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Special support in technical
vocational education





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Introduction

VET4ALL – project has been an initiative financed by European Union and Erasmus + – program. It has been targeted to enhance the opportunities for young people with special educational needs, such as persons with disability, to have vocational education, and increase inclusion in VET sector (vocational training and education). The project has been implemented by:

- Zespół Szkół Ponadpodstawowych w Bystrzycy Kłodzkiej (Vocational school, Poland)
- Dobre Kadry Centrum badawczo-szkoleniowe Sp.z o.o. (Research and training center, Poland) aiming to promote good practices in the hosting companies when hosting persons with disability
- Institute for Training, Employability and Learning Mobility (Hosting and intermediary organisation, Italy) aiming to promote support for the students when accompanying them in VET projects
- Asociación Mundus (Hosting and intermediary organisation, Spain) aiming to increase participation of people with disability in vocational mobility projects
- Juvenia Youth Research and Development Center in South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences LTD, Xamk (University, Finland) aiming to promote special support in education for technical vocations

Aims of the sub-project implemented by Juvenia, Xamk has been to seek such good practices in vocational educational system and learning environments, that would support the young people with disability to achieve their educational goals. These good practices can be, for example, good solutions in teaching, instructing, and arranging conditions to study and learn. In this project, such practices have been sought, that could be applied internationally when providing and seeking possibilities to vocational education for young persons with disability.

This report has two basic aims. Firstly, it strives at mapping out the current developments in Finland, Poland, Spain, and Italy, regarding the practices to provide special support for those young people with special needs for support, who study to learn a vocational occupation. Secondly, the aim is to introduce such good practices in special support that are currently used in technical vocational education specifically in Finland and give tools to apply and develop these practices for educational purposes in other countries. Thus, this report is targeted to professionals and officials working to enhance special support for young persons with disability in vocational education, and the results presented in this report are aimed to be utilized internationally.

On behalf of Finland, it has been possible to learn from those vocational educational institutions, that provide technical studies for persons with special needs of support, such as persons with learning disability, mobility impairments and sensory impairments. Along by the experiences gathered from Finland and other participating countries, different educational institutions provide crucial knowledge on the practices of support. They include various elements for such good practices, that can be further developed and applied internationally in vocational education.



Legislative frameworks for special support in education

Learning difficulties and problems in coping at school are crucial reasons for young people to drop out of the educational system, which furtherly affects the possibilities to learn necessary skills for working life (e.g. Eriksson 2017). Many of these young people need special support at different levels of education and stages in their educational paths. Need for special support in education is widely recognized in contemporary Finnish educational and youth policies, but the practices may vary a lot throughout the educational system.

In Finland, the right to special support according to individual needs is enshrined by law of vocational education and training (Finlex 2017: §531). Each student is entitled to get support in studies and help to build their educational paths. In 2020, appr. 34 900 students received special support in vocational education leading to a qualification, that is 11,2 % of students in vocational education altogether. 87% of those receiving special support were students in initial vocational education, whereas the rest studied in special educational institutions. (Official Statistics of Finland, 2020.)

According to *Act on Vocational Education and Training* in Finland (Finlex 2017: §531), the demand to provide special support to those with special educational needs (SEN) has been established in legislative sections of *special needs support* (§64) and *intensive special needs support* (§65). According to the legislation, a student is entitled to special needs support, if s/he has learning difficulties, disability, or illness. The student requires long-term or special assistance in learning or studying to acquire the vocational competence requirements or key competence requirements.

Special support is defined as to involve systematic special assistance and special arrangements for learning and studying that are based on a student's needs and abilities. The goal of special support in vocational education is that the skills the student acquires must equal to the relevant national qualification requirements or education or training requirements. The competence assessment may be adjusted by conducting a customized competence assessment for the student, but only insofar it is necessary in view of the individual objectives and capabilities of the student. Another purpose of special support is to contribute to the rehabilitation goals of the student together with a rehabilitation service provider.

Diversity of learning difficulties

At vocational education it has been specified, that the students have different developmental learning disorders, such as dyslexia (problems with reading and spelling), dyscalculia (a math learning disability), developmental language disorders (difficulties understanding and/or using spoken language) and learning disability. Students can also be affected by sensory e.g. visual and hearing impairments and mobility impairments, that can affect motoric abilities or cause muscle weakness, and by spatial learning disability that can cause difficulties in sensing directions and/or estimating size.

Special support in general vocational education is needed basically in perception, attention and concentration. More than 30% of the VET students needing special support have been identified as having “other reasons which demand special education”, such as unspecified needs for special support, mainly consisting of combined and diverse difficulties with motivation and coping (Hirvonen et al. 2009). In general, it has been a usual practice for teachers in special educational needs (SEN) to base their assessment of needs and plan the support according to the diagnosis that specifies the functional disorders the student has. However, in recent years, a more holistic trend for educational support has been identified in vocational colleges. It shifts the focus of support from segregated diagnosis-based settings to educational environments that are flexible and multilevel (Pirttimaa & Hirvonen 2014). It has been argued that the strong linkage between general and special education in VET offers possibilities for inclusive education, although the work of SEN teachers needs redefinitions in the light of these new arrangements in educational settings (Hirvonen 2010).

Nature of special support in vocational education and training

It has been stated that it's necessary to provide immediate support for those students, who are starting their studies in the VET sector. Assessment of needs for individual support is necessary to start with, and with the assessment process they use conversations, tests and games, such as game boards and question cards. According to Finnish legislation it is obligatory to take the SEN action plan into use with the student needing special support, in which the individual needs for support and intended methods and practices for support are specified.

In Poland, Italy and Spain, as well, the student's needs for special support are carefully considered on behalf of the professionals, already before the student starts with the vocational studies. For example, the student is ensured to be able to start with studies that are considered as suitable, and the professionals plan the practices of support in learning for the whole duration of the studies.

For example, at VAAO (Valkeakoski Vocational College) in Finland, there are a few crucial supporting practices and methods provided for the SEN students, which are basically 1) general support in the classroom with the school instructor helping the students together with the teachers, 2) special workshops, where students can study and receive non-stop guidance and support every day, 3) special needs support, that provides the student systematic and personalized support based on personalized plan for learning in small study groups. There is also support provided by the school social worker and outreach youth worker to help the students with problems in personal lives, such as mental issues and lack of motivation.

To minimize the risk of dropouts, it has been considered useful in VAAO to arrange a meeting with the student and the special support staff already at the comprehensive school before the studies start at the vocational school. During these meetings the guidance counselor, special education coordinator and curator discuss with the student about his/her special education needs and personal aims in vocational studies. After starting the studies, they arrange a special support conversation at the vocational school attended by the student, his/her parents, and the special education coordinator.

They design a special support plan, in which the student's personal aims in the studies, the needs for support, as well as the practices and methods of support are specified. During the studies, the progress in the studies is being assessed at follow-up meetings and the special support plan is re-assessed and modified, if necessary. The follow-up meetings are arranged among vocational teachers, tutor teachers and SEN teachers, social workers, instructors, and heads of divisions. In those meetings the progress and challenges of the student, as well as need for support, motivation and attitudes are being assessed.

Principles of equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education serve as crucial in conducting the policy and practice of special support in VET. In Finland, the **personal support plan** is the core practice of arranging special support in different fields of services (e.g. educational, disability, employment). It relies on the principle of person-centered approach, meaning that the person or individual is the best knower of his/her own individual needs. Ideologically, it is contradictory to structure-centered thinking, implying, for example, that the professional educational support system is perfect per se, and all individuals should adjust to the existing practices and solutions. On the contrary, according to person-centered principle, the practices should be tailored individually for the person needing support, so that the person him/herself would be the master of his/her own life and needs. (e.g. Duffy 2007.) In vocational education, a personal support plan always involves a thorough map-out of the individual aims of the student, preferences, and interests in studies and careful assessment of the needs of support of the student, which serves as the starting point for all actions needed during the studies.



Special support in technical vocational studies

Basic aim of special support in VET studies is to strengthen vocational skills and competencies to prepare the students for employment. The students needing special support build their educational paths usually by combining work and studies, to learn both theory and practice. In special education, the teachers need to take “SEN action plan” into notice, which is an official Finnish protocol applied in education and training.

What is worth noticing here, is that the teachers feel that assessing the need of support solely according to the medical diagnoses of the student is not appropriate in VET education. They might feel that this traditional method should be supplemented (or even replaced) by providing more concrete support for the student to learn the occupation. By providing individual support for each student to learn the professional skills accordingly, special education could be more inclusive and relevant especially for those, whose difficulties are unspecified, such as absence of coping skills. (Pirttimaa & Hirvonen 2014.)

The students needing special support can have many types of learning difficulties. They may be troubles in spatial or linguistic perception that complicate the learning of mathematics and languages. A student may have hypersensitivity, which causes difficulties in concentrating, or troubles in self-directed functioning. It is very important that the students get individually tailored support according to their personal needs. Individual need for support must be first recognized and the most effective supporting practices needs to be planned together with the young person. The educational institution should provide sufficient resources and build up multi-professional teams to implement the different practices of support for each student.

According to Sandberg (2017), firstly it is necessary to outline a **personal learning curriculum** for a student, in which the specific needs for support would be defined. **Individual supporting practices** ought to be carefully planned in respect of those needs, and they need to be specified and included in the curriculum.

Each student needs **individual structures** as a crucial part of the supporting practice. It can be personal learning schedules, or specific learning groups. Each teacher needs to respect these structures both in teaching and organizing the lessons and learning environments. Understanding the importance of individual structure, e.g.

learning schedule with sufficient time to learn, is crucial to help those with special needs. Individual structures create safe learning environments, and they help in self-directed tasks.

Coping with life is challenging to many of the students with special educational needs. They may have difficulties in keeping their circadian rhythm, which affects the energy level to come to school and concentrate in studies. Facing these troubles, it is important for the college staff to **co-operate intensively with youth workers and families.**



As many of these young people have low self-esteem and negative assumptions of their own skills, it is important to raise the level of their self-consciousness. It means to recognize their **individual capabilities** during different stages of the studies and strengthen them. Sometimes too much independent work included in the studies may increase these negative assumptions of self and personal competencies. **Personal support** in studies is invaluable in those cases. The students should discover their own capabilities and strengths, and the teachers should work with these personal areas by strengthening their self-esteem and include psychological support into their teaching methods.

Many students need support to increase their skills in basic subjects, if they have not succeeded to learn sufficient skills in e.g. mathematics at comprehensive school. Skills in basic subjects should be measured at the beginning of vocational studies and **plan the supporting practice for each subject**. It can be additional teaching, or alternative teaching method. Mapping out the level of knowledge and skills of the students is necessary also to discover possible learning difficulties. For example, difficulties in spatial perception are important to recognize, since they usually affect the learning of technical skills. In these cases, it is crucial to cooperate with other teachers to plan certain practice of sufficient support, for example design a specific tool or practice to help the student to perceive measures.

Parallel teaching has proved to be useful with students with SEN. Team, that consists of a vocational teacher and a SEN teacher have been considered to benefit not just singular SEN students, but the group of students. This teaching method requires sufficiently scheduled time in planning teaching so that the SEN teachers won't be left with a role of a helper. Parallel teaching method is a good addition in working with respect to the student's individual structures and the supporting practices needed, such as teaching in smaller groups.

Supporting the students to cope with independent studies is necessary if their needs for support is recognized. For example, they should have the possibility to do their independent tasks and studies under supervision of a SEN teacher and get sufficient support so that they would gradually be able to start working independently.

Finally, for those who don't speak the teaching language as their mother tongue it is important to provide **additional teaching of language skills** at the vocational college. The number of students lacking sufficient language skills is increasing in Finland, and the teachers in vocational education would need extra resources to cope with the demand.

Finally, there should be resources **to plan the future career paths** of those needing special support already during the studies. The capacities that the student shows can direct to certain professional field, and the career path could be planned by arranging the student possibilities to get acquainted with the occupation. The students could be supported to apply for jobs after graduation, for example, by teaching them literal and social skills to show or present their qualifications, know-how and skills for the potential employers. Learning the skills would help them to prove their eligibility as job seekers. Many studies indicate that the skills of young persons with special needs to apply for a job need strengthening (e.g. Eriksson et al. 2017). They would benefit, if the teachers and psychologists could collaborate with job coaches and other working life experts and prepare the young person for the challenges they may face when starting their working life careers.



SUMMARY:**Crucial practices of special support
in vocational education and training in Finland**

| AT THE STAGE OF SHIFTING FROM COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL LEVELS TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: | DURING THE TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: | AT THE STAGE OF SHIFTING FROM VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO THE WORKING LIFE: |
|---|---|--|
| Interviews regarding the interests, wishes and expectations of the student | Assessment of special needs for SEN action plan and planning personal learning curriculum | Seeking possibilities to learn at workplaces during the vocational studies |
| Assessment of the capabilities together with the student, his/her parents, and the teaching staff | Individual structures (personal learning schedules, specific learning groups and learning environments) | Support to plan the career path |
| Support from teachers, curators, psychologists, and medical experts | Parallel teaching team involving vocational teacher and SEN (special educational needs) teacher | |
| | Strengthening the student's individual capabilities by personal support | |
| | Supporting the students with independent studies | |
| | Additional teaching in language skills | |
| | Support from teachers, curators, psychologists, and medical experts | |

Intense special needs support in technical vocational training in Finland

Finnish students who have higher support needs, such as those with severe learning difficulties and multiple disability, study in special educational institutions. According to the statistics, approximately 13 % of persons needing special support study in these institutions. There are seven special vocational institutions currently functioning in Finland. For example, special vocational college Spesia defines its basic task as to “provide vocational educational training for those young people and adults, who need individual support in their studies” (<https://www.spesia.fi/#>). Spesia provides education and training up to a degree in 22 vocations including technical vocations, such as car mechanic, mechanic in production technology and it-support.

Although opportunities for those with higher support needs seem to be various for even those with severe intellectual disability, these options to study a vocational degree are not available for all the students. It depends a lot on the assessments of the capabilities and qualifications of a student that determine their eligibility to apply. There is a strong divide between those capable of studying in VET programmes and those in preparatory programmes. That’s why there is a strong inequality amongst students with higher support needs, although special education is regarded as an option for VET education for all young people with educational support needs. (see Niemi & Mietola 2023.)

In Spesia, VET teaching is described as very practical in small study groups. The studies are planned individually and multiple methods are used in learning and teaching. The staff is multi professional involving teachers, curators, learning instructors and job coaches in teaching teams (<https://www.spesia.fi/koulutus/kaytannonlaheista-koulutusta/>). The students are also provided counseling and advice in various life skills, such as studies, housing skills, assessment of needs of support, coping with personal finances, health care and rehabilitation, learning at work, finding employment and the shift to the postgraduate phase and working life.

The learning environments are multiple with the focus on practical learning as learning-by-doing. They can learn for example in garages, recycling units, shops and learning workshops in order to acquire necessary skills for the vocation. From these learning environments they move to study in workplace environments.

During their studies they are provided special support according to the individual needs, and the nature of the support varies a lot depending on the needs of the student. For example, the students can use additional supporting tools and devices according to their needs in order to learn the required tasks (see examples of individually designed tools for students with mobility impairments <https://www.spesia.fi/apuvalinein-tuettu-tyoskentely-telma-koulutuksessa-saavutettavuus-tuottaa-itsenaisyytta/>). Crucial practices of intense special support are thus to change and **customize** the working environment, **individually tailored methods of teaching and instructing**, **availability of supporting staff** in different learning environments, sufficient **time to learn**, possibility to use and learn by **individual communication methods** and **special tools** designed individually for the student. The supporting devices and tools involve, for example, visual or sensory signposts, leverages and tools to help with ergonomics. Many times, the need for supporting devices is recognized during the teaching situations, and the teachers and instructors constantly follow the learning procedure and are alert and prepared to customize their teaching practices and the needed tools in order for the student to learn in the best possible ways.

The students also receive **additional support in learning in workplace environments**, and there are staff available to support them in their learning. For example, job coaches are crucial to train the students to learn the occupation and to get familiar with the future working life.

Intense special support in vocational studies differs from the special support mainly in the practices in the sense that the student will get more intense support in accordance to their demanding needs for special support. It can mean, for example, the individual supporting devices or tools due to severe mobility impairment. According to Spesia`s definition, intense special support in the studies means **individual solutions, small study groups, personal instruction and learning by doing** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NifzcvT3Usk&t=28s>

There is more time available to study and learn in special vocational institutions than in regular vocational studies, and more staff resources to support in learning, including a multiprofessional team consisting of a SEN teacher, personal instructor or assistant. The staff is prepared to make customizations in teaching and learning methods according to the needs of the student. The teachers also assess the student`s learning regularly or constantly, so they can react quickly if there are changes in their needs of additional support in learning.

In both levels however, exceptions are always possible to make according to the student`s individual needs both in aims set by the official learning requirements and also the requirements in qualifications needed for the vocation. The goals in learning and study schedules are thus very flexible and always individually tailored. The future job also has to be customized according to the individual skills and qualifications.



SUMMARY:**Crucial practices of special support in special vocational education and training in Finland**

| AT THE STAGE OF SHIFTING FROM COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL LEVELS TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: | DURING THE TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: | AT THE STAGE OF SHIFTING FROM VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO THE WORKING LIFE: |
|---|--|---|
| Interviews regarding the interests, wishes and expectations of the student | Assessment of special needs for SEN action plan and planning personal learning curriculum | Seeking possibilities to learn at workplaces during the vocational studies |
| Assessment of the capabilities together with the student, his/her parents, and the teaching staff | Individual structures (personal learning schedules, small study groups, practical learning environments) | Support in learning at the workplace and getting employed (availability of job coaches) |
| Support from teachers, curators, psychologists, and medical experts | Parallel teaching team involving SEN (special educational needs) teacher and instructor or personal assistant | |
| | Strengthening the student's individual capabilities by individual instructions and personal support (e.g. customizations, supporting tools and aids to study and learn the specific tasks) | |
| | Individual support in learning by using specific teaching and learning materials (e.g. videos) and alternative communication methods (e.g. visual and sensory aids) | |
| | Learning-by-doing | |
| | Sufficient time to train and learn | |

7

Vías para que los estudiantes con necesidades educativas especiales busquen formación en profesiones técnicas en los países socios.

7.1

Spain

In Spain, Special Education Centers are part of the Educational System aimed at ensuring that students with severe special educational needs achieve the general goals that education intends but with greater and more specialized resources. In VET education, in Spain there is “FP Básica” (Basic Vocational Education and Training) which involves very specific and adapted programs and small study groups depending on the professional branches. Finishing the studies, the students obtain the title of Obligatory Secondary Education (ESO). After that they can proceed with upper educational levels or go to work.

Apart from that, there are “PCPIs: *An Initial Professional Qualification Program*, which is a path for students who have not obtained the title of Graduate in Compulsory Secondary Education and whose objectives are to expand the basic skills and to continue studies of the different occupations. PCIs programs are oriented towards specific professions like gardening or housework. It’s professional training adapted to the specific needs of the student. From PCs students are guided to do employment workshops (e.g. gardening). The students also do occupational internships, and they can study in a work environment lasting for 2–3 months if they have the capacity. There is no closed curriculum, and the school board meets the tutors, teachers and specialists in order to decide which level of education is the most suitable to the student.

Whole system is designed with the goal to improve the education, certification and employability of students. “FP Básica” and PCIs are some of the examples. After the compulsory stage, it is important that people with disability are trained to acquire job skills and competencies; but at present there is no defined training itinerary. There are several possibilities to improve the employability, such as NGOs and private companies that have orientation programs, training and labour insertion whose objective is to prepare people to be able to enter the world of work.

In Spain there are also People Education Centres Adults, aimed at people over 18 years old who want to acquire training, improve or update their knowledge or get certain titles and certificates. There are also courses offered by NGOs and companies on various topics, to obtain professional qualifications.

In Spain there is a job reservation quota applied in working life according to the state legislation, which means that companies with 50 or more workers must reserve 2% of jobs for people with any disability. The public administration is also required to reserve 7% of its places for people with disability; but in recent years the state administration has specified that 2% of these places must be specifically for people with intellectual disability. This legislation improves the working life statuses of the persons with special educational needs in Spain, and increases their opportunities in labour markets. In Finland, such legislation still does not exist, but a lot of public discussion has been going on in favour of a similar system as Spanish job reservation quota, as it would enhance equality among the job seekers and decrease discrimination of those with disability in the labour markets.

In the regular employment system in Spain, there are also economic incentives for hiring persons with disability, which are subsidies for contracts, bonuses and fee exemptions, tax reductions and subsidies targeted for the adapted or customized jobs for companies. Equal to Finland, there is also the system of supported employment in Spain, involving for example individual guidance and support activities provided by job coaches at the workplaces for persons with disability who work in ordinary companies. There are also employment possibilities at sheltered employment systems, as well as occupational centers and day care, which are similar with the employment systems in Finland.



7.2

Italy

In Italy, there is an individual education plan applied for those with special educational needs. MIUR (Italian Ministry for Education, University and Research) implements various measures to promote integration: support teachers, funding of projects and activities for integration, training initiatives for support and curricular teaching staff as well as administrative, technical and auxiliary staff. In Italian legislation, individual education plan (henceforth IEP) is the document containing didactic – educational, rehabilitative and socialization dimensions. The IEP is drafted by a multiprofessional team in collaboration with parents, and it is planned for the entire course of the child’s education. The team involves a specialist doctor, child neuropsychiatry and rehabilitation therapists, who ultimately are responsible for the assessment of a child’s functional abilities. At the beginning of each school year, the IEP must be reassessed and updated according to the progress the child has made during education.

During the years 2019–2020 there has been improvements in measures to enhance inclusion in Italian schools by giving the headmasters the opportunity to reassess the educational capabilities of the children with special educational needs during the school year for the children to change their educational plans. Individual educational plans give students with special educational needs the opportunity to get a personalized education according to their skills and possibilities.

After graduation the opportunities for persons with disability seem to narrow down considerably. According to the experts, inclusion in schools is very much paid official attention to, but after the school years there are very few possibilities for these persons to find employment or further education. The situation in Italy is very much similar to Finland, as there are not enough employment opportunities for everyone, and most persons with for example learning disability and profound intellectual disability are directed to supported employment, sheltered work or other types of transitional labour markets. Many of the young people with special educational needs stay at this phase, if they have no access to the regular labour markets with the qualifications, they have acquired in VET education.

In Italy, there is a legislation act dating from 1999 according to which the employers are required to hire people with disability with reduced working capacities up to 45% of regular working capacity. Employers must provide customized work and adaptations in the work tasks for those employees with reduced working capacity.

7.3

Poland

In Poland, there are Special School and Educational Centers, Special (vocational) schools and integration classes at the 3-year 1st level Industry School. There are also Schools Preparing for Work, which, for example, educate persons with moderate or profound intellectual disability and persons with coupled deficits developmental (e.g. autism spectrum, behavioral disorders, mobility impairments, hearing impairments, amblyopia). The latter puts emphasis on comprehensive development of the student and training for independence in functioning. The education is tailored according to educational needs and psychophysical abilities of students. In addition, there is education provided for them to acquire some basic skills to cope in working life. The graduates are, for example, taught to be able to do many household chores and participate in running a household.

Emphasis in Schools Preparing for Work (e.g. Work Training Centers) the student's autonomy is being developed through personalization and acquiring social skills to reflect the real possibilities in studies and working life. The students are equipped with skills that will help them to gain maximum independence in life and participate in various forms of social life on an equal basis with others. Classes include the following subjects: 1) personal and social functioning 2) training for work, 3) physical education, 4) activities that shape creativity and 4) activities to develop communication.

There is no segregated educational system for those with mild intellectual disability or learning disorders. In schools, students are provided individual support according to their needs. For example, Student's Individual Needs Cards, Support Action Plan and Individual Educational and Therapeutic Program are in use at different educational levels. Students with special educational needs are shown the alternatives of occupations taught in vocational education and the studies that are targeted exclusively to students with special educational needs.

Such occupations are, for example, carpenter's assistant, mechanic's assistant, worker assistant locksmith, catering assistant, assistant worker in hotel service. Those with mild intellectual disability have access to study these occupations in special study programmes. Students with visual impairments have access to such professions as office work technician, typhlo informatics technician and masseur with special study programmes targeted to them exclusively.

During vocational education, career counseling for students with special educational needs are being provided. Counselor professionals facilitate the student with the assessment of one's own abilities, to overcome prejudices and gain knowledge and skills to function in the professional environment. In Poland, the studies targeted only to persons with special educational needs improve their employability in these specific professions. However, before choosing vocational school the students have to receive a positive opinion regarding their working capabilities from an occupational medicine physician.



Technical vocational education systems in the partner countries

Comparison between the partner countries show that there are many similarities in vocational educational systems for those that need special support. Technical vocational education is provided for persons with disability in all countries. However, the systems differ in legislation policies considerably, as the emphasis is whether on the educational system or employment system. In all countries the teaching is practical, and learning-by-doing is provided as an opportunity to all those who need special support. However, in some countries the fields of study that the education system provides are targeted especially to these young people. In most of the countries the education system per se segregates those who need intense support from those with fewer needs for support.

Visual methods and aids, signposts, special communication methods, and personal instructions are the most crucial forms of support in the teaching practice and used in every country. Small study groups, individual learning structures and multiple learning environments are also in use, although their practical arrangements vary a lot depending on the country and the practices of the institution. Availability of teaching staff varies accordingly, depending on the professional structure of the vocational institutions and the systems of special support in education.

In sum, all partner countries provide special and intense support in vocational studies, although there are many differences in how the rights of persons with disability to education and employment are enshrined in legislation.

Summary of the report:

Good practices provided by Finnish educational system and the basic recommendations for arranging special support in technical vocational education

This report has provided an amount of information concerning the Finnish system of special support in technical vocational education and comparative knowledge on the special educational systems in Spain, Italy and Poland.

Based on the experience gained from the project and the visits to technical vocational schools, the recommendations to arrange special support in technical vocational education are as follows:

- 1.** Listen to the student, his/her wishes and interests in what s/he expects from the education, and what are the personal goals.
- 2.** Talk with the student about the needs for support and plan your teaching accordingly.
- 3.** Support the student throughout the studies by clear instructions, use such communication methods that support the student best.
- 4.** Use specific aids (visual, sensory etc.) and special tools in teaching in accordance what supports the student best.
- 5.** Assess the progress in studies regularly and adjust the learning goals and teaching if needed.
- 6.** Remember that the student learns best by doing, and start with the vocational practice as early as possible.
- 7.** After graduation, introduce the student suitable occupations and arrange visits to working places.

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