



Focus Group Discussions within the project DIMENSAAI

Practitioners in the field of training for employment and work placement have highlighted that seniors and people with mild learning disabilities face barriers to employment even in sectors with acknowledged skill shortages e.g. Health Care services. This is one of a number of findings which have emerged from research and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) within the project DIMENSAAI.

A focus group discussion (FGD) is a good way to gather together people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest. In bridging research and policy, FGD can be useful in providing an insight into differing opinions among different parties involved in the change process, thus enabling the process to be managed more smoothly.

Within DIMENSAAI, FGD took place in all project partner countries between January and March 2013. The groups included persons with disabilities (mental and physical disability), seniors active peoples, people from employers in the health and care sector, persons from nongovernmental (NGO) associations, persons from vocational education institutions.

The discussions were to focus on:

- Disability and ageing/active ageing concept
- Experiences (how long and what kind)
- Social- Professional-IT abilities of active seniors and disabled people
- Desire for integration into labour market
- Barriers to and risks for the successful job entry of the person with learning difficulties
- The opportunity for sustaining diversity workshops and development of the mentoring program by persons from NGOs (Vocational training situation for focus groups-seniors and disabled people)
- Labour shortage for seniors and people with disabilities

The barriers identified by the research can be classified under one of the following themes:

- Cultural- Historical
Because the term 'senior' is used as a descriptor of a citizen, being retired or 'past it', the depth and range of knowledge, skills and competence, commonly referred to as experience, gathered over a number of years can become invisible to the individual. Similarly, persons with mild learning disabilities have their expectations tempered by family and society, they recognize the disability rather than the person with abilities, who, given the opportunity can 'do' a job as well as anybody else, and perhaps more so. But employers report high levels of satisfaction with such employees/volunteers, not only in the performance of their duties, but their enthusiasm, punctuality, and attention to detail.
- Educational
Many of the Healthcare services require a relevant formal qualification based on curricula that are continually under review. These are relatively recent developments, now a condition of employment and were likely not available at the time of an older person's engagement with national education provision at post-primary level or university level.
- Statutory
There was substantial agreement that job opportunities were plentiful and suitable for older people and those with mild learning disabilities, but that they were unlikely to 'see the light of day'.
- Societal
Potential employers may resist offering employment to a person with extra needs because of the perceived cost of meeting those needs in terms of extra training, for existing staff and the new recruit.

The (re-) integration of people with disabilities and older people into health- and care professions should be realized by professional employees and not by resourced on a purely voluntary basis. But in the scope of the project, voluntary mentors and diversity counsellors (DC) can help with the reintegration. The discussions showed that tasks of light care (geriatric care helper, health assistant or nursing assistant); within domestic economy, or daily accompaniment are realistic possibilities for the project target group.

Newsletter Issue 2

Diversity and Mentoring approaches to Support Active Ageing and Integration

The expert meetings defined **the following points** as success factors for the integration of inclusive care workers into the labour market:

- A clear activity and competence profile of suitable jobs in Health/Care for all team members
- Evaluation of the specific staff requirements – staff management and human resource planning
- Strengthening the team’s diversity competences
- Applying/installing a mentoring programme.
- Additional support such as job placement assistance, supervision, translation of texts into easy-to-read language, etc.
- Motivation of people to work in Health/Care institutions
- Financial support for preparing the target group for their work
- Facilitating job opportunities for seniors and for persons with mild disabilities by ‘job coaches’
- Making human resource managers aware about the graduates and financial supports
- Determining a legal framework for the employment of seniors and for people with learning disabilities (insurance and financial support)
- Preparation of sectors like health, care and education for the employment of active seniors and disabled people first of all.
- Adjustment/orientation to work environment via mentor (reference person) for seniors and for a disabled person is very important. There must be an apprenticeship programme before the employment.
- Organizing workshops in Vocational Training Centre/Schools for the future employment of their disabled students in sectors with skill shortage like Health and Care sector.



FGD Germany



FGD Turkey

Social platform

A social network supported by an ICT platform for innovative online training, forums for information exchange and solving problems, collaboration is developed within the project (www.platform.dimensaai.eu)



DIMENSAAI
Diversity and MEntoring approaches to Support Active Ageing and Integration

Log in

Welcome to the social learning community of DIMENSAAI

This platform provides:

- Social networking service
- Moderated forums
- Innovative training sessions for diversity counselors and mentors
- Cooperation between project partners to develop products and training materials

To join our community you must register yourself and then login
 Click here to register
 Click here to login

For details about the project please visit our web-site: <http://www.dimensaai.eu>