

Description of an example of successful national/local VET programmes for learners with SEN in Estonia

1) Short abstract

Several education and training facilities were visited during the study visit in Estonia. The Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation centre supports disabled persons in their transition to working life, focusing on social and vocational rehabilitation, training and employment counselling. It currently has 128 trainees (aged 15-65) with 6-12 trainees in a total in 19 groups. There are also 120 employees. The target groups are persons of all ages with different types of disabilities. 68% of applicants are accepted into the centre, the remainder receive other suggestions. The centre offers different courses: 5 pre-vocational courses, vocational training classes, vocational education classes as well as courses offering other learning possibilities. Subjects include cooking, bakery, woodwork, handicrafts and home maintenance classes. Classes vary in their target groups, objective, level of education, duration and number of practical hours. The centre holds developmental conversations at least twice a year with all stakeholders involved in a student's education. The employment units organise adjustment as well as vocational training groups to accompany the education and employment process. The school has contact with companies for practical training and offers post-employment support for up to 6 months after graduation.

The Haapsalu Vocational Education Centre is an inclusive setting that mostly provides initial vocational training. It has 800 students and 100 employees. 65% of the students are between 16 and 22 years old, 35% are adult learners and 18% have special needs. It has 13 approved curricula including the simplified one for SEN students. Specialities include cooking, hospitality services, construction, masonry, joinery and computer and network classes. Students get occupational-secondary education for 3-4 years. The school also offers specialities for working adult learners (for example nature tourism management, textile work, accounting, restoration, catering etc). The school has a counselling centre whose main goal is to prevent drop-outs by providing individualised learning plans and curricula to SEN students, among other things. The students from Haapsalu have successfully participated in

national professional competitions and the school cooperates with other schools on an international level.

The Neiseri Grupp in Laagri is a furniture producing company with about 100 employees. A deaf young man did practical training in the company and is now fully employed. Prior to this however, only one other person had been hired this way.

Klavis Vineerimaailm in Tännassilma Tehnopark is a furniture manufacturer with 16 employees. One Astangu student already has an employment contract with the company after having completed training in the company.

Another student with SEN carries out practical training at Taksi Pubi, a local pub.

2) Highlights / Uniqueness

The VET system in the centres is generally very open, especially with regard to age. Classes are small and of high quality. Different pathways and levels of education and training are available. Curricula are individualised and there are close links between theory and practice as well as good contact with the labour market. Both centres have very good facilities. Teachers are highly motivated, and there are good connections between the two organisations. Developmental conversations are also a highlight as they are very individualised and cross-disciplinary.

The Astangu centre has a very high transition rate, varying nevertheless according to the VET area in question. The 6 months of post-graduate support provided at the Astangu centre is another highlight.

3) Availability of evaluation data

The drop-out rate for Astangu is 10-13%, which was lower than the 19.7% national level in 2010/2011, while the rate in Haapsalu is currently 22%. Astangu has a very high transition rate, with 35% of the students getting a job at the place where they did their practical training. Otherwise, transition rates depend on the VET area, varying between 29% and 70%.