



Executive Agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture



## **Inclusive Vocational Education and Specialised Tailor-made Training**

Progress Report

Public Part

## Project information

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## Executive Summary

The Europe 2020 Strategy wishes to develop a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe. In this perspective, attention should be given to the inclusion of persons with disabilities on the labour market. They can represent a significant addition to the labour force and contribute to the economic production. A qualitative and inclusive vocational education and training (VET) system is crucial in this regard.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities includes two key principles, Universal Design and Reasonable Accommodation, according to which products should be designed to be usable by all people and be accompanied with specific accommodations, in order for the product to be accessible to the greatest extent possible.

Based on these principles, Inclusive Vocational Education and Specialised Tailor-made Training, or INVESTT, wants to provide vocational schools with specific tips in order to guide all students towards the open labour market.

A teaching programme is thus produced in each partner country to help practitioners to create a universal design in their learning environment. This teaching programme is assessed through a cyclical approach, where it is first developed theoretically then tried and tested in the field throughout two years.

In this perspective, the project was developed in four countries representing different social cultures in Europe – Belgium, Norway, Austria and Slovenia. In each country, three partner organisations are involved, each with their specific expertise. The university develops the theoretical framework, the school implements the teaching programme and the service provider supports the national team with its expertise in special needs education.

The research team has already developed its research paper developing the theoretical framework of the project, as well as the Strategy at European level which extracts from the national contexts studied suggestions for practitioners across Europe to develop a universal design in their own VET context.

The schools have started the implementation of the teaching programme in August/September 2013, and have noted changes both in the approach of teachers as well as students.

At the end of the academic year 2013-2014, the teaching programme will be assessed and adapted accordingly. The new version will then be tested between August/September 2014 and June 2015, when the teaching programme will once again be evaluated, and a final version be produced.

In the end, there will be four teaching programmes on universal design, one per partner country. The recommendations from these four programmes will be shared with all stakeholders across Europe.

INVESTT will also help break down an important barrier to achieve inclusive VET for all, namely the lack of practical information, through the development of a network of practitioners and of an online knowledge centre, [www.investt.eu](http://www.investt.eu).

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# 1. Project Objectives

The project aims at contributing to a society:

- Where equal opportunities are guaranteed for all.
- Where every citizen can enjoy the right to high-quality vocational education and training in an inclusive setting, meeting his/her personal abilities.
- Where every citizen can enjoy the right to freely choose a career path in the open labour market and actively contribute to the society, meeting his/her personal abilities.

Its concrete objective is to provide vocational schools with specific information and suggestions in order to guide all students (including those with disabilities) towards the open labour market. The project develops and implements a teaching programme – intensively cross-referenced with the expectations of the labour market today – in the mainstream educational system in order to improve the inclusiveness of these settings and the employment in particular of students with a disability into the open labour market.

The project thus aims to develop a universal design in the learning environment in order to include persons with disabilities in the mainstream vocational education system, helping them to achieve the same qualification as other students, and to improve their transition from school to the open labour market.

In that sense, the project is contributing to the educational objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020.

In concrete terms, the project sets out to:

- Develop a teaching programme, helping practitioners to create a universal design in their concrete learning environment, including curriculum adjustments, inclusive teaching methods and a revision of the evaluation methods, in each partner country. This teaching programme consists of a cyclic process of research and action, evaluated on a continuous basis.
- Develop a strategy at European level, helping practitioners to work towards a universal design in their own VET context, enabling them to provide a specialised tailor-made training for all. This strategy is based on research carried out in the partner countries focusing on universal design and reasonable accommodation.
- Further elaborate a sustainable network of all those committed to inclusive education, which was originally developed by the Comenius project 'Pathways to Inclusion', including now stakeholders from the VET sector.
- Further develop the web-based knowledge centre on 'Inclusive education for all', which was originally developed by 'Pathways to Inclusion', now focusing on inclusive VET.

## 2. Project Approach

In order to achieve the project objectives, the work adopts a 4-phase approach.

The first phase has been dedicated to the research on what has been done with regard to 'universal design' and 'reasonable accommodation'. This research is leading to an overall strategy on the setting up of an inclusive learning environment, helping the national project teams to develop a concrete teaching programme in their country.

In the current school year, the schools in the consortium implement the programme in their learning environment with intensive support from the service providers.

The third phase of the project will take place in the next school year, from August 2014 to September 2015. On the one hand, the students who have received a qualification will be followed in their job in order to further streamline the programme with the requirements of the labour market. On the other hand, new students will participate in the updated teaching programme.

The evaluation of the teaching programme is being done on a continuous basis, the last phase of the project will cover the bulk of the evaluation, in order to come to a sustainable product, ready to be used and further developed in the future.

The common evaluation models which will be used were developed by the research centres in cooperation with the entire consortium, and follow the principles of a cyclic process of research and implementation.

This 4-phase approach ensures that input from all the stakeholders in the education process is taken into account – from the parents, students, students with disabilities, schools and employers. Furthermore, it ensures that the final outcome of the project is grounded both in sound academic theory as well as in concrete day-to-day practice.

Building up on the success of the project 'Pathways to Inclusion', a database of stakeholders on inclusive education is continuously being expanded. Through social media interaction such as LinkedIn and Twitter as well as periodic newsletters, an active and sustainable network of stakeholders is being built. Furthermore, national seminars will be organised to present the outcome of the project in the partner countries, while stakeholder forums will be organised in neighbouring countries to develop the network and encourage other countries to develop teaching programmes with a universal design perspective.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

The objective of INVESTT is to provide VET schools with specific information and suggestions in order to guide students with disabilities towards the open labour market.

In this regard, the results of the project so far have been :

1. An online Knowledge Centre on inclusive education in mainstream education as well as in the VET sector. It can be found on the Investt homepage, <http://www.investt.eu/knowledge-centre/inclusive-education>.
2. A research paper outlining the theoretical framework of the project, as well as a dissemination paper summarising the findings of the research. Both can be found on the Investt homepage, [http://www.investt.eu/sites/default/files/Investt%20Research%20Paper\\_EN.pdf](http://www.investt.eu/sites/default/files/Investt%20Research%20Paper_EN.pdf) [http://www.investt.eu/sites/default/files/Dissemination%20paper%201\\_EN.pdf](http://www.investt.eu/sites/default/files/Dissemination%20paper%201_EN.pdf).
3. A teaching programme in each partner country. Developed by the universities in collaboration with the schools, the programmes are now being implemented in schools with the support of service providers. Coming closer to the end of the academic year, the difference in the teaching environment – the way the class is prepared as well as the way it is given and the content it includes – is being felt and appreciated both by the teachers and the students.
4. A strategy at European level helping practitioners in other countries to implement a universal design in their own VET context, based on the findings in the partner countries. It can be found on the Investt homepage, [http://www.investt.eu/sites/default/files/Strategy%20at%20European%20Level\\_EN.pdf](http://www.investt.eu/sites/default/files/Strategy%20at%20European%20Level_EN.pdf).
5. A database of stakeholders interested in inclusive education, counting 656 stakeholders and growing. This covers universities, research centres, high schools, schools, VET centres, service providers, local, national and European authorities as well as individuals and newspapers.
6. Two INVESTT newsletters on the state of play of the project, as well as other projects and events related to inclusive education. You can subscribe to the newsletter through the Investt homepage, [www.investt.eu](http://www.investt.eu).

## 4. Partnerships

Partner ID	Partner name	Country	Type
1	European Association of Service Providers for persons with Disabilities (EASPD)	BE	European Network
2	Vlaams Verbond van het Katholiek Buitengewoon Onderwijs (VVKBuO)	BE	Service Provider
3	University of Leuven	BE	University
4	Scheppersinstituut	BE	School
5	Behandlungszentrum Aschau Gmbh	DE	Service Provider
7	Schule für Sozialbetreuungsberufe	AT	School
8	Center za usposabljanje, dela in varstvo Dolfke Bostjancic Draga (CUDV Draga)	SI	Service Provider
9	Institut Republike Slovenije za socialno varstvo	SI	Research Centre
10	Poslovno-komercialna sola Celje	SI	School
11	The National Support System for Special Needs Education (Stated Vest)	NO	Service Provider
12	University of Stavanger	NO	University
13	Gand videregaende skole	NO	School
14	Pädagogische Hochschule Salzburg	AT	University

The INVESTT consortium is composed of one European Association and 12 partners spread in 5 countries. The countries were selected for the close ties the partners had and to represent the particularities of different regions in Europe. This in turn allows the findings of the project to be extrapolated to neighbouring countries and to a Strategy at European level.

The European Association, EASPD, is the coordinating partner and is, thanks to the almost 10000 organisations represented in its membership, able to maximise the project results at European level. It can also provide input from and disseminate to a large and varied stakeholder community.

In each country, 3 project partners were chosen to translate the outcomes of the research at European level into the daily practice at local level, and to incorporate the best elements of each education system in a European perspective, keeping into account the local context of each country.

The universities and research centres with their academic expertise are responsible for the research to be carried out. In close cooperation with other partners they also develop the inclusive teaching programme at local level and evaluate continuously the implementation of the programmes.

The schools, having a lot of practical experience and knowledge, cooperate closely with the research centres in the development and implementation of the teaching programme and the strategy at European level.

The service providers support the implementation of the programmes with their specific expertise in special needs education, and form the steering committee of the project.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is also involved as associated partner in order to ensure the quality of the project outcomes and their relation to the expectations of the labour market.

## 5. Plans for the Future

By the end of the school year 2013-2014, INVESTT will have finished the second phase of its process. The theoretical framework will have been implemented for a year in the partner school, leading to adjustments and improvements in the universal design of the teaching programmes.

The pupils who have received a qualification in the first year will be monitored to optimise the teaching programme and ensure the programme fits the requirements of the labour market. New students will follow the updated teaching programme following the feedback of stakeholders over the past year.

This teaching programme will also be continuously evaluated throughout the year. At the end of the school year 2014-2015, the final teaching programme will be ready. The programmes of the different countries will have a similar break-down and lay-out, in order to make comparison easier. They will be made available in the Knowledge Centre on [www.investt.eu](http://www.investt.eu) and will be disseminated among the stakeholders, along with the final evaluation paper on the teaching programmes at country level.

National seminars in each partner country – Belgium, Norway, Austria, Germany and Slovenia – and stakeholder forums in 4 neighbouring countries – Finland, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Macedonia – will furthermore be organised until June 2015. These will be opportunities to clarify the needs of stakeholders, receive their input on the project process and encourage them to use or further develop teaching programmes with a universal design. The seminars and forums will also be used to foster a dynamic and sustainable stakeholder network dedicated to inclusive education in the VET system.

Once the implementation part of the project has been concluded, the strategy at European level will be finalised, product of the original theoretical framework and of the continuous evaluation. It will be a clear guide for practitioners across Europe to work towards a universal design in their own VET context, accompanied with advice on reasonable accommodation which could be provided to a student if the learning environment does not correspond to his/her needs.

The results of the INVESTT project will be presented in a final conference held in Salzburg on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015. This event will ensure that the voices of all stakeholders are heard and that they are informed about the main project outcomes as tools to improve their work.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

The responsibility for education policy lies mainly in the hands of the different Member States. Research, however, shows that the challenges faced in this field are very similar throughout Europe. In spite of the theoretical background of international and European declarations and policy documents (such as the Salamanca Statement, Council of Europe Action Plan 2006-2015, EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020, EU 2020 Strategy, UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), inclusive VET for all is not yet a reality.

Although the educational systems are very different in the EU countries, we strongly believe that analysing the strengths of each system is helpful to increase the quality of all systems. There is no need to make an identical copy of the educational systems or to create one uniform way of working, but it is crucial to incorporate the best elements of each of them.

Based on the relevant key aspects of vocational education and training programmes for students with special educational needs, defined by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education and other research at international level, we are producing a strategy with pan-European validity, resulting in inclusive teaching programmes at local level which focus on a universal design in the learning environment. As they will have a scientific ground and an international basis, it will be particularly useful for schools or training centres in other European countries to implement or adapt them to their local situation.

Building further on the network established by the 'Pathways to Inclusion' project, INVESTT is developing a broad European network with a large range of different realities, models and success stories. Such a community at European level will help spread the expertise gained and impact the inclusion of the VET system across the EU.

In that sense, we contribute to the achievement of effective inclusion, where all students/pupils can develop according to their own special prerequisites. We contribute to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and the Employment Strategy by spreading good practices and developing competences in vocational schools and training centres.

