



VET STUDY VISIT BERN, SWITZERLAND

21 - 23 September 2011

Visit details

Study visit participants:

Kalle Toom (expert from Estonia)
Myriam Jost-Hurni (expert from Switzerland and host)
Susanne Aeschbach (expert from Switzerland and host)
René Stalder (expert from Switzerland and host)
Mary Kyriazopoulou (European Agency staff member)

Programme:

1 day morning

Information about the Swiss Education and VET systems

The meeting started with a welcome from the Director of INSOS Switzerland and some introductory information on the study visit programme from René Stalder, Swiss Special Education Center.

There is a wide range of VET programmes in Switzerland, with many career opportunities for young people. The unemployment rate among young people is low in comparison to other European countries. On average, 22% of young people enter university after secondary education, while more than 65% follow VET programmes. The VET approach is dual-track, combining both theory and practice in companies.

A new Directive (May 2011) at federal level gives priority to the integration of students with SEN in the open labour market. Discussion on the Directive had been going on for several years. The Directive introduces changes to Institutions so that they work more closely with employers. It also introduces supported education (at least one whole year of VET directly in the open labour market with support from a job coach from the PrA institution) (PrA: Practical education and training for those who have no access to the Federal VET system).

There is also a new Directive to promote job coaching for students with SEN in VET programmes in the open labour market (70 -100 Swiss francs per day for coaches who support students in the open labour market).

The PrA programmes that started in 2007 are special VET programmes for people with disabilities who can not attend the Federal VET programmes. PrA is not yet part of the Federal VET system.

INSOS provides special VET programmes and PrA to students with SEN.

In 2010, 64 people who had completed a PrA VET programme moved to a Federal 2 years VET programme.

On average, after completing the PrA programme, 1/3 of graduates find a job in the open labour market, 1/3 of the graduates work in sheltered workshops and 1/3 either follow another VET programme of the Federal VET system, get a job, or are lost in the system. Between 30,000 = 35,000 people with disabilities are in sheltered workshops.



According to Federal law, professional organisations are involved in the development of the VET programmes (e.g. they are involved in the development of the curriculum of the VET programmes. For the development of the curriculum of the VET programmes three partners are involved: Confederation, Cantons, professional organisations. The mainstream curricula are adapted to the needs of disabled students, e.g. blind students, deaf students, etc.

Info on the Swiss Education System: Transition from Compulsory education to VET, by Beatrice Kronenberg, Swiss Special Education Center, Bern .

An overview of the Swiss Educational system was presented with a focus on the legal fundamentals, the courses to bridge ISCED 2 and 3 and the structural challenges in bridging the gap between ISCED 2 to 3.

The decentralised Swiss educational system (ISCED 0 and 1) and the centralised Swiss system of professional education (ISCED 3) were presented in detail as well as some possible transitions from compulsory education to VET and employment ([see Info on the Swiss education system-in-CH.pdf](#)).

Info on the Switzerland's VET-System, by Philipp Aggeler, Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology, Bern.

An outline of the Swiss VET system was presented, which focused on the Swiss educational system, the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system and the VET partners' roles and responsibilities.

The Federal Vocational & Professional Education & Training Act, which was revised in 2002, is the legal basis of the system.

The 3 tier system of the upper secondary education was presented in detail:

- dual-track VET
- entirely schoolbased VET ("single-track")
- Baccalaureate school

The dual-track VET approach is based on a good combination of theory and practice and good cooperation among all partners involved (confederation, cantons, professional organisations, VET schools, companies) ([see presentation VET-in-CH.pdf](#)).

Info on the Offers of Invalidation Insurance in the Field of Vocational Training and Occupational Integration of People with Disabilities,

by Susan Dober, Invalidation Insurance, Bern.

An overview of the services offered by Invalidation Insurance (IV) for the vocational training and integration of young people with disabilities was presented with an emphasis on the main tasks and aims, the specific services for young people with SEN, the legal framework, cooperation with institutions and vocational measures.

The main tasks and aims of the Invalidation Insurance are:

- to alleviate or remedy disability using simple and effective rehabilitation measures
- to counteract the lasting economic consequences of disability by covering basic living costs
- to help those affected to lead a self-reliant and independent existence



The services offered include:

- a wide range of vocational measures for young people and adults
- resources for home, school and work (wheelchairs, hearing aids, guide dogs, prostheses, height-adjustable desks, etc.)
- medical measures for children and young people with birth defects
- pensions (should occupational rehabilitation not be available or only be available to a certain extent)
- care allowance for persons unable to care for themselves

The specific services for young people with SEN include:

vocational advisory service / assessments:

- consultations with young people, their parents and teachers at their (special) school
- clarification of the medical situation and associated limitations in the workplace
- interest tests
- performance tests
- supervision during taster weeks at potential training companies
- drawing up of individual training plans

Training at an individual level:

- preparation for a simple occupational activity in a sheltered workplace
- PrA Insos (practical education and training)
- preparatory year for vocational training
- basic vocational education and training with a certificate
- apprenticeship with federal certificate of proficiency
- academic studies

Depending on the young person's individual situation, services are offered either:

- in a sheltered workplace or
- in a free-market business
- with supported education or
- with supervision directly from the Invalidity Insurance

Employment service after completion of training:

- active assistance in finding employment (in cooperation with the institution)
- funding of an on-the-job-training
- advice for employers

(see [presentation invalidity-insurance-offers.pdf](#))

Info on the Vocational training INSOS (PrA),

by Susanne Aeschbach, Responsible for professional integration, INSOS Switzerland,
Bern

INSOS is :

- a national umbrella organisation of institutions for people with disabilities, with 750 Institutions (members);
- 60,000 people with a disability live, work or are being trained in these institutions;
- INSOS undertakes political lobbying, specialist work and public relations activities and programmes;
- specialist work in the fields of employment, professional integration, education, living, day-care centres and psychological disabilities.



Around 200 institutions offer VET:

- practical education and training (PrA)
- 2-year basic VET (federal certificate)
- 3 or 4-year VET (federal diploma)
- employment-integration measures for adults
- financed by invalidity insurance

The PrA VET programmes (practical education and training for those who have no access to the Federal VET system) offered by INSOS are not yet part of the Federal VET system.

PrA is mentioned in federal invalidity legislation, Art. 16, as the “lowest” level of vocational education and training for people with disabilities. Invalidity insurance is not responsible however, for financing VET in general; it only finances the costs arising from the disability.

PrA was developed due to the lack of a semi-standardised VET scheme for people excluded from the federal system of VET and the new federal law concerning VET (federal certificates instead of “cantonal VET”).

Characteristics of the PrA programmes offered by INSOS:

- VET lasting 2 years for people with a disability
- mainly practical; small, complex tasks
- PrA is aimed at finding placements in the labour market, but can also prepare people for a sheltered workplace:
- VET includes theoretical sessions (min. 6 hours/week);
- standardised occupational titles, semi-standardised VET programmes, guidelines;
- permeability to federal VET programmes.

The PrA programmes are addressed to: young people (approx. 15-20 years old) with a disability, who cannot (yet) complete a 2-year VET scheme leading to a federal certificate; those people who have had a decision made in their favour regarding the invalidity insurance for vocational education and training measures. (see presentation PrA-in-CH.pdf)

1st day afternoon

Visit to a VET training centre in the open labour market

Visit to a construction company where trainees of the PrA programme of the Bächtelen Foundation are carrying out their practical training, as well as where some young people with disabilities who

have completed their PrA VET programme have found a job.

Participants had the opportunity to discuss and exchange views with trainers, the employer and a trainee. The company cooperates with Bächtelen Foundation, which has offered PrA VET programmes for a long time; a trusting relationship has been

established. The manager of the company stated that trainees are well prepared in vocational as well as social competences and that he can get support from the foundation whenever needed. He also said that he trusts the assessment made by the institution of



the ability of trainees. So far, he has not experienced any problems for which he could not ask the support of the Foundation in order to find a solution. The trainer said that the trainees are well prepared by the Foundation, so he has not experienced any problems so far in further training the trainees. The trainee seemed to be committed and motivated to do the training and then to get a job. Good communication skills seem to have been developed.

Information on the role of the Organisations Working in the work Environment in Vocational

Training , by Roland Hohl, Professional Organisation of Commercial Vocational Education and Training, Bern.

The link between the national VET system and labour market and the role of the professional organisations was presented with a focus on the involvement of the three partners (confederation, cantons/states, professional organisations) in the whole process, each of whom has concrete tasks. Confederation: strategic management and development; cantons/states: implementation and supervision; professional organisations: curricula and apprenticeships. (see [presentation transition.pdf](#))

2nd day

Visit Bächtelen Foundation

Presentation and Overview of the Work of the Bächtelen Foundation by, Alfred Marti, Managing Director, Bächtelen Foundation, and **Overview of the Vocational Training Offered by the Bächtelen Foundation**, by Elmar Boschung, Head of department of facilities and vocational training, Bächtelen

The Bächtelen Foundation was established in 1840 by the Swiss charitable society, initially as a salvation institution and since 1960, as a provider of vocational training programmes.

The Bächtelen Foundation promotes work, vocational and educational training and home to people with physical or mental disabilities, people with learning difficulties, or people with psychiatric problems.

The Bächtelen Foundation illustrates the possibilities of the Swiss VET system, which is apprenticeship-based, strongly implemented (majority of the population), employer and market driven.

Alongside this, the Foundation offers support measures for job learning, job seeking and professional integration:

Vocational and educational training in the Bächtelen Foundation:

1. Competence assessment and orientation (before starting an apprenticeship)
2. Three different levels of professional qualification and certification :
 - 3-4 year training course with Federal VET Diploma (like the majority of the people in Switzerland)
 - 2-Year basic training course with Federal VET-Certificate (intended for students with low academic achievement)



- The Pra training, which is a lower vocational and educational training qualification, is intended for people with SEN) (well known in Switzerland, although not officially acknowledged)
3. Flexible ways to achieve the VET qualifications :
- theory in professional schools/practice in private enterprises with support of the Foundation
 - theory and practice in internal (to the foundation) schools or companies

Professional integration :

- Jobs in internal companies or in the free economy.
- Integration in free economy is facilitated thanks to external stints and accompanying the candidates in their job research.
Job coaching: support to youngsters and employers during job research and employment

The Foundation includes:

55 assisted living and work training areas for trainees

8 vocational education workplaces

5 assisted living quarters

65 employees

47.6 FTE (Fulltime Equivalent)

The VET programmes include: carpentry, painting, construction, metalwork, garden service, housekeeping, agriculture/farming, kitchen.

The number of trainees in 2010 were:

2: 3rd year apprentices

19: 2nd year apprentices

29: 1st year apprentices

The average age of trainees last year was 17.8 years of age

Main outcomes:

- Most of the trainees find a job in the open labour market (80%) as an intern or on a part time, temporary or permanent contract
- The wage levels are divergent; usually a portion is covered by the invalidity insurance
- 10 - 20 % need sheltered workplaces after their vocational education.

(see [presentation baechtelen-foundation.pdf](#))

Guided tour of the Bächtelen Foundation, visit of the vocational training school integrated in the Foundation and attendance at a specialised lesson of agriculture

Participants visited the different departments of the foundation (e.g. assisted group homes) as well as the different courses (e.g. carpentry, agriculture/farming, construction, etc) of the VET school and had the opportunity to discuss with the trainers and trainees. Some reflections on the training methods include:



- Remarkable amount of the work done in the Vet programme is carried out on clients orders
- VET programme has a 3 tier approach: personal, social and vocational competences
- Focus on the development of personal competences (self development, self esteem, etc)
- Flexibility of VET modules (possibility to move from one module to another, eg from certificate to diploma on the basis of individual development and abilities.)
- Learning environment: development of supportive learning climate
- Focus on practical learning
- Practical training takes place in companies or in the insitution on the basis of the students' abilities.
- Good plans for transition to the open labour market (2 coaches to support the transition, learning session on how to fill in an application form, act in interviews, etc)

Experts discussion: *Facilitating and undermining factors in the context of occupational integration*

A discussion with experts was organised with the participation of:

- Alfred Marti, Bächtelen Foundation
 - Marcel Fasel, Building company A. Bill
 - Susan Dober, Invalidity Insurance
 - Marcel Paolino, Federal Social Insurance Office
 - Thomas Bickel, Integration Handicap (Federation)
 - Jürg Fassbind, Resource Centre of Labor City of Berne
- Moderation: Susanne Aeschbach, INSOS Switzerland

The 2 key questions of the discussion were:

- What are the key elements with a positive influence on VET programmes that facilitate the transition to the open labour market
- Is the involvement of different actors in the VET process an advantage or a disadvantage

Regarding the first question, participants stated that motivation on the side of the trainees, the development of social competences and a nice VET environment all play a key factor in success. It is important to find the best job that best suits the individual trainee. This then prompts motivation.

Unemployment rate is increasing and the market requirements are also increasing so it will be more difficult in the future to find a job on the open labour market for all people with disabilities.

16.500 people with disabilities who are in pension need to be integrated into the labour market. In the future, it is likely that there will be a large number of people that will be very difficult to integrate into the labour market.

In the Bächtelen Foundation, 80% of graduates of PrA VET programmes get a job in the open labour market, but the Foundation does not keep records on how long they keep these jobs. It is easier for PrA students to get a job than those with a Federal Certificate



because the PrA students get support from the Invalidation Insurance so employers pay less salary (part of the salary is subsidised by the Invalidation Insurance).

Regarding the second question, participants said that when more partners are involved, there are more ideas and approaches so better solutions are found. It is an advantage to work together with different actors. On a daily basis cooperation works well, but at national level there may be problems. Financial resources come from different levels: federal, canton, community level and people have different social insurances (unemployment, invalidity, social welfare). Sometimes 2 systems have to decide which is responsible to finance one person.

Cooperation with small and medium size enterprises seem to work very well.

The main outcomes of the discussion were:

- Cooperation of different actors is a positive key element of success so long as it involves flexibility and creativity.
- More places are needed in social enterprises and sheltered workshops for people with disabilities who can not get a job in the open labour market
- More work is needed towards inclusion