MANUAL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATORS AS PROMOTERS OF INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT

Content

1. Approaches to Teaching Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

Introduction

How is it teaching and working with people with ID and why is it important to adjust your approach depending on person to person?

Teaching individuals with intellectual disabilities requires a deep understanding of their unique learning needs and abilities. It is a challenging yet rewarding endeavour that demands patience, empathy, and adaptability from educators and caregivers. Each person with intellectual disabilities is a unique individual, with their own set of strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. Therefore, it is essential to approach their education with a personalised and tailored approach that considers their specific requirements.

Recognizing the importance of individualised approaches is vital for creating meaningful learning experiences for individuals with intellectual disabilities. By customising teaching methods based on their abilities, interests, and goals, educators can provide the necessary support to help them reach their full potential. An individualised approach acknowledges that a one-size-fits-all method is not suitable for this diverse population. Instead, it seeks to cater to each student's specific needs, allowing them to learn at their own pace and in a manner that suits their learning preferences.

Common Approaches

Person-centered Approach

One of the most widely accepted approaches in teaching individuals with intellectual disabilities is person-centered planning. The person-centered approach is a highly valued and widely accepted method in working with individuals with intellectual disabilities. It emphasises the importance of recognizing and respecting the unique needs, desires, preferences, and goals of each individual. This approach shifts the focus from a one-size-fits-all approach to a more individualised and holistic approach that considers the person as a whole.

In the context of education, educators who work with individuals with intellectual disabilities can apply the person-centered approach by implementing person-centered planning. This planning process involves collaboration among the individual, their family, educators, and other relevant

professionals to create an Individualised Education Plan (IEP). The IEP serves as a comprehensive roadmap that outlines specific learning objectives and strategies tailored to meet the individual's needs and aspirations.

There are several practical examples based on this approach that educators can consider implementing with people with intellectual disabilities.

Establishing meaningful goals: Engage in open and honest conversations with the individual and their family to identify their aspirations, interests, and strengths. These discussions can help educators set meaningful goals that align with the individual's personal motivations and long-term objectives. For instance, if a student with an intellectual disability expresses a keen interest in art, the educator can incorporate art-related activities into the curriculum or create opportunities for the student to showcase their artistic skills.

Individualised learning strategies: Tailor teaching methods and instructional materials to suit the individual's unique learning style and abilities. Some individuals may require more visual aids, hands-on activities, or personalised prompts to enhance their understanding and engagement. For example, if a student with an intellectual disability learns best through visual stimuli, the educator can use visual aids such as charts, pictures, or videos to support their comprehension of a specific topic or concept.

Encouraging active participation and self-advocacy: Foster an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages the active involvement of individuals with intellectual disabilities in their own learning process. Promote self-advocacy skills by providing opportunities for them to express their opinions, make choices, and participate in decision-making. During class discussions or group activities, educators can create an inclusive space where all students, including those with intellectual disabilities, are encouraged to contribute their thoughts and ideas. This approach helps empower individuals to develop their communication skills and self-confidence.

Building positive relationships: Cultivate strong relationships between educators, individuals with intellectual disabilities, their families, and support professionals. Collaborative partnerships foster trust, open communication, and a supportive network, which are essential for effective person-centered planning. Educators can schedule regular meetings with the individual's family and support professionals to discuss progress, address concerns, and gather valuable insights about the individual's strengths and challenges. By working together, educators can ensure a consistent and cohesive approach to support the individual's educational journey.

Promoting community inclusion: Provide opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities to engage in activities and experiences beyond the classroom. Encouraging community integration helps foster social skills, independence, and a sense of belonging.

Educators can organise field trips, volunteer opportunities, or collaborations with local businesses or organisations to expose individuals to real-life situations and promote their active participation in the community.

The person-centered approach emphasises the importance of recognizing the unique abilities and aspirations of individuals with intellectual disabilities. By implementing person-centered planning and incorporating practical examples like establishing meaningful goals, individualised learning strategies, encouraging active participation and self-advocacy, building positive relationships, and promoting community inclusion, educators can create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that empowers individuals to reach their full potential.

Applied Behavior Analysis

In addition to the person-centered approach, another widely employed method in working with individuals with intellectual disabilities is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). ABA is an evidence-based intervention technique that harnesses behavioral principles to teach new skills and reduce challenging behaviors. This approach focuses on breaking down complex tasks into smaller, manageable steps and utilizing positive reinforcement to encourage and strengthen desired behaviors. Through a systematic process of reinforcing positive behavior, educators can effectively support individuals with intellectual disabilities in developing new skills and overcoming challenges. Applied Behavior Analysis operates on the principle that behaviors are influenced by their consequences. By identifying the specific behaviors to be targeted, educators can design interventions that promote positive changes in behavior. These interventions involve carefully analysing the antecedents (events or stimuli that precede the behavior), the behavior itself, and the consequences that follow. This analysis allows educators to understand the functional relationship between behaviors and their environmental factors.

An example to illustrate how ABA can be applied in practice would be involving a student with an intellectual disability who struggles with completing homework assignments. The educator, employing ABA techniques, would begin by breaking down the task of completing homework into smaller, more manageable steps. They would establish clear expectations and provide the necessary materials and support to facilitate success.
During the completion of each step, the educator would provide positive reinforcement, such as praise, tokens, or small rewards, to reinforce the desired behavior. For instance, if the student successfully completes the first task, the educator might provide verbal praise and a token that can later be exchanged for a preferred activity or reward.

If the student engages in challenging behaviors, such as becoming frustrated or avoiding the task, the educator would implement strategies to address these behaviors effectively. This could involve providing additional prompts, modifying the task difficulty, or temporarily removing

distractions from the environment. Over time, as the student demonstrates progress in completing homework assignments, the educator can gradually fade the level of support provided. This process involves systematically reducing prompts or assistance while maintaining consistent reinforcement for the desired behavior. Eventually, the student becomes more independent in completing homework tasks, relying less on external support.

ABA techniques can also be utilized to teach a wide range of skills, such as communication, social interaction, self-care, and academic concepts. For instance, if an individual with an intellectual disability is working on developing social skills, the educator might utilize ABA techniques to teach appropriate greetings, turn-taking during conversations, or recognizing social cues. Through the systematic application of positive reinforcement, individuals with intellectual disabilities can acquire and generalise new skills across various settings and contexts. This approach focuses on promoting positive behaviors, building on individual strengths, and effectively addressing challenging behaviors. It requires consistency, patience, and collaboration among educators, families, and support professionals to ensure the best possible outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

While the person-centered approach emphasizes the unique needs and aspirations of individuals, Applied Behavior Analysis complements this approach by providing specific strategies and techniques to teach new skills and address challenging behaviors. By combining these two approaches, educators can create a comprehensive and tailored educational experience that maximises the potential for growth and development in individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Social Stories

Another valuable approach in working with individuals with intellectual disabilities is the use of Social Stories. Social Stories are simple narratives that serve as effective tools for teaching individuals about social situations and appropriate behaviour responses. They utilize clear language and visuals to provide individuals with guidelines for understanding and navigating social interactions, as well as comprehending social expectations. Social Stories are particularly beneficial for individuals who face challenges in social communication and require explicit instruction in this area. These stories can be created and tailored to address specific social situations or behaviours that individuals may find challenging. By presenting information in a structured and easily understandable format, Social Stories help individuals with intellectual disabilities develop a clearer understanding of social norms and appropriate behaviour in different contexts.

When constructing a Social Story, educators can follow a consistent structure. The story should begin by providing an introduction to the social situation or behaviour being addressed. This sets the context and engages the individual's attention. The narrative then continues, using concise

and concrete language to describe the various aspects of the situation, including the people involved, their actions, and the expected responses.

Visual supports play a crucial role in Social Stories, as they help individuals better comprehend and retain information. Photographs, pictures, or simple drawings can be incorporated to illustrate the key elements of the story and provide visual cues for the desired behavior. These visual supports enhance the individual's understanding and aid in their ability to generalize the appropriate behavior to real-life situations. To ensure the effectiveness of Social Stories, it is important to create narratives that are personalized and relevant to the individual's specific needs and experiences. Educators can collaborate with the individual, their family, and relevant professionals to gather information and insights about the social situations or behaviors that require focus. This collaborative approach ensures that the Social Stories are tailored to address the individual's unique challenges and strengths.

An example of how a Social Story can be used in practice. Suppose an individual with an intellectual disability struggles with appropriately expressing anger when faced with frustrating situations. The educator can create a Social Story specifically targeting this behavior. The story would begin by introducing the situation, such as a difficult task or a problem they encounter. The narrative would then describe the individual's emotions and reactions in a clear and objective manner. It would outline alternative strategies and appropriate behavior responses to express anger constructively, such as taking deep breaths, seeking support from a trusted adult, or using calming techniques.

Visual supports, such as pictures of different facial expressions or step-by-step illustrations of calming techniques, would be incorporated to reinforce the information and aid in the individual's understanding and retention of the desired behavior. By regularly reviewing and reinforcing the Social Story, educators can help individuals internalize and apply the appropriate behaviors in real-life situations. Additionally, educators can provide opportunities for individuals to practice the desired behaviors within a supportive environment, offering guidance and reinforcement as needed.

The use of Social Stories fosters social understanding, communication, and appropriate behavior in individuals with intellectual disabilities. By providing explicit instruction and clear guidelines through narratives and visual support, Social Stories offer individuals valuable tools for navigating social situations and improving their social interactions. Combined with the person-centered approach and other strategies, Social Stories contribute to a comprehensive and individualized educational experience for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Conclusion

Teaching individuals with intellectual disabilities demands an individualised and flexible approach that acknowledges and celebrates their uniqueness. By incorporating person-cantered planning, ABA, social stories into the teaching process, educators can create inclusive and supportive learning environments that foster growth, independence, and overall success for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

2. Positive Behaviour Support

Personal Centred Planning

It is very important to organize the space, context as well as the time of employment of people with disabilities in the work environment. Stability of the workplace, support with a reference person in the training and organization of the work area and adaptation to the work environment are important. The overall time of presence in the workplace and even during breaks or leave must be adapted to the specific needs and physical and mental strengths of the employee with intellectual disabilities. The framework, i.e. the working schedule with working hours and the time of breaks, must be clear. Also, have a clear picture of the task he/she is undertaking and if possible individualized, written and in plain language instructions.

Personalised approach

Special educational needs define the approach to the employee. His physical strength, mental profile, sociability and skills must be exploited as far as possible both in the choice of the job and in the placement and organisation of the job. It must be possible to cope to some extent, or be able in time to improve on his responsibilities. With a slow adjustment, with gentle supervision by a reference person, with advice to avoid mistakes, with organization of an individual work plan everything can be improved every day for the better. Also important is collegial solidarity, positive feedback and reward.

Cooperation - Team Building

The company should organise with a clear plan for the rest of the staff to train them in terms of acceptance and inclusion in workplaces for people with disabilities. It is important to have cooperation and team spirit among employees. Rivalry and competition between employees does not help the employee with intellectual disability. It is advisable to create a group, which will be the direct help and communication partner for the person with a disability and the consultant(s) who help the person with a disability to integrate into the working environment

Reception preparation - Proactive approach Preparation- Proactive approach

With each new person joining the workplace there should be a new briefing on their individual needs. It is important for staff to know how to manage certain behaviours or mistakes in the workplace , to have patience and empathy for people with disabilities. The company informs all staff and sets up a policy to welcome a new employee with an intellectual disability. It also includes in its objectives and planning working with people with disabilities so that all staff know, understand and help to integrate the employee.

Reward

We need to know the needs and difficulties of the person with a disability before we integrate them into a workplace. We should find out his/her strengths and weaknesses and also help him/her to focus and come up with the things that will make him/her more independent and competitive. Also, the targeted and defined reward of completing a challenge at work is something that will help to keep him focused on what he is doing.

Reward Evaluation methods to empower the employee Reward Evaluation methods to empower the employee

It is good to make use of reward and evaluation methods for the work items covered by the employee with intellectual disability. Reward system is also used as a motivation for better performance, but mainly to overcome fears and insecurity, since often in people with disabilities there is insecurity that they cannot complete any task on their own because they do not have the skills.

Therefore, with rewards there is a moral recognition of his usefulness and the utilization of his potential in the workplace.

3. Transition Planning for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in the Workplace

Transitions are very important in human lives. A transition can refer to roles, locations or relationships change. Transition from school to work is about choices, about career options, living and social arrangements, economic options that may have long consequences in one's life. For people with intellectual disabilities this kind of transition is very difficult, due to several limitations imposed by others' view of disability and by the complexity of the services intended to support this transition in Europe and all over the world (Williams Diehm & Lynch, 2007).

This becomes more obvious when considering the percentage of people with disabilities employed.

The transition planning process for individuals with intellectual disabilities must begin early to help them develop the skills they need to successfully meet employment goals. With comprehensive, effective and ongoing transition planning, students are prepared to achieve post-high school success.

Transition planning is nowadays supported by a number of European laws and policies as well that outline what the transition from school to work process should look like in order to maximize that success.

Individual Education Programme (IEP) for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

'School to work' transition refers to the critical socio-economic life changing period between approximately 15 to 24 years of age, a period when young individuals develop and build skills, based on their initial education and training that helps them become productive members of the society. (World Bank, 2009)

A distinction needs to be made between an individual education programme (IEP) and an individual transition plan (ITP). Support for the transition from school to work, is a frequent model, initiated and used mainly by the schools. The aim is to ensure an easy passage of youngsters with disabilities between the two environments since their education path.

For a long time, people with intellectual disabilities were considered subjects for whom learning, both in developmental age and even more so in later ages, could be particularly limited. People

with intellectual disabilities have many opportunities to learn, and in particular to learn skills useful for performing future activities work, but the traditional modes of teaching based on lectures and study on texts obviously continues to be problematic for people who precisely in reading and writing, abstract reasoning and the processing of symbols language and mathematics present the main vulnerabilities.

What makes the difference is the way of teaching, the adoption of appropriate teaching strategies, the use of compensatory tools.

Access to work for people with intellectual disabilities is prepared already in the school years in two ways:

> Education plays a decisive role in creating skills useful for future careers   employment;
>
> The childhood and adolescent years experienced outside and inside the school environment are   fundamental in developing personal identity, bringing out preferences, interests and
> passions that can help guide career choices.

The function of guidance and preparation for future work choices can produce effects and be a benefit to people with intellectual disabilities.

We can first identify three fundamental guidelines that seem to emerge from the general framework outlined:

 (a) School is important for future employment and it is therefore an obvious, but fundamental prerequisite for effectiveness, to increase the presence of young people with disabilities in school higher and university education;

(b) School time and extracurricular activities must be made fruitful by adopting specific educational supports and tools that facilitate participation and the learning of basic and transversal skills. A strong action to recognize their rights (advocacy) where effective access to quality education is not guaranteed;

(c) Transition to adulthood and work choices must be planned in good time through the mediation of educational figures who know how to carry out "coaching" and "counselling" targeted and personalized.
School is and remains the crucial time and space in which to be there as a precondition for the development of the skills necessary for one's future workplace. (World Health Organization, 1993)

Every effort must be made to realize authentic inclusive education that respects the neuropsychological and adaptive profile of young people with intellectual disabilities. The fundamental inspiration of these interventions, correctly assumes an ecological perspective of the disability condition also linked to the bio-psycho-social model of disability promoted by the OMS and emphasizes the need to prepare appropriate actions personalized, compensatory and dispensatory interventions to make sure that the time school can be used to the fullest, with intensity, with a strong orientation to the achievement of goals relevant to the person.

Moreover, for the acquisition of certain life skills, it is absolutely necessary that young students with intellectual disabilities have access to specific training. Among the most well-known, documented in the literature and important include training on social skills.

Transition to adult roles, social and work inclusion requires **counselling** and **coaching**. It is not simply a matter of "discovering," perhaps through "done at the desk" textual insights, vocations and possible matches between people with disabilities and training opportunities or employment opportunities as much as it is about actively stimulating the exploration of interests and preferences, support choices and decisions, take care of the direction of interventions to support for learning skills, recompose in a framework as much as possible coherent and shared with people with disabilities their life project such as "**career development**" approaches inspired by the principle of life design.

An **individual educational programme** is therefore necessary for this transition process and can be summarized as:

> **A broad document**. Covering all aspects related to the individual's education (strategies, provisions, outcomes), with a specific focus on education. Personal and social aspects do not always seem to play a significant role, but they need to be taken into account;

> **The teacher is the key.** It is a professional in charge of creating an IEP, in close co-operation with the student, her/his family and all other professionals involved.

The youngsters, together with the specialists in employment and teachers, are investigating different work climates, for short periods of time. The school makes a convention with the employer, in order to ensure the training. A specialist in employment is needed, one for each workplace.

Special education staff is available for providing assistance with counselling, identification of interests, educational and vocational planning, prevocational skills training, academic training and ensuring links to various programs and services.

A variety of community resources are also made available to support the transition process, like youth employment programs, summer jobs for youth programs, transition partnerships

13

programs, local vocational centers, adult education programs, individual educational programmes, etc.

Individual Transition Plan (ITP) for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

The individual transition plan is formalized as a document, in which it is condensed the past, the present and the future of a person; it should also contain life information concerning family circumstances, medical history, free time, cultural context and values, education and training. The outputs should increase the chances of a person to find a sustainable job; match the interests, motivations, skills, attitudes and competencies of a young person to the demands of a profession, place and working environments; increase the autonomy, motivation, self perception and self esteem of the young person; create a 'win-win' situation for both parties, the employed person and the employer.

One of the most interesting is the Individual Transition Plan (ITP) developed by EADSNE in 2006 in 19 EU countries (EADSNE, 2006). In these European countries it is already a practice of assisting adolescents and youngsters with intellectual disabilities at the end of schooling, for the passage from school to work and life. Building the transition support should include the ongoing participation of the young person and his/her family, the coordination of all responsible services and a close cooperation with the employment sector.

An individual transition plan needs to be prepared from two to three years before the end of compulsory education. It has to be included in a **portfolio**, the same type of document as the one of individual education programmes, with first the pupil, later on the student, being the owner of such an individual document, thus guaranteeing the confidentiality of the included information.

The individual transition plans need to include and focus on these features:

- It is focused on transition matters related to employment and adult life. It needs to take into consideration **environmental labour conditions**. It needs to provide a clear analysis of the young person's possibilities and a consequent career plan, preparing her/him for a real job situation;

- Teachers from **lower and upper secondary education**, together with the young person, the family and other external professionals (not necessarily school-related), are involved in its development;

- It needs to include tools and methods to ensure an individual process of transition and to facilitate the **young person's empowerment**;

- It needs to ensure **equal opportunities** with respect to differences in gender, culture or geographical location;

- It needs to guarantee a **follow-up process**, through a professional appointed for this purpose;

- Effective transition planning follows the principles that are in agreement with the goals of transition, **respecting the differences** related to the characteristics and values of families.

The **basic guiding principles** of an ITP planning process are:

• The person with special needs must actively participate in the planning of her/his ITP;

• Families should be involved;

• Planning should involve inter-agency co-operation and collaboration;

• Planning should be flexible, responding to changes of values and experiences.

Young people with special needs should have all the necessary opportunities and support in order to play a key role in their own ITP planning, as they are the ones most concerned about their own life. The skills that need to be acquired involve a clear analysis of the young person's possibilities, the assessment of his /her current abilities, the identification, discussion of his/her wishes, and planning, and the preparation of a consequent career plan with him and his family. Young people and families need to be aware of the content of **vocational training programmes**. The qualifications to be obtained must reflect the young person's achievements and must have real status, even in the case of 'non-formal' certificates issued by educational centres or employers (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2002).

Responsibilities and roles need to be clarified, established and accepted by all parties concerned. One professional, such as a vocational counsellor, teacher, needs to act as a contact person during the process of development, implementation and assessment of the ITP. However, it is important to identify her/his qualifications and responsibilities. Work possibilities and experiences implies preparing a young person for a real job situation and follow-up at the workplace, at least for a period of time.

The young person, her/his family and the contact person need to be well aware of the demands and requirements of the labour market. Validation of the process, all parties involved such as professionals, young people, families need to participate in continuous evaluation of the young person's progress and development, which will secure and will help monitor the quality of the

process. Evaluation needs to be conducted on a regular basis as part of a contract between the young person and the nominated contact person.

An individual transition plan must ensure an optimal process for young people to get the advice and support they need **before, during** and **after the transition period**.
Families must also actively participate, as they will become advocates and support partners. To this end, professionals must take into account the family situation, their cultural values and their resources.

Work also takes place within a network of **social relationships**. Success in employment certainly depends on the ability to perform the assigned task correctly, but corollaries of this success are certainly, at the same level, **good relations with colleagues**, positive reactions in the event of technical or organizational problems, and the ability to cope with work rhythms that are sometimes variable in relation to the production and economic process.

The **WHO's life skills** constitute as well an important reference for an active learning process and for facilitating effective transitions to work. Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. (World Health Organization, 2020)

The World Health Organization had listed ten of these skills to be used when taking into consideration a transition plan:

> **• Decision making**
> Decision making helps to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health if young people actively make decisions about their actions in relation to health by assessing the different options, and what effects different decisions may have.
>
> **• Problem solving**
> Similarly, problem solving enables us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to physical strain.
>
> **• Creative thinking**
> It contributes to both decision making and problem solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives and various consequences of our actions or non-action. It helps us to look beyond our direct experience, and even if no problem is identified, or no decision is to be made, creative thinking can help us to respond adaptively and with flexibility to the situations of our daily lives.

• Critical thinking

It is an ability to analyse information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognise and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure, and the media.

• Effective communication

It means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations.

• Interpersonal relationship skills

Help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with.

• Self-awareness

Includes our recognition of ourselves, of our character, of our strengths and weaknesses, of our desires and dislikes.

• Empathy

The ability to imagine what life is like for another person, even in a situation that we might not be familiar with.

• Coping with emotions

Involves recognizing emotions in ourselves and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour and being able to respond to emotions appropriately.

• Coping with stress

Recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help to control our levels of stress.

Inevitably, cultural and social factors will determine the exact nature of life skills. For example, eye contact may be encouraged in boys for effective communication, but not for girls in some societies, so gender issues will arise in identifying the nature of life skills for psychosocial competence. The exact content of life skills education must therefore be determined at the country level, or in a more local context. However, described in general terms, life skills are being taught in such a wide variety of countries that they appear to have relevance across cultures.

In summary, we can state that the **transition planning** must be a systematic and structured process in which stakeholders, family members, teachers and agencies collaborate to provide a continuum of services individualised to the person. **Transition-oriented schools** focus also on systematic community involvement in the development of educational options, community-based learning opportunities, systematic inclusion of students in the social life of the school, and increased expectations related to skills, values, and outcomes for all students.

4. Preparing Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities for the Workplace

Preparing Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities for the Workplace in Austria

Introduction

Austria's proactive approach towards realising the principles of the UN Convention is evident in the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities, established in 2012. This comprehensive strategy outlines ambitious disability policy goals and measures. This article delves into Austria's evolving disability policy, highlighting key legislations and initiatives that have shaped the journey toward a more inclusive and equitable society. Awareness about the Austrian laws and "Inklusionspaket 2017" is instrumental in achieving this goal.

Evolution of Disability Policy in Austria

The landscape of disability policy has undergone profound transformations in the past decades, with a significant shift towards a human rights and equality approach. Austria ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008, a monumental step that established new standards for the rights of individuals with disabilities. This human rights perspective is also echoed in the EU Disability Strategy 2021-2030.

Austria has been proactive in implementing the UN Convention, evident through the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities established in 2012. This comprehensive strategy outlines long-term disability policy goals and measures. For further insights and the latest National Action Plan for Disabilities 2022-2030, refer to the National Action Plan for Disabilities.

Disability, being a cross-sectional issue, is overseen at the federal level by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which plays a coordinating role in disability-related matters and leads significant initiatives for people with disabilities. The Ministry focuses on promoting vocational participation and disability equality. Three pivotal legal instruments contribute to this effort: the Disabled Employment Act, the Federal Disability Act, and the Federal Disability Equality Act.

A key resource for individuals with disabilities is the Social Ministry Service, which operates through nine regional offices across Austria's capital cities. One of the crucial functions of the Social Ministry Service is to enhance the vocational inclusion of individuals with disabilities. While many significant aspects concerning people with disabilities fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government, numerous responsibilities, such as housing and daily structure (occupational therapy), are under the purview of the regional authorities.

Introduction to "Inklusionspaket 2017"

The *Inklusionspaket 2017 (Inclusion Package 2017 - Full Participation for All)* is a set of Austrian regulations aimed at promoting social inclusion, especially in the workplace. is a ground-breaking initiative by the Austrian federal government, focusing on establishing dignified working conditions for people with disabilities and promoting their comprehensive social and economic integration. This comprehensive set of measures, developed in close collaboration with disability organizations and various partners, is a significant driver for transforming the world of work. Notably, it extends legal protection and significantly increases financial resources to enhance vocational integration. An outstanding aspect of this holistic approach is its consideration of gender perspectives. The fundamental principles of this endeavour encompass a multi-stakeholder approach and the core principle of "Leaving no one behind." These characteristics make the implementation and impact of this initiative particularly significant.

Introduction to "Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz"
(Act on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities)

The *Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz (Act on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities)* is the Austrian law on the employment of people with disabilities. This law mandates regulations related to the employment of individuals with disabilities in Austria. The key points include the employment obligation for employers with a certain number of employees, definitions of beneficiaries, the calculation of required hires, reasonable accommodations, and the principle of equal remuneration. These provisions are designed to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce and ensure that they have equal opportunities for employment.

In Article II of the Act following requirements are stated:

● **Employment Obligation**

   Employers with 25 or more employees are required to hire at least one qualified individual with disabilities for every 25 employees they have. This law applies to all employers except international organizations as defined in the 1977 law on privileges and immunities for international organizations.

The Minister of Labour, Health, and Social Affairs has the authority to adjust the number of required hires for certain industries to one disabled individual for every 40 employees. This adjustment is permissible when the unique structure of these industries makes it unfeasible to hire as per the standard requirement even with all possible technical and support resources.

- **Eligibility of Beneficiaries**

Beneficiaries of this law are Austrian citizens with a disability degree of at least 50%. Union citizens, citizens of EEA agreement countries, Swiss citizens and their family members, as well as refugees granted asylum and certain third-country nationals, are also considered beneficiaries if they meet the specified criteria.

- **Calculation of Required Hires**

The law provides the definition of employees used to calculate the required hires, including those in dependent employment, apprenticeships, and home-based workers. The total number of employees, including disabled individuals and others, is used to calculate the requirement.

- **Reasonable Accommodations and Support Measures**

Employers must consider the health conditions of disabled individuals when hiring them and should create appropriate conditions for their employment.
The law emphasises the importance of appropriate measures to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities, with financial support available for technical aids, creating suitable workplaces, and covering costs related to their employment.

- **Equal Remuneration**

Remuneration for individuals employed under this law should not be reduced due to their disability.

"These regulations aim to ensure that people with disabilities have equitable opportunities in the workplace, fostering their social and economic inclusion while requiring employers to actively engage in creating an inclusive work environment."

Conclusion

In Austria, the paradigm of disability policy has undergone remarkable shifts, fuelled by the principles of human rights and equality. The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the establishment of the National Action Plan exemplify Austria's commitment to transforming its disability landscape. Through legislations like the

Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz and initiatives like the Inklusionspaket 2017, Austria is carving a path toward a society where the unique capabilities and contributions of individuals with disabilities are fully recognized. As Austria continues to pave the way for a more inclusive future, its journey stands as an inspiration to nations striving for a society where every individual, regardless of ability, can thrive on equal footing.

Preparing Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities for the Workplace in Greece

Preparatory Workshops

Preparatory workshops are organised training sessions designed to equip individuals with intellectual disabilities with essential skills and knowledge needed for the workplace. These workshops can cover a wide range of topics, such as communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving, and professional etiquette. They may also include sessions on building self-confidence and self-advocacy, which are crucial for succeeding in a work environment.

The workshops should be tailored to the specific needs and abilities of the participants, focusing on practical and hands-on activities to enhance learning. Additionally, these workshops can provide an opportunity for participants to learn from each other, share experiences, and build a supportive community.

Simulation of a Working Environment

Creating a simulated working environment can be an effective way to prepare individuals with intellectual disabilities for the challenges they may encounter in real workplaces. This simulation can take place in a controlled setting that resembles an actual workplace, such as a training centre or a vocational program.

During the simulation, participants can engage in tasks and activities relevant to the jobs they aspire to pursue. This hands-on experience helps them develop specific job-related skills and increases their comfort level in a work environment. Additionally, it allows trainers and support staff to observe participants' strengths and areas that may need further improvement, facilitating targeted training.

Time Management Activities

Time management is a crucial skill for success in any job. Individuals with intellectual disabilities may face challenges in organizing their time and completing tasks efficiently. Therefore, time management activities should be incorporated into their preparation for the workplace.

These activities may include creating schedules, setting priorities, and using tools like calendars or task lists. Participants can learn to break down larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps and practice meeting deadlines. Regular practice and reinforcement of time management skills can boost their confidence and help them maintain productivity in a real work setting.

Simulation of an Interview

Job interviews can be intimidating for anyone, and individuals with intellectual disabilities may require additional support and practice to feel confident during interviews. Conducting mock interviews in a supportive and encouraging environment can be immensely beneficial.

During these simulations, participants can practise answering common interview questions, learn appropriate body language and communication skills, and receive constructive feedback from trainers or mentors. This preparation helps them understand what to expect during a real interview, reduces anxiety, and increases their chances of performing well when seeking employment opportunities.

Preparing Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities for the Workplace in Italy

Preparatory Workshops

The preparatory workshop aims to implement a set of tools to provide people with disabilities with skills useful for employability and integration into the world of work through the development of skills such as critical thinking, relations with colleagues, but also functional skills for everyday work.

In Italy, there are many workshops funded by the EU through various projects aimed at the employability of people with disabilities.

Simulation of a working environment

A simulated workplace must replicate real workplace conditions to allow demonstration of the performance evidence in the job requirements. Simulation of the work environment allows people with disabilities to immerse themselves in a work environment that could become real, testing their strengths and weaknesses. These simulations are also important for employers to raise awareness of creating a more inclusive and stimulating work environment.

Time Management Activities

Time management is a challenge for everyone. People with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia and other disabilities, find it even more challenging than others. The concept of time itself can be particularly challenging. Time management is a very important skill, which can often make or break academic success.

A good place to begin improving time management is task analysis. It provides one illustration of a skill that many people do not develop intuitively, yet it is an essential element to developing effective time management. Task analysis is the process of identifying what needs to be done to finish a given undertaking, whether it is a homework assignment or a long-term project like a research paper. Accurately estimating how much time it takes to complete tasks is essential for long-term planning.

Simulation of an Interview

The job interview is an important step toward successful employment and often a significant challenge for people with intellectual disability. Vocational rehabilitation specialists can benefit from a systematic approach to training job interview skills. It is nowadays possible to create simulated job interview training through software that provides a virtual reality experience with which learners can systematically improve their job interview skills, reduce their fears, and increase their confidence about going on job interviews.

While such software is in no way a replacement for clinical contact, computer-based training may amplify the effectiveness of such contact and help people with disabilities in being much more prepared in real situations.

Preparing Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities for the Workplace in Spain

In Spain, there are specific regulations and legal measures to promote the preparation and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in the workplace. These regulations are mainly framed in the General Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion, which is the most relevant regulation in this field. In addition, there are other laws and provisions that support the labour inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. Some of the most outstanding are:

- Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013, of November 29: Approves the revised text of the General Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion. This law establishes the bases for equal opportunities, non-discrimination and the promotion of the inclusion of people with disabilities in all areas, including the workplace.

- Law 49/2007, of December 26, 2007, which establishes the system of infractions and sanctions regarding equal opportunities, non-discrimination and universal accessibility of persons with disabilities: This law regulates infractions and sanctions in the field of equal opportunities and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities, including aspects related to employment.

- Law 13/1982, of April 7, 1982, on the social integration of the disabled (LISMI): Although this law has been repealed, at the time it was relevant for the promotion of the employment of people with disabilities, and some of its provisions are still in force and included in other regulations.

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Although it is not a Spanish regulation, Spain is a signatory to this convention, which recognizes and protects the rights of persons with disabilities, including the right to work and labour inclusion.

These laws and regulations establish the fundamental principles for equal opportunities, non-discrimination and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in the workplace. In addition, the autonomous communities in Spain may also have additional specific regulations to complement these national regulations and adapt them to their regional contexts.

Additionally, to the previous information, preparing people with intellectual disabilities for the workplace in Spain requires an inclusive approach tailored to individual needs. Here are some guidelines to help facilitate this process:

- Education and training: It is critical that people with intellectual disabilities have access to appropriate education and training. This may include special education programs, social skills training, specific job skills, and job skills development.

- Career guidance and vocational support: Provide guidance and counselling on career options available to people with intellectual disabilities. This may include identifying areas of interest and aptitude, as well as employment opportunities suitable for each individual.

- Internship programs: Internships provide an excellent opportunity for people with intellectual disabilities to gain experience in a real work environment. This will allow them to become familiar with work routines and develop practical skills.

- Job adaptation: It is essential to adapt the work environment and tasks according to individual needs. This may involve adjustments to work tools and equipment, establishing flexible schedules or providing additional support in the workplace.

- Awareness raising and training for employers and colleagues: It is important to raise awareness and sensitize employers and co-workers about the inclusion of people with

intellectual disabilities in the work environment. This can contribute to a more welcoming and supportive work environment.

- Ongoing support in the workplace: Providing ongoing support in the workplace is essential to ensure the success of people with intellectual disabilities. This may include mentoring or assigning a co-worker to provide guidance and assistance.

- External support network: Connecting people with intellectual disabilities to external organizations and services that provide additional support, advice and resources can be beneficial to both employees and employers.

- Promoting inclusion in the workplace: Fostering a culture of inclusion in the workplace is critical. This involves ensuring that all people, regardless of their abilities, are valued and respected for their contribution to the team.

- Monitoring and evaluation: It is important to regularly track the person's progress on the job and evaluate the effectiveness of the support measures implemented. This will allow adjustments to be done if it is necessary to improve their work experience.

In Spain, there are different organizations and resources that can provide support and advice in the labour inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities, such as the State Public Employment Service (SEPE), the ONCE Foundation or local and regional entities specialized in the labour inclusion of people with disabilities.

5. Identifying job skills and interests

Introduction

When assisting individuals with intellectual disabilities in their job search, it is crucial to identify their job skills and interests to ensure a good fit with potential employment opportunities. By understanding their unique abilities and preferences, educators can guide individuals toward careers that align with their strengths and passions. This chapter will explore effective strategies for identifying job skills and interests in individuals with intellectual disabilities, empowering them to pursue fulfilling and meaningful employment.

How to Identify Job Skills and Interests

Self-Assessment:

Encourage individuals to reflect on their abilities, strengths, and preferences. Engage in open conversations to explore their interests, hobbies, and activities they enjoy. Consider their academic achievements, extracurricular involvements, and any special talents or skills they possess. This self-assessment helps individuals gain insight into their own capabilities and provides a foundation for identifying potential job skills and interests.

Skills Assessment:

Conduct a comprehensive skills assessment to identify the individual's capabilities across various domains. Assess cognitive abilities, communication skills, problem-solving skills, motor skills, social skills, and any specific vocational skills acquired through previous experiences or training. Observe them engaging in different activities and tasks to gain a better understanding of their abilities and areas for development. This assessment informs the identification of transferable skills that can be applied in different work settings.

Job Shadowing and Internships:

Provide opportunities for individuals to engage in job shadowing or internships in various industries. Job shadowing allows individuals to observe and experience different work environments first-hand, gaining insights into various job roles and industries. Internships provide hands-on experience and the opportunity to develop job-specific skills. These experiences help individuals explore their interests and understand the skills and tasks associated with different careers.

Vocational Assessments:

Collaborate with vocational rehabilitation services or job placement agencies that offer vocational assessments. These assessments use standardized tests and activities to evaluate an individual's abilities, interests, and aptitudes for specific jobs. Vocational assessments provide objective data about an individual's strengths, limitations, and potential career paths. Utilize the results to guide the job search process and identify suitable job skills and interests.

Occupational Interest Inventories:

Implement occupational interest inventories or assessments designed to identify an individual's interests in specific job fields or industries. These inventories typically involve questionnaires or surveys that measure preferences for certain work tasks, work environments, or work styles. The results provide valuable insights into an individual's preferences and can guide the exploration of suitable job opportunities aligned with their interests.

Communication and Collaboration:

Maintain open and ongoing communication with the individual, their family, and support professionals. Discuss their interests, strengths, and aspirations regularly. Collaborate with other professionals involved in their care, such as occupational therapists or vocational trainers, to gather additional insights and perspectives. By pooling resources and knowledge, you can gain a comprehensive understanding of the individual's skills and interests.

Community Engagement:

Encourage individuals to participate in community activities related to their interests. Community engagement exposes individuals to various experiences and helps them develop skills relevant to their potential job interests. Connect individuals with volunteer opportunities, clubs, or organizations related to their passions. Engaging in these activities allows individuals to further explore their interests and discover potential job opportunities within those fields.

Conclusion

Identifying job skills and interests is a crucial step in supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities in their job search. By conducting self-assessments, skills assessments, job shadowing, vocational assessments, and occupational interest inventories, educators can gain valuable insights into an individual's abilities and preferences. Ongoing communication and collaboration with the individual and their support network, as well as community engagement, contribute to a comprehensive understanding of their skills and interests. Armed with this knowledge,

educators can guide individuals towards suitable employment opportunities that align with their strengths and passions, empowering them to achieve meaningful and fulfilling careers.

6. Developing employment readiness skills

Introduction

It is important to stress that preparation for the world of work, including pre-employment skills and competences, is crucial before entering the professional sphere. It has been shown that the main difficulties in maintaining employment are not so much linked to the performance of specific tasks, but rather to the ability to behave appropriately in the work environment.

People with intellectual disabilities face significant limitations in their repertoire of social skills, especially those required in complex environments such as the workplace. These limitations are largely due to the fact that they have been excluded from such contexts and have not had the opportunity to develop these skills necessary to be successful in the professional environment.

Training for Employment

The objective is to provide a training structure that equips the future worker with the personal, social and work-related skills that are essential to successfully face his or her future job. To achieve this, it is essential to plan specific training actions that meet the needs of a functional and adequate preparation.

During this training process, the focus should be on providing future workers with a mainly practical and functional experience in order to achieve the following objectives:

1. To develop an adequate level of maturity to enable them to successfully meet the professional challenges and demands of adult life.
2. To orientate their interests and career aspirations in a realistic manner, aligning them with the options available in their context through effective vocational guidance.
3. Broaden their repertoire of adaptive skills, thus fostering greater autonomy in their family, social and working life. In addition, they will acquire cognitive strategies that help them to make decisions, solve problems and establish causal relationships, thus developing their practical and social intelligence".

Methodological approach to training

In order to achieve our objectives, we have opted for a methodology that is governed by the following criteria:

a) Training must be personalised and approached in a comprehensive manner. Each programme will be adapted to the needs, capacities, expectations and learning pace of each student, which will promote their autonomy and allow for a more precise and effective intervention.

b) The aim should be practical and applicable training in the daily lives of future workers, encouraging their development in real environments whenever possible.

c) The training will acquire meaning for the subject by listening to and considering their opinions and demands, allowing active participation in the whole training process. In addition, the relevance of each content and its usefulness in their daily life will be explained.

d) It will be adjusted to the chronological age of the learner, focusing on motivating and relevant learning for adults with intellectual disabilities, excluding childish or excessively academic content. This often involves creating specific learning materials that are appropriate to their cognitive level.

e) Cross-cutting content will be addressed, avoiding fragmentation and adopting an interdisciplinary approach covering personal, social and work-related aspects.

f) Training will include attitudinal and socio-personal elements essential for autonomous development in adult life, such as decision-making, self-esteem, ethical values and the ability to recognise and solve work-related problems.

g) Priority shall be given to training that focuses on practical components and favours the socio-occupational integration of people with disabilities.

Customised training approach

The training field has a wide variety of models, and the choice will depend on the specific objective pursued. It is essential to design the contents according to the aspects observed during the initial assessment of the users, focusing on addressing the common difficulties faced by people with intellectual disabilities. In this way, it is ensured that a personalised and relevant training is offered to each individual.

a) **Labour orientation**. The main objective is to provide knowledge, resources, skills and strategies that facilitate the successful access to a job. To achieve this, it is crucial to focus on an adequate vocational orientation, which allows aligning the professional interests of each individual with his or her abilities and limitations. We also need to address basic labour concepts, such as how a company works, aspects of contracts and payroll, and we will promote positive work attitudes, among other relevant aspects to achieve success in the world of work.

b) **Pre-vocational skills.** The main objective in this module is to provide training that facilitates the development of skills necessary to carry out various tasks.

c) **Computer skills.** Most of the jobs accessible to people with intellectual disabilities do not involve the use of computers. However, nowadays, having basic computer skills has become essential for adaptation in society. The aim is to ensure that each person develops the necessary computer skills to improve their social integration.

d) **Social skills.** In training, working on social skills is one of the most important areas, as people with disabilities generally face greater difficulties in this aspect. The aim is to provide learners with the necessary resources and skills to perceive, understand, interpret and respond appropriately to social stimuli, enabling them to function independently both in their work activities and in their daily lives. Social skills cover a wide spectrum, and some relevant examples to work on are*:*

- Basic social skills, such as active listening, eye contact and appropriate interpersonal distance.
- The ability to ask for help. This skill is crucial, as its lack can result in incorrect or incomplete completion of tasks, which could negatively affect job performance.
- Adapting to different situations and people, as well as understanding different roles within a company. For a person with an intellectual disability, it can be challenging to understand the differences between a friend and a colleague, and how interactions with bosses and colleagues vary. Therefore, specific work needs to be done in these social situations.

e) **Personal autonomy.** It is essential that people who opt for a job demonstrate a certain degree of independence and personal autonomy. For this reason, it is of great importance to address issues related to self-care, healthy behaviour and autonomy at home. Workers who do not have responsibilities outside the work environment tend to replicate these behaviours once the support of the job coach diminishes. This is why, in addition to working with people with intellectual disabilities, it is vital that families become aware of the importance of fostering the same adult role that will be required of them in the work environment, within the home.

f) **Community resources**. The aim is to deepen the knowledge and understanding of the community environment, thus facilitating the active participation of students in their environment and reinforcing the appropriate use of available resources. All accessible resources should be addressed, from health care to leisure, sports, cultural and other resources requested by our users.

g) **Instrumental learning.** The aim is to provide students with basic instrumental learning such as language skills, as well as basic mathematical skills that promote their autonomy. For example, work can be done on time and money management, enabling them to

31

manage their daily lives with confidence. We also prioritise the improvement of expression and vocabulary, the understanding of instructions and the handling of means of communication, which contributes significantly to their ability to communicate effectively in different contexts.

h) **Cognitive training.** Cognitive training is based on the stimulation of fundamental thinking processes, which will be of great use both in everyday life and in the work environment. Work can be done on comparison, classification, organisation, orientation and flexibility in situations*.*

i) **Problem solving.** Work on problem solving aims to provide our students with the skills and strategies necessary to deal adequately with situations that may arise in their working life as well as in their daily lives. Therefore, it is crucial to introduce and reinforce the processes and steps needed to solve problems effectively in their daily lives:
1. Clearly identify what the problem is and define its characteristics.
2. Propose different options to solve the problem, encouraging creativity and flexible thinking.
3. Analyse the advantages and disadvantages of each option in order to make informed decisions.
4. Choose the most appropriate option according to the assessment of the aspects evaluated above.
5. Implement the selected option and evaluate its effectiveness.

j) **Personal training.** Personal training is based on the idea of the promotion of mental health in people with intellectual disabilities. Ordinary employment is a very demanding challenge and many of the people with disabilities who are going to be integrated in it may lack the personal coping strategies to assume a new, more demanding and complex role. That is why personal training aims at learning to know themselves, to have a realistic view of their body and their own possibilities, to communicate better what they feel and what they want, to cope adequately with interpersonal conflicts, to plan to achieve their goals and to know how to make decisions.

7. Collaborating with employers and other professionals to support individuals with disabilities in the workplace

Austria

Introduction

Supporting individuals with disabilities in entering and thriving in the job market is crucial for fostering inclusivity and equality in society. Collaborating with employers and professionals plays a pivotal role in creating accessible and supportive work environments. In Austria, various organizations, programs, and institutions are dedicated to this cause, aiming to empower individuals with disabilities to lead fulfilling professional lives. This chapter will explore some of these initiatives and resources, highlighting their contributions to the integration of people with disabilities into the workforce.

Diakonie: Enabling Participation and Meaningful Engagement

Diakonie Workshops provide individuals with disabilities meaningful employment and development opportunities across diverse fields, tailored to their abilities, talents, and aspirations. These workshops establish open and public spaces, facilitating social integration and participation. By offering normalized daily routines, they enhance practical skills while also nurturing social and behavioural competencies, boosting self-esteem through social interactions, recognition, and affirmation.

Support Offerings by the Social Ministry Service

The Social Ministry Service has been providing a wide range of support mechanisms for vocational participation through various project and individual-based funding options.

Project Funding for Vocational Inclusion for Youth with Disabilities

- **Network Vocational Assistance (NEBA)**
  The Network Vocational Assistance (NEBA) offers programs like "Youth Coaching," "AusbildungsFit" (formerly Production School), and Vocational Training Assistance. These initiatives cater to young people with disabilities and those at risk of labour market exclusion, co-financed by the European Social Fund.

- **Youth Coaching**
  Youth Coaching focuses on guiding young individuals through counselling, support, and case management to provide them with prospects. It aims to prevent them from ending up on the streets and falling out of the social system, facilitating a successful transition to future careers.

- **AusbildungsFit**
  This program targets youths with support needs, aiming to equip them with the necessary skills for advanced vocational or educational training, overcoming challenges posed by baseline competencies.

- **Vocational Training Assistance (BAS)**
  BAS supports youths with disabilities and other barriers during vocational training, ensuring sustained guidance in both the workplace and school to secure viable educational pathways.

- **Integrated Vocational Training (IBA)**
  Young individuals with disabilities or other limitations might require adaptations in terms of training content or additional time to successfully pass their final exams. Integrated Vocational Training (IBA) enhances the likelihood of a successful professional qualification by providing optimal conditions for disabled youths and supporting them on their journey. Under IBA, options such as partial qualification training or extending the duration of training are available. The Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs individually assesses eligibility for these options.

- **Assistance During Vocational Training**
  Austria offers dedicated assistants to support disadvantaged youths before, during, and after integrated training. These assistants serve as competent and helpful points of contact for any arising queries during the training period. They also facilitate communication between the training site and the trainee, intervening if issues arise. Assistants can also accompany disabled youths to vocational schools or training sites when needed.

Facilitating Workforce Entry and Support

- **Job Coaching**
  Job Coaching provides personalized, direct assistance to individuals with more extensive support needs, enhancing both technical and interpersonal skills to enable independent fulfilment of job requirements.

- **NEBA Business Service**
  The NEBA Business Service focuses on addressing employer needs. It proactively engages with companies, networking, providing targeted information and sensitization about "Work and Disability," offering comprehensive advice on various funding benefits, and guiding recruitment to motivate businesses to employ individuals with disabilities.

- **Personal Assistance in the Workplace**
  Personal Assistance in the Workplace offers tailored support for disabled individuals to perform jobs or undertake training. The goal is to enable equitable, self-directed participation in professional life.

- **Fit2work: Bridging Health and Employment**
  Fit2work serves as a free consultation service for workers and businesses. It assists people with extended sick leaves or health issues, preventing early exit from the workforce and facilitating sustainable reintegration.

- **Fonds Soziales Wien: Inclusive Career Support**
  Every individual, regardless of ability, aspires to engage in meaningful work. To make this a reality for disadvantaged youths entering the workforce, the Social Fund Vienna (Fonds Soziales Wien) was established. Its mission is to provide personalized support for individuals with disabilities in finding the right apprenticeship. The Fonds Soziales Wien promotes occupational integration and qualifications for apprenticeships. The main point of contact in the Vienna area is the Counseling Center for Disability Assistance, where offerings and funding possibilities are communicated. Assistance is also provided in applying for funding, and comprehensive consultations are available on this matter.

- **myAbility.jobs: Tailored Job Opportunities**
  myAbility.jobs is a job platform designed for individuals with disabilities and chronic illnesses, presenting openings tailored to these candidates.

- **Showcasing Best Practices**
  The Social Ministry has compiled over 100 best practice examples of successful vocational integration for individuals with disabilities. These practices span different sectors and offer valuable insights into tailoring inclusion strategies to diverse disabilities and industries.

Conclusion

Collaborating with employers and professionals is crucial for ensuring the successful integration of individuals with disabilities into the workplace in Austria. The array of initiatives, programs, and institutions discussed in this chapter showcases Austria's commitment to creating an inclusive work environment and fostering the career growth of individuals with disabilities. By implementing these support mechanisms and learning from best practices, Austria continues to pave the way for a more diverse and accessible job market.

Greece

Regarding the support, organisation and integration of people with disabilities in Greece, there are the following sectors, organisations and public bodies that are actively involved in this, either separately or in cooperation.

a) For better organization, supervision and promotion of vocational training and integration of people with disabilities, many years ago, with private initiative, a secondary and tertiary trade union body was created, in which these organizations, all primary institutions in the country are included. That is, parents' associations, associations of disabled people and other micro-organizations. The secondary body is called the panhellenic federation of associations of people with disabilities, while the tertiary and highest body is called the National Confederation of People with Disabilities. These two bodies have the role on a specific axis of claim, the consultation and discussion with each government, on the terms and conditions concerning the labour integration of people with disabilities, and then they organize and promote programs to the smaller associations which they implement.

b) But there are also parents' associations or unions made up of boards of directors with a scientific background, which over the last 15 years, through various European and national programmes, have managed to set up sheltered workshops in which they employ the beneficiaries who enrol in them, train them, support them and integrate them into the labour market, and supervise their communication and liaison with employers. These associations organise scientific workshops in which they inform and train other associations on how they can do something similar.

c) Another organisational structure which in Greece assumes the role of mediator for the labour integration of people with disabilities is the social cooperatives which, through legislation and the culture brought by the social and solidarity economy, manages to do great work. Thus groups of citizens either health professionals or parents, are creating social cooperatives with work in catering, commerce and education, sectors in which they try to integrate people with disabilities. In these cases, they either act as a "hive" of training, preparing people with disabilities for the labour market and as observers and

animators during their work in another company. Of course in many cases , either working in the cooperative itself with the corresponding support depending on the functionality of the person.

d) Regarding social enterprises, a special register has been created in the Ministry of Labour which is in direct cooperation with them, so that there is help and support through programs and development of social enterprises -cooperatives that employ people with disabilities. They also register people with disabilities and forward the data to the local organisations so that there is knowledge of the number of people with disabilities.

e) Finally the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance have defined some pillars that relate to the labour integration of people with disabilities and the support of protected workshops, with laws and regular grants on an annual basis, but also programs through development laws that are occasionally upgraded and renewed. The latter , namely the cooperation with the ministries , is indeed in recent years something that gives me incentive and help to institutions to include people with disabilities in their work but it is time consuming and very difficult to communicate and this often prevents institutions to deal with the labour integration of people with disabilities or they do not choose this way to do so.

Job Integration initiatives:

"*ErgAxia*" is a service for the work inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disorders and autistic spectrum disorders It has been operating since 1997 and to this day has placed 205 people in the open labour market.

It was established with the purpose of meeting every individual's fundamental right to be employed and to facilitate the elimination of the exclusion of people with disabilities from the labour market.

The Hellenic Society for Supported Work (EL.ET.YP.E.) is a non-profit association, founded in 1997 as a nationwide organization of Supported Work. Its purpose is to promote Supported Employment in centres, services and institutions that deal with finding work for vulnerable groups and people with disabilities. It promotes social inclusion through work.

Italy

People with disabilities need to receive adequate support, from the earliest stages and throughout their lives, in order to be able to express their full potential, to be guaranteed the right to be part of society's investment in opportunities for growth, social inclusion and remuneration.

Working is, for every person, a right-duty that assumes a fundamental value not only from a purely economic and remunerative point of view, but also for its social and psychological implications, with a decisive impact on the quality of life. An effective job placement can be very important for people with disabilities to increase their sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-realization, to orient their activities towards something 'useful' and 'productive', to enhance their skills, autonomy and sense of adulthood, to promote personal and relational enrichment and at the same time represents one of the fundamental and central steps in the process of social inclusion.

CPI: Employment Centers

Employment centres in Italy provide services to individuals looking for a job and to people with intellectual disabilities, accompanying and following them in their job placement. These centres deal with the appropriate assessment of the working capacity of people with disabilities, which includes the analysis of jobs, forms of support to be activated, elimination of architectural barriers, facilitation of communication and social relations.

The person interested in seeking employment must submit an application for registration in the protected categories at the Employment Centres, at the competent territorial office based on their domicile, with their tax code, identity document and certification of residual working capacity. For each disabled person, the work capacity, aptitudes, skills, predispositions, type and degree of disability are described.

The Employment Centres will cross-reference the companies' applications with those on the list of registered unemployed disabled persons. A single ranking list is envisaged. The list and ranking of unemployed disabled persons are public. Disabled workers who have been dismissed for just cause or due to staff reduction retain the position in the ranking list acquired at the time of their employment (ACMT-Rete. Per la malattia di Charcot-Marie-Tooth, 2023).

The criteria and proposals for targeted employment will be:

- Path of inter-institutional collaboration and sharing towards a labour inclusion system that can be more efficient and organic throughout the country.

- Provision of a unified reference framework with respect to principles, interventions and implementation methodologies.

- Support for administrative capacity actions, with a view to inter-institutional collaboration, favouring the adoption of innovative interventions in regional planning and supporting the strengthening of what is already provided by the territorial services for targeted employment.

- Promotion and consolidation of the systematic management of administrative data referred to the targeted Placement, constant and regular updating of the information flows, development of application collaboration oriented towards full interoperability among the reference systems on disability, within the framework of regional governance and in synergy with the needs for uniformity expressed at the national level, also for the purpose of their appropriate analysis and evaluation.

- Accessible and dynamic IT platform for the systematic collection of good employment inclusion practices in order to contribute, through the dissemination of positive and effective experiences, to the raising of management standards of the targeted employment system and to ensure the availability throughout the national territory of replicable models of actions, procedures and projects.

- Annual monitoring of the implementation of the Guidelines, by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies with the collaboration of the competent regional administrations, also making use of the reasoned repertoire of good practices expressed by the territories and contained in the IT Platform.

- Proposal for the adoption of the mainstreaming of disability for a system of analysis and evaluation of the policies promoted by the regional administrations that considers the potential impact on the world of disability of the measures prepared, not only in terms of equity but also in terms of economic growth.

- Proposal for an ex ante gender assessment of the impact of the measures adopted by the administrations in the field of targeted employment.

- Within 18 months, the services are called upon to carry out a survey of those registered to verify abnormal permanence on the compulsory employment lists for persons registered for more than 24 months, identifying: the prevailing causes of their persistent state of unemployment; the number of job offers made to them in the same period.

- Promotion of communication campaigns and enhancement of corporate social responsibility that guarantee good quantitative and qualitative results in terms of employment and produce the necessary cultural changes on the issue of disability in organizational and production contexts.

- Introduction or consolidation, by the administrations responsible for targeted employment, of rewarding mechanisms and clauses in public contracts in favour of

companies and bodies that have instituted the figure of the person responsible for job integration in the workplace.

● Recourse to the figure of the person responsible for job placement in the workplace also in an advisory capacity for SMEs by drawing on skills available in the area.

The Role of Third Sector Associations

The associations of the Third Sector will also have their central role and must be involved in the collaboration between the company, the employment centre and the employee; in fact, representatives of associations of persons with disabilities and their families may also join the territorial network available for collaboration with the Employment Centre, whose organizations may collaborate with the network.

ANFFAS: National Association of Families of Persons with Intellectual and/or Relational Disabilities

In Italy, the path of labour inclusion of persons with disabilities has a long history, starting from no specific legislation until the 1960s to a first dedicated law in 1968 to the establishment of a more definitive and complete regulatory framework only in 1999 with Law no. 68/99. Getting to the heart of the matter, the recipients of the recruitment obligation and collaboration in Italy are public and private employers who are obliged to employ workers belonging to the categories of disadvantaged persons, to the extent provided for by the so-called reserve quotas.
Despite these obligations, several agencies, associations and companies collaborate with employers to indirectly support the recruitment and accompaniment of people with mental disabilities.

Anffas is the National Association of Families of Persons with Intellectual and/or Relational Disabilities, founded in Rome on 28 March 1958 by a group of parents of children with intellectual disabilities.
This association works to build a world in which people with intellectual disabilities and neurodevelopmental disorders, and their families, can see their rights respected and made fully enforceable.

For more than 15 years Anffas organized training courses such as refresher courses, conferences, seminars, round tables, masters, professional advanced training courses, awareness-raising events aimed at professionals working in various capacities in the world of disability and the third sector who intend to update their professional skills. The training courses are structured to allow the professional who works with people with intellectual disabilities to be able to apply the skills

acquired in the working environment and at the same time to be able to update himself by investing in his own professional growth.

The purpose of the proposed courses is to solicit and promote, in an organized, structured manner through solid experience, research, prevention, habitation and rehabilitation on intellectual and neurodevelopmental disabilities, proposing all useful information also of a regulatory, health and social nature to all those involved in the process of taking charge of the person with disabilities and his/her family in every phase of the life cycle. This is flanked by specific training and highly customized consultancy carried out throughout the country and adapted to the specific organizational needs of the context (Anffas, 2020).

ANDEL: National Disability and Employment Agency

ANDEL is a non-profit agency that bases its activities on the principle of subsidiarity and therefore operates in a non-competitive or alternative spirit to those who are already involved in the system of employment inclusion of disabled people.

It promotes cultural, training and service activities, signing collaboration agreements, conventions, protocols and joint ventures with any entity, both public and private, that operates in the field of labour inclusion of disabled people and active employment policies (ANDEL Website, 2023).

For private and public companies, ANDEL offers:

- Assessment of the company's employment potential

- Customisation of the compliance project

- Choice of the most appropriate tools for fulfilling obligations

- Use of good practices in use in the various territories

- Valorisation of cost-cutting and facilitation tools

- Training of the staff in charge and of the colleagues of disabled staff in line with the solutions chosen for the fulfilment of obligations.

To the Employment Centres the ANDEL offers:

- Promotion of Law 68/99 with companies and other obliged parties in the territory

- Promotion of job accompaniment paths

- Dissemination of good practices

- Staff training and updating

- Support in the dissemination of inclusive culture and corporate mediation

Trade Unions and Social Cooperatives

The workers' and employers' trade unions that are comparatively more representative at the national level, the social cooperatives, the associations of persons with disabilities and their families, and other relevant third-sector organizations, in order to promote the employment of persons with disabilities, will sign territorial agreements with functions of proposal, verification and evaluation regarding the policy guidelines that are based on the principles of targeted employment on a territorial basis.

The Italian Regions will set up these places of concentration on the application of the right to work of persons with disabilities. The agreements will identify the needs of the territory and propose three-year action lines in the field of employment of persons with disabilities (Handylex, 2022).

Spain

There is a programme in Spain for the integration of people with intellectual disabilities into the labour market:[1]

This programme is carried out by the Mapfre Foundation, which facilitates the union of companies willing to support the inclusion of people with disabilities and enhance their competitiveness, and individuals willing to join the workforce. A symbiosis that thrives; evidence corroborates this.

In addition, to corroborate it with evidence, below are some examples of success stories collected through this initiative; in which the experiences and motivations for the employability of people with intellectual disabilities are reflected both by the company and by the members of this group themselves, with their life experiences.

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[1] https://www.fundacionmapfre.org/accion-social/programa-social-empleo/juntos-somos-capaces/

Decathlon Lugo case[2]

Decathlon is a company committed to the inclusion of people with functional diversity as part of its philosophy of reaching out to all individuals, both as customers and employees. The Decathlon Lugo team, of which Marcos, a person with an intellectual disability, is now a part, is a group of people who share the idea of the need to integrate those who may face a certain degree of social exclusion. Therefore, it is a team committed and favourable to the insertion of Marcos or any other person with a disability.

Marcos' integration, like that of any person with an intellectual disability, is different from that of other people, as it requires a little more attention at the beginning. At Decathlon, they strive to enable their salespeople to be autonomous from the very beginning, and with Marcos, this has been an additional challenge. However, it has certainly been a rewarding experience where all the staff are growing as employees and as human beings.

Marcos has also benefited greatly from working in this company: he has gained self-confidence, experiences personal satisfaction, is financially rewarded and has gained independence. Although he feels that he is still in the process of integration, he is learning and feels that he is on the way to greater inclusion. The initial integration process in the company was complex but very satisfying. It is worth highlighting the excellent relationship with both her colleagues and her superiors, due to the culture of teamwork that fosters this type of relationship.

Carrefour Campanas Case[3]

Carrefour Campanas' main reason for employing a person with an intellectual disability is its strong commitment to corporate social responsibility. In Carrefour Campanas, they undoubtedly recognise the importance of contributing to two fundamental aspects: at a social level, promoting inclusion and diversity, and at a business level, generating value and competitiveness.

The process of integration of people with intellectual disabilities in the company is assisted at all times by the figure of the job coach. This person accompanies and guides the worker for an efficient adaptation to the position, while providing advice to the work team.

A remarkable aspect for Carrefour Campanas is the value that is manifested in three areas. Firstly, the value of effective integration of people with disabilities, providing them with opportunities to be part of the world of work. Secondly, the value of collaborating with entities that support appropriate integration. Finally, the value at a business level, by contributing in a competitive way to the performance of a job and bringing value and a positive atmosphere to the work team.

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[2] Inserción laboral en Decathlon Lugo - Fundación MAPFRE (fundacionmapfre.org)

[3] Inserción laboral en Carrefour - Fundación MAPFRE (fundacionmapfre.org)
Inserción laboral en Carrefour - Fundación MAPFRE (fundacionmapfre.org)

María Bellver has Down's Syndrome and is a cashier's assistant at Carrefour Campanas. Thanks to this job she has money and is able to work, and she is also happy to have colleagues. She also considers the integration with her colleagues to be positive, as she says that they help her a lot and she already knows the tasks, although she wants to improve by being quicker in carrying them out.

Calidad Pascual Case4

In the case of Calidad Pascual, the reason for promoting the integration of people with intellectual disabilities is also corporate social responsibility and its commitment to society. The integration of people with intellectual disabilities in the yoghurt section has not been a difficulty at any time; they fulfil their responsibilities just like the rest of the workers. In this case, the employment of people with intellectual disabilities has a great impact on society, especially in terms of the integration of people who have greater difficulty in accessing a job.

The collaboration with expert entities in the support of people with intellectual disabilities has been considered by Calidad Pascual as essential to define the jobs that better adapt to each person with intellectual disabilities.

The main work of people with intellectual disabilities in this company is focused on controlling the palletising of yoghurts and providing the machines with the material they need to work. They also clean the machines and perform quality control tasks of the yoghurts.

The workers with intellectual disabilities in this company value very positively the fact that they are able to occupy their available time with a job, which also allows them to be financially sufficient. In addition, employment has allowed them to broaden their range of friendships, making them feel more integrated and more emotionally stable.

In conclusion, the "Together We Can" programme of the Mapfre Foundation is an initiative that aims to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market in Spain. Through this programme, it seeks to collaborate with different social entities and companies to create employment opportunities for people with disabilities, facilitating their integration into the world of work. In addition, training and advice is offered to both employees and participating companies to promote an inclusive and diverse culture in the workplace. The programme focuses on the development of skills and competencies of people with disabilities in order to improve their chances of securing decent and sustainable employment.

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[4] Inserción laboral en Calidad Pascual - Fundación MAPFRE (fundacionmapfre.org)

8. How to address challenges and barriers that individuals with disabilities face in the workplace?

PBS (Positive Behaviour Support)

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) is a proactive approach that focuses on understanding the function and context of behaviour and implementing strategies to promote positive behaviours while reducing challenging behaviours.

Principles and strategies, including functional behaviour assessment, behaviour intervention:

An inclusive workplace should:

> Provide comprehensive training on PBS on planning, and data collection methods.
>
> Create behaviour support plans tailored to the needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) in the workplace, which outline strategies for promoting positive behaviours and addressing challenging behaviours.
>
> Collaborate with behaviour analysts or PBS specialists to develop and implement effective behaviour support plans.

Preparatory Workshops

An employer can organise preparatory workshops to educate and inform employers, co-workers, and supervisors about working with individuals with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual disabilities.

- Customize the content of the workshops to address specific challenges and barriers that individuals with ID may face in the workplace.

- Include sessions on disability awareness, communication strategies, reasonable accommodations, and creating an inclusive work environment.

- Provide practical examples, case studies, and interactive activities to enhance understanding and empathy among participants.

Supporting Consultants

- Engage supporting consultants or experts in disability inclusion to provide ongoing guidance and support in the workplace. These consultants can help monitor changes and challenges in the workspace, identify areas for improvement, and offer recommendations for fostering inclusion.

- Collaborate with supporting organizations that have expertise in supporting individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

- Consultants can also assist in developing policies and procedures, conducting accessibility audits, and providing training for employees.

Team Building Activities

A company or workplace that aims to be inclusive develops a co-productive environment by: Organizing team building activities that foster inclusion and strengthen relationships among all employees, including those with intellectual disabilities.

- Include a variety of activities that encourage collaboration, communication, and mutual support. Promoting shared goals and tasks that require the diverse skills and strengths of team members. Scheduling activities that raise awareness of individual differences and promote a culture of respect and acceptance within the team.

Tension Release Methodologies

Introduce tension release methodologies to help employees, including those with ID, cope with stress and maintain a healthy work environment.

- Offer techniques such as mindfulness exercises, deep breathing exercises, guided relaxation, or stretching exercises.

- Encourage employees to take short breaks and engage in stress-reducing activities during the workday.

- Provide resources and information on stress management, self-care, and mental health support services available within the workplace or community.

Development of Soft Skills of PWID

- Design training programs or workshops specifically tailored to developing soft skills in individuals with intellectual disabilities.

- Focus on areas such as communication skills, problem-solving, time management, teamwork, self-advocacy, and workplace etiquette.

- Utilize interactive and experiential learning methods, including role-playing, simulations, and real-world scenarios.

- Offer ongoing support and coaching on learned skills in the workplace.

Development of Inclusive Tools

Collaborate with EU consortia, such as the European Disability Strategy, to access resources and tools that facilitate the adaptation of individuals with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, to the workspace.

- Explore inclusive technology solutions, assistive devices, and software applications that enhance productivity, communication, and independent functioning.

- Provide training and support for individuals with ID to effectively use inclusive tools, ensuring equal access and opportunities.

- Collaborate with accessibility experts to ensure that all tools and technologies comply with relevant accessibility standards and guidelines.

Conclusions

Overall, teaching and working with individuals with intellectual disabilities is a complex but fulfilling task that calls for educators and caregivers to possess qualities such as patience, empathy, and adaptability. Each person with intellectual disabilities is unique, with their own strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. Therefore, the significance of adjusting teaching approaches on an individual basis cannot be overstated. Recognizing the necessity of personalized methods is crucial in ensuring meaningful learning experiences for these individuals, as it acknowledges the inadequacy of one-size-fits-all approaches. By tailoring education to suit their abilities, interests, and goals, educators can provide the necessary support for individuals with intellectual disabilities to thrive and reach their full potential. Some of the common approaches to teaching individuals with intellectual disabilities range from the person-cantered approach, applied behaviour analysis, and social stories.

When it comes to positive behaviour support in the workplace, this practice emphasizes personal cantered planning, personalized approach, cooperation, team building, reception preparation, reward, and reward evaluation methods to empower the employee. These principles aim to create an inclusive and supportive work environment that allows individuals with intellectual disabilities to excel and thrive. Transitions, on the other end, are a crucial part in human lives, thus they encompass changes in roles, locations and relationships. However, for individuals with intellectual disabilities, this transition is particularly challenging due to societal perceptions of disability and the complexity of support services, a challenge reflected in the low employment rates for this group. To address this issue, early and comprehensive transition planning is essential. Importantly, European laws and policies now emphasize the importance of effective transition planning, providing a framework to maximize the success of the school-to-work transition for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Overmore, the process of identifying job skills and interests plays a pivotal role in assisting individuals with intellectual disabilities in their job search. Through various assessments and ongoing communication, educators can gain valuable insights into an individual's abilities and preferences. This information enables educators to guide individuals toward suitable employment opportunities that align with their strengths and passions, ultimately empowering them to pursue meaningful and fulfilling careers. In addition, preparing individuals, especially those with intellectual disabilities, with pre-employment skills and competences is crucial for success in the workplace.

In this report, examples across Austria, Italy, Greece and Spain of institutions and good practices of collaborating with employers and other professionals to support individuals with disabilities in the workplace are gathered. These may serve as insight into further employment of such practices, resulting in higher inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the work field. Identifying job skills and interests, as well as, further developing these employment skills of people with disabilities is crucial for finding opportunities of employment. Finally, challenges and barriers that individuals with disabilities face in the workplace should be addressed through integral solutions, such as having positive behaviour support, supporting consultants, and team building activities within the workplace environment.

In conclusion, disability inclusion is a win-win situation for everyone involved. Individuals with disabilities possess valuable skills and talents that can be harnessed in the workforce, and an inclusive workplace recognizes and values the strengths of all its employees. It provides equal opportunities for people with disabilities to succeed, learn, receive fair compensation, and advance in their careers. True inclusion involves celebrating diversity and benefiting not only those with disabilities but also fostering a more accepting and supportive environment for all employees.

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