@cdplablancapaloma.es

Source: All information comes exclusively from the described best practice provided by partner FDO.

BP4: Hands-On Inclusion – Collaborative Model between VET Providers and Disability Support Structures in Greece (Greece)

***Organisation*: KEEPEA Orizontes (Athens)**

Context and stakeholders

The practice is implemented within **KEEPEA Orizontes**, a publicly supported VET and Lifelong Learning centre in Athens. It operates within the Greek educational and training framework and focuses on inclusive education, environmental awareness, and social integration. The centre collaborates with local authorities, social services, and educational institutions to provide interdisciplinary learning opportunities.The centre offers non-formal and complementary VET programmes aligned with EQF levels 2–5 equivalents, including:

- **Introductory VET / Skills Development (EQF 2–3)**: basic life skills, environmental education, vocational orientation
- **Intermediate Training (EQF 4)**: social care, community support, cultural activities
- **Advanced Training / Specialisation (EQF 5)**: social inclusion, community development, environmental education facilitation
- **Learner population**

Each year, **250–300 participants** engage in activities. Learners include:

- Young people transitioning from compulsory education
- Adults in lifelong learning
- Individuals from socially vulnerable groups
- Learners with intellectual disabilities, autism, and developmental disorders

Approximately **15–20%** require additional educational support. Learners with intellectual disabilities are supported across **low-, medium-, and high-functioning** profiles, with activities adapted to each level.

Stakeholders

- KEEPEA Orizontes educators and trainers
- Disability support structures (KDIF, KDAP-MEA)
- Families and caregivers
- Local authorities and social services
- Employers and community organisations
- Participants with disabilities

What problem it solves

The Greek VET system faces several challenges:

- Standard teaching approaches **do not sufficiently address learner diversity**
- Limited **structured collaboration** between VET providers and disability services
- Many learners experience **low motivation, disengagement, or learning barriers**

The practice responds to the need to:

- Ensure **equal learning opportunities**
- Adopt **flexible and personalised** teaching approaches
- Connect learning with **real-life social and professional environments**

The Hands-On Inclusion model was developed to bridge VET and disability support structures through practical, community-based learning.

What is done. Steps

The model is implemented through a **seven-phase structured process** within the social café "To Pareaki," where learners with disabilities engage in real work tasks.

1. Outreach & Initial Assessment

- Identification of participants through KEEPEA Orizontes or partner organisations
- Profiling of abilities, interests, and support needs
- Assessment of communication and social skills
- Consultation with families/caregivers

2. Preparation & Pre-Vocational Training

- Introduction to workplace rules and routines
- Hygiene and safety training
- Development of communication skills
- Familiarisation with café roles

3. Guided Workplace Introduction (Shadowing)

- Observation of daily operations
- Shadowing staff and trainers

- Initial participation in simple tasks
- Confidence-building in a real setting

4. Supported Task Engagement

- Assignment of simple, structured tasks
- One-to-one or small-group support
- Use of repetition and routine
- Immediate feedback and encouragement

5. Skill Development & Role Expansion

- Gradual increase in task complexity
- Development of customer interaction skills
- Teamwork and responsibility
- Progressive reduction of support

6. Supported Employment in Real Conditions

- Active participation in daily café operations
- Interaction with real customers
- Responsibility for specific roles
- Ongoing but less intensive supervision

7. Continuous Monitoring & Personal Development

- Regular assessment of progress
- Adaptation of tasks
- Emotional and social support
- Reinforcement of strengths

Why it worked

The model is effective because it:

- Integrates **real-life, hands-on learning**
- Builds on **existing institutional structures**
- Uses **personalised support** and mentoring
- Strengthens **collaboration** between VET and disability services
- Focuses on **abilities rather than limitations**
- Provides **structured, predictable routines**
- Ensures **continuous monitoring** and adaptation

The café environment offers a safe, inclusive, and socially rich setting where learners can develop vocational, social, and emotional skills.

What was hard

The main challenge is **not the disability itself**, but:

- **Stereotypes and social prejudices**

These barriers were addressed through:

- Direct interaction
- Shared activities
- Experiential learning

Other difficulties include:

- Ensuring consistent support across diverse functioning levels
- Maintaining staff coordination
- Balancing emotional, social, and vocational needs

UDL link. Principles applied

While UDL is not explicitly named, the model clearly aligns with UDL principles in the following ways.

Multiple means of engagement

- Learning by doing

- Real-life tasks
- Gradual responsibility
- Positive reinforcement

Multiple means of representation

- Step-by-step instructions
- Simple and clear language
- Visual cues and signage
- Demonstration and modelling

Multiple means of action and expression

- Tasks adapted to functioning levels
- Structured routines
- Flexible pacing
- Opportunities for role expansion

The approach is inherently **person-centred**, flexible, and barrier-reducing.

Evidence of success

The practice leads to:

- Increased learner **engagement and motivation**
- Improved **social and communication skills**
- Enhanced **empathy and inclusion awareness**
- Better **preparation for employment**

Outcome indicators include:

- Participation and attendance rates
- Improvement of individual skills
- Progression in education pathways
- Integration into work environments

Transferability conditions

The model can be applied across Greece in EPAL, SAEK, EEEEK, and disability support centres as well as in similar organizations in other countries, considering that the following key requirements are met:

- Commitment to inclusion
- Flexible teaching approaches
- Structured collaboration with external partners
- Continuous monitoring
- Use of existing infrastructure and human resources

The Pareaki social café operated by KEEPEA Orizontes is also documented as an employment best practice in Part 3, BP8, illustrating how the same organisation bridges VET and employment inclusion.

Risks and limits

- Dependence on staff coordination and time investment
- Need for sustained collaboration with disability services
- Potential persistence of stereotypes without structured exposure
- Variability in functioning levels requiring differentiated support
- Limited scalability without trained personnel

Stakeholder perspectives

Educator perspective

“Standard teaching approaches do not sufficiently address learner diversity.”

Manager perspective

“The main challenge is not the disability itself, but stereotypes and social prejudices.”

Person with disability / user-related perspective

“These are addressed through direct interaction, shared activities and experiential learning.

Links and sources

https://www.keepea.gr/en/aksies/

Source: All information comes exclusively from the best practice description provided by the partner Panagia Evagelistria.

BP5: Integrated Support for VIP Students and Pedagogical Diversity (Slovenia)

***Organisation*:** University of Primorska (UPR) & Centre IRIS

Context and stakeholders

This practice is implemented through a collaboration between two major Slovenian institutions:

Centre IRIS

A specialised national centre for **Education, Rehabilitation, Inclusion, and Counselling for the Blind and Partially Sighted**. It provides field-based support to pupils and young adults in VET, including itinerant teaching, assistive technology, and environmental adaptations.

University of Primorska (UPR)

An academic institution that prepares future VET trainers through its programme **Pedagogical Preparation for Diversity**, ensuring that inclusive pedagogy becomes a standard part of teacher training.

System context

Slovenia's inclusive education system is governed by the **Higher Education Act** and national SEN integration strategies. These frameworks require VET providers to ensure accessibility and rely on specialised centres like IRIS to bridge general vocational standards with the sensory and pedagogical needs of learners with visual impairments.

Stakeholders involved

- Students with visual impairments (VIP)
- Itinerant specialised teachers
- Multidisciplinary teams from Centre IRIS
- University of Primorska academic staff
- VET teachers and trainers
- Employers and workplace mentors
- National SEN support structures

What problem it solves

Traditional VET approaches often lack:

- specialised technical knowledge for sensory disabilities
- pedagogical flexibility

- accessible learning environments
- structured collaboration between VET institutions and specialised centres

The practice responds to the principle that **"every child should have at least approximately equal access to education."** It aims to move from basic integration to **"inclusion-by-default"**, ensuring that VIP students are not only present but fully able to succeed academically and vocationally.

What is done. Steps

The practice is built on five interconnected pillars:

1. Individualised Learning Experiences ("Extreme Personalization")

- Delivered through **Itinerant Specialized Teaching**
- One-on-one support tailored to each student's functional profile
- Deep adaptation of teaching methods, materials, and classroom practices
- Goes beyond curriculum modification to redesigning learning processes

2. Strengthening Multidisciplinary Support Teams

- Itinerant teachers operate as field representatives of a **larger expert network**
- Teams include specialists from IRIS and UPR
- Provides a safety net for students
- Facilitates institutional mindset change toward inclusion

3. Adapted and Accessible Learning Environments

- Installation of **Specialized Computer Workstations**
- Audits of classrooms and workshops
- Integration of assistive hardware and software
- Ensures seamless participation in technical VET tasks

4. Implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Accessibility is **proactive**, not reactive

- All materials (PDFs, videos, digital platforms) are designed or adapted to universal standards
- Eliminates last-minute adaptations
- Ensures equal access for all sensory profiles

5. Workplace-Based Learning (WBL) Support at RTBS

- Prepares students for real labour-market demands
- Includes preparatory internships and specialised mentorship
- Supports transition to competitive employment
- Ensures mastery of assistive technologies before entering the workplace

Why it worked

The model succeeds because it:

- Combines **technical adaptation** with **specialised human support**
- Embeds inclusion into **institutional culture**
- Uses **evidence-based teacher training** (UPR's Master's in Inclusive Pedagogics)
- Provides **1:1 mentorship** and continuous monitoring
- Ensures **full accessibility** across physical, digital, and pedagogical dimensions
- Demonstrates that VIP students can complete high-level VET when properly supported

The partnership between IRIS and UPR creates a systemic, mutually reinforcing model.

What was hard

The main challenge was **changing deeply ingrained mindsets** and overcoming the tendency to label students. This required:

- direct contact
- demonstration of results
- showing that extreme personalization leads to equal academic and vocational performance

Other challenges included:

- ensuring consistent technical adaptation
- maintaining multidisciplinary coordination
- shifting from integration to inclusion-by-default

UDL link. Principles applied

The practice explicitly applies UDL:

Multiple means of engagement

- Proactive accessibility
- Personalised learning pathways
- Continuous mentorship

Multiple means of representation

- Accessible digital materials
- Assistive technologies (screen readers, Braille displays, ZoomText)
- Tactile materials and adapted workstations

Multiple means of action and expression

- Adapted technical tasks
- Flexible learning environments
- Real-time pedagogical adaptation

UDL is not an add-on but a **core design principle**.

Evidence of success

Academic & Training Excellence

- UPR demonstrated that specialised faculty training leads to institutional change
- Inclusive pedagogy is now a **standard part of curricula**, not an experiment

Operational Success

- Centre IRIS achieved **approximately equal educational access** for VIP students
- The itinerant model proved that VIP students can complete high-level VET successfully

Overall Impact

- A fundamental shift in institutional mindset
- Inclusion-by-default shown to be achievable
- The model is now **replicable and evidence-based**

Outcome indicators

- **0 months:** baseline sensory assessment and hardware provision
- **6 months:** independent use of adapted materials
- **12 months:** completion of vocational modules and readiness for employment

Transferability conditions

The model is transferable if institutions:

- invest in staff training on assistive technologies
- adopt UDL for all digital materials from the outset
- establish active collaboration between specialised centres and VET schools
- ensure funding for itinerant or specialised support
- commit to institutional culture change

Risks and limits

- Requires highly trained specialised staff
- Dependence on national SEN funding
- Institutional resistance to mindset change
- Need for continuous technical updates
- High reliance on multidisciplinary coordination

Stakeholder perspectives

(Exact sentences from the text that reflect stakeholder perspectives.)

Educator perspective

“Specialized faculty training is a powerful tool for institutional change.”

Manager perspective

“The goal was to move from simple integration to ‘inclusion-by-default.’”

Learner / disability-related perspective

“Extreme personalization leads to academic and vocational performance that is equal to that of any other student.”

Links and sources

Contact information is available in the full report on the best practice. Source: All information comes exclusively from the case presentation provided by UICI Firenze.

BP6: From Passive Recipients to Active Leaders: apiDV's Self-Determination Model for Inclusive VET and Employment (France)

Organisation: apiDV (Accompagner, Promouvoir, Intégrer les Déficients Visuels)

Context and stakeholders

France has a long-standing disability and VET inclusion framework, shaped by:

- **Law of July 10, 1987** introducing the 6% disability employment quota
- **2005 Disability Act (Loi n° 2005-102)** establishing the right to ordinary schooling
- **2023 Full Employment Law (Loi n° 2023-1196)** introducing the *Digital Backpack* for portability of adaptations
- **RGAA (Référentiel Général d'Amélioration de l'Accessibilité)** as the national digital accessibility standard

The system includes PPS (Projet de Personnalisation de Scolarisation), ULIS support units, Disability Referents in CFAs, and specialised structures such as RHF and CRDV.

apiDV's role

apiDV is a national association ensuring equal access to education, VET, and employment for visually impaired learners. It acts as a **continuity actor** in a highly decentralised system, ensuring stable support as learners move between:

- VET centres
- universities
- apprenticeships
- employers

Stakeholders

- Visually impaired students (approx. 3,000 in France)
- apiDV staff (8 professional transcribers, 2 coordinators)
- 12-member student governance committee
- 75 volunteer mentors (ActifsDV)
- VET providers and universities
- Employers and Disability Referents

- National disability agencies (Agefiph, FIPHFP, RHF)

What problem it solves

Although France has strong disability legislation, **accessibility often stops at institutional boundaries** due to decentralisation. This creates a **"postcode lottery"** where visually impaired learners may lose access to adapted materials or support when changing institutions.

For VET learners, this fragmentation is particularly harmful because their pathways combine:

- classroom learning
- work-based learning
- apprenticeships
- professional immersion

Without continuity, learners risk:

- training interruptions
- inaccessible materials
- delays in receiving adaptations
- drop-out
- reduced employability

apiDV solves this by acting as a **national bridge** between institutions, ensuring uninterrupted accessibility and support.

What is done. Steps

apiDV implements a **dual-track model** combining academic accessibility and professional socialisation.

1. Self-Determination Governance (Campus DV)

- In 2024, apiDV shifted to a **student-led model**.
- A committee of **12 visually impaired students** co-leads services with 2 staff members.
- Students identify gaps in university/VET services and co-organise support activities.

- This transforms learners from passive recipients into active leaders.

2. Technical Accessibility – Professional Transcription

- A team of **8 professional transcribers** adapts complex materials into:
  - Braille
  - tactile diagrams
  - audio formats
- Essential for STEM and VET subjects requiring diagrams, formulas, or spatial information.

3. Human Support – ActifsDV Mentoring Network

- **75 volunteer mentors** (visually impaired or sighted professionals) provide:
  - mock interviews
  - workplace mediation
  - job-readiness coaching
  - support in communicating with Disability Referents
- Mentors help learners articulate their needs and navigate employer expectations.

4. Advocacy for RGAA Digital Accessibility

- apiDV promotes compliance with France's mandatory digital accessibility standard.
- Ensures VET platforms, remote exams, and digital tools are compatible with screen readers.

5. Continuity of Support Across Transitions

- apiDV ensures that adaptations follow the learner across:
  - VET centres
  - universities
  - apprenticeships
  - first jobs
- This continuity prevents drop-outs and ensures stable learning conditions.

Why it worked

The model succeeds because it:

- Combines **technical excellence** (high-quality transcription) with **human support** (mentoring)
- Places learners in **leadership roles**, increasing agency and motivation
- Bridges the gap between **protected education** and **competitive employment**
- Uses a **hybrid resource model** (professional staff + volunteers)
- Aligns with national legislation (Digital Backpack, RGAA)
- Operates across institutional boundaries, ensuring continuity

It is both **systemic** and **practical**, addressing real barriers in real time.

What was hard

1. Decentralisation and inconsistent accessibility

Different regions and institutions apply accessibility unevenly. **Solution:** apiDV acts as a *national knowledge hub*, coordinating support across institutions so learners do not lose adaptations when they move.

2. Employer bias and fear of accommodation costs

Employers may hesitate to hire visually impaired candidates due to misconceptions. **Solution:** ActifsDV mentors provide **"proof of concept"** by showing real examples of successful visually impaired professionals. They mediate between learners and employers, clarifying actual accommodation needs.

3. High cost of specialised transcription

STEM diagrams, tactile graphics, and Braille require expensive equipment and expertise. **Solution:** apiDV uses a **hybrid resource model**, relying on 75 volunteer mentors for coaching so that financial resources can be prioritised for high-level transcription.

4. Transition from protected education to competitive labour market

Learners often lack self-advocacy skills. **Solution:** The self-determination model trains students to co-lead services, strengthening autonomy and confidence.

UDL link. Principles applied

The practice aligns with UDL principles:

Multiple means of engagement

- Student-led governance
- Peer mentoring
- Self-determination and agency

Multiple means of representation

- Braille, tactile diagrams, audio formats
- RGAA-compliant digital materials
- Adapted STEM content

Multiple means of action and expression

- Coaching for interviews and workplace communication
- Tools enabling independent navigation of digital platforms
- Support for articulating accommodation needs

UDL is embedded in both the technical and human dimensions of the model.

Evidence of success

Learner reach

- **60 students** supported annually in higher education
- **75 job seekers/graduates** supported through transitions

Educational outcomes

- Students complete **CAP, Bac Pro, and university degrees** using high-quality adapted materials
- Complex STEM diagrams and exam subjects are accessible in Braille or digital formats

Employment outcomes

- **50% positive exit rate** among the 75 job-readiness participants in 2024
- Mentoring and mediation help learners navigate the 6% employment quota system

Systemic impact

- 30 years of operational experience
- Proven ability to secure accommodations in high-stakes environments (national exams, corporate offices)

Transferability conditions

To replicate the model, organisations need:

- **Staff training** on visual impairment
- **Technical resources** for transcription and digital accessibility auditing
- **Student-led governance structures**
- **Partnerships with NGOs** to recruit volunteer mentors
- **A Disability Referent** to mediate between student, teachers, and employers

The model is compatible with international digital accessibility frameworks (RGAA/WCAG).

Risks and limits

- Dependence on volunteer mentors
- High cost of specialised transcription
- Need for strong coordination across institutions
- Risk of uneven implementation without national-level support
- Requires sustained advocacy to maintain RGAA compliance

Stakeholder perspectives

(Exact sentences from the text that reflect stakeholder perspectives.

Educator perspective

“The primary challenge lies in the high level of institutional autonomy, where accessibility measures often stop at institutional boundaries.”

Manager perspective

“apiDV plays a critical role as a continuity actor within this highly decentralized system.”

Learner / disability-related perspective

"This function is particularly relevant for VET learners, whose pathways frequently combine classroom-based training, work-based learning, and professional immersion across different organizations."

Links and sources

https://www.arcom.fr

Source: All information comes exclusively from the best practice description provided by partner VIEWS International.

BP7: Inclusive Vocational Education Through Individualised Support, Multidisciplinary Collaboration, and Adapted Learning Environments in Lithuanian VET Schools (Lithuania)

Organisations: Raseiniai Technology and Business School (RTBS) & Karalius Mindaugas Vocational Training Centre (KMVTC)

Context and stakeholders

Lithuania's VET system is shaped by national legislation emphasising accessibility, inclusion, and lifelong learning. The **Law on Education**, the **2024–2030 Inclusion Development Plan**, and ongoing VET modernisation require institutions to support learners with special educational needs (SEN) through:

- individualised learning
- adapted materials
- flexible assessment
- multidisciplinary support
- collaboration with external agencies

This best practice combines the inclusive approaches of two VET providers:

Raseiniai Technology and Business School (RTBS)

A regional VET institution offering programmes in engineering, technology, business, logistics, services, health, and social care. Operating in a region affected by demographic decline and socioeconomic inequalities, RTBS prioritises personalised learning and strong employer partnerships.

Karalius Mindaugas Vocational Training Centre (KMVTC)

A large VET institution offering general education (Grade 9+) and vocational programmes. KMVTC has a long-standing inclusive culture shaped by cooperation among teachers, support specialists, administration, parents, and external agencies.

Stakeholders

- SEN learners (cognitive, sensory, emotional, behavioural, physical disabilities)
- Teachers and mentor teachers
- Special educators, psychologists, social pedagogues, career counsellors

- Parents and families
- Municipal support services and NGOs
- Employers and workplace mentors (RTBS)

Together, these institutions demonstrate a mature, systemic approach to inclusive VET in Lithuania.

What problem it solves

Both institutions observed a growing number of learners with disabilities entering VET. Many faced challenges related to:

- learning pace and cognitive processing
- sensory sensitivities
- emotional or behavioural difficulties
- social integration
- transition to employment

Traditional teaching methods were not always flexible or accessible enough. Schools recognised the need for:

- individualised support
- adapted learning materials
- stronger support services
- improved teacher competencies
- safer, more accessible learning environments

Participation in Erasmus+ projects further motivated innovation and learner-centred inclusion.

What is done. Steps

The two schools implemented a comprehensive set of inclusive measures.

1. Individualised Learning Experiences

- Individual learning plans

- Adjusted task complexity and pace
- Differentiated instruction
- Adapted practical tasks for safety and confidence
- Flexible assessment (oral exams, visual/practical demonstrations, portfolios, projects)

2. Strengthening Multidisciplinary Support Teams

Daily collaboration among:

- special educators
- psychologists
- social pedagogues
- career counsellors
- mentor teachers

External cooperation with municipal services and NGOs ensures continuity beyond school.

3. Adapted and Accessible Learning Environments

- Quiet rooms and sensory spaces
- Flexible seating
- Easy-to-read materials with visuals and simplified language
- Adjusted workshops and practical training areas for safety and sensory comfort

4. Implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Multiple formats for presenting information (text, audio, video, visuals)
- Various ways for students to demonstrate learning
- Differentiated engagement strategies
- Reduced need for individual accommodations

5. Workplace-Based Learning (WBL) Support at RTBS

- Structured workplace training with employer mentors
- Adapted tasks for safety and ability level
- Monitoring through logs, evaluations, and self-reflection

- Regular teacher–employer meetings

KMVTC does not yet provide an external WBL for SEN learners but is preparing to develop partnerships and mentor training.

Why it worked

The model works because it:

- embeds inclusion into daily school culture
- uses multidisciplinary teams for coordinated support
- adapts both teaching and physical environments
- applies UDL to reduce barriers proactively
- builds strong partnerships with employers and external agencies
- invests in teacher training and continuous improvement
- uses existing resources efficiently

The combination of individualisation, collaboration, and adapted environments creates a stable and supportive learning ecosystem.

What was hard

1. Teacher preparedness

Not all teachers initially felt confident working with diverse learners. **Solution:** targeted training, mentoring, and peer support.

2. Limited material and spatial resources

Some adaptations required gradual upgrades. **Solution:** prioritising urgent needs, seeking external support, and redesigning spaces over time.

3. Employer hesitancy

Some employers were unsure how to support SEN learners in WBL. **Solution:**

- RTBS built strong relationships with employers
- Teachers held orientation meetings with company mentors
- Joint planning clarified expectations and support mechanisms

This “direct contact” involved **teachers, employers, and learners meeting together** to discuss tasks, safety, and support needs.

4. Ensuring continuity of support

Learners required consistent emotional and academic support. **Solution:** daily collaboration among specialists and regular communication with families.

UDL link. Principles applied

Multiple means of engagement

- Choice in tasks
- Quiet rooms and sensory spaces
- Differentiated motivation strategies

Multiple means of representation

- Easy-to-read materials
- Visual cues
- Audio and video content
- Digital materials with high contrast and large fonts

Multiple means of action and expression

- Oral exams
- Practical demonstrations
- Portfolios and projects
- Adapted practical tasks

UDL is embedded across teaching, assessment, and environment design.

Evidence of success

RTBS

- Increased motivation and attendance
- Lower dropout risk
- Stronger mastery of practical skills
- Positive employer feedback

- SEN learners demonstrate reliability and growing confidence

KMVTC

- 43 SEN learners show improved social interaction and emotional stability
- Better organisation, self-regulation, and independence
- Safer equipment use and more active participation

Overall impact

- Improved academic, social, and emotional development
- Stronger peer relationships and tolerance
- Increased independence at home (reported by families)
- More cohesive and supportive school environments

Transferability conditions

To replicate the model, VET institutions need:

- committed leadership
- multidisciplinary support teams
- adapted curricula and flexible assessment
- teacher training in UDL and differentiation
- partnerships with external agencies and employers
- a culture of continuous improvement

Most schools can implement the model within 1–2 years.

Risks and limits

- High demand on specialist time
- Limited resources for space adaptation
- Employer hesitancy in WBL
- Need for ongoing teacher training
- Risk of inconsistent implementation without leadership commitment

Stakeholder perspectives

(Exact sentences from the text that reflect stakeholder perspectives.)

Educator perspective

“Teachers observe increased motivation, lower dropout risk, and more consistent attendance among SEN learners.”

Manager perspective

“Inclusive education is embedded in the daily culture of the institution and is widely accepted by staff, students, and families.”

Learner / disability-related perspective

“Students participate more actively in lessons, communicate more openly with peers, and manage equipment more safely during practical activities.”

Links and sources

https://rtvm.lt/itraukiojo-ugdymo-ir-profesinio-mokymo-prieinamumas/

Additional links and contact information is available in the report on the best practice.

Source: All information comes exclusively from the best practice description provided by partner eMundus.

BP8: Inclusive Vocational Education Through Individualised Support, Multidisciplinary Collaboration, and Adapted Learning Environments (Portugal)

Organisation: Escola Professional Amar Terra Verde (EPATV)

Context and Stakeholders

EPATV is a vocational school providing upper-secondary level VET across a wide range of programmes including Electrotechnics, Computer Programming, CNC Machining, Mechatronics, Automotive, Refrigeration, Sports, Hairdressing, Beautician, Kitchen and Restaurant, Management Informatics, Sociocultural Animation, and Graphic Design. The school currently enrols students with cognitive disabilities and neurodevelopmental disorders.

Key stakeholders include local companies from the hospitality, catering, and industrial sectors, the Portuguese Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), the local municipality, the Child and Youth Protection Commission (CPCJ), and Private Institutions of Social Solidarity (IPSS). These partners play a crucial role in work-based learning placements and supporting students' transition to employment.

What Problem It Solves

Students with cognitive impairments frequently experienced delays or incomplete curricular modules, lowering overall course completion rates. Adapting technical components of vocational programmes to match diverse learning profiles proved difficult. Some work-based learning providers initially resisted accepting students with specific educational needs. The practice addresses equity in access, participation, and success, ensuring that special educational needs do not limit students' ability to complete courses or succeed in future employment.

What Is Done. Steps

Student-centred inclusive teaching: teachers break down complex tasks into smaller, manageable steps using visual materials, hands-on activities, and digital tools.

Experiential learning through practical workshops and real or simulated work environments.

Individual transition plans guiding progress from education to employment.

Tutoring, co-teaching, and a Learning Support Centre provide continuous support.

Physical accessibility: ramps, elevators, adapted sanitary facilities, clear signage.

Digital accessibility: subtitles, screen-reader compatibility, easy navigation on learning platforms.

Pedagogical accessibility: differentiated instruction, flexible assessments, additional time, co-teaching.

Structured work placements with preparation, dual mentoring (school tutor and workplace mentor), and continuous monitoring through meetings, observation tools, and feedback reports.

Why It Worked

Strong leadership and institutional commitment embedded the practice into the school's strategic framework.

Effective collaboration among teachers and multidisciplinary support staff (special educators, psychologists).

Active involvement of partner companies in work-based learning.

Clear focus on student needs and employability outcomes.

Positive and inclusive school culture sustained over eight years of implementation.

Cost-efficient model relying on existing human and material resources.

What Was Hard

Initial resistance from some teachers and employers toward inclusive approaches.

Difficulties managing time and coordinating activities across stakeholders.

Solutions included targeted professional development for staff, sharing successful practices, awareness sessions for employers, and clear planning and coordination mechanisms.

UDL Link. Principles Applied

The practice implicitly aligns with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles through multiple means of engagement (tutoring, co-teaching, experiential learning), multiple means of representation (visual materials, digital tools, hands-on activities), and multiple means of action and expression (differentiated instruction, flexible assessments, additional time). The approach is holistic, covering physical, digital, and pedagogical accessibility.

Evidence of Success

Reduction in incomplete modules and increase in course completion rates.

Higher levels of student participation in classroom activities and work-based learning.

Improved confidence, independence, and practical skills among learners.

At 6 months: visible progress in participation, skill development, and engagement.

At 12 months: higher completion rates, successful work placements, improved employability. Some students transition directly into employment or further training.

Practice sustained for approximately eight years, demonstrating long-term viability.

Transferability Conditions

The practice has strong replication potential. Requirements for transfer include a multidisciplinary support team (teachers, special educators, psychologists), a dedicated support structure such as a learning support centre, and partnerships with local employers. The approach is methodology-based rather than infrastructure-dependent, making it adaptable to different contexts with relative ease.

Risks and Limits

Currently limited to students with cognitive disabilities and neurodevelopmental disorders; broadening to other disability types may require additional expertise.

Depends on willing employer partners for work-based learning placements.

Initial resistance from staff and employers must be proactively addressed through training and awareness.

Scalability may be constrained by the availability of specialised support staff.

Stakeholder Voices

Educator: "We break down complex tasks into smaller steps and use visual materials, hands-on activities, and digital tools, ensuring no student is left behind."

Manager: "Our main motivation is to ensure equity in access, participation, and success in vocational education."

On students: "Learners demonstrate improved confidence, independence, and practical skills essential for their future careers."

Links and Sources

Contacts: Sandra Monteiro (sandra.monteiro@epatv.pt), Jose Carlos Dias (jc.dias@epatv.pt), Clara Sousa (clara.sousa@docente.epatv.pt)

Source: Best practice description document submitted for the WIN project.

BP9: Inclusion in Erasmus+ VET Mobility Projects (Romania)

Organisation: Liceul Tehnologic Francisc Neuman, Arad

Context and Stakeholders

Liceul Tehnologic Francisc Neuman is a technical school founded in 1948, located in Arad, Romania. Since 2017, the school absorbed the Stefan Cicio Pop Gymnasium, whose students are largely from the Roma community (150 students). The school serves 780 high school and professional school students across profiles including Commerce, Hairstyling, Textile Industry, Forestry, and Wood Products.

Over 50% of students come from precarious socio-economic backgrounds. 25% of primary and secondary students have Special Educational Needs (SEN). 80% of SEN students from the gymnasium continue into the school's VET programmes. The school employs 85 teachers and is supported by 1 psychologist, 1 speech therapist, and 2 teaching assistants. The school has held Erasmus+ VET accreditation since 2020.

Key stakeholders include VET teachers, the Erasmus+ project team, the County Centre for Educational Resources and Assistance (CJRAE), host organisations abroad, local employers, and families.

What Problem It Solves

Students with SEN faced multiple barriers in VET pathways: limited access to individualised learning and assessment, insufficient teacher training in inclusive methodologies, reduced self-confidence and motivation due to marginalisation, and structural barriers restricting participation in international mobility. These challenges resulted in lower participation rates of SEN students in Erasmus+ VET mobility programmes, limiting opportunities for skills development, employability, and social inclusion. The practice addresses the need to move from a deficit-based to a strength-based, learner-centred approach.

What Is Done. Steps

Revision of Erasmus+ VET mobility selection criteria: students with fewer opportunities (SEN, precarious socio-economic status, commuting) receive additional scores. Selection based on motivation, personal progress, and development potential, not only academic performance.

Careful selection of host institutions based on the degree of SEN, special situations, and the host's capacity to provide tutoring, tailored tasks, and safe working environments.

Adapted preparation for mobility: individualised orientation and counselling sessions, adaptation of work materials, and clarification of daily routines and expectations to reduce anxiety.

Monitoring and support during mobility: constant mentoring from accompanying teachers, permanent communication with receiving partners, and adaptation of practical activities according to the student's pace and abilities.

Physical accessibility: adapted entrances, flexible classrooms, VET workshops configured for safe work with adapted tasks, scheduling that accounts for commuting students.

Digital accessibility: accessible online platforms (Google Classroom, Edus), adapted digital materials with clear structure and legible fonts, device-accessible content.

Annual cyclical process: selection, training, mobility, evaluation, and adjustment of inclusion measures.

Why It Worked

Strong leadership support ensuring inclusion was a school priority with adequate resource allocation.

Staff trained in inclusive pedagogy and mentoring for SEN learners.

Long-term partnerships with employers, host organisations, and educational institutions.

Targeted Erasmus+ funding supporting travel, accommodation, and additional mentoring.

Efficient use of existing school resources (workshops, digital platforms, assistive technologies).

Continuous monitoring, feedback, and knowledge exchange ensures adaptability.

What Was Hard

Attitudinal challenges: some staff or partners initially underestimated the abilities of SEN learners. Addressed through awareness-raising sessions, inclusion workshops, and success stories from previous mobilities.

Logistical challenges: organising placements for learners with diverse needs. Addressed through detailed planning, flexible scheduling, prior assessments of host organisations, and dual mentoring.

Budget constraints: limited funding for travel and additional mentoring. Addressed through efficient Erasmus+ fund allocation, shared accommodations, and integration of preparation into regular curricula.

Procedural challenges: complex administrative procedures. Addressed through standardised agreements, transparent selection criteria with bonus points, and centralised documentation.

UDL Link. Principles Applied

The approach is explicitly aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles: multiple means of engagement (motivation, emotional support, positive feedback), multiple means of representation (visual explanations, practical demonstrations), and multiple means of action and expression (varied ways of evaluating acquired competences). This allows SEN students and those with reduced opportunities to actively participate and benefit equitably from the Erasmus+ VET experience.

Evidence of Success

Increased active participation of SEN students in classes and practical training.

Acquisition of relevant VET competences adapted to individual abilities.

Increased self-confidence, autonomy, and teamwork skills among SEN learners.

Reduced absenteeism and higher motivation to complete studies.

Documented case: Mara Oprea, a student with SEN, completed a 90-day Erasmus+ mobility in Granada, Spain, at a protected workshop in textiles. After returning, she continued using acquired skills, organises workshops through the INTEGRA association, and has participated in Special Olympics, exhibitions, fashion shows, and community activities over four years since graduation.

Outcome indicators tracked at 0, 6, and 12 months covering participation rates, skills acquisition, retention, satisfaction, and transition to employment.

Transferability Conditions

Replication requires: Erasmus+ VET accreditation (KA121 or KA122), existing partnerships with employers or host organisations, mechanisms for identifying learners with SEN/fewer opportunities, staff trained in inclusive education and mentoring, and commitment to UDL principles with flexible curriculum adaptations. Typical cycle: 2-3 months preparation, 2-12 weeks mobility, 1-2 months follow-up. The flexible design allows adaptation to different local contexts, learner profiles, and vocational sectors.

Risks and Limits

Dependent on Erasmus+ accreditation and funding cycles (current accreditation ends 2027).

Quality of host organisation support varies and requires careful vetting.

SEN students may face heightened anxiety in foreign environments; preparation and mentoring must be robust.

Administrative complexity of mobility procedures may discourage smaller institutions.

Practice reach is limited to students selected for mobility; broader institutional inclusion benefits are indirect.

Stakeholder Voices

Educator: "Teachers have adapted teaching, assessment and mentoring methods, using flexible and student-centred approaches."

Manager: "The desire to ensure equal access to quality VET and mobility opportunities for all learners, including those with SEN, drives our work."

Person with disability (Mara Oprea): Her post-mobility trajectory demonstrates transformed self-confidence, motivation, autonomy, and sustained community engagement through workshops, Special Olympics, exhibitions, and fashion shows over four years after graduation.

Links and Sources

Contact: Lupei Anca Marilena, Deputy Headmaster, Liceul Tehnologic Francisc Neuman Arad (lupei.anca@gmail.com)

www.liceul-neuman.ro

Source: Best practice description document submitted for the WIN project.

PART 3. EMPLOYERS: Inclusive workplaces, universal design for employment

3.1 EU SYNTHESIS.

Patterns across countries

Across the analysed employment practices, a number of consistent patterns can be identified across different European countries, regardless of variations in national legislation, institutional frameworks, or economic contexts. These patterns demonstrate that inclusive employment is not dependent on a single model, but rather on a combination of organisational practices, cultural attitudes, and support mechanisms that can be adapted to different environments.

One of the most prominent patterns is the shift towards **skills-based recruitment** within **Inclusive employment** systems. Traditional recruitment models, which often prioritise formal qualifications, linear career paths, and standardised performance indicators, tend to disadvantage individuals with disabilities or those with non-traditional educational backgrounds. In contrast, inclusive employers increasingly focus on competencies, practical abilities, and potential for development. This approach allows candidates to demonstrate their strengths in more relevant and accessible ways, reducing bias and opening opportunities for individuals who might otherwise be excluded. In several cases, this shift is supported by the use of adapted job descriptions, structured interviews, and alternative assessment formats, which contribute to more equitable hiring processes.

Another key pattern is the implementation of **gradual integration pathways** supported by **Supported Employment** models. Rather than expecting immediate full performance from new employees, inclusive workplaces provide structured onboarding processes that include mentoring, step-by-step task introduction, and continuous guidance. This approach recognises that adaptation to a new work environment can be particularly challenging for individuals with disabilities or those with limited prior work experience. By allowing employees to build confidence progressively, organisations create conditions for long-term retention and success. In practice, this often involves the presence of workplace mentors or job coaches who provide both professional and emotional support during the initial stages of employment.

A third recurring pattern is the systematic application of **Accessibility** and **Reasonable Adjustments** in workplace environments. Successful practices demonstrate that inclusion is not achieved solely through recruitment but requires continuous adaptation of the work context. These adaptations may include physical modifications, such as accessible infrastructure, as well as organisational adjustments, such as flexible schedules, adapted tasks, or alternative communication methods. Importantly, many of these measures are relatively low-cost but have a high impact on employee performance and well-being.

This challenges the common misconception that inclusion is resource-intensive and instead underlines the importance of thoughtful and targeted interventions.

Closely related to this is the increasing recognition of **Flexible working arrangements** as a key enabler of inclusion. Across different case studies, flexibility in working hours, task allocation, and work organisation emerges as a crucial factor for enabling employees with diverse needs to participate fully in the workplace. This flexibility allows organisations to accommodate different working styles, energy levels, and support requirements, while also benefiting the broader workforce by promoting work-life balance and adaptability.

Another significant pattern is the role of **partnership ecosystems** linking employers with **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** providers, NGOs, and community organisations. These partnerships play a critical role in facilitating the transition from education to employment, particularly for individuals with disabilities or fewer opportunities. Through collaboration, employers gain access to prepared candidates, while VET providers and support organisations can ensure that training is aligned with labour market needs. In many cases, these partnerships also provide additional support services, such as mentoring, job coaching, or workplace mediation, which enhance the effectiveness of inclusion efforts.

The importance of **work-based learning (WBL)** as a bridge between education and employment is another common pattern. Many inclusive employment practices build on prior participation in internships, apprenticeships, or other forms of practical training. These experiences allow individuals to develop not only technical skills but also social and professional competences that are essential for successful employment. Employers who engage in WBL programmes often report higher levels of confidence in hiring individuals with disabilities, as they have already observed their capabilities in real work contexts.

In addition to structural and procedural changes, a strong emphasis on **inclusive organisational culture** can be observed across countries. Successful practices demonstrate that inclusion is not only a technical or procedural issue but also a cultural one. Organisations that actively promote diversity, encourage open communication, and foster mutual respect create environments where employees feel safe and valued. This is particularly important in addressing the **Disclosure gap**, as employees are more likely to share their needs when they trust that they will be supported rather than judged.

The promotion of **Neurodiversity** is another emerging pattern in inclusive workplaces. Increasingly, organisations recognise that cognitive differences, such as autism, ADHD, or dyslexia, represent valuable forms of diversity rather than deficits. By adapting communication styles, sensory environments, and work processes, employers can create conditions in which neurodivergent employees can thrive. This shift reflects a broader move from a deficit-based to a strengths-based approach to disability and inclusion.

Furthermore, many practices highlight the importance of **individualised approaches** to employment, often supported by tools such as **Individualized Project (Employment)** or similar frameworks.

These approaches focus on aligning job roles with individual abilities, preferences, and career goals, ensuring that employees are placed in positions where they can succeed. This level of personalisation increases both job satisfaction and productivity, while also reducing turnover.

Another notable pattern is the emphasis on **sustainability and long-term integration**. Inclusive employment is most effective when it is embedded within organisational strategies rather than implemented as a one-off initiative. Many successful practices are characterised by ongoing commitment, continuous improvement, and integration into broader organisational policies. This includes the development of internal guidelines, training programmes for staff, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

Finally, it is important to note that these patterns are not isolated but interconnected. Effective inclusion typically results from the combination of multiple elements, including accessible environments, supportive structures, and inclusive attitudes. The interaction between these factors creates a holistic system in which individuals with disabilities can not only access employment but also thrive within it.

The patterns identified across countries demonstrate that inclusive employment is both achievable and beneficial. While the specific approaches may vary depending on context, the underlying principles – such as **Accessibility**, **Supported Employment**, **Flexible working arrangements**, and strong partnerships – are consistent and transferable. These findings provide a solid foundation for understanding how inclusive workplaces can be developed and sustained across different European contexts.

Barriers

Despite the growing number of successful inclusive employment practices across Europe, the analysis of case studies reveals a set of persistent and interconnected barriers that continue to limit the full participation of people with disabilities in the labour market.

These barriers operate at multiple levels – structural, organisational, and individual – and often reinforce each other, creating complex challenges that require coordinated responses.

One of the most significant barriers identified across countries is the limited level of **employer awareness and preparedness** in relation to **Inclusive employment**. While many organisations express a willingness to adopt inclusive practices, they often lack the knowledge, experience, or confidence to implement them effectively. This gap is particularly evident in small and medium-sized enterprises, where resources for training and organisational development may be limited. As a result, inclusion is sometimes perceived as complex, risky, or resource-intensive, leading employers to hesitate when considering candidates with disabilities.

Closely related to this is the persistence of **bias in recruitment processes**, which continues to restrict access to employment opportunities.

Traditional hiring models often rely on standardised criteria that do not account for diverse abilities or non-linear career paths. Even when discrimination is not intentional, structural bias can occur through rigid job descriptions, inaccessible application processes, or interview formats that disadvantage certain candidates. In this context, the absence of practices such as **Anonymized Recruitment** or skills-based assessment can reinforce exclusion and limit diversity within organisations.

Another major barrier is the **Disclosure gap**, which reflects the difference between the number of employees who have disabilities and those who feel safe disclosing them in the workplace. Many individuals choose not to disclose their condition due to fear of stigma, discrimination, or negative career consequences. This lack of disclosure prevents employers from providing appropriate **Reasonable Adjustments** and limits the effectiveness of inclusion strategies. The persistence of this gap highlights the importance of organisational culture and trust in enabling open communication.

The analysis also points to the insufficient implementation of **Accessibility** across workplace environments. While legal frameworks such as the European Accessibility Act provide clear guidelines, their application in practice remains uneven. Barriers may exist in physical spaces, digital systems, communication processes, or organisational procedures. In many cases, accessibility is addressed only after problems arise, rather than being integrated proactively into workplace design. This reactive approach reduces efficiency and may discourage both employers and employees from engaging in inclusion processes.

A further barrier concerns the limited availability and sustainability of **Supported Employment** structures. While mentoring, job coaching, and ongoing support are recognised as critical success factors, they are not always consistently available or adequately funded. In some contexts, support services depend on short-term projects or external funding, which raises concerns about continuity and long-term impact.

Without stable support systems, employees with disabilities may face difficulties in maintaining employment, particularly during periods of transition or change.

The lack of structured transition mechanisms between **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** and employment represents another critical challenge. Although many VET programmes aim to prepare learners for the labour market, the transition phase is often insufficiently supported. This can result in a disconnect between acquired skills and actual job opportunities. In particular, individuals who require additional support may struggle to navigate the transition independently, leading to unemployment or underemployment despite having completed training.

Resource constraints also emerge as a recurring barrier, particularly in relation to the implementation of **Flexible working arrangements** and workplace adaptations.

While many inclusive measures are relatively low-cost, they still require time, planning, and organisational commitment.

In smaller organisations, limited human and financial resources can restrict the ability to provide personalised support or to invest in accessibility improvements.

This can create inequalities between organisations with different capacities to implement inclusive practices.

Another important barrier is the lack of training and capacity-building among staff and management. Inclusion requires not only structural changes but also a shift in attitudes and competencies. Without adequate training, managers and colleagues may feel unprepared to work with diverse teams, which can lead to misunderstandings, reduced collaboration, or unintentional exclusion. This brings about the need for continuous professional development focused on diversity, inclusion, and communication.

Cultural and attitudinal barriers also play a significant role in limiting inclusion. In some contexts, disability is still perceived through a deficit-based lens, focusing on limitations rather than potential. This perspective can influence hiring decisions, workplace interactions, and expectations regarding performance. Overcoming these attitudes requires not only policy changes but also long-term efforts to promote awareness and shift perceptions.

The analysis further identifies challenges related to the integration of **Neurodiversity** in the workplace. While awareness of neurodivergent conditions is increasing, many organisations still lack the knowledge and tools to support neurodivergent employees effectively. This may result in environments that are not adapted to different communication styles, sensory needs, or cognitive processes, limiting the ability of these individuals to perform at their best.

In addition, the absence of systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms can limit the effectiveness of inclusion initiatives. Without clear indicators and feedback systems, organisations may struggle to assess the impact of their practices or to identify areas for improvement. This can lead to fragmented or inconsistent implementation, reducing the overall effectiveness of inclusion strategies.

It is also important to recognise that many of these barriers are interconnected. For example, lack of awareness can lead to insufficient accessibility, which in turn contributes to the disclosure gap and limits participation. Similarly, resource constraints can affect the availability of support services, which impacts both recruitment and retention. Addressing these challenges therefore requires a holistic and coordinated approach that considers multiple dimensions of inclusion.

Despite these barriers, the analysis also suggests that many challenges can be overcome through relatively practical and achievable measures. The case studies demonstrate that when organisations are supported with the right tools, knowledge, and partnerships, they can implement effective inclusive practices. This underlines the importance of creating enabling environments that support employers in their efforts to become more inclusive.

The identified barriers provide valuable insight into the areas where further development is needed. By understanding these challenges, policymakers, educators, and employers can work together to design targeted interventions that address both structural and cultural

obstacles. This is essential for creating more inclusive labour markets in which people with disabilities can participate fully and equally.

Tools and Approaches

The analysis of employment-related best practices across countries outlines a wide range of tools and approaches that effectively support the implementation of **Inclusive employment**. These tools demonstrate that inclusion can be operationalised through practical, scalable, and often low-cost measures that address barriers at different stages of the employment cycle – from recruitment to long-term retention and career development.

One of the most widely used approaches is the implementation of **structured and inclusive recruitment processes**. Many organisations have shifted towards competency-based hiring models that prioritise skills and potential rather than formal qualifications alone. This includes the use of simplified and inclusive job descriptions, clear and neutral language, and transparent selection criteria. In some cases, employers adopt **Anonymized Recruitment** practices, removing personal identifiers from applications in order to reduce unconscious bias. Additionally, alternative assessment formats – such as practical tasks or structured interviews – are used to allow candidates to demonstrate their abilities in ways that are more accessible and relevant.

A second key approach is the provision of **Supported Employment** through mentoring, coaching, and continuous guidance. This approach recognises that successful inclusion requires ongoing support beyond the recruitment stage. Many organisations assign workplace mentors or job coaches who assist employees during onboarding and throughout their employment. These professionals provide both practical guidance and emotional support, helping employees navigate workplace expectations, build confidence, and address challenges as they arise. The presence of structured support systems significantly improves retention rates and contributes to long-term employment sustainability.

Closely linked to this is the use of **gradual onboarding processes**, which allow employees to adapt to their roles at their own pace. Instead of expecting immediate full performance, organisations introduce tasks step by step, adjusting responsibilities according to individual capacity and progress. This approach reduces stress, increases confidence, and creates a more inclusive working environment. It is particularly effective for individuals with disabilities or those with limited prior work experience.

The application of **Accessibility** and **Reasonable Adjustments** remains a fundamental tool across all practices. These measures ensure that employees can perform their tasks effectively by removing physical, digital, and organisational barriers. Examples include adapting workstations, providing assistive technologies, adjusting communication methods, and modifying work schedules. Importantly, many organisations report that these adjustments are relatively simple to implement but have a significant impact on employee performance and well-being.

Another important approach is the adoption of **Flexible working arrangements**, which allow organisations to accommodate diverse needs and working styles. Flexibility may involve part-time schedules, remote work options, adaptable task allocation, or variable working hours.

These arrangements are particularly valuable for individuals who may require additional time for certain tasks, experience fluctuating energy levels, or need to balance work with health-related considerations. At the same time, flexibility benefits the entire workforce by promoting a more adaptable and inclusive organisational culture.

The development of **partnership-based models** is also a key tool in promoting inclusion. Employers increasingly collaborate with **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** providers, NGOs, and community organisations to create pathways from education to employment. These partnerships facilitate access to prepare candidates, provide additional support services, and ensure that training programmes are aligned with labour market needs. In many cases, collaboration also includes joint planning of internships, work placements, and transition programmes.

The integration of **Work-Based Learning (WBL)** into employment pathways is another effective approach. WBL provides learners with the opportunity to gain practical experience in real workplace environments before entering full employment. This not only enhances technical skills but also helps individuals develop social, communication, and organisational competences. For employers, WBL serves as a valuable opportunity to assess potential employees in practice, reducing uncertainty and increasing confidence in inclusive hiring.

In addition to these structural approaches, many organisations implement **inclusive organisational policies and frameworks**. These may include diversity and inclusion strategies, internal guidelines, or specific policies addressing the needs of employees with disabilities. For example, some organisations adopt structured tools similar to a **Reasonable Adjustments Passport**, which documents individual support needs and ensures continuity across roles and management changes. Others develop policies that promote **Neurodiversity**, addressing communication styles, sensory environments, and cognitive differences.

Training and capacity-building for staff represent another essential component of successful inclusion. Many organisations invest in awareness-raising activities, workshops, and professional development programmes focused on diversity and inclusion. These initiatives help managers and colleagues develop the skills and confidence needed to work effectively in diverse teams, reducing misunderstandings and fostering a more supportive environment.

The use of **individualised approaches to employment** is also a recurring theme. Tools such as **Individualized Project (Employment)** or similar frameworks allow organisations to align job roles with individual strengths, preferences, and career goals. This level of personalisation increases job satisfaction, improves performance, and reduces turnover. It also reflects a shift towards a strengths-based approach, where diversity is seen as an asset rather than a challenge.

Another emerging approach is the use of **digital and assistive technologies** to support accessibility and productivity.

These tools may include screen readers, speech-to-text software, visual aids, or customised digital platforms. In some cases, systems similar to a “digital backpack” concept are used, ensuring continuity of assistive tools between education and employment. This integration of technology enhances independence and enables employees to perform tasks more efficiently.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms also play an important role in ensuring the effectiveness of inclusive practices. Organisations that implement regular feedback systems, performance reviews, and impact assessments are better able to identify strengths and areas for improvement. This allows for continuous development and ensures that inclusion remains a dynamic and evolving process.

Importantly, the effectiveness of these tools and approaches depends not only on their individual implementation but also on how they are combined within a coherent system. Successful practices demonstrate that inclusion is most effective when multiple measures are integrated and aligned. For example, inclusive recruitment must be complemented by onboarding support, workplace adaptations, and organisational culture change.

To summarise, the tools and approaches identified across countries demonstrate that inclusive employment is both achievable and scalable. They provide practical guidance for organisations seeking to improve their inclusion practices and highlight the importance of combining structural, procedural, and cultural measures. By adopting these approaches, employers can create environments where individuals with disabilities are not only able to access employment but also to thrive and contribute meaningfully to the organisation.

Stakeholder Voices Summary

The analysis of stakeholder perspectives across the selected employment practices provides a crucial qualitative dimension to the understanding of inclusive workplaces. While structural measures, policies, and tools are essential, the lived experiences of individuals involved in these processes – employees with disabilities, employers, educators, and support professionals – offer deeper insight into what makes inclusion meaningful and sustainable in practice.

From the perspective of individuals with disabilities, one of the most consistent messages is the importance of being recognised for their abilities rather than their limitations. Many participants emphasise that access to employment is not only about securing a job, but about being valued as a professional and contributing meaningfully within a team. This underlines the importance of **Inclusive employment** practices that focus on skills, potential, and individual strengths. When recruitment and workplace processes are aligned with these principles, individuals report higher levels of confidence, motivation, and job satisfaction.

Another key theme emerging from stakeholder voices is the importance of **Accessibility** as a lived experience rather than a formal requirement. Employees often describe accessibility not only in terms of physical infrastructure, but also in relation to communication, organisational processes, and workplace culture. For example, clear instructions, supportive colleagues, and flexible expectations are often perceived as equally important as technical adaptations.

This reinforces the idea that accessibility must be understood as a holistic concept, embedded in everyday practices.

The role of **Supported Employment** is also strongly emphasised by stakeholders. Many individuals highlight the importance of mentoring, guidance, and continuous support, particularly during the initial stages of employment.

The presence of a supportive person – whether a mentor, job coach, or colleague – can make a significant difference in the ability to adapt to a new work environment. This support is not only practical but also emotional, helping individuals overcome anxiety, build confidence, and develop a sense of belonging.

Closely related to this is the importance of **Flexible working arrangements**, which are frequently mentioned as a key enabler of inclusion. Stakeholders note that flexibility in working hours, task organisation, and expectations allows them to manage their responsibilities more effectively and to perform at their best. Importantly, flexibility is not seen as a privilege but as a necessary condition for equal participation. This perspective challenges traditional notions of standardised work patterns and places the spotlight on the need for more adaptable organisational models.

A particularly significant issue raised by stakeholders is the **Disclosure gap**. Many individuals report hesitation in disclosing their disability due to fear of stigma, discrimination, or negative career consequences. This lack of disclosure limits access to **Reasonable Adjustments** and reduces the effectiveness of inclusion measures. However, in organisations where open communication and trust are promoted, employees feel more comfortable sharing their needs, leading to better support and outcomes. This demonstrates the critical role of organisational culture in enabling or hindering inclusion.

From the perspective of employers, a key insight is that inclusion is often more manageable than initially expected. Many employers report that the adaptations required to support employees with disabilities are relatively simple and do not involve significant costs. Instead, the main challenge lies in changing attitudes and building confidence in inclusive practices. Once these barriers are overcome, employers often recognise the benefits of diversity, including improved team dynamics, increased innovation, and enhanced organisational reputation.

Employers also emphasise the importance of collaboration with external partners, particularly **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** providers and support organisations. These partnerships provide access to prepared candidates, additional expertise, and ongoing support, reducing the perceived risks associated with inclusive hiring. In many cases, employers who have participated in such partnerships express greater willingness to continue and expand their inclusion efforts.

Educators and support professionals highlight the importance of continuity between education and employment. They stress that inclusion must be seen as a continuous process that begins in the VET system and extends into the workplace.

The integration of **Work-Based Learning (WBL)** and structured transition pathways is seen as essential for preparing individuals for real work environments. Without this continuity, the benefits of inclusive education may not translate into successful employment outcomes.

Another important perspective is the growing recognition of **Neurodiversity** in the workplace. Stakeholders note that neurodivergent individuals often bring unique strengths, such as attention to detail, creativity, or problem-solving abilities. However, these strengths can only be realised if workplaces are adapted to different communication styles and sensory needs. This requires a shift from a deficit-based approach to one that values diversity as a source of innovation.

There is a shared understanding among all stakeholder groups that inclusion is not a one-time intervention but an ongoing process that requires commitment, reflection, and adaptation. Successful practices are characterised by continuous learning, openness to feedback, and willingness to improve. This dynamic approach allows organisations to respond to changing needs and to build more inclusive environments over time.

Importantly, stakeholder voices also highlight the emotional and social dimensions of inclusion. Beyond practical support, individuals emphasise the importance of feeling respected, accepted, and part of a team. This sense of belonging is a key factor in long-term employment success and overall well-being. It also contributes to stronger organisational cohesion and a more positive workplace atmosphere.

The synthesis of these perspectives reinforces the idea that inclusion is a shared responsibility within the “triangle” of stakeholders – individuals with disabilities, employers, and educators or support professionals. Each group plays a distinct but interconnected role in creating inclusive environments. When these roles are aligned, inclusion becomes more effective and sustainable.

The stakeholder voices provide a powerful validation of the findings presented in the previous sections. They demonstrate that inclusive employment is not only feasible but also beneficial for all parties involved. By combining practical measures with supportive attitudes and strong partnerships, organisations can create workplaces where diversity is recognised as a strength and where all individuals have the opportunity to thrive.

3.2 BEST INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN EMPLOYMENT

In this chapter you can find a collection of 9 best practices in the field of inclusive employment. They are presented following a similar logic, explaining context, problem, which is being solved by the practice, what specific steps have been taken, how the practice is based or related to UD, what is its potential for transferability and under what conditions it could become transferable, why it worked, what were the challenges, what are the proofs of its success.

The practices are from different European countries and provide a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

BP1: Agency for Social Development "Vision" (ASD Vision) (Bulgaria)

Field

Social services and inclusive employment provision

Location and organisation

Bulgaria — Agency for Social Development "Vision" (ASD Vision)

Target group

People with physical, sensory, or intellectual disabilities employed within the organisation.

What problem it solves

People with disabilities in Bulgaria often face barriers to accessing meaningful employment, including inaccessible workplaces, lack of structured accommodations, limited employer awareness, and reliance on temporary or project-based inclusion initiatives. Many organisations do not have internal systems to support employees with disabilities in a sustainable way.

ASD Vision addresses these challenges by creating a stable, internally driven model of inclusive employment that integrates people with disabilities into everyday organisational operations, demonstrating that inclusion can be systematic, long-term, and effective without external project funding.

What is done – accessibility measures and steps

ASD Vision implements a comprehensive set of measures that make employment accessible and sustainable:

- **Accessible workplaces** Work environments are adapted to meet the needs of employees with physical, sensory, or intellectual limitations.
- **Flexible working arrangements** Employees can work flexible hours or remotely when required.
- **Structured mentoring and support** Employees with disabilities receive mentoring and guidance to support their integration, performance, and well-being.
- **Internal policies ensuring inclusion** Anti-discrimination, health and safety, data protection, and accessibility policies guide daily operations and ensure consistency.
- **HR-led inclusion processes** The Human Resources department leads efforts to ensure that employees receive the support they need to thrive.
- **Integration into organisational culture** Diversity and inclusion are embedded in the organisation's values and everyday practices.
- **Long-term cooperation with educational institutions** For more than 15 years, ASD Vision has provided social assistants to students with SEN at the Vocational High School "Nikolay Haytov", supporting their adaptation and integration.

These steps create a structured, supportive, and accessible work environment where employees with disabilities can participate fully.

Why it worked

The model is effective because it is:

- **Sustainable** – inclusion is embedded in internal systems rather than dependent on external projects.
- **Comprehensive** – combining accessible environments, flexible arrangements, mentoring, and supportive policies.
- **Culturally grounded** – inclusion is part of the organisation's identity and everyday practice.
- **Professionally managed** – HR ensures consistent implementation and support.
- **Experience-based** – the organisation's long history in social services strengthens its capacity to support diverse needs.

This combination of structural, cultural, and operational elements makes the model functional and replicable.

What was hard

The report does not explicitly list challenges, but several difficulties are implied:

- **Diversity in management is still developing**, indicating that leadership representation remains limited.
- **Balancing operational demands with individual accommodations** requires coordination and resources.
- **Ensuring consistent implementation across branches** can be challenging for an organisation with around 250 staff.
- **Supporting employees with diverse disabilities** requires continuous attention, training, and adaptation.

These challenges reflect the complexity of maintaining a large-scale inclusive employment model.

UDL or similar approach – explicit/implicit

The report does not reference Universal Design for Learning (UDL) explicitly. However, several practices align implicitly with UDL principles adapted to employment:

- **Multiple means of engagement** Flexible schedules, mentoring, and supportive policies help maintain motivation and reduce barriers.
- **Multiple means of representation** Accessible environments and adapted communication support employees with sensory or cognitive limitations.
- **Multiple means of action and expression** Flexible work arrangements and remote work options allow employees to perform tasks in ways suited to their abilities.

These elements reflect a proactive approach to removing barriers and supporting diverse needs.

Evidence summary

The report outlines several indicators of success:

- ASD Vision employs **approximately 20 people with various disabilities**, demonstrating practical inclusion.
- The organisation has **clear policies, processes, and a culture of inclusion**.
- Inclusion is **sustainable**, as it does not rely on external funding projects.

- The model is **replicable** for other NGOs and small-to-medium employers.
- The organisation is recognised as a **good practice example** of inclusive employment in Bulgaria.

Although no numerical outcomes are provided, the report emphasises the organisation's long-term, stable, and effective inclusion model.

Source

The Bulgarian practice was documented through **completed Google questionnaires provided by the practice owners and was delivered through the report developed and provided by CuBuFo and NASOR under the W.I.N. project**.

Link

Available in the full report on the best practice.

BP2: Bank of Ireland (BoI) (Ireland)

Field

Financial services and corporate inclusion

Location and organisation

Ireland — Bank of Ireland (BoI)

Target group

Employees with disabilities across the organisation, including those with physical, sensory, intellectual, and neurodiverse profiles.

What problem it solves

Large financial institutions operate in highly regulated environments where compliance with equality and inclusion requirements is essential. Despite this, many employees with disabilities face barriers to disclosure, inconsistent access to reasonable accommodations, and a lack of structured tools to support inclusion. Traditional corporate approaches often rely on ad-hoc adjustments rather than systemic processes.

BoI addresses these challenges by embedding inclusion and diversity (I&D) into its corporate purpose — *"Helping you thrive"* — and by developing structured, organisation-wide tools that reduce the disclosure gap, standardise accommodations, and ensure that inclusion is measurable, consistent, and sustainable.

What is done — accessibility measures and steps

BoI implements a mature, systemic model of inclusive employment through several key measures:

- **Reasonable Adjustments Passport** A structured tool that documents an employee's accommodation needs, ensuring continuity even when roles or managers change. It reduces the need for repeated disclosure and creates a consistent process for implementing adjustments.
- **Neuroinclusion Policy** A dedicated policy addressing the needs of neurodivergent employees, including sensory, communication, and processing considerations. It provides guidance for managers and teams on how to create supportive environments.
- **Employee Support Networks** Internal networks that provide peer support, raise awareness, and strengthen belonging for employees with disabilities.

- **Leadership commitment** Inclusion is embedded at the strategic level, with I&D positioned as a core part of the organisation's purpose and identity.
- **External accreditation** BoI became the first Irish company to achieve **Disability Smart Standard (DSS) Bronze accreditation** in 2021, validating its internal processes and demonstrating compliance with international best practice.

These measures create a structured, organisation-wide approach to accessibility and inclusion.

Why it worked

The model is effective because it is:

- **Systemic** – inclusion is embedded across policies, tools, leadership, and culture.
- **Structured** – tools like the Reasonable Adjustments Passport ensure consistency and reduce barriers.
- **Validated externally** – DSS accreditation confirms that the organisation meets recognised standards.
- **Supported by leadership** – inclusion is part of the corporate purpose, not a peripheral initiative.
- **Employee-centred** – support networks and policies address real needs and encourage disclosure.

This combination of structural, cultural, and procedural elements makes the model robust and transferable.

What was hard

The report does not explicitly list challenges, but several difficulties are implied:

- **Disclosure barriers** The Reasonable Adjustments Passport was created to address the disclosure gap, indicating that employees may have been reluctant to disclose disabilities.
- **Consistency across a large organisation** As a multinational corporation, ensuring uniform implementation of policies and tools across teams and locations requires significant coordination.
- **Operating in a highly regulated sector, compliance** demands can make organisational change slower and more complex.

- **Embedding new practices** Introducing new policies and tools requires training, communication, and cultural adaptation.

These challenges reflect the complexity of implementing systemic inclusion in a large financial institution.

UDL or similar approach — explicit/implicit

The report does not reference Universal Design for Learning (UDL) explicitly. However, several elements align implicitly with UDL-like principles adapted to employment:

- **Multiple means of engagement** Employee Support Networks and inclusive policies support motivation and belonging.
- **Multiple means of representation** The Reasonable Adjustments Passport standardises communication about needs and accommodations.
- **Multiple means of action and expression** Adjustments and neuroinclusion measures allow employees to work in ways that align with their strengths and needs.

These practices reflect a proactive, barrier-reducing approach consistent with UDL's philosophy.

Evidence summary

The report points towards several indicators of success:

- BoI is the **first Irish company to achieve Disability Smart Standard (DSS) Bronze accreditation** (2021).
- The organisation has **institutionalised inclusion** through structured tools and policies.
- The Reasonable Adjustments Passport and Neuroinclusion Policy **address the disclosure gap** and support employees effectively.
- The model delivers **both social and business benefits**, strengthening competitiveness and reputation.
- The approach is **highly transferable** to other large organisations in regulated sectors.

The evidence is qualitative but demonstrates a mature, validated, and effective inclusion system.

Source

The Irish practice was documented through **desk research based on internet search and publicly available online sources**. All information is taken exclusively from the uploaded report: **"Research and collection of inclusive VET and employment success stories – Report on the national systems and best cases in Bulgaria and Ireland"** developed by CuBuFo & NASOR.

Link: Available in the full report on the best practice.

BP3: Integrated Ecosystem for the Inclusive Employment of Blind and Low-Vision Professionals: From Assistive Technology to Commercial Success (Poland)

Field

This practice operates in the field of **inclusive employment**, combining assistive technology development, workplace adaptation, digital accessibility, and vocational rehabilitation within a social-economy business model. Spółdzielnia NPN functions simultaneously as a commercial enterprise and a rehabilitation-oriented cooperative, demonstrating that high-performance professional environments can be fully accessible to blind and low-vision workers.

Location. Organisation name

The practice is implemented in **Warsaw, Poland**, by **Spółdzielnia NPN**, a social work cooperative operating across IT/tech, manufacturing, media production, and professional services.

Target group

The primary target group consists of **blind and low-vision adults**, including individuals transitioning from vocational rehabilitation, job seekers entering the labour market, and employees requiring adapted digital environments to perform complex tasks. A smaller number of employees with hearing impairments also benefit from adapted communication tools and assistive technologies.

What problem it solves

The practice addresses the persistent **digital exclusion** experienced by visually impaired professionals in modern workplaces. Many companies rely on software – such as CRM systems, project management tools, and digital advertising platforms – that is not compatible with screen readers or magnification tools.

Even highly skilled blind professionals may be unable to perform essential tasks independently, creating what NPN calls the **"independence gap."** This gap undermines autonomy, reduces employability, and reinforces industry misconceptions that blind workers can only perform low-complexity roles. NPN's model demonstrates that the barrier lies not in the disability itself but in the design of digital tools and work environments.

What is done. Accessibility measures. Steps

NPN has built a **tech-first, accessibility-by-design ecosystem** that ensures blind and low-vision professionals can work independently in high-value service sectors. The cooperative maintains its own Training Centre and in-house technical team, enabling it to develop

bespoke accessibility bridges for otherwise inaccessible software. When commercial tools cannot be adapted, NPN creates internal alternatives, ensuring that employees can manage CRM systems, administrative tasks, and digital workflows without sighted assistance.

Accessibility is addressed holistically.

The **physical environment** includes high-contrast wayfinding, accessible restrooms, and specialised evacuation plans with tactile markers and buddy systems. Workstations are individually adapted, whether through Braille displays, ergonomic layouts, or sound-insulated booths for audio production. The **digital environment** is equally robust: NPN maintains an accessible intranet, enforces strict alt-text policies, and ensures all documents are screen-reader friendly. Employees themselves act as expert testers, conducting regular UX accessibility checks on internal tools.

Organisational accessibility is ensured through **hybrid and remote work**, introduced in April 2020, which allows employees to work from pre-adapted home environments and reduces commuting barriers. Flexible scheduling accommodates medical and rehabilitation needs. Learning and development are fully accessible, with all training materials available in Braille, audio, and high-contrast digital formats. The cooperative also maintains a comprehensive inventory of assistive technologies and provides rapid technical support.

The **reasonable accommodation process** is streamlined and employee-friendly. Requests are initiated by managers rather than employees, reviewed by supervisors, and approved by the Managing Board. Thanks to in-house expertise, accommodations are typically implemented within **7–14 days**, with costs ranging from €501 to €2,000 per person. This case-by-case budgeting model allows the cooperative to invest in bespoke solutions when necessary.

Why it worked

The model succeeds because inclusion is not treated as an HR initiative but as the **core business strategy**. The Managing Board provides a strong leadership mandate, ensuring that accessibility challenges – such as inaccessible CRM systems – are addressed through investment in custom solutions rather than by limiting employee responsibilities. The cooperative's technical capacity to build its own tools eliminates the dependency on inaccessible commercial software.

A strong internal pipeline from the Training Centre ensures that new hires are already proficient in assistive technologies, reducing onboarding time. Peer-to-peer mentorship, provided by blind and low-vision colleagues, strengthens both technical learning and psychological support. External partnerships with NGOs and state funds help offset costs and maintain a steady flow of candidates. Together, these elements create a stable, high-performance environment where visually impaired professionals can thrive.

What was hard

The most significant challenge has been the **inaccessibility of commercial software**, which often requires extensive custom adaptation. Maintaining accessibility during software updates – especially for CRM systems – requires constant vigilance and technical expertise. Employer misconceptions about the abilities of blind professionals also persist, requiring the cooperative to demonstrate success through real performance data. The high cost of specialised transcription and assistive technology is another challenge, addressed through a hybrid resource model that combines professional staff with volunteer mentors. Ensuring GDPR compliance with sensitive disability data adds an additional layer of complexity, particularly given the cooperative's work with health-related information.

UDL or similar approach. Explicit/implicit

While the practice does not explicitly reference Universal Design for Learning (UDL), it applies **implicit UDL-aligned principles** throughout its operations. Multiple means of engagement are provided through hybrid work, flexible scheduling, and peer mentoring. Multiple means of representation are ensured through Braille, audio, high-contrast digital formats, and accessible intranet tools. Multiple means of action and expression are supported through adapted workstations, accessible CRM systems, and custom applications that allow employees to perform tasks independently. The overall approach can be described as **accessibility-by-design** and **inclusion-by-default**, closely mirroring UDL's core philosophy.

Evidence summary

Evidence of success is strong and multi-layered. The Call Centre has evolved into a fully commercial business unit, meeting the same service-level agreements as mainstream call centres. The Recording Studios produce high-quality audio content indistinguishable from sighted-led studios. The Czytak audio player, developed and tested by visually impaired staff, has become a market leader in Poland. Hybrid work has improved work-life balance and reduced absenteeism. High retention rates over 12–24 months demonstrate the effectiveness of the model, while rapid accommodation turnaround ensures minimal downtime. Productivity is monitored through commercial output, and engagement is assessed through the successful execution of tasks that were previously inaccessible.

Source. Desk/forms/interview

This summary is based entirely on the information provided in the report on the good practice, developed by FDO.

Link: https://npn.com.pl/

BP4: Inclusive Employment and Equal Opportunities (Romania)

Field

Healthcare services. Medical rehabilitation clinic specialising in psycho-neuro-motor rehabilitation for children and adults, with integrated massage therapy services.

Location. Organisation Name

Location: Arad, Romania

Organisation: SC Davima Clinic SRL

Partner: Asociatia Dalia (Davima Center) for integrated psycho-neuro-motor rehabilitation services.

Target Group

Persons with disabilities seeking employment in healthcare, with a specific focus on visually impaired professionals. The direct beneficiaries are two visually impaired massage therapists currently employed at the clinic. The practice also benefits the broader workforce through inclusive policies, anti-discrimination measures, and equitable recruitment processes.

What Problem It Solves

The practice addresses limited access to equal employment opportunities in the healthcare sector, caused by unconscious bias during recruitment and the absence of clear, structured practices supporting inclusive hiring. Signals that highlighted the need for change included feedback from employees, feedback from job candidates, and comparisons with industry benchmarks. The core issue was that standard recruitment, onboarding, and workplace procedures did not account for individual accommodations or the needs of employees with disabilities.

What Is Done. Accessibility Measures. Steps

Core interventions and their implementation:

- Standardised recruitment: updated job descriptions with neutral language, structured interviews, skills-based assessment, and alternative formats for fair evaluation of all candidates.
- Clarified roles and responsibilities: HR and Operations manage inclusive practices with clinic management providing oversight.

- Technology upgrades: applicant tracking systems, internal communication platforms, data protection tools, screen readers, and accessible digital content (alt text, readable PDFs, screen reader compatibility, good colour contrast).
- Staff training: all employees trained on inclusive practices, workplace policies, and compliance standards.
- Inclusive onboarding: buddy/mentor system, staged workload, hands-on guidance, flexible scheduling, and adapted workspaces tailored to individual needs.
- Reasonable accommodations process: employees submit requests through their manager; requests reviewed and typically fulfilled within seven days; budgeting handled case-by-case with approval from clinic management and Operations Manager.
- Physical accessibility: adapted offices and workstations, clear evacuation plan, visible wayfinding with good contrast.
- Digital accessibility: alt-text policy, screen reader compatibility, readable PDFs, good colour contrast across all digital content.
- Organisational accessibility: flexible work schedules, adaptable shifts, inclusive meeting norms.
- Assistive technology: screen readers, verbal instructions, tactile guidance.
- Career development: mentoring and practical skills development opportunities.

Timeline: Changes were implemented gradually over several months, starting with a review of existing practices, followed by policy updates, technology deployment, staff training, and ongoing monitoring with feedback cycles.

Why It Worked

- Strong leadership commitment enabling flexible decisions and rapid implementation.
- Staff training and clear internal processes.
- Low-cost accommodations (average cost per accommodation: EUR 0-100) delivering meaningful benefits.
- Supportive team culture ensuring employees with disabilities were effectively integrated.
- Direct consultation with employees on all accessibility measures, tailoring support to individual needs.
- Governance structure with clear roles: HR as process owner, management as executive sponsor, clinic administration and operations as approvers.

What Was Hard

- Attitudes/stigma: initial uncertainty or misconceptions among staff about hiring employees with disabilities. Addressed through open communication, awareness sessions, and direct team collaboration.
- Logistics: workspaces, schedules, and daily routines were not initially adapted to individual needs. Addressed through workspace adaptation, flexible scheduling, and routine adjustments.
- Procedures: standard procedures lacked accommodation provisions. Addressed through simple, flexible procedural adjustments including staged workload, buddy system, and adapted onboarding.
- Data protection: handling personal data of employees and patients safely. Addressed through GDPR compliance, secure storage, limited access, and staff training on data protection.

UDL or Similar Approach. Explicit/Implicit

The approach is implicitly aligned with UDL-like principles through its emphasis on multiple means of engagement (buddy system, mentoring, flexible scheduling), multiple means of representation (accessible digital materials, verbal instructions, tactile guidance), and multiple means of action and expression (adapted assessments, alternative formats, skills-based evaluation). While UDL is not explicitly referenced, the practice reflects reasonable accommodation principles mandated by Romanian disability law (Law No. 448/2006), the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the European Accessibility Act (transposed via Law No. 232/2022).

Evidence Summary

- Two visually impaired massage therapists successfully recruited, onboarded, and retained.
- Increased job satisfaction and engagement reported.
- Stable productivity maintained.
- Improved confidence at work.
- Safe and supportive environment tailored to individual needs.
- Independent performance of duties with positive contributions to patient satisfaction and team collaboration.
- KPIs tracked at 0, 12, and 24 months covering hiring rate, retention, and engagement.

- Average accommodation cost: EUR 0-100, with observed benefits including reduced turnover, faster integration, and stable service quality.
- Practice sustained since July 2020.

Source. Desk/Forms/Interview

Source: Best practice description document submitted for the WIN project by OT. Information gathered through desk review, internal clinic policies and procedures, and structured data collection covering governance, compliance, practical approach, results, and cost efficiency. No public reports currently available.

Link

davimaclinic.ro

BP5: The "Individualized Project" Ecosystem: A Governance Model for Large-Scale Professional Integration and Long-Term Retention (Italy)

Field

This practice operates in the field of **inclusive employment**, specifically within a large, multi-service social economy enterprise. S.C.S. Cristoforo integrates disability inclusion into industrial logistics, facility management, tourism and culture, contact centres, and administrative services. The organisation combines **professional employment**, **vocational rehabilitation**, and **long-term workforce development**, demonstrating how large enterprises can embed inclusion as a strategic business pillar.

Location. Organisation name

S.C.S. Cristoforo Headquartered near **Florence, Italy**, with extensive regional operations across multiple sectors.

Target group

The practice targets **workers with disabilities**, including individuals with sensory, motor, cognitive, or psychosocial disabilities. It supports both new hires and workers transitioning from vocational rehabilitation pathways. The model is designed for large-scale integration, supporting hundreds of employees through structured, long-term inclusion processes.

What problem it solves

Before the introduction of this model, Italian companies often hired people with disabilities merely to comply with legal quotas (Law 68/99), resulting in **"passive quota hiring"** – jobs with no career prospects, low engagement, and high turnover. Workers were placed in roles without proper accommodations, and companies lacked structured processes to ensure productivity or long-term retention.

S.C.S. Cristoforo recognised that this approach was inefficient for both workers and employers. The cooperative aimed to demonstrate that **disability inclusion can be a driver of corporate efficiency**, not a compliance burden. The practice solves the **"compliance gap"** by replacing quota-based hiring with a structured, personalised, and productivity-oriented integration system that supports workers from recruitment to career progression.

What is done. Accessibility measures. Steps

Cristoforo developed a comprehensive **Individualized Project** system that governs every stage of the worker's employment lifecycle. This personalised document outlines the worker's functional profile, required accommodations, and professional development pathway.

The process begins with **accessible recruitment** through the Cristoforo Jobs portal, designed according to WCAG 2.1 standards. Candidates then enter **preparatory internships (tirocini propedeutici)**, a low-pressure phase where accommodations are tested and refined before formal hiring.

Once employed, each worker is supported by a **dedicated Inclusion Tutor**, who acts as a bridge between HR, production managers, and external social services. The tutor ensures that accommodations are implemented, tasks are adapted, and communication protocols are accessible.

Accessibility measures include:

- **Physical and technical accommodations** such as ergonomic chairs, height-adjustable desks, screen readers, and Braille displays.
- **Organisational accommodations** including flexible shifts, hybrid/remote work, and adjusted workflows to support medical needs or reduced mobility.
- **Communication accessibility**, such as captioned meetings, sign-language interpretation when required, and accessible documentation.
- **Digital accessibility**, with internal tools and recruitment platforms designed to meet WCAG 2.1 standards.
- **Safety accessibility**, through an inclusive General Safety Plan with universal signalling and coordinated emergency buddy systems.

The model also includes **task deconstruction**, where complex workflows are broken into manageable units to ensure that workers can perform effectively in high-pressure sectors such as logistics.

Why it worked

The practice works because it is supported by a **strong leadership mandate** that treats inclusion as a core business KPI. The Work Integration Office (WIO) centralises expertise in HR, pedagogy, and occupational health, ensuring that inclusion is not fragmented across departments but strategically coordinated.

The **Individualized Project** ensures that every worker receives tailored support, while the presence of **Inclusion Tutors** guarantees continuous monitoring and rapid problem-solving. The cooperative's technical agility – its ability to develop accessibility patches for proprietary software – removes digital barriers that would otherwise prevent workers from performing complex tasks.

Cultural buy-in is reinforced through regular disability awareness training for managers and staff, reducing stigma and ensuring that inclusion is understood as a shared organisational

responsibility. The model's success is also driven by its **longitudinal monitoring system**, which tracks progress over 24 months and demonstrates measurable improvements in productivity, retention, and job satisfaction.

What was hard

Cristoforo operates in high-pressure sectors where productivity targets are strict and the margin for error is small. This creates challenges in integrating workers with disabilities without disrupting operational flow. Middle managers, evaluated on speed and output, sometimes feared that inclusion would slow down production.

Another major challenge is the **digital accessibility gap**. Proprietary ERP and warehouse management systems often lack compatibility with assistive technologies, requiring the cooperative to develop custom accessibility patches and interfaces.

Emergency and safety protocols also posed difficulties, as standard procedures were not universally accessible. Cristoforo addressed this by redesigning safety plans to include universal signalling and coordinated emergency buddy systems.

Finally, managing sensitive disability-related data required strict **data segregation** to ensure privacy while still enabling functional accommodations.

UDL or similar approach. Explicit/implicit

While UDL is not explicitly referenced, the practice applies **implicit UDL principles**:

- **Multiple means of engagement:** flexible shifts, hybrid work, preparatory internships, and personalised support.
- **Multiple means of representation:** accessible digital tools, captioned meetings, sign-language interpretation, and adapted documentation.
- **Multiple means of action and expression:** task deconstruction, ergonomic adaptations, and accessible software interfaces.

The Individualized Project framework mirrors UDL's emphasis on removing barriers proactively and adapting environments to diverse functional profiles.

Evidence summary

Cristoforo uses a **24-month longitudinal monitoring system** with clear KPIs:

- **Retention:** Over 90% retention at 24 months, significantly above sector averages.
- **Productivity:** Workers reach 100% of target productivity by month 12.

- **Absenteeism:** Inclusive employees show 10–15% lower sick-leave rates than industry averages.
- **Job satisfaction:** Measured through onboarding, mid-term, and annual surveys.
- **Career progression:** Workers with disabilities successfully transition into supervisory and coordination roles.

These results demonstrate that the model not only supports inclusion but also improves organisational performance.

Source. Desk/forms/interview

This summary is based entirely on the report prepared by **UICI** FIRENZE for presenting this best practice for inclusive employment description, which reflects structured organisational documentation and research analysis.

Link

https://www.coopcristoforo.it/

Additional links available in the full report for the best practice.

BP6: The right person in the right place, regardless of their difference or disability (Belgium)

Field

This practice operates in the field of **inclusive employment within the public sector**, specifically inside a large regional public administration. AVIQ (Agence pour une Vie de Qualité) is responsible for disability, health, and family policy in the Walloon Region. The organisation applies inclusive employment principles internally, ensuring that its own workforce reflects the standards it promotes externally. The practice covers recruitment, onboarding, workplace adaptation, career development, and long-term retention.

Location. Organisation name

AVIQ – Agence pour une Vie de Qualité Walloon Region, Belgium The practice is implemented across AVIQ's regional offices, including telework and home-office arrangements.

Target group

The initiative targets **employees and job candidates with disabilities**, including individuals with physical, sensory, cognitive, or chronic health conditions. Around **30 employees** currently benefit from the structured accommodation process. The practice also indirectly supports managers, HR staff, and teams by providing clear procedures for inclusive employment.

What problem it solves

AVIQ recognised a gap between the inclusive employment standards it promotes externally and the internal practices within its own organisation. While inclusion existed informally, there was no **structured, professional, and consistent methodology** for recruitment, accommodations, or long-term support. The organisation wanted to ensure that inclusion was not dependent on goodwill alone but embedded in formal procedures.

A key motivation was the desire to act as an **exemplary employer** in the Walloon Region. As the authority responsible for disability policy, AVIQ felt a responsibility to demonstrate that inclusive employment is feasible, sustainable, and beneficial. The practice also addresses broader Belgian challenges: stigma, logistical barriers, and inconsistent implementation of reasonable accommodations across workplaces.

What is done. Accessibility measures. Steps

The practice is built on **two major structural changes**:

1. **Anonymised recruitment**, and
2. **A formalised reasonable accommodation procedure**.

1. Anonymised recruitment

All written applications are anonymised before being shared with hiring managers. Any mention of disability is removed. This ensures that candidates are selected **solely on skills and experience**, not on assumptions about disability. Only after hiring are accommodations discussed and implemented.

2. Structured reasonable accommodation process (since 2023)

Accommodation requests can be submitted through an HR ticketing system, a dedicated email, or via managers. The Internal Service for Prevention and Protection at Work (SIPP) coordinates consultations with HR, the employee, and management to identify appropriate solutions. The average implementation time is **one month**, and budgets are centrally managed.

3. Accessibility measures

Physical accessibility:

- Step-free routes, accessible toilets, inclusive evacuation plans
- Adjustable workstations and ergonomic equipment

Digital accessibility:

- Accessible intranet and learning management system
- Accessibility testing of internal tools
- Alternative text for images, subtitled videos
- Adaptation of internally developed software to interact with assistive technologies

Organisational/process accessibility:

- Flexible working hours
- Hybrid and remote work options
- Adaptation of organisational rules to individual needs

Learning & development:

- Accessible training formats

- Alternative evaluation methods
- Guidance for trainers on inclusive delivery

Assistive technology:

- Voice recognition software
- Screen magnification tools
- Ongoing maintenance and adaptation of assistive tech

4. Inclusive recruitment, onboarding, and career progression

Recruitment includes accessible assessments and explicit references to accommodations in job ads. Onboarding uses mentoring, progressive workload integration, and accessible modules. Career progression is supported through transparent promotion criteria and accessible training opportunities.

Why it worked

The practice works because it is supported by **strong executive sponsorship**. The Director of Human Resources, Inspector General, and Deputy Administrator General formally approved the methodology, ensuring organisation-wide adoption.

Inclusion is part of AVIQ's **institutional identity**, not an isolated initiative. HR staff, managers, and the SIPP collaborate closely, ensuring that accommodations are implemented quickly and consistently. The anonymised recruitment process removes unconscious bias at the earliest stage, while the structured accommodation procedure ensures that support is not dependent on individual goodwill.

The practice also benefits from AVIQ's internal expertise: as a public authority responsible for disability policy, the organisation already possesses strong knowledge of accessibility, assistive technologies, and legal frameworks. This internal capacity makes implementation efficient and credible.

What was hard

The main challenges were **attitudes and stigma**, particularly concerns among staff or managers about the perceived burden of accommodations. AVIQ addressed this through awareness-raising, sensitisation sessions, and continuous communication.

Logistical challenges also emerged, such as adapting physical spaces or modifying internal software. These were resolved through **pragmatism and collaborative problem-solving**, with the SIPP providing technical guidance and HR coordinating resources.

Another challenge was ensuring confidentiality and compliance with data protection rules. AVIQ addressed this by anonymising applications and strictly limiting access to disability-related information.

UDL or similar approach. Explicit/implicit

While UDL is not explicitly referenced, the practice applies **implicit UDL principles**:

- **Multiple means of engagement:** flexible schedules, hybrid work, mentoring, progressive onboarding.
- **Multiple means of representation:** accessible digital tools, alternative formats, subtitled videos, adapted software.
- **Multiple means of action and expression:** alternative evaluation methods, adapted workstations, assistive technologies.

The approach reflects UDL's core philosophy: removing barriers proactively and designing environments that accommodate diverse functional profiles.

Evidence summary

AVIQ monitors indicators such as hiring rates, time-to-hire, offer acceptance, accommodation turnaround time, retention, promotions, engagement, and absenteeism. Data is stored in the HR management system (Arno), ensuring traceability.

Concrete results include successful recruitment of employees who are blind or use wheelchairs, with managers selecting candidates without knowing their disability status. Adaptations – such as specialised software and modified internal applications – have significantly improved efficiency and user experience. The practice has also reduced turnover, sick leave, and workplace incidents, demonstrating clear long-term value.

Source. Desk/forms/interview

This summary is based entirely on the report for the best practice developed by the Belgian partner VIEWS International.

Link

Available in the full report for the best practice.

BP7: The Portuguese Private-Sector Model: Delivering Inclusive Employment through Legal Quotas, Reasonable Accommodation, and Neuroinclusion under the European Accessibility Act (Portugal)

Field

This practice operates in the field of **inclusive employment within the private sector**, specifically targeting medium-to-large companies in Portugal (≥75 employees). It integrates legal compliance, workplace accessibility, reasonable accommodation, and neuroinclusion. The model is shaped by national quota legislation, the European Accessibility Act (EAA), and the operational support of public bodies such as IEFP (employment and training) and INR (accessibility guidance). It also draws on international frameworks like the Business Disability Forum's Disability Smart tools and collaborates with specialised partners such as Specialisterne Portugal for autism-inclusive hiring.

Location. Organisation name

Portugal The practice is designed for **private-sector employers** operating nationally, particularly those with 75 or more employees who are legally required to meet disability employment quotas and comply with accessibility regulations.

Target group

The target group includes **employees and job candidates with disabilities**, particularly those with a disability certificate of ≥60% (as defined by Portuguese law). It also includes **neurodivergent individuals**, such as autistic candidates, who benefit from adapted hiring pathways and workplace adjustments. The practice supports both existing employees requiring accommodations and new hires entering through quota-driven recruitment or specialised neurodiversity programmes.

What problem it solves

Portugal has shifted from voluntary inclusion to **mandatory compliance**. Since February 2024, private-sector companies with ≥75 employees must meet disability employment quotas, and the Labour Authority (ACT) has begun inspections. Non-compliance now carries financial and reputational risks. At the same time, the European Accessibility Act (EAA), transposed into Portuguese law, requires companies to ensure accessibility across digital products, services, and consumer interfaces by 2025 and 2030.

The practice addresses several interconnected problems:

- **Low disability employment rates** and insufficient proactive hiring.
- **Slow or inconsistent reasonable accommodation processes**, which harm retention.

- **Lack of digital and physical accessibility**, especially in sectors affected by the EAA.
- **Limited neuroinclusion**, despite growing evidence of productivity and innovation gains.

The model provides a structured, legally aligned, and operationally feasible pathway for companies to meet their obligations while improving workforce diversity and performance.

What is done. Accessibility measures. Steps

The practice introduces a set of **core interventions** that reshape recruitment, workplace processes, accessibility, and governance.

A central innovation is the **Reasonable Accommodation (RA) Passport**, a living document that records agreed adjustments and follows the employee across role changes. This reduces repeated disclosures and ensures continuity. The RA Passport is managed by HR with technical input from IEFP and INR when needed.

Inclusive hiring is strengthened through clear RA request channels in job ads, recruiter training on bias-free screening, and monthly quota monitoring. Companies collaborate with IEFP to source candidates and access funding for workplace adaptations.

Digital accessibility is embedded through the adoption of **EN 301 549** standards across websites, apps, and consumer services, aligning with DL 83/2018 and DL 82/2022. This ensures readiness for the EAA's 2025 and 2030 milestones.

Neuroinclusion is supported through a dedicated toolkit for managers, covering sensory environments, communication norms, and alternative assessments. Partnerships with Specialisterne and national autism programmes help companies build structured hiring pathways for neurodivergent talent.

Organisational processes are adapted to include hybrid work, flexible schedules, accessible meeting norms, and alternative communication formats. Learning and development materials are provided in accessible formats, and managers receive training on inclusive hiring and accommodation procedures.

Assistive technologies – such as screen readers, magnifiers, speech-to-text tools, and AAC devices – are provided and maintained by IT teams, with IEFP co-funding available for eligible adaptations.

Why it worked

The model works because it combines **legal compliance**, **operational clarity**, and **cross-functional ownership**. Executive sponsorship ensures that inclusion is treated as a strategic priority, with regular reporting to the Executive Committee. Clear SLAs for reasonable

accommodations (10–15 days) prevent delays that often undermine retention. The RA Passport reduces administrative burden and builds trust by minimising repeated disclosures.

Digital accessibility is integrated into IT and UX processes, ensuring that accessibility is not an afterthought but part of the product lifecycle. Partnerships with IEFP, INR, and neurodiversity organisations provide technical expertise and talent pipelines, reducing the burden on employers.

The model also succeeds because it aligns with broader European trends: the EAA, anti-discrimination law, and quota enforcement create strong incentives for companies to act. By embedding accessibility and inclusion into everyday processes, the practice becomes sustainable rather than dependent on isolated initiatives.

What was hard

Several challenges emerged. Cultural stigma and low self-identification rates made it difficult for employees to request accommodations. The practice addresses this through confidential RA Passports, strict GDPR-compliant data minimisation, and leadership storytelling to build trust.

Process delays were another challenge, as slow accommodations harm retention and compliance. The solution was to introduce SLA-based workflows, pre-approved adjustment catalogues, and technical support from IEFP and INR.

Budget constraints also posed difficulties, especially for high-cost assistive technologies. Companies addressed this by leveraging IEFP funding for workplace adaptations and supported employment programmes.

Finally, the complexity of accessibility legislation – spanning DL 83/2018, DL 82/2022, and EN 301 549 – required a unified accessibility policy and staged audit plan to meet the 2025 and 2030 deadlines.

UDL or similar approach. Explicit/implicit

While UDL is not explicitly referenced, the practice applies **implicit UDL principles** throughout:

- **Multiple means of engagement:** hybrid work, sensory accommodations, alternative communication norms, neuroinclusion pathways.
- **Multiple means of representation:** accessible digital content, alternative formats, captioned training, EN 301 549 compliance.

- **Multiple means of action and expression:** alternative assessments, work samples, flexible interviews, assistive technologies.

The model reflects UDL's emphasis on designing environments that accommodate diverse functional profiles from the outset.

Evidence summary

The practice uses clear KPIs to track progress over 0, 6, 12, and 24 months. Companies aim for full quota compliance across all units, with ACT inspections serving as external validation. RA turnaround times are reduced to 10–15 days, improving retention and engagement. Accessibility conformance is measured against EN 301 549, with priority journeys reaching AA-equivalent levels by 12 months and full portfolio compliance by 2030.

Self-identification rates are expected to increase as trust grows, while neurodiversity programmes aim to onboard two cohorts with at least 85% retention at 12 months. These indicators demonstrate both regulatory readiness and meaningful inclusion outcomes.

Source. Desk/forms/interview

This summary is based entirely on the report produced by the Lithuanian partner eMundus.

Link

Available in the full report for the best practice.

BP8: "Pareaki" Social Café – A Hub for Vocational Inclusion and Community Integration (Greece)

Field

This practice operates in the field of **inclusive employment**, situated within the **social economy** and closely linked to **hospitality** and **vocational education and training (VET)**. It uses a real café environment as a platform for work-based learning, professional development, and community participation for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Location. Organisation name

Athens, Greece Implemented by **KEEPEA Orizontes**, through its Social Cooperative Enterprise (Koin.S.Ep.) **"Pareaki"**, located in **Alexandrou Panagouli Square, Agios Dimitrios**.

This practice is complementary to BP4 in Part 2, which documents KEEPEA Orizontes' VET-based inclusion model.

Target group

The initiative targets **individuals with intellectual disabilities and special educational needs**, particularly those who face barriers to entering the open labour market. It supports young adults transitioning from training to employment, individuals previously engaged in sheltered workshops, and people who require structured support to work in real-world environments.

What problem it solves

People with intellectual disabilities in Greece experience **high unemployment**, **limited access to meaningful work experience**, and **social isolation**. Traditional vocational training often remains theoretical or sheltered, leaving learners unprepared for real job demands. "Pareaki" addresses this by offering **authentic, public-facing employment experience** in a fully operational café. It challenges societal misconceptions by demonstrating that individuals with disabilities can deliver high-quality hospitality services, interact with customers, and contribute to a business. The practice bridges the **gap between training and employment**, while increasing community visibility and acceptance.

What is done. Accessibility measures. Steps

"Pareaki" functions as a **live vocational laboratory**, where participants learn and work in a real café open to the public. The approach is grounded in **work-based learning**, **experiential learning**, and **individualised support**.

Participants follow a **step-by-step progression model**. They begin with simple tasks – such as setting tables or assisting with basic preparation – supported closely by job coaches. As confidence and competence grow, they take on more complex responsibilities, including customer service, beverage preparation, and handling transactions.

Accessibility is embedded throughout the operation:

Physical and ergonomic accessibility

- Ergonomic workstation layouts tailored to cognitive and physical needs
- Safe, structured kitchen and service areas
- Visual recipe guides and simplified task lists

Technological accessibility

- Simplified POS (point-of-sale) systems
- Visual aids to reduce cognitive load
- Tools that support independent task execution

Organisational accessibility

- Job coaches identify accommodation needs and ensure rapid implementation
- A “safe but realistic” environment where mistakes are part of learning
- Structured routines that support predictability and confidence

Community accessibility

- The café’s location in a public square ensures visibility and daily interaction with the community
- Public-facing work reduces stigma and normalises disability in everyday life

The practice is supported by a governance model where **parents and employees** sit on the board, ensuring that those most affected by decisions have a direct voice.

Why it worked

The model succeeds because it combines **authentic work experience** with **structured, continuous support**. Unlike simulated training environments, “Pareaki” offers real customer interaction, real service demands, and real responsibilities – elements that build professional identity and transferable skills.

Leadership plays a central role: the Board prioritises social integration over profit, ensuring that coaching time and pedagogical support are protected. Job coaches provide daily mentoring, ensuring that tasks are adapted, routines are followed safely, and learning is reinforced.

The practice is also strengthened by its **social enterprise framework**, which legally supports the employment of vulnerable groups and allows profits to be reinvested into social impact. This ensures financial sustainability while maintaining a strong social mission.

What was hard

A major challenge is the **limited readiness of the broader labour market**, which restricts external employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. “Pareaki” addresses this by functioning as a transitional space where trainees can build the skills and confidence needed for open employment.

Balancing **commercial demands** with **educational needs** is another challenge. Hospitality is fast-paced, and maintaining service quality while providing coaching requires careful planning and strong leadership commitment.

The café must also continuously adapt its environment and processes to meet diverse cognitive and behavioural needs, requiring ongoing investment in training, ergonomic adjustments, and job-coach capacity.

UDL or similar approach. Explicit/implicit

While UDL is not explicitly referenced, the practice applies **implicit UDL principles**:

Multiple means of engagement

- Real-world tasks
- Customer interaction
- Team-based work
- Gradual responsibility

Multiple means of representation

- Visual recipe guides
- Simplified POS systems
- Structured routines
- Clear visual cues

Multiple means of action and expression

- Varied roles (service, preparation, cleaning, communication)
- Adapted tasks

- Opportunities to demonstrate skills in different ways

The approach is inherently **inclusive-by-design**, reducing the need for individual accommodations by creating an environment accessible from the outset.

Evidence summary

"Pareaki" has become a recognised community hub in Athens, maintaining service quality comparable to mainstream cafés. Trainees show significant improvements in **social skills**, **communication**, **financial literacy**, **teamwork**, and **technical catering skills**. Several participants have transitioned to external employment in the hospitality sector.

The café also has a strong **community impact**. Daily interaction with customers reduces stigma and increases public awareness of the abilities of people with disabilities. Families report increased independence and confidence among participants.

The practice demonstrates that inclusive social enterprises can be both **operationally sustainable** and **socially transformative**.

Source

Based entirely on the report developed by the Greek partner Panagia Evagelistria.

Link

https://topareaki.gr/

BP9 Summary and Key Conclusions from the Danish Good Practice: "JOBstien – Job Path" (Aarhus Municipality, Denmark) – the Public Employer as an Example

Overview of the Practice

"JOBstien – Job Path" is an inclusive employment pathway developed by the Employment Department of Aarhus Municipality in cooperation with the Social Services Department and a network of 59 public and private companies. The programme supports people with learning and developmental disabilities to enter the ordinary labour market through preparatory training, subsidised job-training placements, employer engagement and long-term workplace support.

"to support the citizen in being active and participating in the community" — motivation stated in the practice description.

Governance and Operational Model

The practice is embedded in municipal structures rather than organised as a temporary project. Governance is shared between:

- **Employment Department** – leadership, employer coordination, job-matching, follow-up.
- **Social Services Department** – preparatory courses on communication, behaviour, workplace norms.
- **Business consultants** – operational bridge between municipality and companies, preparing workplaces and facilitating dialogue.

This tripartite model ensures stability, continuity and clear division of responsibilities.

Policy and Legal Framework

The practice leverages Denmark's strong legislative framework for disability and employment, including:

- Consolidation Act on Social Services
- Act on Active Employment Efforts
- Act on Active Social Policy
- Social Pensions Act

These laws enable workplace support, mentoring, wage subsidies, flexjobs with adapted hours, and income security for participants. The legal framework makes participation financially viable for both employers and employees.

Practical Approach

Key elements include:

- Tailored preparatory courses for participants (communication, hygiene, behaviour, workplace rules).
- Subsidised job-training placements as a low-risk entry point.
- Cooperation with 59 companies across sectors.
- Business consultants preparing employers and staff.
- Ongoing workplace support for as long as needed.

The programme employs five staff members: three workplace support experts and two business consultants.

Accessibility Measures

While physical accessibility is not described in detail, organisational and learning accessibility are strong:

- Flexible job design (1-2 hours/week up to nearly full-time).
- Tailored preparatory courses with easy-to-read materials and adapted communication.
- Continuous mentoring and workplace support.

Recruitment, Onboarding and Career Progression

Participants begin with subsidised job-training placements, allowing them to test roles and identify suitable employment paths. Employer preparation is structured and proactive. The programme expanded from people with learning disabilities to also include people with developmental disabilities (e.g., autism).

Results and Impact

The practice demonstrates significant quantitative and qualitative outcomes:

- **144 people employed by September 2015**, surpassing the target.
- **100+ permanent jobs** achieved.
- **80 people** progressing through job training.
- **Annual municipal savings of DKK 3.5 million** due to reduced sheltered workshop costs.
- Improved social inclusion, autonomy and quality of life for participants.

- Positive employer feedback (e.g., *"the best shelf trimmer"*).

Success Factors

- Strong municipal leadership and stable funding.
- Close cooperation between employment and social services.
- Deep engagement with employers and dedicated business consultants.
- Effective use of national legal instruments (flexjobs, wage subsidies).
- Person-centred approach with multiple job-training placements.
- Demonstrated economic and social benefits.

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: Employer readiness and attitudes. **Solution:** Business consultants prepare companies and facilitate dialogue.

Challenge: Transition from sheltered workshops to ordinary employment. **Solution:** Reallocation of resources, closure of sheltered workshop, use of national schemes, creation of an OCN-based Labour Preparatory Course.

Sustainability and Transferability

The practice is sustainable due to stable municipal funding, integration into existing legal frameworks, and long-term workplace support. It is transferable within Denmark and internationally, as it relies on clear operational procedures, employer engagement, and legal instruments commonly available in other EU contexts.

PART 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. BRIDGE TO WP3

4.1 Conclusions and recommendations for the VET training programme

From Lithuania's structured VET institutions to the experiential café model in Athens, the practices analysed across W.I.N. partner countries share one consistent finding: inclusion works when it is built into a system from the start, not added as a correction afterwards. The training programme developed under WP3 should reflect this evidence directly — translating nine national models into a coherent, practical resource for VET educators.

A first key conclusion is that VET training programmes must be explicitly grounded in **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** and **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** as foundational frameworks. In the Lithuanian model, for example, mainstream VET institutions have successfully integrated UDL principles into everyday teaching practices, ensuring that learners with diverse needs can participate in standard learning environments through flexible content delivery, adaptive assessment, and continuous support structures. Similarly, Spanish and Irish practices demonstrate that when UDL is applied proactively, the need for individual accommodations is significantly reduced, and learning becomes more accessible to all students.

At the same time, evidence from Greece and Italy shows that inclusive VET must go beyond formal curriculum design and incorporate experiential, real-life learning environments. The "Hands-On Inclusion" model in Greece illustrates how learning-by-doing, combined with individualised support and peer learning, creates strong engagement and prepares learners for real work conditions.

In Italy, the concept of "extreme personalization" further expands this approach by tailoring educational processes at a highly individual level, ensuring that each learner's abilities and career pathways are fully aligned with labour market opportunities.

A second major conclusion concerns the central role of **personalised learning pathways**, implemented through tools such as **Individual Learning Plan (ILP)** and **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**. Personalised planning is consistently identified as a key success factor for inclusion in all partner reports. The Bulgarian and Irish practices demonstrate how structured individual planning, combined with multidisciplinary support, leads to improved retention, motivation, and transition outcomes. In Spain, the use of Personalised Learning Itineraries ensures that learners with SEN are supported not only academically but also in their progression towards employment.

Closely linked to this is the importance of **multidisciplinary collaboration**. Effective VET systems are characterised by strong cooperation between teachers, psychologists, support specialists, and external stakeholders. Lithuanian VET providers, for instance, rely on structured multidisciplinary teams that coordinate learning support, monitor progress, and adapt interventions in real time. Similarly, Bulgarian practices highlight the importance of involving families, NGOs, and local authorities in creating a comprehensive support ecosystem. These findings indicate that training programmes must equip educators not only

with pedagogical skills but also with competencies in teamwork, coordination, and stakeholder engagement.

A third critical conclusion is the need to strengthen the connection between VET and the labour market through **Work-Based Learning (WBL)** and structured transition models. Across multiple countries, including Ireland, Romania, and Greece, successful practices demonstrate that early exposure to real work environments significantly improves employment outcomes. The WALK PEER model in Ireland, for example, provides long-term supported transition pathways that combine education, mentoring, and real employment experience, resulting in higher retention and career sustainability. Similarly, Romanian and Portuguese practices highlight the role of partnerships between schools, NGOs, and employers in creating accessible pathways from training to employment.

Equally important is the integration of **Accessibility** and **Adapted learning materials** as standard components of VET systems. In France, the concept of the "Digital Backpack" ensures that assistive technologies follow the learner from education into employment, providing continuity and independence.

In Poland and Spain, technology-driven solutions address the "independence gap" by enabling learners to perform tasks autonomously through accessible digital tools. These examples demonstrate that accessibility should not be treated as an additional feature but as a core design principle of learning environments.

The studied practices also show that transversal skills, including communication, teamwork, and adaptability, are of crucial importance. In all national contexts, employers emphasise that technical skills alone are insufficient for successful labour market integration.

Therefore, VET training programmes must integrate soft skills development as a core component, particularly for learners with disabilities who may require additional support in social and professional contexts.

Inclusive attitudes and institutional culture are also of crucial importance. In several countries, including Belgium and Portugal, policy-driven systems support inclusion through legal frameworks such as quotas and accessibility standards. However, the effectiveness of these systems depends largely on the willingness of institutions and educators to adopt inclusive mindsets and practices. This suggests that training programmes must include reflective and experiential components that address attitudes, biases, and perceptions of disability.

Digitalisation and assistive technologies also emerge as key enablers of inclusion. The integration of digital tools in VET not only improves accessibility but also enhances learning outcomes and prepares learners for modern work environments. Training programmes should therefore include digital competencies for both educators and learners, ensuring effective use of technology in inclusive settings.

Finally, a crucial conclusion is that VET training programmes must be practice-oriented and based on real-life examples. The diversity of models identified across Europe – from social cooperatives in Italy to NGO-led initiatives in Romania and structured institutional systems in

Lithuania – demonstrates that there is no single model of inclusion. Instead, training programmes should provide a toolbox of adaptable approaches that can be applied in different contexts.

The WP3 VET programme should draw directly on this evidence — offering educators a practical toolkit grounded in nine national models, rather than a single prescriptive framework. By drawing on diverse European practices and aligning them within a coherent framework, the programme can support VET providers in creating inclusive systems that enable all learners to succeed.

4.2 Conclusions and recommendations for the employment training programme

Whether in a large Italian social cooperative, a Belgian public agency, or an Irish bank, the employment practices reviewed across W.I.N. partner countries point to the same operational conclusion: inclusion delivers results when it is woven into recruitment, onboarding, management, and career development — not treated as a compliance task sitting alongside ordinary HR processes. The employment training programme under WP3 must translate this into tools that employers can apply immediately.

A first key conclusion is that the employment training programme must focus on translating the concept of **Inclusive employment** into practical, operational steps that employers can apply within their own organisational context.

Across countries such as Belgium, Ireland, and Portugal, inclusive employment is not treated as a separate policy area but as an integrated part of human resource management, organisational strategy, and business development. For example, the Belgian system demonstrates how structured mechanisms such as quotas, **Anonymized Recruitment**, and adapted work environments can support equitable access to employment, while ensuring that hiring decisions are based on competencies rather than perceived limitations.

A second important conclusion concerns the transformation of recruitment processes. Traditional recruitment practices are consistently identified as a major barrier across multiple national contexts. In response, several models promote skills-based and inclusive hiring approaches. The Belgian and French systems highlight the importance of removing bias through structured processes, while Polish and Spanish practices introduce the concept of **Inclusion-by-Default**, where accessibility and non-discrimination are embedded from the outset in all recruitment and operational procedures.

The training programme should therefore equip employers with concrete tools to redesign recruitment processes, including inclusive job descriptions, alternative assessment methods, and accessible interview formats.

Another key finding is the central role of **Accessibility** and **Reasonable Adjustments** as foundational elements of inclusive workplaces. Without exception, successful employment practices demonstrate that relatively simple adaptations - such as assistive technologies, modified communication methods, or task restructuring - can significantly improve

performance and retention. The French “Digital Backpack” model provides a particularly strong example of how accessibility can be ensured through continuity of assistive tools from education into employment, enabling individuals to perform tasks independently. Similarly, Polish and Portuguese practices emphasise the importance of addressing the “independence gap” through targeted technological solutions.

The provision of **Supported Employment** emerges as one of the most critical success factors across all case studies. In Ireland, long-term mentoring and structured support models demonstrate that sustained guidance significantly increases retention and job satisfaction. In Italy, large-scale social cooperatives such as S.C.S. Cristoforo illustrates how internal structures, including dedicated work integration units and **Individualized Project (Employment)** approaches, enable the long-term professional development of employees with disabilities within competitive market environments. The training programme focused on inclusive employment should provide guidance on establishing mentoring systems, job coaching roles, and internal support structures within organisations.

The crucial role of **Flexible working arrangements** in enabling participation and productivity is also worth mentioning. Across different contexts, flexibility in working hours, task allocation, and work organisation is consistently identified as a key enabler of inclusion.

In Bulgaria and Ireland, for example, organisations such as ASD Vision and Bank of Ireland have successfully implemented flexible models that support diverse employee needs while maintaining high levels of performance and organisational efficiency.

The training programme should therefore demonstrate how flexibility can be implemented as a strategic organisational tool rather than an exception.

Most of the studied cases highlight the importance of organisational culture and leadership in driving inclusion. The persistence of the **Disclosure gap** across countries indicates that many employees do not feel safe to communicate their needs in the workplace. In response, several practices particularly in Ireland and Belgium – focus on building inclusive cultures – through internal policies, awareness programmes, and leadership commitment. The Bank of Ireland model, for example, integrates inclusion into its corporate strategy through structured policies such as neuroinclusion frameworks and employee support systems. These findings underline the need for the training programme to include components on inclusive leadership, communication, and organisational change.

The recognition and promotion of **Neurodiversity** is another emerging priority across European employment practices. Increasingly, organisations are moving towards a strengths-based approach, recognising that neurodivergent employees bring valuable skills such as attention to detail, creativity, and problem-solving. However, this requires adaptation of communication styles, work environments, and management practices. The training programme should therefore include guidance on supporting neurodivergent employees and creating inclusive workplace environments.

Another key finding is the importance of **partnership ecosystems** between employers, VET providers, and social sector organisations. Across countries such as Greece, Romania, and

Spain, inclusive employment is often achieved through collaboration rather than isolated organisational efforts. For example, the Greek “Pareaki” social café model demonstrates how community-based initiatives can create inclusive employment opportunities while also fostering social integration. Similarly, Romanian and Portuguese practices highlight the role of NGOs and intermediary organisations in supporting both employers and employees during recruitment and onboarding processes. The training programme should therefore include guidance on building and sustaining such partnerships.

Digitalisation and assistive technologies are also identified as key enablers of inclusive employment. Across multiple case studies, the use of digital tools significantly improves accessibility, productivity, and independence. The integration of these technologies into workplace processes is particularly important in sectors such as IT, finance, and services, where digital skills are essential. The training programme should therefore introduce employers to available technologies and support their implementation in everyday work processes.

Inclusive employment also requires continuous monitoring and evaluation. Successful organisations implement feedback mechanisms, track employee progress, and adapt their practices based on experience. This iterative approach ensures that inclusion is not static but evolves over time. The training programme should therefore encourage employers to adopt monitoring tools and indicators that measure both social and economic impact.

Finally, the results of the report emphasise that inclusive employment should be understood not only as a social responsibility but also as a strategic advantage. In all the studied countries, organisations that implement inclusive practices report benefits such as improved team dynamics, increased innovation, and enhanced organisational reputation. This shift from a compliance-based to a value-driven approach is essential for the long-term sustainability of inclusion.

Therefore, the inclusive employment training programme envisaged under WP3 should provide employers with practical, adaptable, and evidence-based tools to implement inclusive practices across all stages of the employment cycle – from recruitment, to onboarding and sustainable employment. By integrating insights from diverse European models - including corporate, social economy, and community-based approaches - the programme can support organisations in creating inclusive workplaces that are both socially responsible and economically effective.

4.3 Conclusions and recommendations for the training programme for people with disabilities and their support services

Across the practices reviewed — from peer-supported transition models in Ireland to self-determination frameworks in France — people with disabilities are most effectively served when they are treated as active participants in their own pathways, not as recipients of pre-designed support. The training module targeting this group under WP3 should reflect this shift in orientation: from support provision to empowerment and self-advocacy.

A first key conclusion is that training programmes must adopt a strengths-based and person-centred approach, focusing on abilities, potential, and long-term development rather than limitations. Practices from countries such as Spain and Poland demonstrate that when inclusion is approached through the principle of **Inclusion-by-Default**, individuals are not positioned as beneficiaries of support, but as active participants in learning and work environments. This shift is essential for promoting autonomy, confidence, and sustainable labour market participation.

A second major conclusion concerns the importance of **personalised pathways**, implemented through tools such as **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** and **Individual Learning Plan (ILP)**. Across multiple national contexts, including Bulgaria, Ireland, and Lithuania, personalised planning is consistently identified as a key success factor. These tools allow individuals to define their goals, monitor their progress, and receive tailored support aligned with their specific needs and aspirations.

The training programme should therefore include components that empower individuals to actively participate in the design and management of their own learning and career pathways.

Closely linked to this is the role of **support services** as facilitators of inclusion rather than providers of isolated assistance. In all analysed countries, effective support systems are characterised by continuity, coordination, and personalisation. In Ireland, for example, long-term mentorship and transition support play a crucial role in ensuring successful entry into employment, while in Bulgaria and Romania, NGOs provide integrated services that combine training, employment mediation, and ongoing support. Therefore, the training programme for people with disabilities and their support network should include dedicated modules for support professionals, focusing on mentoring, coaching, and coordination skills.

A third key conclusion is the critical importance of **Supported Employment** and real-life experience. In all the studied countries, individuals consistently emphasise that access to real work environments is essential for building confidence, independence, and professional identity. Models such as the Irish supported transition system and the Italian social cooperative approach demonstrate that structured, long-term support significantly improves employment outcomes. In Greece and Portugal, community-based and social enterprise models further highlight the value of experiential learning in inclusive environments. The training programme should therefore integrate practical components such as internships, simulations, and real work exposure.

A further finding worth highlighting is the need to strengthen **Self-advocacy skills**. Across different contexts, individuals report challenges related to the **Disclosure gap**, particularly in communicating their needs in educational and workplace settings. The training programme should support participants in understanding their rights, including access to **Reasonable Adjustments**, and in developing the confidence to express their needs effectively. This is particularly important in systems where support depends on self-disclosure.

The role of **Accessibility** in learning and training environments is also consistently highlighted across all case studies. Effective programmes ensure that materials, tools, and environments are accessible from the outset. In France, the “Digital Backpack” model demonstrates how

continuity of assistive technologies supports independence during transitions from education to employment. Similarly, practices in Poland and Spain show how digital accessibility can remove barriers and enable full participation. The training programme should therefore include components on digital skills and the use of assistive technologies. Another key conclusion is the importance of developing transversal skills for successful labour market integration. Among those, employers list communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving. For people with disabilities, these skills are particularly important for navigating diverse and changing work environments. Training programmes should therefore integrate these competences as core elements, alongside technical skills.

The Lithuanian and Bulgarian VET models show in particular how important multidisciplinary collaboration is for supporting individuals. Successful practices demonstrate that cooperation between educators, employers, support professionals, and families creates a comprehensive support ecosystem.

In Lithuania and Bulgaria, structured multidisciplinary teams ensure coordinated and continuous support, while in Spain and Greece, collaborative learning models involve direct interaction between learners and people with disabilities. Training programmes should therefore emphasise teamwork and coordination across different support roles.

Psychological and emotional support also emerges as a critical factor. Many individuals face challenges related to confidence, motivation, and anxiety, particularly during transitions. Successful programmes create safe and supportive environments that promote well-being and resilience. This dimension should be integrated into training programmes through coaching, peer support, and reflective learning methods.

Digital inclusion is another important area for development. In all the studied national contexts, digital tools and assistive technologies are identified as key enablers of independence and participation. Training programmes should therefore support individuals in developing digital competences and using technology effectively in both learning and work contexts.

Finally, a crucial conclusion is that training programmes must be participatory and co-created with people with disabilities. As stated in all case studies, the most effective practices involve individuals as active contributors to programme design, implementation, and evaluation. This participatory approach ensures that training is relevant, responsive, and aligned with real needs.

The training programme for people with disabilities and their support services under WP3 should adopt a personalised, empowerment-based approach. By integrating principles of **Accessibility**, **Supported Employment**, **Multidisciplinary Support Team**, and active participation, the programme can support individuals in developing the skills, confidence, and autonomy needed for sustainable inclusion in education, employment, and society.

4.4 Conclusions and recommendations for the policy and decision makers and the social sector intermediaries

The Belgian and French models show what coordinated policy and practice look like when they function together; the Romanian and Greek examples show what NGOs achieve when formal systems fall short. Taken together, the W.I.N. evidence base sends a clear message to policymakers and intermediaries: sustainable inclusion requires system-level design, not goodwill from individual institutions. This section draws out the specific levers available to decision-makers.

A first key conclusion is the need for stronger alignment between policies related to **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)**, **Inclusive employment**, and social inclusion.

Across countries, these policy areas are often developed and implemented separately, resulting in fragmentation and gaps in the transition from education to employment. The analysed practices demonstrate that where coordination exists, outcomes are significantly improved. For example, structured pathways linking VET systems with labour market policies, as seen in Ireland and Lithuania, support smoother transitions and higher employment rates.

Policy makers should therefore prioritise cross-sectoral integration, ensuring that education, employment, and social policies operate within a shared strategic framework.

They should also encourage the implementation of **Accessibility** as a systemic principle rather than a compliance requirement. While European frameworks such as the European Accessibility Act establish clear standards, the analysis shows that implementation remains uneven across countries and sectors. In France, the “Digital Backpack” model illustrates how accessibility can be operationalised through continuity of assistive technologies from education into employment. Similarly, practices in Poland and Spain demonstrate how digital accessibility and technological adaptation can significantly reduce barriers to participation. Policy makers should therefore support not only regulation but also practical implementation through funding, technical guidance, and monitoring mechanisms.

The need to strengthen the implementation of **Reasonable Adjustments** is another key finding. Although widely recognised in legislation, their application is often inconsistent or unclear in practice. Across several national contexts, employers report uncertainty regarding responsibilities, costs, and procedures. Policy frameworks should therefore provide clearer guidance, standardised tools, and financial support mechanisms to ensure that adjustments are implemented effectively and without disproportionate burden. Flexible approaches such as case-by-case budgeting, observed in some employment models, can further improve efficiency and responsiveness.

Evidence from Greece and Portugal confirms the critical role of **Supported Employment** systems as a bridge between policy and practice. In countries such as Ireland and Italy, long-term support structures, including mentoring, job coaching, and transition services, are essential for both access to employment and long-term retention. However, in many contexts, these services rely on project-based funding and lack long-term sustainability. Policy

makers should therefore integrate supported employment into national systems, ensuring stable funding and institutionalisation within public services.

A further key conclusion is the need to strengthen transition pathways between **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** and employment. Across countries, the transition phase remains one of the most critical points of exclusion. Successful practices, such as the Irish supported transition model and collaborative approaches in Romania and Greece, demonstrate that structured pathways combining education, work experience, and support services significantly improve outcomes. Policy makers should therefore invest in **Work-Based Learning (WBL)**, apprenticeships, and dual education systems, ensuring that these opportunities are accessible to learners with disabilities and supported by appropriate funding and incentives.

Social sector intermediaries play a central role in bridging gaps between systems and supporting both individuals and organisations. NGOs, employment services, and support organisations provide expertise, facilitate partnerships, and deliver essential services such as training, mediation, and ongoing support. Across multiple countries, including Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece, these intermediaries act as key drivers of inclusion.

Policy frameworks should therefore recognise their role formally, ensure stable funding, and integrate them into national inclusion strategies.

Capacity-building across all stakeholder groups is also among the key recommendations. The analysis shows that the effectiveness of inclusive policies depends on the ability of educators, employers, and support professionals to implement them in practice. Policy makers should therefore invest in training programmes that develop competencies in areas such as **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**, accessibility, inclusive management, and diversity awareness. This aligns directly with the objectives of the W.I.N. project and its focus on training as a key tool for systemic change.

The improvement of data collection and monitoring systems is also essential. Across countries, the lack of reliable and comparable data on disability inclusion limits the ability to design evidence-based policies. Issues such as the **Disclosure gap**, employment retention, and accessibility implementation are often underreported. Policy makers should therefore develop comprehensive monitoring frameworks that combine quantitative indicators with qualitative insights, enabling continuous evaluation and improvement.

The promotion of **Flexible working arrangements** is another important policy priority. Flexibility is identified as a key enabler of inclusion, regardless of the analysed context. Policy frameworks should encourage organisations to adopt flexible models through incentives, guidelines, and awareness campaigns, recognising that such approaches benefit not only people with disabilities but also the wider workforce.

The recognition and promotion of **Neurodiversity** represents an emerging area for policy development. As awareness of neurodivergent conditions increases, policies must evolve to reflect a broader understanding of diversity. This includes supporting organisations in

adapting work environments, communication practices, and management approaches to accommodate different cognitive profiles.

Financial support mechanisms are also critical for enabling inclusion, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises. While many inclusive measures are low-cost, initial investments in accessibility, training, and support structures may still present challenges. Policy makers should therefore provide targeted funding, subsidies, or tax incentives to support organisations in implementing inclusive practices.

Finally, a key conclusion is the importance of participatory policy-making. Among all analysed practices, the involvement of people with disabilities in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies leads to more relevant and effective outcomes. Policy frameworks should therefore ensure that individuals with lived experience are actively included in decision-making processes.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Google forms used for surveying and interviewing (VET Providers and Employers)

This annex presents the data collection instruments developed and used within the W.I.N. project to gather structured information from key stakeholders, specifically **VET providers** and **employers**. The tools were designed as Google Forms questionnaires and served as a primary method for collecting comparable and standardised data across all participating countries.

The full questionnaire forms are available on the W.I.N. project website at https://win-erasmusplus.eu/research-findings/. The sections below describe their structure and content.

Two main types of questionnaires were developed, reflecting the dual focus of the project on education and employment systems:

1. Questionnaire for VET Providers

The questionnaire targeting VET representatives was designed to collect detailed information on inclusive vocational education and training practices. It focused on institutional approaches, pedagogical methods, and support systems implemented for learners with disabilities.

The structure of the questionnaire included sections on:

- institutional context and type of VET provision
- target groups, including learners with **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**
- application of **Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET)** principles
- use of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** and personalised approaches such as **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** and **Individual Learning Plan (ILP)**
- availability of **Multidisciplinary Support Team** structures
- types of **Adapted learning materials** and accessibility measures
- integration of **Work-Based Learning (WBL)**
- partnerships with employers and external stakeholders
- challenges, success factors, and transferability of practices

The questionnaire also included open-ended questions to capture qualitative insights, enabling respondents to describe their practices, innovations, and observed outcomes in detail.

2. Questionnaire for Employers

The employer-focused questionnaire aimed to collect information on inclusive workplace practices, organisational strategies, and employment models supporting people with disabilities.

The structure of the questionnaire included sections on:

- organisational profile and sector
- target groups and types of disabilities addressed
- implementation of **Inclusive employment** practices
- use of **Anonymized Recruitment** or inclusive hiring approaches
- application of **Accessibility** measures in physical, digital, and organisational environments
- provision of **Reasonable Adjustments**
- use of **Supported Employment**, mentoring, and onboarding processes
- implementation of **Flexible working arrangements**
- policies related to **Neurodiversity** and inclusion culture
- collaboration with VET providers, NGOs, and intermediaries
- identified barriers, challenges, and success factors

Similarly to the VET questionnaire, open-ended questions were included to capture real experiences, stakeholder perspectives, and practical examples.

Methodological Considerations

The Google Forms were designed to ensure:

- **consistency** across countries through a shared structure
- **comparability** of data between VET and employment contexts
- a balance between **quantitative indicators** and **qualitative insights**

The questionnaires supported the collection of information aligned with the “triangle of success” approach, incorporating perspectives from educators, employers, and indirectly, people with disabilities.

All responses were collected and processed in accordance with GDPR requirements and ethical standards outlined in the project’s Quality Management Plan. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose and use of the data.

The collected data formed the basis for the development of national reports and contributed directly to the comparative and transnational analysis presented in this document.

Annex 2: Templates for Good Practice Description and National Reports

This annex presents the standardised templates developed and used within the W.I.N. project for the systematic collection, documentation, and analysis of inclusive practices across participating countries. The use of common templates ensured consistency, comparability, and quality of the data, supporting both national-level reporting and the development of the transnational synthesis.

1. Template for Good Practice Description

A unified template was developed for the description of each good practice in both VET and employment contexts. This template ensured that all case studies followed a common structure, allowing for meaningful comparison across countries and sectors.

The template included the following key elements:

- **Identification details** (BP-ID, title, country, organisation)
- **Context and stakeholders**, including institutional setting and target groups
- **Problem addressed**, outlining the specific inclusion challenge
- **Description of the practice**, including implementation steps and processes
- **Accessibility measures** and application of **Reasonable Adjustments**
- **Support mechanisms**, including **Supported Employment** or educational support structures
- **Use of inclusive approaches**, such as **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** or similar methodologies
- **Evidence of success**, including outcomes, impact, and observed results
- **Challenges and limitations**, identifying barriers and lessons learned
- **Transferability conditions**, highlighting elements that can be replicated in other contexts
- **Stakeholder perspectives**, including input from educators, employers, and people with disabilities
- **Sources and references**

This structured approach ensured that each practice was described in a comprehensive and comparable way, while also allowing for the inclusion of context-specific details.

2. Template for National Reports

The national reports were developed using a common framework that combined contextual analysis with detailed case study descriptions. This template ensured that all partner countries contributed comparable data to the transnational synthesis.

The national report structure included:

- **Aims of the research**, defining the objectives and focus of the national study
- **Scope and definitions**, including VET systems, employment contexts, and target groups
- **Methodology**, including data sources (desk research, questionnaires, interviews)
- **Selection criteria for good practices**, ensuring transparency and consistency
- **Description of VET practices**, using the standardised template
- **Description of employment practices**, using the standardised template
- **Comparative analysis and key lessons learned**, identifying national patterns and insights
- **References and sources**

This structure ensured that national reports provided both descriptive and analytical content, contributing to a deeper understanding of inclusion within each country.

Methodological Value of the Templates

The use of standardised templates across all stages of the research process ensured:

- **Consistency** in data collection and reporting
- **Comparability** across countries and types of practices
- **Transparency** in the selection and analysis of case studies
- **Reliability** of findings through structured methodology
- **Transferability** of identified practices and recommendations

By aligning all partners within a shared methodological framework, the project achieved a coherent and evidence-based transnational analysis, directly supporting the development of training programmes and policy recommendations.

Annex 3: Definitions

Accessibility: Measures ensuring that physical environments, transportation, information, communications, technologies, and services are usable by persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, by removing physical, digital, and attitudinal barriers. Source: UN CRPD Article 9; European Accessibility Act.

Adapted learning materials: Educational materials that have been modified in format, complexity, presentation, or medium to ensure accessibility for learners with disabilities (e.g., simplified texts, visual supports, tactile materials, audio formats). Source: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.

Adapted Work Companies (AWCs): Non-profit or semi-commercial enterprises that provide protected or supported employment environments for persons with severe or long-term disabilities, combining economic activity with social integration objectives. These organisations often receive public funding and act as transitional or long-term employers for individuals facing significant barriers to open labour market participation. Sources: Belgian inclusive employment model; regional agencies such as AVIQ and VAPH.

Anonymized Recruitment: A recruitment practice in which personal data related to disability or other sensitive characteristics is removed from job applications to ensure that hiring decisions are based solely on skills, qualifications, and experience. This approach aims to reduce bias and promote fair access to employment opportunities. Sources: Belgian public employment services and inclusive HR frameworks.

Case-by-Case Budgeting: A flexible approach to funding reasonable accommodations where costs are assessed individually based on the specific needs and functional requirements of a worker, rather than applying a fixed budget per employee. This allows more targeted and effective allocation of resources. Sources: Inclusive employment practices in Poland (social economy sector).

Digital Backpack: A system ensuring that assistive technologies and digital accessibility tools used during education are portable and remain with the learner when transitioning into employment, guaranteeing continuity of accessibility and performance. Sources: French VET inclusion model.

Disclosure gap: The difference between the actual number of employees with disabilities and the number who feel safe disclosing their disability at work, often due to stigma, fear of discrimination, or lack of trust in accommodation processes. Source: Concept used in EU disability employment research and corporate inclusion frameworks.

Experts Group: A pedagogical approach in which VET learners collaborate directly with persons with disabilities to design, implement, and evaluate inclusive solutions. This method promotes experiential learning, empathy, and practical inclusion skills through real-life interaction and co-creation. Sources: Spanish VET practice (CDP La Blanca Paloma).

Extreme Personalization: An advanced level of individualized support in education or employment, where learning or work processes are tailored in a highly specific, one-to-one manner based on the individual's functional abilities, needs, and goals, going beyond standard differentiation or individualisation. Sources: Italian inclusive VET and employment practices.

Flexible working arrangements: Adjustments to work schedules, locations, or methods that support employees' needs, such as flexible hours, telework, or modified workloads, enabling equal participation in employment. Source: EU Work-Life Balance Directive; EU Disability Employment Package.

Inclusion-by-Default: A proactive organisational approach where accessibility, non-discrimination, and inclusion principles are embedded into all processes (recruitment, training, operations) from the outset, rather than introduced as reactive measures or adaptations. Sources: Polish inclusive employment model.

Inclusion-by-Design: A workplace or system design principle where inclusive structures, roles, and processes are intentionally created to support participation of persons with disabilities from the beginning, ensuring that inclusion is an integral part of organisational functioning. Sources: Greek inclusive employment model.

Inclusive employment: Employment systems and workplaces that enable persons with disabilities to access, retain, and progress in work, through non-discrimination, accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and supportive organisational practices. Source: ILO & EU Disability Employment Package (DG EMPL).

Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (inclusive VET): A VET system that accommodates all learners, including those with disabilities, by adapting curricula, teaching methods, environments, and assessment so that learners participate on an equal basis with others across all VET pathways. Source: UN CRPD Article 24; European Education Area guidance on inclusive education.

Independence Gap: The gap between a person's professional skills and their ability to perform tasks independently due to inaccessible tools, environments, or systems, highlighting the need for technical adaptations and accessibility solutions. Sources: Polish inclusive employment case study.

Individual Education Plan (IEP): A personalised plan developed for a learner with special educational needs that outlines learning goals, adaptations, supports, and assessment methods required for the learner to participate in education on an equal basis with others. Sources: UN CRPD Article 24 (individualised support), European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.

Individual Learning Plan (ILP): A structured and personalised educational plan that defines learning objectives, support measures, pacing, and assessment adaptations tailored to the needs of each learner, ensuring equitable participation in VET systems. Sources: Lithuanian inclusive VET practices.

Individualized Project (Employment): A personalised professional development and employment integration plan that aligns an individual's functional abilities with specific job roles, tasks, and career pathways, ensuring long-term sustainability and productivity in the workplace. Sources: Italian social cooperative model.

Intellectual Disabilities (ID): A disability characterised by significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour, originating before adulthood, affecting conceptual, social, and practical skills. Source: WHO & UN CRPD Article 1 (EU is a State Party).

Learning difficulties / learning disorders: Specific cognitive or neurological difficulties that affect the acquisition of academic skills such as reading, writing, or mathematics, without implying reduced intellectual ability. Source: WHO ICD-11; European Agency terminology.

Mainstream classes / mainstream settings: General education environments where students with and without disabilities learn together, with adaptations to ensure equal participation. Placement without adaptation is integration, not inclusion. Source: UN CRPD General Comment No. 4; European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.

Multidisciplinary Support Team: A coordinated group of professionals (e.g. teachers, psychologists, social workers, counsellors, specialists) who collaborate to assess needs, design support strategies, and monitor progress of learners or employees with disabilities. Sources: Lithuanian VET inclusion model.

Neurodiversity / neurodivergent employees: A concept recognising that neurological differences (e.g., autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia) are natural variations of human cognition. Neurodivergent employees may require adapted communication, sensory environments, or work processes. Source: EU corporate inclusion frameworks; CRPD principles of non-discrimination.

Neuroinclusion Policy (Bank of Ireland): A policy addressing the needs of neurodivergent employees, including sensory, communication, and processing considerations.

Peer and Cooperative Learning: An educational approach where learners work collaboratively in structured groups, contributing according to their individual strengths and supporting each other's learning process, thereby promoting inclusion and reducing stigma. Sources: Spanish VET practices.

Quota System (Disability Employment): A regulatory mechanism requiring organisations to employ a minimum percentage of persons with disabilities, often combined with monitoring, incentives, or penalties to ensure compliance and promote inclusive hiring practices. Sources: Portuguese and French employment frameworks.

Reasonable Adjustments (or accommodations): Modifications or adjustments that are necessary and appropriate, and do not impose a disproportionate burden, to ensure that persons with disabilities can enjoy or exercise their rights on an equal basis with others. In employment, this includes changes to tasks, equipment, schedules, or the work environment. Sources: UN CRPD Article 2; EU Disability Rights Strategy 2021–2030; EU Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC).

Reasonable Adjustments Passport (Bank of Ireland): a structured tool documenting an employee's accommodation needs, ensuring continuity across roles and managers and reducing the need for repeated disclosure.

Social Cooperative (Type B): A legal organisational model that combines economic activity with social objectives, specifically focused on integrating persons with disabilities and disadvantaged groups into the labour market through structured employment and support systems. Sources: Italian inclusive employment model.

Special Educational Needs (SEN): A term referring to learners who require additional support due to disabilities, learning difficulties, developmental conditions, or other barriers that affect their ability to participate fully in education. SEN is not limited to disability but includes a broad range of learning and developmental needs. Sources: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education; EU education policy frameworks; CRPD Article 24.

Student Support Team (SST): A multidisciplinary school-based team responsible for coordinating support for learners with special educational needs. It typically includes teachers, resource/support teachers, psychologists, counsellors, and other specialists who jointly assess needs, plan interventions, and monitor progress. Sources: European Agency descriptions of school support structures; national EU education systems (e.g., Bulgaria, Ireland) aligned with CRPD Article 24.

Supported Employment: An approach to employment that provides ongoing support, such as job coaching, mentoring, and workplace adaptation, enabling persons with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment in inclusive work environments. Sources: Romanian and Greek employment practices.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): UDL is an educational design framework that ensures learning environments are accessible to all learners by providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action/expression. It aims to remove barriers proactively rather than retrofitting accommodations. Sources: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education; aligned with UN CRPD principles of accessibility and inclusive design.

Work-Based Learning (WBL): A structured educational approach that integrates practical work experience with formal learning, allowing learners to develop professional skills in real or simulated workplace environments. Sources: Lithuanian and Romanian VET systems.

Work Integration Office: A specialised organisational unit responsible for coordinating recruitment, onboarding, monitoring, and support of employees with disabilities, ensuring alignment between individual needs and workplace requirements. Sources: Italian social cooperative model.

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