


VET STUDY VISIT IN NICOSIA, CYPRUS

16th – 18th December 2010

Visit details

Study visit participants :

Ulrich KRAUSE (expert from Germany)
Witold CYRON (expert from Poland)
Andreas Theodorou (Representative Board Member from Cyprus)
Maria EVRIPIDOU (expert from Cyprus and host)
Kostas PISTOS (expert from Cyprus and host)
Jessica Foley (European Agency staff member)
Mary Kyriazopoulou (European Agency staff member)

Programme:

1st day afternoon

Meeting and discussion with stakeholders

A meeting was organised with representatives from the ministries, associations of parents of children with SEN, representatives from technical schools, lyceums, foundations and centres and employers and students.

Department for Social Inclusion of Disabled: This unit was created in 2009 by as part of the Ministry of Employment, in order to develop a new system of assessment and a platform of information regarding the needs and abilities of people with disabilities, to provide social benefits and to promote schemes on vocational training and employment. The Centre for Vocational Rehabilitation was set up, whereby 35 people with disabilities work in 3 sheltered workshops for a salary. The department also promotes funding schemes for self-employment and schemes for supported employment in the open labour market. The Foundation on Vocational Training and Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities was created to promote the quota system of 10% and as a result, 40 people with disabilities are now employed.

Committee of People with Intellectual Disabilities: Supported employment was introduced in Cyprus in 1996 and research was undertaken in 2003 to evaluate the results achieved so far. The outcomes were positive; 35% of employers were happy, the salaries were low and socialisation of people was not very high. It is not very clear whether parents' associations prefer their children to work in the open labour market or in workshops. The people themselves seem to be happy with their jobs, in particular the men. This research related to 220 disabled people across 15 projects of supported employment in the open labour market.

The job coaching scheme in Cyprus:

- The job coach is employed within the framework of a voluntary programme and is expected to find a job for approximately 3-5 persons per year
- He gets to know the person, their family and their file and develops a trusting relationship with the person in order to find him a job in the open labour market.

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- He negotiates with the employer
 - He supports the person in work for as long as needed; people with learning disabilities need ongoing support
 - He increases awareness of the needs of the person with disabilities amongst the other employees,
 - He initially works together with the person and gradually reduces the time he is present in the workplace.

Pancyprian Federation of associations of Parents with Children with Special Needs (POSYGOPEA):

The Federation represents the parents of children with sensorial disabilities, learning problems and intellectual disabilities. In regards to students with sensorial disabilities, the Federation is in favour of mainstreaming in schools (compulsory education and vocational training) with additional support. In order to ensure the principle of equal opportunity in education, the students need psychological support and continuous monitoring in order to identify educational gaps and provide additional support, to help them to use technology and to be honest with them and give advice about what they will be capable of in the future.

Students with severe intellectual disabilities usually attend special schools. It is important for them to be in real working places in order to become familiar with real working conditions. There should be co-ordination between the different phases of the students' lives in order to avoid gaps.

The Federation considers it important that students with intellectual disabilities be trained in jobs so that they find it easier to get work afterwards. They also consider the development of social enterprises to be a good solution for their children. For example, creating a social enterprise of persons with disabilities and opening a hotel.

Practical training in real working conditions is also considered to be very good. Some parents presented positive examples of their children's experiences in the technical lyceum. They carry out training in a super market and in a book shop twice a week.

Employers: Two employers presented their positive experience of having employed people with severe intellectual disabilities.

The first one has a consortium of companies (car rental, garage, car assistance) and has employed a person with severe intellectual disabilities for more than 19 years. He is very happy with the abilities of his employee, who is involved in all the various activities.

The second employer owns a garage and also presented his positive experience of employing persons with intellectual disabilities.

IDALION Lyceum: presentation of the pre-vocational programme for students with special needs with the aim of providing students with knowledge on both educational matters and every-day life skills, so as to enable them to :

- respond to the social and communication demands
- make an effective transition from school to working life.

For the school year 2010 – 2011 there are 12 students (moderate, severe intellectual disabilities, down syndrome) involved in the programme, with 6 school assistants. The students spend 3 days per week at school and 2 days per week out of school for work experience (eg super markets, offices, etc).

In regards to parents, some of them are very happy with this project and are actively involved and some are neutral or even negative. (see presentation idalion-lyceum.pdf)



Christos Stelios Ioannou Foundation: The representative presented the main activities of this foundation, which focuses on vocational training and supported employment. There are 200 students of over 18 years of age with learning problems who attend 7 different workshops. The foundation also promotes supported employment schemes in the open labour market. (see [presentation stelios-ioannou.pdf](#)).

Technical School of Archbishop Makarios III:

The representative of the school presented the aspects of the Technical and Vocational Education, the Special Unit for pupils with severe learning and mental problems and all the programs for SEN students are functioning in the Technical and Vocational Education. In the vocational Education are functioning four programs for students with SEN.

1. Program with supporting lessons
2. Special units
3. Home supporting program
4. Deaf supporting program

(see [presentation makarios.pdf](#)).

2nd day

Visit to Technical School of Archbishop Makarios III, the IDALION Lyceum, a supermarket where students are working and the Apostolos Varnavas Special School.

Visit to Technical School of Archbishop Makarios III:

The Technical School of Archbishop Makarios III is a technical and vocational school that provides education to pupils of 15 to 18 years of age. It provides theoretical and practical classes with an emphasis on workshops especially on the practical sector. In both cases, pupils can continue their education in higher educational institutions and in universities. The theoretical and practical classes are well balanced, offering to pupils the necessary knowledge and skills required for their future employment.

There are seven departments in the school. Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Civil Engineering and Architecture, Art Studies, Hotel and Catering and Fashion Design.

There are 600 pupils in total, from which 155 are students with SEN. These pupils attend mainstream courses with 310 periods of additional supporting lessons. The Special Unit has 22 pupils with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities. These pupils attend a special program with 31 periods of supporting lessons and 4 periods of inclusion. The Special Unit of the school is supported by seven school assistants.

Teachers do not have any special qualifications to teach these pupils. For this reason they eagerly participate in in-service training and seminars. The primary aim of the Special Unit of the school is to prepare the pupils in the labour market.

The pupils of the Special Unit prepare and serve us breakfast in the Hotel and Catering workshops.

Visit to a supermarket where students work: We visited a supermarket where students with SEN from the lyceum are doing their practical training accompanied by assistants and/or where they work after having completed the VET programme. The manager said



that he is happy with most of the students and/or employees and so far had not had a problem with any of them.

As regards the students who are doing their practical training, the fact that the assistants accompany and support them with the training is considered a very positive aspect. This training is sufficient for some of them to acquire the skills needed for the job so they can be employed afterwards by the supermarket. According to the manager, 2 days of practical experience over 3 years in the real working environment of the supermarket allows students and employers to assess their abilities and determine whether the job suits them.

Visit to IDALION Lyceum: This is a mainstream general lyceum with a total of 800 students. 23 are students with SEN who attend mainstream courses with additional support and 12 of them attend a special unit. There are 117 periods of support with 23 children supported.

Special unit: 12 students in 2 groups of 6 have 2 days work experience/3 days school per week. They spend approximately 17 hours in the inclusion unit and 5 hours in mainstream lessons and work with 6 school assistants. Teachers do not need a qualification in special needs education at secondary school level. The majority don't have a qualification but may participate in in-service training.

School work focuses on the link to supported employment in the open labour market.

Visit to Apostolos Varnavas Special School: This is a special primary school where students with severe disabilities are enrolled. In addition to education, the school also offers ergotherapy, physiotherapy and pre-vocational training. This is a very modern school with high quality equipment.

Additional information.

- 1999 Inclusion Law on education – all children must be included in mainstream school but with additional support. Law implemented in 2001.
- Children with learning difficulties have been included in mainstream schools since 1990.
- It is Ministry policy to give children all the benefits of mainstream school with a view to further education or employment.
- Since 2001, particular efforts have been made to implement this law in secondary school.
- Since 2004, pilot programmes have been carried out in pre-vocational education in secondary schools.
- Special units in schools prepare children for work outside, which is permitted from age 16.
- All support is provided by mainstream teachers, not special teachers. It is intended to minimise the number of teachers working in special units.
- Links are improving between the Ministries of Labour and Education. The Ministry of Labour competence is post 21 age and guides are expected from them on prevocational education.
- A new employment law has introduced a quota system; 10% of all public sector employment must be allocated to disabled people.