

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

1) Short abstract

Two educational facilities were visited during the VET study visit in Latvia. The first one was the Riga Special Primary/Compulsory Boarding School. It caters for 167 students with intellectual disabilities between the ages of 7 to 21. There are 3 types of educational programmes: 81 students attend a programme for students with mild mental disabilities, 55 students attend a programme for students with moderate and severe mental disabilities and 38 students currently attend vocational classes (separated in A, B, C level, A being the highest). The school offers two vocational programmes (housekeeping and book binding) with a number of VET subjects, for example computer, labour safety, languages, bookbinders technology, composition, household technology, textile, catering, leather work, life skills, crafts/sewing, home economics. Students with mild intellectual disabilities can receive qualification certificates after graduating from the VET programmes. The school employs a student employment counsellor. It also cooperates with municipal institutions and employers. In the last 10 years 337 students have graduated from the school, most of them continuing their studies in other institutions. Most of the graduates have found a job in one of many fields of work, for example kindergartens, supermarkets, restaurants, food and catering, health and social care, building, carpentry, car services, typography, marketing, road repair companies, cleaning services, etc.

The Social Integration State Agency is a state institution which offers vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities so that they can master new professions or improve in their existing one. It consists of Jurmala Secondary Vocational School and a vocational college. Jurmala Secondary Vocational School offers 16 Vocational, Secondary Vocational and Further education programmes allowing students with and without special needs to acquire different professional qualifications, for example cook assistant, cook, domestic servant, chambermaid, accountant, bookkeeper, retail specialist, wholesale specialist, hospitality specialist, electronic assembler, computer system technician, etc. At the college, students can take 2 year, 2.5 year or 3 year courses after having finished secondary education.

2) Highlights / Uniqueness

Concerning the Riga Special Primary/Compulsory Boarding School, a good cooperation between the staff as well as a good learning environment needs to be noted as one of the highlights. Also, facilities, equipment, class sizes and therapeutic possibilities are very good. Cooperation with the community (municipality, local companies etc), is also very satisfactory. Furthermore, school is involved in a number of events, festivals and projects, even participating in Special Olympics.

The Social Integration State Agency with Jurmala Secondary Vocational School is well equipped and fully accessible to wheel-chair users. It offers VET courses for different durations (1 year, 2-3 years, 4 years, allowing students to obtain different qualifications). During training periods, assessments are done by the company and the teacher. The school also offers extensive career services, for example career assessments, provision of information, evaluation, contact to local companies in order to organise practical training and create job opportunities for graduates etc.

3) Availability of evaluation data

Concerning general statistics, 216.307 students went to day school in Latvia last year. 4,9% of students with SEN are in compulsory education. In the school year 2009-2010 the number of students with SEN, integrated in general education institutions was 113 in general education programmes, 462 in special education programmes and 64 in social correction programmes.

Riga Special Primary/Compulsory Boarding School's graduates pursued multiple career paths. In 2010/2011, 10 primary education graduates followed vocational classes while one went to evening secondary school. The same year, 6 vocational education graduates started working, 2 continued their education and one stayed at home.

Last school year, 153 learners in total acquired the chose professions in Jurmala School. 127 of them have functional disabilities. The year before, 60 learners, 45 of them with functional disabilities passed the professional qualification exams and 42 graduates successfully entered the labour market.