

Newsletter 1



The UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities declares that all people with disabilities have the right to work on an equal basis with others. This includes the right to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market in a work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. The Convention also declares that discrimination on the basis of disability relates to all forms of employment, including the conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment, continuance of employment, and career advancement shall be prohibited by the legislation of the EU member states.

This implies the full and correct implementation of the EC Equality in Employment Directive and the inclusion of real career perspectives and official recognition of vocational educational competencies.

Many efforts have been made to achieve these goals – but they have often failed because of formal barriers. One of these barriers is the educational system as it now exists – a system which defines vocational educational programmes on levels which are too high to be successfully completed by persons with intellectual disabilities. If it would be possible for them to obtain an accredited certification, persons with intellectual disabilities could at least hope to work in specific areas of certain sectors. To have such a certification would give many more people with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to apply for jobs and become employed, as they would then be in a position to offer proof of their vocational competences.

The project 'NQF Inclusive' aims at enabling people with intellectual disabilities to obtain an officially recognised certificate for their vocational competences. This would be an important step towards inclusion in the labour market, especially in times of economic difficulties.

Chance B is happy to have been provided with this opportunity from the European Commission to develop a model of accreditation and certification together with its European partners. A lot of expertise and long-term experience exists in the field of education and service provision for people with disabilities. Together we can make a contribution towards ensuring that people with disabilities are offered the same opportunities as everyone else.

Franz Wolfmayr, CEO Chance B Gleisdorf

People with (learning) disabilities often gain valuable employability skills through non-formal education and trainings. In most cases they can't prove those job related qualifications since no accreditation of basic vocational trainings exists so far. Therefore there is an urgent need to develop systems which would promote opportunities to empower young people and adults with learning disabilities to realise their potential in further education, training and employment. As stated in the UN Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities people with disabilities should have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training. Moreover, each country is responsible for promoting employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment.

NQF will help to support the UN Convention directives referring to education and employment. Moreover, NQF is responding also to the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs which underlines a new situation on the labour market - globalisation, the European fast-changing economy which requires a flexible and highly skilled workforce.

The labour market evolves fast, therefore learning "on-the-job" is becoming more and more important. Through accreditation it becomes transferable to other contexts and offers a new instrument that closes the gap between the labour market and people with disabilities. Closing that gap is significant as disability results in unemployment and further leads to poverty and exclusion.

Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General EASPD

Throughout our lives we tend to acquire a range and variety of knowledge, skills and competences through formal, non-formal and informal learning. Through the National Qualifications Framework, there exists the possibility for all these forms of learning to be pegged within the framework. However, unfortunately, there is a lack of vocational trainings for people with learning disabilities. The Malta Qualifications Council firmly believes in valuing all forms of learning and hence the huge interest in participating in this project lies within the aim of this project – that of giving the possibility for training programmes offered for persons with learning disabilities to be level rated and eventually accredited within the National Qualifications Framework.

Richard Curmi, Senior Manager Assessment and Accreditation MQC

Organisations involved



Chance B was founded in 1986 as a self-help association by parents of children and young people with disabilities, as well as by teachers of the Gleisdorf General School for Children with Mental and Physical Disabilities.

The aim of the organisation is to assist and support elderly, ill and disabled persons so that they can live life to the full and in their home towns. For this purpose, Chance B has set up services for people of all ages to compensate for possible disadvantages due to disability in their efforts to pursue an independent way of life. Amongst these are different social and health care support services, as well as training and employment support services. Every year, about 1,800 people use these services which are provided by about 220 employees.

Vocational training programmes (e.g. gardening, bakery, farming and gastronomy) are offered to people with learning difficulties and other disabilities from the age of 16, and to the long-term unemployed. The “NQF Inclusive” project has been developed to foster recognition of their competencies, since these trainees do not yet receive any officially recognised certificate despite the competences that they gain during their training period. By coordinating this project we hope to open national vocational education systems to people with learning disabilities, and to take a further step towards equalisation of opportunities.



The overall objective of the **Malta Qualifications Council (MQC)** is to steer the development of the National Qualifications Framework for Life-long Learning (NQF) and to oversee the training and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework and which are not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies. MQC is responsible for defining the levels of qualifications and competences within the NQF and for establishing standards related to qualifications within the Framework. Malta's Qualifications Framework is at the forefront of European developments, achieving as it does, the inclusion of qualifications across compulsory, vocational and academic sectors into a single framework.

MQC is the agency that provides a shared national context for qualifications. In describing qualifications within the Framework, MQC uses two principle measures: the level of the outcomes of learning and the volume of outcomes, described through a credit transfer system.



Public social welfare institute day-care and work centre POLŽ Maribor (Slovenian abbreviation is VDC POLŽ Maribor) was established on the 26th of October 1993 by the Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, as an initiative of the Maribor Association for Mentally Challenged Persons.

The mission of VDC POLŽ is to promote active lifestyles, to encourage persons with disabilities to take active part in working activities, to develop their independence, self-determination, personal responsibility and self-esteem, and to cooperate with relatives and other members of users' social circles in order to integrate into the work of the centre according to their personal capacities.

The principle of the centre is that the user or resident carries out all the tasks he or she is able to carry out by him or herself. This means that employees' main role is to help, direct, demonstrate, explain and educate in order to offer as much guidance to the individual as he or she may need. VDC POLŽ Maribor also has a Family Friendly Enterprise Certificate which is a tool for obtaining effective high quality human resource management within enterprises and organisations, and for balancing the professional and private lives of employees. The objectives will be guided and supported using the results of the Leonardo da Vinci project "HAPPY FARM - Education for the start and work in social firm/enterprise on a farm and in the countryside".

The role of VDC POLŽ Maribor in the current "NQF - Inclusive" project is supporting the transfer of results and experiences from the former "HAPPY FARM" project, to support the partners in the adoption of the catalogue of standards developed in this project, and to help in the process of matching training programmes to the demands of a system of accreditation.



The Malta College of Arts Science and Technology is primarily a state-funded further and higher education institution. The College has grown over the past few years to nine Institutes, and is currently welcoming and providing for 5,000 full-time and another 5,000 part-time students. MCast provides both vocational education and training as well as academic programmes that prepare students for careers in industry, business or commerce and for world of work or higher education.

The College offers vocational qualifications that are work-related and internationally recognised. These qualifications provide the individual with the skills, knowledge and expertise required for employment or further progression within the education and training systems. They are particularly suitable for the individual who knows the area of work that s/he wishes to enter or the career s/he wishes to pursue. 9 institutes offer a variety of study programmes at different levels ranging from level one (equivalent to the first class of secondary school) to level six which is the degree level. When achieving a particular qualification, students can either join the labour force or else progress to a higher level of education within the same College. MCAST strives hard to reach its key principal of "putting students at the heart of all we do" as this will ensure that the individual needs, potential and aspirations of students as learners will be met in the most focused way possible.



The Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues NVC, an institute under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers aims at promoting inclusion of vulnerable groups, equal treatment of citizens, social solidarity, as well as accessibility and quality with regard to social services.

The work of the centre is divided into the following categories:

The head office of the institution is in Stockholm and the daughter institutions in Denmark and Finland. The Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues is led by a board with representatives from the 5 Nordic countries. The board is appointed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. Nordic institutional and expert networks are connected to our work. Their aim is to consolidate our work in practice and to communicate the results to decision-makers and practitioners. An important part of our work is on an international level. We cooperate with international actors within the social and health sector, e.g., the EU, the European Council and the UN.

The Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues is also a secretariat to the Nordic Council on Disability Policy. The Council is a policy-making and advisory organisation to the Nordic Council of Ministers. Policy-making means that the Council puts disability policy issues on the political agenda in the Nordic countries. Advisory means that the Council acts as a source of knowledge for all sectors of the Nordic Council of Ministers.



The European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities

represents over 8000 service providing organisations across Europe and across disabilities. The main objective of the association is to promote the equalisation of opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high quality service systems facilitating full participation and inclusion in society in an appropriate way for persons with a disability.

To achieve its goals, EASPD is committed to user participation in the development and delivery of services, the implementation of governance principles and active lifelong learning opportunities for staff. The main focus of the work is always on the so called 4 A's: accessibility, availability, affordability and adaptability of services.

EASPD and its members are generally committed to using and developing best practices to promote respect, inclusion, rights based on effective participation and full citizenship for those it supports. The association strongly believes in partnership between user organisations, providers and authorities at all levels.

In the NQF project, the main task of EASPD is promoting the project and disseminating the results across the European bodies.

Where to find more information? www.nqfinclusive.org