

## **Description of an example of successful national/local VET programmes for learners with SEN in the Czech Republic**

### **1) Short abstract**

In the Czech Republic, there is a type of school known as a 'practical school', which is separate from the mainstream and offers a programme for students with mental disabilities at secondary level.

The first school visited as part of the Czech example was Aloys Klar's Secondary School, which has traditionally been inclusive. Recently however, it was decided that the school will stop accepting students without special needs, thus committing the school to becoming a segregated setting. The school is not a 'practical school' but does offer 10 different educational programmes, 2 of which are aimed at students with severe mental disabilities. 5-10% of the students have physical disabilities and 15-20 % have social impairments. The majority of students have learning difficulties, yet currently 20% of students have no disability or special needs at all. 5 of the programmes culminate in a final exam, successful completion of which can lead to higher education. A further 2 programmes are recognised through the award of a vocational certificate, following which the students must still complete 2 follow-up courses in order to obtain A-Levels. The school's students are aged between 15 and 25 and are enrolled in programmes of 2, 3 and 4 years in duration. Their studies are conducted on the basis of individual learning plans, typically in class sizes of 8-12 students. One former student of Aloys Klar's school now works at a Czech television studio. It is positive that he is working in a mainstream environment, however it was highlighted that his father was quite instrumental in his getting the job.

The second school visited was Jaroslav Jezek School for Children with Visual Impairments, which is a practical school forming part of a special educational centre for disabled learners. It is one of only two schools available for students with all types of visual impairments in the Czech Republic. The school provides all levels of education, from pre-school and primary up to practical post-secondary education, with a student body aged 3-20. There are currently 70 students enrolled at the school, with a further 170 students catered for externally, in mainstream education.

## **2) Highlights / Uniqueness**

The educational approaches of the schools involve making use of good connections with the labour market in order to provide students with relevant information and materials about future work and study possibilities. Importantly, both schools also offer accommodation and leisure activities. Aloys Klar's Secondary school offers a variety of programmes and activities (some of which involve non-disabled students), cooperates with similar schools in various European countries and offers qualification programmes for adults. The school also allows students to switch to different programmes or prolong their studies. Jaroslav Jezek School provides many special care facilities including a nursery, an after-school care centre and a special pedagogical centre. It also offers a broad based curriculum, including compulsory subjects and professional training, as well as various workshops. The curricula are tailor-made and offer a wide variety of options. The school also develops transition plans for life after schooling. The school's staff are qualified teaching and care personnel and the school also functions as a teaching school as part of the Teacher Training College of Charles University. It provides teaching in VET and offers counselling for parents.

## **3) Availability of evaluation data**

Unfortunately, there is very little data or information available in respect of graduates' later careers. To the school's knowledge however, some go on to sheltered workshops, some attend day care centres and many stay at home. Graduates do also have the possibility of continuing at Aloys Klar's secondary school. The statistics that *are* available concern the final exam results and graduation of students at Aloys Klar's. In 2010/2011, 53 students sat final exams or otherwise attempted graduation, 6 of whom were not successful. 26 went on to a higher level of schooling, although only 2 of these students went to college /university. Several graduates have found employment in the field in which they studied (11 in contrast to just 1 who found employment outside the field studied in 2010/11).