Empowerment by employment

NORDPLUS Adult

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1 Introduction to the “Empowerment by employment” project

“An inclusive society is a society for all in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play”.
The World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 1995

There are an estimated 650 million people with disabilities worldwide, which amounts to 10 % of the global population. Many of them are somehow excluded from society. For instance, people with disabilities might not have equal access to public information or have equal opportunities for work as well as distribution of wealth and resources. According to the United Nations agenda, there are several key areas in which social inclusion objectives need to be integrated: poverty, employment and sustainable development. Poverty eradication and employment creation, two goals of the Social Summit, are considered to be key areas to achieve the goal of creating an inclusive society.

To post-modern societies, employment of youngsters and adults with special needs is a major challenge. Western economy development and tech-revolution has rapidly affected the amount of jobs that are done using muscle power. The work that used to be done by hands in factories is now being replaced by machines. Many companies have moved their production to more cost-effective countries. For these reasons, companies in the Nordic and Baltic area have had difficulties maintaining their competitiveness without reducing the amount of labor.

In the meantime, it is important to notice that integration to the labor market can be the most effective way of preventing disabled people from being ostracized. Furthermore, integration has also a major influence on social costs of nation-states. These two factors legitimate institutions and organizations that are operating in the field of special employment. To improve inclusion on the job market, there is a need for innovative solutions, cross-national cooperation and open minded thinking. This can only be done by strengthening ties with companies, public institutions and third-sector actors.

The “Empowerment by employment” (EBE) project was launched in 2014. It was established to look for new innovative practices in the Nordic and Baltic area that are improving the employment of people with special needs. Participants in the project were: Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre from Estonia, Dugni Vocational Needs College from Faroes, Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre from Lithuania and Validia Vocational College from Finland.

All the partners in the project operate in the field of vocational education and training for people with special needs. The purpose of the project was to share knowledge and good practices between participating organizations on how to support people with disabilities in the employment process and in the working life. A permanent development network between project partners was also created.

The project was divided into five parts:

1. Visits to partner organizations (including visits to employers in the country) to see the local practices & learn about national systems, teaching/learning environments, and organizations of service provision;
2. Peer review to exchange practices and techniques of work (bench learning);
3. Using good approaches and methods from others in order to support clients;
4. Creating a booklet to compile good ways of working and sharing information amongst external partners, service users, employers, etc;
5. Using a Facebook group as a tool for keeping contact between project partners and sharing information.

This “Empowerment by employment” booklet can be a fruitful source for rehabilitiation institutions and education organizations when they are seeking new ideas to cultivate their worklife relevancy and especially improve their results in integrating people with special needs into real jobs. Please find suitable ideas for your organization and enjoy the reading!

2. EBE partners

2.1 Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre, Estonia

The Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre provides rehabilitation services and scholarly courses to working-age people with special needs. As a valued partner of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the staff of Astangu work to improve the social services sector, with an emphasis on vocational rehabilitation in Estonia.The courses for people with special needs have been provided ever since the centre started operating in 1996. Over the years, over 900 people have graduated from a range of the courses. In the 2014/15 academic year, there were 130 students in 18 groups at Astangu.

Currently offered programmes are:
1. Prevocational training programmes;
2. Vocational training programmes;
3. Vocational education;
4. Traumatic brain injury programme.

Additionally, Astangu focuses strongly on being a national competence centre in the field of social and vocational rehabilitation. The wide array of projects and developments combine with the main vocational rehabilitation process, constituting the prime activities of the centre. Astangu has been awarded with EQUASS Assurance quality certificate and is the Local Licence Holder providing support in implementing a quality system to other social service providers in Estonia. Collaborating with the European Platform for Rehabilitation, Astangu has successfully maintained a multi-year relationship with many vocational rehabilitation centres in Europe.
The most important aim of the Astangu is to prepare people with special needs for work, support them in their search for suitable jobs and help them in adjusting to their jobs. Main areas of work-related activity are:

- Prepare students for work through career-guidance classes, individual counseling and company visits.

During group work sessions (career guidance classes) and individual counseling, the clients can focus on different work related topics, such as job opportunities, employers' expectations, finding a job, suitable behaviour in the workplace, legislation, and career services. During company visits, the clients can learn about the work environment and obtain a first-hand impression of a potential workplace.

- Support students in finding traineeship places and provide continued support throughout the traineeship.

The process of finding traineeship opportunities takes place through close cooperation with clients, their parents and/or other people who provide close support, vocational teachers, and rehabilitation specialists. When finding traineeship opportunities, a client's abilities and skills are taken into account and preference will be upon

traineeship sites near the client's home in order to maximise their chances of finding a job in their home area.

- Support graduates and alumni in finding jobs and in their work process.

Supported employment method is used as a basis for helping the clients to achieve employment. This method has been implemented successfully in many other countries. Instead of directly finding jobs for the students, they are supported while they take the active role in the search process. By involving the clients and their support circle, the responsibility is shared. This ensures that the client's goals are met, and helps them keep their job long term.

- Cooperation with employers, to raise their awareness through various training events.

Cooperation with employers is a central activity of the Astangu vocational rehabilitation process in order to achieve the desired aim – clients' employment. Educating employers is important, because many companies have indicated low awareness of how to integrate people with special needs into the labour market. In the employers training day, Astangu specialists provide employers with information about people with special needs and their opportunities in the labour market, and discuss potential areas of cooperation. In 2013, Astangu's "Employers training day" program won the Innovation Prize of European Platform for Rehabilitation.

2.2 Dugni, Faroes

Dugni is a self-governing institution underneath Ministry of Social Affairs. Dugni's mission is to work for a more "spacious" labour market in the Faroe Islands by systematic and steady to influence the political system and the employers with the saying:
"Everybody has a right for education and/or a job"

Dugni is a rehabilitation institution for people within the working age - from age 18 to 67 years - people who for some reason have stopped working or never finished primary school and need a new start in life. The target group is people with social-psychological- and physical disabilities. Dugni's main purpose is to help clients that struggle to keep a job back into the labour market. We organize work experience programs, rehabilitation and retraining in an effort to help our students keep a steady and regular job in future.

The structure and activity of Dugni is divided into three major programmes:

- **rehabilitating/retraining (job training)**
  The work rehabilitation school is a sheltered workshop with possibility for job training. In the rehabilitation school "á Hjalla" in Tórshavn and in the department of Dugni in "Kambsdalur" the students have the opportunity to get some work practice, to get instruction and guidance and to develop as a person. The goal and main purpose of the program is to train and rebuild the students so they

can enter the labour market or start an education. Programs in the sheltered workshops:

- ICT - fx. Publishing, Layout
- Wood workshop, Padding and painting
- Restaurant, cooking, service and cleaning
- Recycling store, warehouse and customers service

As well as we help the student develop and train his/ hers working skills we empathize the importance of training the social skills.

- **rehabilitating/ sheltered jobs for clients with early retirement (job)**
  Dugni offers jobs to people with limited work abilities and early retirement. These jobs are at our sheltered workshops as described above, fitted to the worker´s ability, capacity and interest

- **rehabilitating/education (school)**
  At Dugni's school "skúlin við Áir" we offer two programs - 9th grade and a preparation class for 9th grade. The students are from age 18 up to 67.
  The school offers a full 9th year curriculum with mathematics, Faroese, Danish, English, History, Biology, Geography, Physical Activities and IT. At the same time, the school offers tests for dyslexia and provides special education for those, who struggle with reading and mathematics. In the timetable, there is available time for special help or tutored homework. The school follows the public school system and it is therefore required to follow the Primary Education Act.
  With the 9th grade diploma the students can apply for higher schools fx. Business school (fhs), Senior High School (HF), apprenticeship or get a regular job.
  In the preparation class we aim to give basic reading, writing and mathematics ability to the students. The school also supports the students in getting necessary help when needed concerning personal challenges this so that the students are able to learn and gain the 9th grade diploma in the school.

<u>General unemployment rate in the Faroe Islands</u>

According to Hagstova Føroyar (www.hagstova.fo), there were 24,948 employees in Jun'15 and the unemployment was 2.9%. The unemployment rates has been quite steady this year and has been around 3.0%. The unemployment for men is 2.3% and for the women 3.8%.

The numbers show that more and more teenagers and senior citizens are working. In the last year the number of working pensioners has grown with 10,3%.
In the recent years, the labour market is getting more aware of hiring people with disabilities. In a country like The Faroe Islands - a so-called microstate - with limited natural resources and small population, it is important that we use all the capacity all working power we have.

2.3 Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre, Lithuania

The public Institution Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre (VRC) was established in 2000 by the Government of Lithuania. The mission of VRC is to provide, constantly improve and develop medical, vocational and social rehabilitation services, vocational educational training for people with disabilities and other persons who experience social exclusion or long-term health problems, in order for them to reach full and equal participation, integration and a better quality of life.

Over 100 VRC staff members provide vocational rehabilitation, medical rehabilitation and driving school services for people with severe and moderate disabilities in Lithuania. Every year, more than 700 service users benefit from the services provided in the Vilnius and Kaunas locations.

Vocational rehabilitation programme

At the Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre, vocational rehabilitation programme is available for people who have certified 0-45 percent of working capacities. The vocational rehabilitation is defined as restoration of a person's capacity to work, professional competence, and capacity to participate in the labour market or increase thereof by educational, social, psychological, rehabilitation, and other means. The programme consists of 5 sequentially running stages: assessment of vocational skills, vocational guidance and counselling, restoration of current vocational skills or vocational training, job search support and on-job support.
Service users in the Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre may choose from 24 vocational training programmes, including ICT, administration, handcraft and social care related training.

Every trainee at the Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre receives support in job search. These services aim to provide professional job search support and assistance in working place services for people with disabilities seeking to successfully integrate into the labour market and society. It includes personal counselling on the labour market situation, development of job-search skills, workplace search services and counselling on workplace adjustments. These services are provided to the people with disabilities or to potential employers.

Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre works in close cooperation with companies and strives for successful experience in job placement of clients who completed VRC's vocational rehabilitation programme.

People with disabilities in Lithuania

In Lithuania, a person with disabilities is an individual with less than 55 % working capacity and/or with special needs requirements, as recognized under the Law of Social Integration of People with Disabilities. Working capacity is individual capacity to implement previously acquired professional competence or acquire new professional competence or perform less demanding tasks in terms of professional

competence.In 2013, the total number of people with disabilities who were receiving disability pensions or allowances for their lost capacity for work was 253 689, which represents about 8,5 % of the whole population according to official data from year 2013. Approximately 32 % of all people with working disabilities are employed.

2.4 Validia Vocational College, Finland

The Validia Vocational College (Validia) is owned by the Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities (FPD), established in 1948. Validia provides vocational education and training for students with special needs, rehabilitative instruction and guidance for disabled students. In addition to this, Validia provides home economics instruction. Development and service centre of special vocational education, the school campus is situated in Järvenpää, around 35 km north of Helsinki, the capital of Finland; Validia Vocational College is an accessible learning environment with 270 employees and 600 students with special needs.
There are two study programmes in rehabilitative instuction and guidance. First is the training preparing students for upper secondary VET – similar contents and themes as the corresponding VET. Second is the training preparing students for work and independent living – aiming to enable students to acquire skills that are required in working life (in eg sheltered workshops).
Validia offers secondary education and training in 10 study programs. Students study in small groups, with emphasis on practical aspects. All studies include personal instruction and guidance.

Examples of Validia VET programs:
-Business and administration;
-Logistics;
-Watchmaking (watchmaker);
-Vehicle technology (vehicle mechanic);
-Metalwork and machinery (precision mechanic);
-Cleaning services (site facilities operative);
-Visual expression (graphic designing);
-Business information technology (IT support specialist).

<u>General unemployment rate in Finland</u>

According to Statistics Finland's Labour Force Survey, the number of unemployed individuals in December 2014 was 232 000, which was 27 000 higher than in 2013. The unemployment rate was 8.8 per cent, having been 7.9 per cent in December of the previous year. In Finland, approximately 15-20 % of people with disabilities are in working life. There has been estimations that 15 000 - 30 000 disabled people who have decent working ability are inactive (Linnankangas, 2006; Holm & Hopponen, 2007; Laiho, 2010). It has also been described that there are problems in transition from basic education to secondary education for people with disability (Mahlamaki, 2013).

Transitions from Validia to working life

Many Validia students are moving towards their first job – or their first job after a new degree. The aim is set for a job (or some other suitable solution). The best possible scenario is employment right after graduation. Health issues, skills and income issues need to be considered. At Validia, the main scope is to find suitable career paths for every graduating student. Validia has succeeded well in this endeavour, when comparing to other similar education institutions in Finland. In 2014, 54 % of the graduates were integrated to working life (pay subsidy or not) or work trial (Validia transition survey, 2014). Validia's services for students support the well-qualified everyday teaching. As one of these services, career counselling has the main emphasis to increase employment rates for Validia students. Career counsellors provide information and guidance on special employment services as well as guidance and support for job hunting, training for job interviews, assistance with bureaucracy and form filling.

2.4.1 Varusteleka LTD

Assistant warehouse manager Jarmo Tyni, Varusteleka LTD

The co-operation with Validia started in 2013, by offering logistics teaching to students at the company's logistics center, and went from there to start the so called "Strike force project" in the Autumn of 2015. It started by teaching 2 of Validia's instructors to have basic knowledge and know-how about Varusteleka's Outbound Logistics department and basic order picking and sending parcels. This way the Strike Force became a self-sustaining team inside the company, which was beficial for both Varusteleka and Validia. Varusteleka was also one company to visit during the project meeting in Finland. Mr Jarmo Tyni also participated to the exra meeting in Copenhagen as one of Finland's representatives.

The main goal of Varusteleka is to offer a job environment that has a low starting level, mainly for logistics students and students that are younger and have no working experience, allowing them to find easy-to-obtain jobs within the organisation. In the course of 5 years, the organization has formed over 500 student, from elementary school (300 people) to those who are studying vocational education (200 people). Currently, out of 13 employees, 9 are former trainees from different fields of studies. One is actually from Validia and was a logistics trainee until he got a permanent job at the Outbound Logistics department in Varusteleka.

The reason why so many students were trained there is that the approach to teaching is kind of different when compared to other companies in Finland. Every job process is made by thinking about what the easiest and logical way would be for one trainee to perform a given task. Whether it be picking a webstore order or sending them to a buyer, the trainee only needs a couple of hours to get in touch with the job.

Trainees are also a source of learning for the company. When they are given a task, they can be observed: if they do not perform the task in the proper way, the trainees are not blaimed, but rather the process itself. The people within the organization are therefore required to start thinking over the specific process that did not work out and simplify its working methods; another possibility is to make some adjustments to the warehouse management system (WMS). This way, no ”super employees/students” are needed, and the company gets everyone to the same line as what it takes to someday become its employee.

”I am very pleased to become part of this project as a representative of Varusteleka. When we started our cooperation with the Validia vocational college, I became familiar with students with special needs, as a trainee recruiter and job instructor. In the future, I expect more to come from this kind of project and we sure are ready to continue as a company if we get the opportunity.” – Jarmo Tyni, Varusteleka Ltd.

3. Good practices

The main goal of the EBE project was to find new effective and innovative solutions in improving the inclusion of disabled people to the job market. Good practices were found during the benchmarking visits to each partner organization. Every visit was systematically written and reported about by the visiting teams in each country. The following paragraph constitutes a recipe-like presentation of the good practices found in Lithuania, Estonia, the Faroe Islands and Finland. Those good practices were Video CV, Employers training day, Career counselling and Presentation skills.

3.1 Video CV

Natalja Markovskaja and Rasa Noreikyte-Ustinaviciene, Valakupiai Rehabilitation centre, Lithuania.

Objective:
To support people with disabilities when trying to find employment, by visually demonstrating a person's personal, everyday life and work abilities to fulfill a job role.

Video CV creation consists of the following contents:

- Empowerment-of-person session, self-exploration session to know the person's skills, abilities and personal characteristics;
- Effective self-presentation workshops through video training;
- Recording of the video CV and postproduction;
- Use of the video CV in the job search and employment process.

Actors involved and roles:

- People with disabilities;
- Employment counsellors, social workers and psychologists;
- Employers.

Result:

- Improved employment rate of people with disabilities;
- Raised employers' awareness in the disability field;
- Improved empowerment of people with disabilities.

Many individuals who have severe or moderate disabilities are far more capable than they may appear on paper, for example in a paper CV. When seeking work experiences — as an employee, volunteer, intern — most of the time, employers who are not familiar with disabilities focus more on limitations than strengths. A video CV is a way to show potential employers that a person with disabilities has specific skills and abilities that might be a good match for their vacancies. Employers are not the only ones who can use the Video CV, but also the employees who will work directly or indirectly together with the applicant, for example an administrator. Another reason to use the video CV is to tackle the misperceptions of the employers about people with disabilities. Most employers have never had any personal or work experience with people with disabilities, so a video CV is a method to demonstrate an individual's ability to fulfil a job role through video.

Success factors:

- Short and focused as most employers make up their minds about a potential recruit within 20 seconds of looking at a CV;
- Professional video to increase attractiveness;
- Good representational look of the participant (tidy clothes and hair).

Feedback from employer:
"Often, employers make inaccurate judgements about disabled people. This is a fantastic way of showing employers that you are a real person with amazing skills and talents!"

More video CV's:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pg_MXdu9FuI&list=PLusuEaBf-P7QXWey9qnYocw1GrO6Jh3m_

3.2 Employers training day

Jana Maekivi, Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre, Estonia

Objective:
To share information and experiences on recruiting people with disabilities.

Employers training day creation consists of the following contents:

- Information on pay subsidies;
- Self-exploration sessions to know how people with disabilities can cope in society and their everyday lives.

Actors involved and roles:

- People with disabilities;
- Job coaches, employment counsellors, social workers and psychologists;
- Employers.

Result:

- Improved awareness regarding the recruitment of people with disabilities;
- Raised awareness of the employers in the disability field;
- Contacts and contracts between education/rehabilitation centers and companies.

Employers recognize more and more their social responsibility with hiring people with disabilities. For employer, it does not matter whether the person has a disability or not, the most important thing being that the job get done. It is important for the person with a disability to be both willing and ready for the job, while it is also essential that they get offered one that is suitable to them. What they really need is support. In order to bring these two parties together, Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (Astangu VRC) implemented an event – Employers training day.

How then to persuade companies to be more active in hiring people with disabilities? It took a lot of effort until the event really succeeded; in 2016, employers started to demand the training day, because they were keen to acquire knowledge on how to

hire disabled people and what they should pay special attention to. The Astangu VRC employment unit is responsible for organizing the employers' day. The morning of the employers' day starts with preparation tasks and welcome coffee which leads employers forward to the seminar room.

The introductory part of the day is filled with presentations, where many specialists explain the field of rehabilitation and introduce the subject of disability and side problems which occur with it. The clients share their stories, and a questions and answers session ends the morning of the training day. After the lunch break, there is a tour of the building to show the facilities of Astangu VRC. After the tour, some extra physical activities for the guests are prepared. It is very important to show employers what they need to focus on if they hire a person with, for example, a physical disability. What employers need to experience: riding a wheelchair; managing through the special wheelchair path; trying out wheelchair tennis as well as trying to move outside the building or on the street, etc.

Employers training day has become as a very important tool for social responsibility, not only to motivate employers to hire people with special needs, but also because it creates a win-win situation: disabled people are helped in finding a job, allowing them to enter the labor market, while the employers discover the benefits for themselves of hiring a person with disabilities. The training day received the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) Innovation Prize 2013.

A video about the Employers Training Day at Astangu VRC:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpRwJv1y2VA

3.3 Career counselor services

Satu Kataja, Validia Vocational College, Finland
Tuomas Kaihua, Validia Vocational College, Finland

Objective:
To improve job market relevancy and effectiveness on vocational and rehabilitation education.

Career counselor services consist of the following functions:

- Guidance and support to graduating students on job seeking, job market situations;
- Gathering a multiprofessional network for supporting students to working life;
- Activating the cooperation with companies and educational/rehabilitation institutions;
- Monitoring student performance in a variety of work sites according to program guidelines (e.g. visiting job sites, obtaining employer evaluations, serving as a liaison between employer & student, etc.) for the purpose of identifying areas requiring additional training on techniques and methods for maintaining solid work habits.

Actors involved and roles:

- Students;
- Career councellor;
- Teachers;
- Employers.

Result:

- Improved results and awareness of recruiting people with disabilities;
- Raised employers awareness in the disability field;
- Contacts and contracts between education/rehabilitation centers and companies.

Career counselling in special education institutions is a relatively new phenomenon in the Finnish special education system. At the Validia Vocational College (Validia), the increasing need for career counselling service was recognized as the challenges and the needs for special education of incoming students were escalating, partly because of the governmen's youth policy agenda established in 2013. According to Youth guarantee, everyone under the age of 25, as well as recent graduates under 30 should be offered a job, on-the-job training, a study place or rehabilitation within three months of becoming unemployed.

Career counselling at the Validia is based on the current situation and needs of a student. The students have different goals in their lives; some of them will continue their studies after graduation, while some are heading to working life. Most of the students are studying in a special education institution because they have health issues that are diminishing their opportunities to study in regular vocational schools. As of 2016, the major reason for people to need special education was mental health issues, although the amount of people with autism was increasing as well.

For Validia students, career counsellors provide education, training and support on workseeking skills, such as work interview skills and how to write a CV and application. The counsellors' goal is to find suitable solutions for each student during their studies in Validia. Some of the students receive support also after graduating. In addition, career counsellors are dealing with employment office, social security office in situations where the subsidies for employment are needed.

Counsellors are the main professional group co-operating with entrepreneurs, companies and employers. Their emphasis is to constantly find new innovative solutions on reaching results on employment of people with special needs. Counsellors are regularly organizing various events for employers, such as breakfast for company owners, (speed dating based recruitment event) Talent meeting, Job Shadow Day etc. With various events, everybody wins: students will get working opportunities and companies new workers.

In Finland, career counselling is more known in higher education institutions. Requirements for the profession vary depending on the formality of the institution. In universities, career counsellors may have a degree from university or polytechnic

school. In a secondary vocational education facility, there might not be any education requirements for career counsellors or job coaches, the experience from employment profession and knowledge about different special needs are more valued. In secondary special education institutions, it is more usual to meet job coaches than career counselors, although the job requirements and description are quite similar.

3.4 Presentation skills, Elevator speech

Hedvig Johansdóttir, Dugni, Faroe Islands

Objective:
To improve marketing skills and effectiveness on job-seeking processes.

Presentation skills consist of the following functions:

- Guidance and support to clients regarding self knowledge on personal abilities and strengths;
- Guidance and support to clients on job seeking.

Actors involved and roles:

- Clients;
- Staff members;
- Customers;
- Vocational partners.

Result:

- Raised awareness;
- Realistic view on personal abilities;
- Opportunity to test presentation skills;
- Inspiration to others;
- Improved results on job seeking.

Dugni values the importance of allowing the students and people with early retirement pensions to grow in acknowledgement of their own strengths and possible limitations. The goal is to help all clients grow in the area of self-esteem and self-respect.

This is a necessary foundation to personal development and growth. Dugni's focus areas are:

- The individual is the basis;
- We acknowledge diversity;
- Focus on abilities.

These areas are integrated in everything it is done at Dugni. There, clients are encouraged to step forward and supported in doing so, all adjusted to what they feel capable of. The importance of various assignments on all levels is aknowledged. It is essential to see the greatness in the small things or assignments, and to give equal importance to all, for instance when Dugni presents itself and those assignments to visitors.

Students performing at open reception

Students are introducing work assignments to the Minister of Social affairs

All working assignments give the participants opportunities to practice their presentation skills. These skills are very valuable: they support the clients' acknowledgement of themselves, make them capable of sharing their own story and then give them the opportunity to be an inspiration to others.

4. Experiences on implementing good practices

After the benchlearning trips around the Nordic and Baltic area each organization implemented good practices they discovered in other countries to their own organization. The good practice's process was adjusted to each organization's culture, and developed further if needed. The following paragraphs will report the experiences on implementing good practices in each country.

4.1 Video CV (Implemented in Estonia)

Jana Maekivi, Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre, Estonia

Astangu VRC has gone through the innovative practice with trying out video CV creation. According to the curricula of the study program, students have to have practical training each year during their studies. Therefore, for some students a video CV would be a great opportunity to present themselves before the internship starts.

One of the students of the vocational training course (Software Development) needed a video CV to get acquainted with the employer. This student was very enthusiastic about the idea and was a wonderful partner to the filming team, bringing along plenty of humor and creativity. This experience had a really positive outcome and inspired all involved.

However, for all of the participants involved in the process of making the video CVs, it was a good experience and wonderful practice, especially when it comes to the effective teamwork involved, allowing the participants to gain something new. This practice was introduced to the employment unit and it is now being used.

Results of implementing video CV:
- the best way for people with physical disabilities to introduce themselves to the employer;
- possibility for adjustment in the process (it can be filmed many times in order to present only the best version of the CV to the employer);
- occasion for people with disabilities to be modern, to be able to respond to the employer's needs;
- The person can learn about their strengths and weaknesses while performing;
- due to the performance being online, the clients have less fear afterwards when going to the working place and meeting the employer.

4.2 Employers training day (Implemented in Lithuania)
Natalja Markovskaja, Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre, Lithuania

Inspired by the "Empowerment by employment" project, the Valakupiai Rehabilitation Center organized an employers training day, emphasizing corporate social responsibility. The training called "Corporate social responsibility and employment of people with disability" was organized by the Valakupiai Rehabilitation Center in cooperation with one of the biggest international employer in Lithuania – Swedbank. Employers, scientists, vocational rehabilitation service providers and people with disability themselves shared their experience and discussed the topic of integration of people with disability for the benefit of each interested party. The idea of organizing an event for employers came from the Astangu VRC's concept of employers training day. Transformed, the idea became a training event for employers to widen their understanding of corporate social responsibility.

Most of the time, corporate social responsibility is understood by the companies as environment safety or investment in the staff competences or working conditions. It is rarely perceived as creation of employment opportunities for the most vulnerable groups of society, such as people with disabilities, which would indeed facilitate the development of a socially responsible society.

The training day covered a big variety of topics, to give the employers a broad understanding of employment of people with disability. Different speakers took turn in addressing the audience. They described vocational rehabilitation and employment support services offered in the community, social innovation, different employment of people with disabilities models for employers and model, used by a popular supermarket chain to integrate people with disabilities in the labor force. A young woman with a disability also told her personal story of finding her way into employment.

More than 30 employers from different public and private companies participated in the event, where time was allotted to story-telling, sharing experience, giving new ideas and encouraging good practices. Following the intervention of those speakers, the audience was given the chance to express their opinions or ask questions about corporate social responsibility and the employment of people with disabilities during the "hot microphone" session.

The feedback enclosed shows that many of them changed their perceptions of people with disabilities and are ready to create job opportunities for them, through different means they didn't know before – sub-contracting social firms, employment in their company, fund raising campaigns for social services, creation of on-job training opportunities, etc.

As it was a very informative conference, Valakupiai Rehabilitation Center plans to organize such events on an annual basis.

4.3 Career counselling and breakfast meetings (Implemented in the Faroes)

Hedvig Johansdóttir, Dugni, Faroe Islands

<u>Career counselling</u>

Dugni was inspired by the role of the career counselling at Validia, especially by the practice of coaching in a real work place. This practice gives the opportunity to be closer to jobs after training. It creates a safe work environment for the students as well as good cooperation possibilities.

At Dugni all the counsellors are occupied on various workshops. Each counsellor is responsible for one workshop and is counselling around 8 students or clients. The past years, it has been difficult to support the clients who are doing in-job training, since the counsellor has many clients inside as well as outside of Dugni. This has been an obstacle when students are ready to move on to the real work field.

Students doing moving assignments for the clients

The goal is to help students succeed after job training programs at Dugni, by including career counselling and job training in real work environment. Therefore, a part-time career counsellor was hired. The counsellor's profile is a psychologist and her tasks will be to cooperate with the workshop counsellors regarding the students in the workshops with group sessions, as well as assignments with relevant context. She will also be responsible for visiting and following up on students who are doing injob training outside of Dugni.

As for the practice of integrating staff members to the work field together with the students, Dugni is testing new possibilities. As a starter, the center is offering to do various tasks for certain companies, one or two days a week, part time. The workshop counsellors will be in charge of these tasks together with 2 students**.**

Breakfast meetings

In connection with a Nordplus project presented in Vilnius, about the good cooperation they have with the companies and employers, Dugni was inspired and challenged to test if this could also be implemented in the Faroes.

At Dugni things were put together in order to do what needed to be done to reach the same level of cooperation.It was decided to invite selected companies, both private and public, to short breakfast meetings arranged by the kitchen at Dugni.

Companies deemed suitable for the students were selected, given a call and e-mailed with an invitation. Everyone was pleased to see that all who were invited turned up, which means that there are now 15 companies and employers that can be called by Dugni, when students need work experience in the Southern part of the Islands, as well as 6 in the Northern part.

The meetings start with a short presentation about Dugni, as an organisation. Guests are told what it means to have a student from Dugni in jobtraining, what the organisation expects and why the students need work experience outside of Dugni's workshops.
The aim of the meetings is to inform about the Dugni's work and about the target group. The main goal is to give the clients a fresh start in the labour market. Therefore it is necessary to get closer cooperation with employers all around the Faroe Islands. Otherwise, it is impossible to support students in the right direction, in order for them to improve.

Furthermore, the center is willing to show what services are provided to and for its customers, commercial as individual.The conclusion is that the breakfast meetings have been very successful, and that both Dugni and its new partners are satisfied with the result. Breakfast meetings are now a fixed part of the practices implemented within the organization.

4.4 Presentation skills, elevator speech (Implemented in Finland)

Satu Kataja, Validia vocational college, Finland
Tuomas Kaihua, Validia vocational college, Finland

In job seeking processes various communication skills are needed for job seekers. The first seconds can be crucial when applicants are facing employers. This can obviously be made more challenging when the applicant's work ability is not at an average level. Disabled or not, employees want immediate engagement and a good impression of the applicants.

Self marketing skills can be practiced using different methods. One of them is the elevator speech, or in other words: pitching. Pitching has been used for many years, for instance in business and marketing education institutes. One can associate an elevator speech to the time spent riding an elevator. Time is short, and the content of one's talk must be clear and relevant for the listener; this is why this concept can also be effective in a job interview.

Employers benefit from the applicants' pitching skills. Employees want clarity on the relevance of their main skills to themselves. Therefore, each pitch must demonstrate a conclusion that shows each applicant's skills and main objectives. This requires presentation skills, the aim of which is to build a relationship of openness, honesty and trust.

During the visit in the Faroes, the Validia team was impressed by how good Dugni's clients were at presenting themselves in front of an audience. Their clients seemed to be quite skilled at finding their strengths and translating those into words.

Based on Validia's experience, students with mental challenges, especially, usually have barriers on marketing their skills in front of an employer. These good impressions and practices came across the sea, and it was decided to implement presentation training sessions for students and staff.

A client from Dugni is presenting her career path.

During the Autumn of 2015, a job coaching course was organized for Validia`s staff where the participants learned various job coaching skills. One of the main emphases was marketing skills, in other words pitching. The idea of pitching is very useful for students who are applying for a job; those skills are also beneficial also to supervisors and job coaches. When pitching, a person will generate a 2 minute speech on his or hers skills, experience and education. Pitching can be used on various job seeking situations where students or staff members are involved with an employer.

Students with special needs are not the only ones who can use the pitching skills, but also the other employees who will work directly or indirectly together with the applicants. For Validia staff members and students, marketing skills are extremely helpful, especially around spring-time: for instance for summer job recruitments, there might be as many as 200 applicants for only one spot and the deciding factor might be the decisive factor.

Supervisors and job coaches from Validia are training their pitching skills

Supervisors and job coaches were very satisfied with the skills that they got from the job coaching course. Marketing and pitching tools in particular were immediatly implemented into their field work.

5. The outcomes of the “Empowerment by employment” project

The “Empowerment by employment” (EBE) project has been a productive international learning platform for sharing new innovative solutions to promote the employment of people with disabilities. Several new methods and assessments related to this challenging field were studied and implemented. In addition, the partner organizations also had the chance to exchange, as well as to gain knowledge and experience.
As of 2016, EBE is a solid and modern network, where participants are in constant interaction with one another. Thanks to the EBE network, there are no more barriers preventing the partners from changing good practices, find innovative solutions and gaining open minded thinking in the Nordic area.
Good practices found and shared through the EBE network have for instance changed the structure of some organizations and the involved employers’ attitude towards people with disabilities; it has also led to the creation of new course methods for staff members and students.

Employers’ attitude. The project has shown that special education and training providers have an obligation to affect the preconceptions of employers on how disabled persons can work in real-life working tasks, without any need for segregation. On the way towards a truly inclusive working life, useful tools such as Employers training day seems to have a very straightforward approach to breaking the key barriers on recruiting disabled person: prejudice. This training day was founded by Astangu (Estonia), where training it provides down to earth, personal experience for employers, for them to discover how disabled people live and work in society. Thanks to this experience, they may react differently when considering hiring a person with a disability.

New courses and methods for staff members and students. New technology to help job-seeking has given a major opportunity for disabled job seekers to find an employer. That is the reason why many EBE organizations immediately implemented video CV format introduced by Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre (Lithuania). Thanks to a video CV, a disabled person has a perfect opportunity to emphasize their skills and personality in ways that are more efficient when compared to a traditional paper CV.

Influenced on organization structures. This project has revealed a real need for the transformation of the organization structure, as well as a need for a change in employment culture, in order to make it more suitable to the employment of people with special needs. The partners found out that in order to get jobs for their clients, it is essential for them to have certain professions represented in their organization; such professions include job coaches or career counsellors. These occupations are highly demanding, since they involve standing by a client in a period of major change in their life. At the same time, they need to cooperate and interact with the surrounding society. The mission of a job coach or career counsellor is to adapt various languages from different areas of employment area: the client, social services, companies, public sector, insurance companies etc.

The EBE project has allowed the partners to notice the need for internationally coherent education tailored for job coaches, career counsellors, educators and project managers in the field of employment of people with special needs. In addition to this, students with special needs would also highly benefit from international cooperation and work exchange. Hopefully, the opportunity will arise to develop these ideas further in EBE II!

We were honoured to the visit the Danish Parliament as Mr Magni Arge's guest, representative from Faroes