

Report on the Implementation on SE in Romania

The aim of the implementation in Romania was to apply and test the Supported Employment (SE) tools in the Harghita county context.

Implementation of the methods was planned to be realized with the help of organisations and institutions, who have a key role in the protection and promotion of rights of people with disability or other disadvantaged groups, especially the right to work. The aim of this partnership was to develop a network to support the efforts related to the recognition by the government of the activity as support service and to find a rational and financial recourses for the employment support service. The following institutions, organisations were invited to support the activities within the TEST project:

- *Office for Evaluation of People with Disabilities, Social and Child Protection Department*, responsible for the registration and assessment of deficiency, evaluation (psychological and skill assessment) of persons with disabilities, preparing and addressing recommendations to the Evaluation Committee of Adults with Disabilities
- *County Employment Agency, Harghita County*, responsible for implementation of measures to prevent unemployment, stimulating employment, the social protection of jobseekers, organizing and realization the employment activities and training of the workforce.
- *“Szent Agoston” Day Care Center, Caritas Alba-Iulia*,. The centre gives the opportunity to young people with disabilities and autists to participate in various activities. The developing activities are organized in two groups. Those suffering from autism are part of activities that are adequate for them. Besides regular activities young people also go for trips, camping. The centre is functioning in the context of the Caritas Alba Iulia organisation, one of the main social service providers in the Transylvanian region of the country. It’s objective is to emphasize and advocate the human dignity of each person; to advocate and support the reintegration of the poor and marginalized into society, regardless to nationality, religion, race, gender or political

opinion; to promote the development of the communities by empowerment and support; to promote public spirit, individual social responsibility and volunteerism.

- *Association of People with Physical Disabilities, Harghita Branch*, promotes and protects the rights of people with different types of disabilities. It offers information, assistance and counseling to the members of the Association about their rights, it provides professional orientation, guidance into applying for a job. The mediators of the association identify accessible jobs for the physically disabled people, inform their clients and employers about the possibilities of employing people with physical disabilities.
- *Foundation LIA (Foundation of Youth from Locodeni)*. The foundation's ambition is to help and support disadvantaged children and young people in Romania, especially those leaving the foster care institutions. It tries to create job and living opportunities for them, it provides trainings to support and to minimize the problems related to their integration into the society and labour market. The foundation operates foster homes in 5 localities, and home network in Locodeni. It runs an educational/informational center to support integration into society, sheltered workshops. A group home and workshop in Tăureni supports people with disabilities run by professionals. They receive training to develop job and social skills.

From each organisation one person attended to the implementation workshop organized in December 2013, in Graz.

Coaches Profile

The implementation support coaches have been recruited from the partner-organisations. The coaches have a wide range of expertise and knowledge in the field of disabilities. Three coaches already initiated awareness raising programs in the past, activities related to the promotion of employability of the target group. They have firsthand experience with trainings and coaching activities organized to suit the special needs of people with disabilities or disadvantaged groups. The other two coaches have a deep knowledge about the formal structural-institutional aspect of the employment of disadvantaged people (e.g. the certification processes, benefits, legal requirements related to employment of persons with disability, etc.).

The main role of the 5 coaches is to implement the SE methods in their regular tasks in order to identify obstacles and the need to further develop the practices for an efficient wider application of the tools.

Related to their regular work each coach is performing some tasks related to different stages of SE, thus they support each other with exchange of know-how and best practices.

Clients' profile

The recruitment of clients was realized within the organisations. Some were long term beneficiaries of the organisations services. In general they participated to social programs, or special training to develop their social and life skills.

The clients who benefited from the SE services vary from each other in different aspects.

Clients are aged between 16-50 years, their educational level spreads from having no studies till secondary school final exams. Related to their type of disability, some have severe sensory impairments, mental deficiency, autism, schizophrenia. Others have with disability associated condition, like diabetes, severe heart condition. A further group is represented by youngsters with behavioral programs, learning and socializing difficulties.

Some clients had job related experiences, other are still in the vocational training process.

The implementation process

The actual implementation process period started in February 2014 with a great meeting of managers of the listed institutions and implementation support coaches. Collaboration was agreed at institutional level to develop a network to support an efficient use of the employment support instrument for disadvantaged groups. Employment Agency identified resources, presented the employment mediators certification, accreditation process that could enable the access to financial resources. A program was established to provide financial support to ensure sustainability of the SE employment programs in the organisations.

The structural-organizational impediments of the accession of funds highlighted some specific problem-areas that still need to be resolved in order to be able assure the sustainability of the SE method. Furthermore the Social and Child Protection Department promoted SE on policy and administration level. It initiated programs for the sustainability of the program. Result of applications can be expected following this month.

Meanwhile, from the practical aspect, the coaches tried to develop practices suited to the needs of jobseekers. The coaches met regularly to exchange experiences, to report on their results or to discuss difficulties. The Social and Child Protection Department coordinated this process and provided support, the actual implementation was realized by each organisation separately.

At the start of the implementation process the clients were found to be in different stages of the SE process. As some primary stages were already realized in the past, the different stages of the SE process were applied simultaneously according to the clients' needs. (E.g. a group of clients were already in the stage of On the job support - after being employed, they needed guidance and mediation to perform according to the employee's expectation, to address social tensions, etc.).

It is important to mention that implementation coaches carried out both SE worker and the Jobcoach tasks.

Exploitation seminar and conference

The Social and Child Protection Department invited several organisations and institutions from throughout Romania to the exploitation seminar held on the on 29th of April 2014. The main aim of the event was to present the concept of SE and different approaches of the employment support for people with disabilities, but in the same time to provide possibility for professionals to discuss and get support

related to specific problems of employer engagement, on and off the job support, and the financial possibilities provided by the legislation in the field.

Results of the implementation

The implementation of SE is still an ongoing process in Harghita county. A lot of the confusion has been cleared up since SE's implementation phase started. Here are some results of the implementation

The *outputs* of the implementation are the following:

- 49 clients engaged
- 7 persons - probation time at a workplace
- 2 persons - employment with contract after starting implementation
- 5 persons – off the job support (were employed before implementation)
- The other clients are participating in special training to develop work specific, transversal abilities or are currently at work experience placements (job tasting), whereas others are waiting for the right employment possibilities.

Impact

- One important recognition of the implementation coaches is that some parts of SE have already existed in their range of services they've been providing to their clients. The involvement in the project and the preoccupation with the concept of SE reinforced the objective that possibility of employment has to be ensured to people with disabilities or with special needs despite the social distance of the employees, or the social environments the person is living in.
- Furthermore, the conceptual and methodological approach of the SE tools brought more structure into the coaches' work.
- According to the projects objective and the aim to realize an effective implementation, the networking between institutions was fostered.

Difficulties encountered

- The implementation of the concept of SE is placed in a context where no real and effective measures support the employment of PwD. Job tasting or work experience placements, voluntary work as neither the developed abilities can't be recognised as real work experience or competences.
- There is the need to define in more detail the target group. The Romanian definition of Disability applies only to one category of the conceptual wide range of potential clients (severe disabilities, medical conditions).
- SE employment can't be applied individually to all beneficiaries. It has to be recognized that some persons with disability will be more effective carrying out work in groups, special sheltered workshops.
- It was recognised that SE can be effective only if it's recognized as an occupation and at least one person fills the responsibilities related to the SE. Implementation coaches report, that it is difficult to separate their role as life coach and SE coach in case of their clients. The merged responsibilities

hinder them to develop relations with actors on the labour market and to perform the job finding activities.

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