

Report from the Parallel Work Session 1

Rights of children with disabilities - From inclusive education to employment

In the session, there were the following four presenters:

Mr Pat CLARK, Down Syndrome Ireland

Down syndrome Ireland can provide support and knowledge not only to parents and families concerned, but also provide valuable opinion and evaluations to policy makers who decide about and sometimes also design new measures.

Pat Clark described situation in Ireland

People with disabilities are only half as likely to be in employment as others of working age.

What is needed for people with disabilities when it comes to work?

For those born with a disability, quality education and training and good bridges from education and training into the world of work are key to getting on a job and career ladder.

For those who acquire a disability during their working life - they need support to re-enter the workforce, either returning to their old job or being retrained for another position

Ireland has a strong legislative disability infrastructure

Very important is the National Disability Strategy (2004

Its high level goal is:

"Participation: People with disabilities live ordinary lives in ordinary places, participating in the life of the community. As part of this, people with disabilities have access to jobs".

But Comprehensive Employment Strategy implemented as a specialist service is unsatisfactorily integrated in mainstream services.

Government policy to activate measures for the long term unemployed looks predominantly at people on the Live Register, but most people with disabilities are not on Live Register due to receiving Disability Allowance

Up until very recently, responsible Intreo centres are not aiding people with disabilities to find jobs.
after hard lobbying, 10 Intreo centres are now working with people with disabilities

A large contribution towards the implementation of the high level goals contained in the NDSIP comes from the voluntary sector.

Two examples have been mentioned:

WALK PEER Programme

Focuses on supporting young people at an early stage to gain access to the same employment opportunities as their mainstream peers.

Offers individualised supports at key transition points in a person's life.

Use of 'PEER mentors' (other young voluntary participants) to provide a natural form of support

NCBI (National Council for the Blind of Ireland) Employment Services

?This organization helps people with dealing with sight loss to stay in employment.

It provides assistive technology assessments, mobility training and other potential supports that assist in keeping a job, advice to employers and employees regarding retention advice, awareness and reintegration.

Summary

Ireland has some disability infrastructure in place. However, more socioeconomic infrastructure is needed to support the participation and inclusion of people with disabilities in employment. There are two different employment agendas: one for people with disabilities and one for people engaged in mainstream employment.

Large contribution is coming from the voluntary sector like WALK PEER and NCBI.

Ms Tiina Mäki-Gaetz and Ms Satu Kataja from Validia Vocational College in Finland were invited to give Finland's experience and suggestions on best measures how to provide career guidance and assistance when choosing the future profession.

She described Validia Vocational College Established by the Finnish Association for People with Physical Disabilities

It provides

An accessible learning environment

Vocational Education and Training for students with special educational needs (12 different Vocational Qualification Programmes)

- Rehabilitative Instruction and Guidance for students with severe disabilities

- 600 students and 280 staff members
- Development and Service Centre of the Vocational Special Needs Education and Training

There was in detail described complex structure of services and activities provided like

Grounds for Special Needs Education

Student support services

Support for transition from school to the Labour market

Choice of the right profession

Career guidance to support employment

Processes before, during and after studies

On job training period

Self-evaluation and on job evaluation

Job analysis

Network co-operation with employers, insurance companies, associations for people with disabilities, employment offices, student's hometown's social workers, employment projects...

Best practices and good experience in particular concerning networking with employers and indolent of students.

Mr David Morales from Fundación ADECCO presented successful programs for youth with disability to involve into the labour market

ADECCO is multinational company with about 31 thousands employees and provide employment to more than 600 thousands of people. Its task is to help companies to get suitable employees for requested jobs.

They started in Spain, now they have branches in many countries.

They concentrate on three vulnerable groups: disabled people, people with family responsibilities and gender victims, and older unemployed people.

He presented programs for disabled persons and potential employers ranging from awareness improvement, job preparation up to inclusion in leisure activities. . He informed about difficulties to find high qualified people with disabilities, but also about program for employment in tourism people with mental disabilities.

Ms Ulrike Rebhandl, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Austria. She shown on the example of Austria how persons with disabilities needs are included in the employment activities implemented by national authorities.

In Austria federal ministry is responsible for vocational rehabilitation and regional ministries for social rehabilitation.

The system consists from the following five measures

Youth coaching

Production school

Vocational training assistance

Work assistance

Job coaching

These measures were in detail described concerning disabled people.

Participation in this system is voluntary and free of charge to support independent life of disabled people.

Some comments from discussion:

If the main reason for choice of job is personal motivation and willingness of the disabled persons and the choice occurs unsuitable after some time, what will happen? The answer was that new study or requalification is and should be available.

In many countries youth guarantee to be trainee in an enterprise is only up to six months. Disabled persons sometimes need more.

Employment of disabled person is benefit for company, for its social profile, atmosphere in company and social contact even if work productivity is lower.

In outline of the parallel sessions there were a few questions. According to my opinion, two of them follows can be answered as

Are countries comparable and is the best practice transferable? Or is the situation so different that it requests also different solutions?

.Differences exist mainly in legislation. At least some different solutions are needed temporarily

Can appropriate career guidance and choice of the right profession secure stable future prospects for children with disabilities?

Partly yes. but much more is needed. In particular concerning attitude of employers, coworkers and .whole society