

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

### **1) Short abstract**

The experts visited four institutions during the study visit.

The Vocational Training Centre of Alcoitão was founded in 1960 with a focus on people with disabilities and the individual, as well as an emphasis on the transition to the labour market. Since 2004 however, the centre has been opened up to all learners aged 16 and above and offers 75 courses across a number of professional areas.

Casa Pia de Lisboa (the Centre for New Opportunities) is a state-run institution, founded in 2007 with the support of 2 centres for deaf and deaf-blind people. The Centre has specialised facilities and teachers for these target groups. It serves as a reference for other centres and is the only centre for adults in Portugal.

School EB 2 is a state school for adolescents. In addition to its standard programmes, it also offers two special educational training courses of 2 years duration which include practical on-the-job training. On completion, students receive two 9<sup>th</sup> grade certificates - academic and professional. A teacher and a trainer from the company evaluate the students on a weekly basis throughout the 6 weeks of practical training,

CERCICA is a vocational training centre for SEN students. CERCICA's mission consists of promoting, in a sustainable manner and in the context of professional excellence, the quality of life and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and impairments. 75% of the students at CERCICA are aged between 16 and 25 years old. All students attend vocational training courses in cooking, administration, laundry, gardening and nursery gardening.

### **2) Highlights / Uniqueness**

The aim of the policy is for every member of the student population to reach the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, including learners with SEN. The flexibility of the educational programmes with regard to SEN students in vocational training is noteworthy, as is the practical

training, which is an important aspect of all the institutions in better preparing learners for the labour market. Students with SEN receive support in finding an employer for the practical training. Individual future aspirations are independent of the course focus; i.e. even if a course does not match an individual's interests, it is nevertheless accepted by a student as necessary for obtaining a certificate. All schools now offer the same type of qualification, meaning that a student can take one module in one institution and a second in another.

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

Over the past thirty years, a considerable effort has been made to close the gap in average development standards between Portugal and the European Union, particularly regarding educational attainment. There is nevertheless still progress to be made: the educational attainment of 3.5 million working age people is below secondary education level, while some 485 000 young people (i.e. 45 % of the total) aged between 18 and 24 are in work without having completed secondary education (Year 12). 80% of all sensory impaired learners in Portugal receive their certificate from the centre Casa Pia de Lisboa. Learners must be at least 18 years old to receive a basic level certificate, whereas the secondary level certificate requires learners to have worked for at least 3 years and be 21 or over. The success rate for attaining these levels is 15%. As regards transition rate data for the CERCICA centre, in 2004, 50% of the students who had completed VET went on to find employment. This figure had dropped by 4% by 2011 due to the difficult economic circumstances. The drop-out rate fell by 15% between 2004 and 2011.