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# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## GEPP

Grundtvig Economic Participation Platform

[www.gepp-project.eu](http://www.gepp-project.eu)

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Education and Culture  
Lifelong Learning Programme



# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

No. 1/2011  
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Introduction, from the Editor

We are delighted to be able to present this new Journal to you. It is a result of various European countries collaborating to fill a gap in the market for shared information aimed at professionals working with unemployed people, in particular those who have extra barriers to overcome where work is concerned. As David Imber explains in his piece below, the Journal is part of the GEPP project, and as such is a pilot for a more established, regular publication which we intend will follow this one.

The aim of this Journal was explicitly to produce a prototype of a publication focused on the employment position of those in disadvantaged groups in participating countries, and relevant initiatives, policy and research being undertaken around this.

Our approach in compiling this first edition has followed these principles:

- to ensure that all partner countries are represented in the Journal;
- to welcome all contributions as long as the subject matter was relevant;
- to focus on a spread of subjects rather than take a thematic approach;
- to accept varying styles of writing rather than aiming for a particular house style.

Essentially, our philosophy has been that of inclusivity, and we hope that as a result of this, there will be something for everyone in this Journal. Please enjoy it and send us your feedback and any suggestions.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed, including those people on the Editorial Board. It has been an exciting path to tread, and we hope the journey continues!

Jean Brading  
Director, RehabWindow

## What is GEPP? Why this new Journal?

GEPP is a project to develop good practice, information and consultancy, and to create this Journal. GEPP responds to the need to improve services to unemployed people, so that they can participate fully in the economic, and hence the social, life of their countries. Throughout Europe, though under differing economic and legislative conditions, services provide advice, support, training, and job-seeking support. But these services still need to become more effective. GEPP – the Grundtvig Economic Participation Platform, is a small contribution to that effort.

Funded by the EU Grundtvig Programme, part of the Lifelong Learning Programme, the partnership from Austria, Italy, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Germany and the United Kingdom has discussed the ideas that underlie employment advice, and prepared an interactive project website [www.gepp-project.eu](http://www.gepp-project.eu), with an on-line consultancy service, collected examples of best practice programmes, and developed this Journal.

The concept of a Journal came when we realised that there is much research and evidence, mainly from academic and policy review sources, on what is needed, and what is effective in employment support programmes. And correspondingly, there are many programmes endeavouring to do their best in supporting clients and employers. But the research findings are not often discussed among practitioners; and the results of practice are only rarely evaluated with critical rigour. So after failing to find an alternative, we felt the need to create a publication that can link practice, policy and research, in a participative and discursive debate. We hope to encourage a critical appreciation of the many difficulties faced by employment programmes, as well as a celebration of their successes. We want to hear the issues that policy makers face, and relate them to the research and to the practice, in ways that go beyond exposition, towards critical and analytical thinking.

This is our first, very simple, collection of papers and essays. It is a mixture of several themes and approaches, which we hope will spark new ideas and encourage new contributions to our next editions.

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Introduction, from the Editor

While this edition is by no means a complete expression of our ambitions for the Journal, as no single edition could be, we still hope that it excites enough interest to stimulate replies, refutations, rational argument, and evidence in future contributions. We hope too that contributions will come to the Journal from all corners of the employment advisory and support sectors, and from all areas of Europe, and even the world.

David Imber

Principal, Vocational Rehabilitation Consultants Ltd  
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*If you wish to be involved in any further development of this Journal, please contact Jean Brading or David Imber, either of whom would be delighted to hear from you!*

## Editorial Board members

Jean Brading (Editor) – UK

Martina Pilařová – Czech Republic

Zdenka Wltavsky – Slovenia

Wilhelm Schilling – Germany

Enrico Rampazzo – Italy

Małgorzata Mikłosz – Poland

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## GEPP Partnership

### Karriere Club (AT)

Karriere club is an independent service centre that acts as a trusted advisor to its clients providing a full range of career management development, and training programmes.

[www.karriere-club.at](http://www.karriere-club.at)

### Merosystem, s.r.o. (CZ)

MEROSYSTEM is private company which is pointing mainly on the preparation and holding of the training courses and actions.

[www.merosystem.cz](http://www.merosystem.cz)

### Vocational Rehabilitation Consultants (UK)

VRC is an independent group of senior and expert consultants. We provide consultancy, training and services for employment and disability.

[www.vocationalrehabilitationconsultants.com](http://www.vocationalrehabilitationconsultants.com)

### The Center of Education and Enterprise Support (CEES)

CEES is non-profit organization that was officially registered in 2004. It is promoting education and entrepreneurship in Poland.

[www.cwep.eu](http://www.cwep.eu)

### University Rehabilitation Institute, Republic of Slovenia (SI)

URI-SOČA was founded in 1954 as the Institute for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons. In 1993 it was reorganised into a Public Health Institute – Institute for Rehabilitation.

[www.ir-rs.si](http://www.ir-rs.si)

### Focusconcept GmbH (DE)

The focus of Focusconcept is on vocational training, career advancement, recruiting services, start-up support, consulting and project development.

### Interattiva (IT)

Interattiva is a company with 20 years of experience in the field of job consultancy for companies and 15 in the selection, training management of human resources.

[www.interattiva.net](http://www.interattiva.net)

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# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## Women in the Labour Market Veronika Mikulcová, Czech Republic

In 1918 the right to vote was given to women in Czech countries. This was followed by the rights to education, to own property, and to have a job. These were the results of initiatives stemming from the time of the French revolution. There was a very low rate of female employment at the end of 19th century; women performed unskilled work. The period of world wars proved the ability of women, without major problems, to be capable of jobs that previously belonged only to men. The employment rate of women in this period rapidly increased. This started a wave of women's higher education and their economic independence. This is enough from the historical perspective, but what is the situation now?

Although it may seem that since the time of the last war we have come a long way, some things remain the same, though on a different scale. Women's wages are 30% lower than men's wages for the same job (in the EU 15%). On the other hand, female employment is growing faster than the male employment rate. But these are mostly in workplaces of lower quality and the jobs are less paid, despite the high level of women's qualifications. Barely a third of women hold managerial positions (the top managerial positions only comprise 4% of women), and economic and political power is in the hands of men.

Why exactly are women generally supposed to be a disadvantaged group on the labour market? The role of historical development and gender stereotypes still play a part. The first group of women at risk of unemployment are women ending their maternity. In most cases, they have long been isolated from current events and often do not return to their pre-maternity leave level. The second group of women are somewhere around the age of 50 years. If these women lose their jobs, they have little chance of being successful on the labour market, often because of inadequate qualifications, age and little flexibility for inclusion in other work.

When we focus on women after maternity leave and their return to work, we find that the market situation significantly complicates the persistent gender stereotypes. The major problems are aspects such as a motivation to return, self-evaluation, self-confidence and less adaptability.

A serious barrier is the attitude of employers and their prejudice towards women/mothers and the lack of an individual approach. Very rarely do we meet with the "family friendly" employers. Compared with the western countries, in the Czech Republic there is almost no system of shared jobs, part time jobs, and so on. In this respect in the Czech Republic there is a wide space for improvement.

So, how to help yourself on the labour market? It is very important to invest in education at any age, whether it would be money or time spent, and to keep in touch with current events. Coordination of the family and job is not easy. But nowadays there are many ways to help with that, for example by attending courses financed by the European social fund, public university courses etc.

The Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Vladimír Špidla, said: "Women are driving employment growth in Europe and help us to reach our economic targets, but there are still plenty of obstructions that prevent them from ensuring that they can fully realize their potential."

**Ms. Veronika Mikulcova** graduated from Silesian University, Faculty of Business Administration. She majored in European Integration and Doing Business in Central Europe. Now she studies on the Ph.D. programme focused on human resources development in the company and return on human capital investment.

Veronika Mikulcova works as a project manager in a private company and is responsible for projects financed by the European Social Fund. Projects are focused on education of women who are unemployed, on maternity leave, have or want to start their own business.

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## Integration of Lone Parents into the Labour Market in Selected European Countries

Eva Poledníková, Czech Republic

Social inclusion (integration) of disadvantaged people is one of the main European Union's priorities in the field of employment and social affairs and it is part of the framework laws of the EU (e.g. European employment strategy, 1997) and several nations (included in national active labour market policies). Active social inclusion aims to increase the likelihood of employment or improve income prospects for vulnerable groups who find it difficult to enter the labour market. One of the groups that can experience disadvantages in the labour market and suffer from risk of poverty are unemployed lone parents (especially lone mothers) or lone parents on maternity leave.

There is an increasing number of single-parent households<sup>1</sup> across the European Union, whereas the majority of single parents are women who find it difficult to keep their place in the labour market and remain independent from welfare payments. Lone mothers are at higher risk of exclusion because of their care responsibilities (as a result of lack of available childcare services), which may prevent them from labour market participation. At the same time, lone mothers are vulnerable to poverty<sup>1</sup> more than lone fathers because of the financial constraint which increases the work-family pressures of raising children single-handedly compared with the resources available in dual-parent households. The second reason is the lone mother's labour market conditions: women have higher unemployment rates than men<sup>1</sup> and if employed they generally receive a lower wage.

<sup>1</sup> Almost 20 % of European children live in single-parent households and that their poverty risk is almost twice as high as the average poverty risk for all children. (European Commission, 2010b).

<sup>1</sup> In 2007, one third (34 %) of lone parents were at risk of poverty in the EU-25, relative to 12 % for couples with one dependent child. The highest incidences are in Malta (54 %), Luxembourg (45 %), the United Kingdom (44 %) and Ireland (40 %). Very high percentages are registered also in the Baltic countries as well as in the Czech Republic (37 %). (European Commission, 2010a).

<sup>1</sup> In fact, in the EU, the unemployment rate of lone mothers of children between 0 and 6 years old is 6 percentage points higher than the unemployment rate of lone fathers and 9 percentage points higher than the unemployment rate of all mothers of children between 0 and 6 years old. The higher unemployment rate of lone mothers compared with lone fathers is more significant in the Czech Republic, Poland, Luxembourg, Germany, Portugal, Greece and Spain (over 10 percentage points); (European Commission, 2010a).

In order to improve and increase the integration of women into the labour market, the balance between work and private life should be supported. This can be achieved through a variety of measures, including better social services - child care provision, more flexible working arrangements, financial assistance, tax credits for women returning to work, better parental leave regulation, better protection against dismissal for women on maternity leave, training, job rotation and job sharing, employment incentives or start-up incentives etc.



There are very different systems of supporting lone parents across the EU member states. The **United Kingdom** represents a liberal model in which the welfare state provides social protection to particular families in poverty, the majority of benefits subject to income testing. The objective is to actively engage people on the labour market and increase their relative income. The United Kingdom is one of the EU member states with a largest proportion of single parents (where over 90 % of lone parents are mothers) and over half of them are unemployed. The UK government has been dealing with measures such as tailored advice and tax credits, as well as through a voluntary government programme designed to encourage single parents to find employment - *the „New deal for lone parents“* (NDLP). It combines active and passive measures, maintaining household income on one side and encouraging lone parents to support their families on the other side via employment through compulsory six-monthly work-focused interviews, during which the lone parents engaged in the programme can discuss their needs in terms of training and dealing with competing demands with professional advisers to facilitate their reintegration into the labour market. This approach is considered a positive step in that it has been tailored to the particular needs of lone parents, by providing support in the form of tax help and reconciliation measures to make it feasible to be absent from home during job-search activities. Evaluation studies show that the programme has contributed to raising the employment rate of lone parents (European Commission, 2010a).

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## Integration of Lone Parents into the Labour Market in Selected European Countries

Eva Poledníková, Czech Republic

**Germany** is a conservative welfare state, in which the traditional perception of female roles is supported by family policy. This creates a situation in which many women must choose between the roles of mothers and any economic activity. At the present a paradigm shift is taking place with the growing emancipation of women and an increasing focus on economic activity. The Government's priority is to strengthen the role of the father in the upbringing of the child and to reconcile work and family care. Germany has recently launched a comprehensive strategy aimed at helping lone parents in managing the competing demands of work and family. In February 2009 the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the Federal Employment Agency (BA) entered into a strategic partnership, called *Perspektiven für Alleinerziehende* (Opportunities for single parents), which ensures a coordinated and cooperative process in providing opportunities for single parents. In the coming years, cooperation within the partnership — which also involves local government associations — will concentrate on four main areas of activity: (i) initiation and further development of specific network-based cooperation activities to improve work-life balance for single parents; (ii) an ideas competition to devise models for *Gute Arbeit für Alleinerziehende* (good jobs and working conditions for the single parent); (iii) improved job placement and case management processes for single parents; (iv) improved data collation and research findings on the life situation (realities) of single parents. The programme is subsidised with EUR 65 million.

**France** is one state that is putting the emphasis on family issues. This country's wish to enable parents to reconcile work and family life is shown in the provision of support for individual professional child care and pre-bid facilities for children over 3 year. The state supports the single parent; in other measures a more conservative approach is notable. France takes into account the incompleteness of certain benefits for families in general, but also applies the measures aimed only at this group - a single parent allowance (allocation de parent isolé-API) and the support family allowance (allocation de soutien familial).

The labour market inclusion of lone mothers is supported also in **Belgium, Austria, Sweden, Luxembourg, Denmark and the Netherlands** by flexible working arrangements to improve job placement and retention<sup>1</sup>. Some of the measures put in place to support single parents included a generous universal allowance in **Ireland** and single-parent programmes offering education and job advice in **Denmark**. Other countries (**Romania, Cyprus**) are set to adopt benefits targeted at single parents but there are no specific measures available in **Slovakia, Czech Republic or Latvia**.

Despite of the notable support of lone parents there are different supporting systems across EU-27 states, particularly in the east European countries. Especially in new member states, the lone parents can experience a lack of child care provision, and more flexible working arrangements.



**Ms. Eva Poledníková**, graduate study programme, European integration at the Faculty of Economics VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava, Czech Republic. She studied for a Ph.D. in Economics at the Faculty of Economics VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava and acts as a Ph.D. student in the Department of European Integration. She deals with the European Union's Cohesion Policy and regional development.

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EUROPE 2020. Better Europe of the Future

Martin Koval, Czech Republic

In the words of Dante Alighieri, author of the Divine Comedy, the European Union has been through "Hell" in last three years. Facing the heavy economic decline, accompanied by other unexpected consequences, its citizens had to show much more strength and belief than before. But things seem to be changing for the better. Continuing the path from the bottom, EU is currently entering "Purgatory" and should reach "Paradise" by 2020.

Awakening from the sweet dream was a nightmare. The vision of never-ending growth and welfare disappeared like a puff of smoke in 2009 and the national governments, together with the European Union representatives, had to start seeking the shortest, quickest, but on the other hand sustainable exit from the recession. As a result, the document simply called EUROPE 2020 was presented. After the embarrassing outputs of the Lisbon strategy, professionals as well as the wider public were awaiting the new document with different expectations. The bigger surprise was that the strategy itself really reflects the needs of the near future and is trying to find answers for the most burning issues and problems of today. In general, the strategy seeks smart, sustainable and inclusive growth that would enable us to reach particular indicators.

And what do the magical words "smart", "sustainable" and "inclusive" mean? Simply said, the proportion of employed people aged 20-64 should be at least 75%, while the share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree. The investments into R&D should represent up to 3% of EU's GDP and the goals relating to the climate/energy targets should be met. Finally, 20 million fewer people should be at risk of poverty. It is obvious that the ambitious goals themselves are not enough and further stimulus will be needed. Hence, it is nice to read in EUROPE 2020 that flagship initiatives like "Youth on the move", "An agenda for new skills and jobs" or "European platform against poverty" were implemented for the fields of education and training, social integration and labour market. The before-mentioned promise is that European Union will pay more attention also to disadvantaged groups of people, who are dealing with difficulties during entering and/or reintegration at the labour market.

**Mr. Martin Koval** studied at the Technical University in Ostrava and graduated from the MA programme of the Economic faculty, in the field of European integration. He has operated in the field of education, training and human resources development since 2006. He has particular experience with the implementation of national and international projects supported by the European Union and Czech national budget. In the last two years he has led the team of project managers and worked as lecturer for various areas including History of European integration, European strategies in context of member countries and Project Cycle Management. He is a member of the Board in the Czech Association of Training Institutions.

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# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## Maintaining Tradition through ICT

### ACT Train, Accessible Web-based and Interactive Video-supported Skills Transfer

Barbara Plasonik, Zdenka Wltavsky, Slovenia

The goal of the partnership ACTrain within the framework of 5 workpackages over 3 years (January 2010 – December 2012) is to achieve the following results:

- Project management,
- Development of innovative ICT-based training in ceramic design,
- 6 piloted training schemes,
- A project promotion campaign, and its dissemination plan,
- Evaluation plan.

Within the framework of workpackage 1 - Project management – the partnership held its Kick-Off-Meeting in April 2010, in Maribor, Slovenia. The purpose of the meeting was to enable those partners, subcontractors, and other participants working on the project to meet each other, ensure a clear overview, and to plan all the project's activities, as well as defining the optimal strategies for implementing all the workpackages, establish a Project Management Group in order to ensure the monitoring and implementation of single workpackages, discuss the financial issues and management of the project, and find the best promotion and dissemination plan.



Visiting the Ceramic workshop at OZARA d.o.o.: The partnership ACTrain, together with their blind and partially-sighted members.



School of Sign Language in Patras (<http://www.noimatiki.gr>). During the visit, the partners had the chance to exchange knowledge and experience with the school's teachers, and view the infrastructure and facilities of the school.

In order to complete workpackage 1 successfully, the partnership ACTrain will have to provide a Progress report to the EACEA ([http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/index_en.php)) in July 2011, and carry out Workshop 5: The Final Meeting will be in October 2012, and a Final Report issued at the beginning of 2013.

The 2nd workpackage is about the Development of Innovation. It concerns the development of ICT-based training in ceramic design, accessible for everyone and specially adapted for the deaf, hard of hearing, blind, and partially-sighted, in 5 different languages. It is our priority to raise the competence levels of people with special needs.

Within this workpackage, the partnership has already completed the 2nd Workshop in Patras, Greece: Development of Innovation. The purpose of this workshop was to find the most optimal strategies for developing the ICT-based training, the most suitable adaptations for the target groups, and to evaluate the progress of the project, in addition to those management and financial issues connected with the implementation of the project.

Within the framework of this workpackage the partnership is developing a Curriculum with 50 ICT-based lessons about ceramic design. All 50 lessons will be available in all 5 languages. The teaching materials will provide the foundation for any necessary adaptation required during a training programme, due to any special needs of the target group.

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Accessibility adaptations for the target groups is the next issue. By bearing in mind the specific needs of the target groups and the experience of the experts, the partnership ACTrain has so far agreed on the following adaptations:

#### **For blind and partially-sighted people:**

- blind people will be able to download their lessons if they want to read them using their already existing screen readers such as Jaws, Proteus, Amebis, Virgo, Apollo, Zoomtext, Braille Display or Braille Line;
- all lessons will be available as an audio description, which is the best way to provide access to education and training for those who are blind and partially-sighted;
- blind people will hear what is on the photos or in the videos via the audio descriptions;
- since the innovative, though as yet unavailable Application Proteus, will orally guide those who are blind and partially-sighted throughout their whole training, they will no longer need any of their already existing screen readers, and will not have to buy any additional and expensive software or hardware. The partnership is developing an all-inclusive and innovative ICT tool for the education and training of people with special needs;
- moreover, the blind and partially-sighted will no longer need any of their existing devices, since the Application will include all the things they need to have access to education and training.

#### **Adaptations for deaf and hard of hearing people:**

- videos will have subtitles for a better understanding;
- sign-language videos will be made;

- photos, videos, and explanations will be used in order to enable the target group to understand the lessons – different teaching materials that will enable them to understand the lessons better;
- words that are hard to understand will be explained and described if necessary;
- new signs will be developed in sign-language;
- lessons will be structured according to the clarity principle with very clear beginnings and endings;
- synonyms will not be used, always the actual words;
- where necessary, concrete descriptions will be used for words regarding colours, forms, time, location etc.

Within the next workpackage 3 - Pilot training - Workshop 3 is planned for Torino, Italy, in June 2011 in order to scrutinize the first results of the training, monitor the progress of the training, define any strategies for solving those problems that may have surfaced during the training, and review the methodologies and qualities of the work programme, dissemination activities etc. The partners will also discuss optimal strategies regarding the preparation of the Progress report.

6 training groups will be formed within this workpackage:

- 1. OZARA d.o.o., Maribor, Slovenia: 5 participants
- 2. School for the Deaf in Ljubljana, Slovenia: 80 participants
- 3. Intermunicipal Association for Blind and Partially-Sighted, Maribor, Slovenia: 3 participants
- 4. HRDC: 10 participants
- 5. Instituto dei Sordi: 19 participants
- 6. University Rehabilitation Institute Republic of Slovenia – Soča: 5 participants and other children with special needs

Since everyone is invited to contribute to the development of innovation in ICT-based education and training, there is one more school from Maribor - 7. The Center for Hearing and Speech (<http://www.z-csg.mb.edus.si/>) - is going to participate in the training with 5 to 7 children with special needs.

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Barbara Plasonik, Zdenka Wltavsky, Slovenia

Since clay is a suitable material (therapy, learning etc.) for both children and adults, the partners will disseminate the innovative ICT-based training and the webpage [www.see-hear-touch.com](http://www.see-hear-touch.com) to the different National and European organizations responsible for the education, training and re-integration of people with special needs.

Within the framework of workpackage 4 - Project Promotion Campaign and Dissemination plan – the partnership aims to achieve the following results:

- Workshop 4: Dissemination and Evaluation;
- Dissemination to the EPR: Since the partner URI-Soča is a member of the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR), the coordinators of the projects OZARA d.o.o. and URI-Soča jointly prepared an article that was published on 22nd December 2010. This article can be downloaded at: <http://www.epr.eu/index.php/about-epr/members/30>; Members of the EPR will also be invited to participate in the final conference;
- Final International (Video-On-Line) Conference for promoting the project, the EU policies, Social Inclusion, Lifelong Learning Programme, antidiscrimination and awareness raising activities, the EACEA agency, learning through ICT for people with special needs etc. This conference is planned for the 24th October 2012 at the University Rehabilitation Institute – Soča, in Ljubljana, Slovenia [http://www.ir-rs.si/osebna\\_izkaznica](http://www.ir-rs.si/osebna_izkaznica)
- A Video-on-line presentation: 5-minute video for promotional purposes
- Articles and news in the media for promotional purposes at local, regional, national or european levels. Articles are also published on [www.see-hear-touch.com](http://www.see-hear-touch.com)
- E-newsletters

- Network: All partners are responsible for the development of a network of institutions responsible for the education and training of people with special needs, as well as policy making authorities and other stakeholders, with the purpose of transferring the outcomes into mainstream practice, carrying out promotion, dissemination, anti-discrimination, and awareness raising activities at local, regional, national and european levels; in 2010 the partnership ACTrain promoted this project within the framework of the Photo exhibition stereOTIP by the photographer Andrej H. Štruc, in Novo Mesto (Slovenia), Slovenj Gradec (Slovenia), Klagenfurt (Austria), Ljubljana (Slovenia).



Gallery Sokolski dom in Novo Mesto;  
[http://sokolskidom.org/?page\\_id=5](http://sokolskidom.org/?page_id=5)

The web page [www.see-hear-touch.com](http://www.see-hear-touch.com) and the innovative ACTrain-Application:

#### What is so special about it?

- it has not as yet been developed for these target groups
- it is multilingual
- adaptable to the needs of the user
- a big challenge: 4 different target groups with quite varied needs – deaf, hard of hearing, blind and partially-sighted
- accessible for all regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds

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# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## Maintaining Tradition through ICT

### ACT Train, Accessible Web-based and Interactive Video-supported Skills Transfer

Barbara Plasonik, Zdenka Wltavsky, Slovenia

- all-inclusive-ICT: participants will not have to buy any additional and expensive programmes or any other hardware (navigation is voice-guided – blind people, for example, do not need a screen reader since the Application includes the voice-guidance), the training can be performed on any modern computer with internet connection
- it can be used during distance-learning by everyone, and for those people with special needs
- the whole project, as well as the ICT, has been developed in very close cooperation with the target groups of the project
- this Application can be used for any other modules in any other field, not only in ceramic design
- scalable architecture - participants can add or hide different functions, depending on their needs - the Application is designed for everyone, not just the target groups of the project, which is a very important added-value of the ACTrain project; expandable (depending on the needs of participants, functions can be added or ignored)
- the application is optimised for best performance, even on smaller screens.

Logo of the Application – Proteus at  
[www.see-hear-touch.com](http://www.see-hear-touch.com)



The name of this Application - **Proteus** - is based on the **Olm** (**Proteus anguinus**). It is a **blind** and a **deaf** amphibian, endemic to the subterranean waters of those caves within the Dinaric karst regions of Southern Europe.

It lives in the waters that flow underground through this extensive limestone region, including the waters of the Soča Rr basin near Trieste in Italy, through to southern Slovenia, southwestern Croatia, and Herzegovina. The olm is the only species of its genus *Proteus*, the only European species of the family *Proteidae*, and the only European exclusively cave dwelling chordate. It is also occasionally called the "**human fish**" - because of its pink skin and small arms and legs, it also looks rather like a small human. (taken from Wikipedia and other websites). The Logo includes elements that indicate eyes and ears because the application is aimed at the deaf and hard of hearing, blind and partially-sighted.

This project is meant to improve learning opportunities, hand skills, knowledge in learning through ICT, employment possibilities, and the exchange of knowledge between partners. In this way people with special needs will be able to participate equally in the world of ICT, if they want new learning challenges.

This project is based on the report »The use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning for all« adopted by the EC in 2008, clearly stating that ICT is insufficiently present within Europe's education and training systems. It is the long-term objective of this project to establish a foundation for the Application Proteus to become one of the key ICT tools for the education and training of people with special needs.



The brochure about the National Assembly was given to the Union for the blind and partially sighted of Slovenia for the first time ([http://www.dz-rs.si/index.php?id=390&no\\_cache=1&show\\_sporocilo=3164&pageNumber=&cHash=9d1c5a68b0](http://www.dz-rs.si/index.php?id=390&no_cache=1&show_sporocilo=3164&pageNumber=&cHash=9d1c5a68b0))

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**Zdenka Wltavsky, M.Sc.Econ.** Zdenka has a Masters in Economics Sciences (Faculty of Economics and Business Maribor, Slovenia) and is experienced in management and administration of national and international projects, responsible for transnational affairs, implementation of innovative activities in the vocational rehabilitation field (research, methodologies, education ICT, quality management etc.). She worked for 16 years in two companies as accounting manager and as head of organizational department. In 1999 she started to work in the University Rehabilitation Institute, Republic of Slovenia (unit Maribor) and lead special training programmes for unemployed and disabled persons. Now she works in the Development centre of vocational rehabilitation in University Rehabilitation Institute, Republic of Slovenia as researcher and project manager. She has special skills in preparing applications for European projects in URI-Soča and coordinated most of them (Leonardo da Vinci TOI and development of innovation, cross-border projects SI-AT, LdV Partnership, Grundtvig study partnership, mobility projects, International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance projects, etc.). She is experienced in issues of employment of people with disabilities, responsible for implementation of innovative activities in vocational rehabilitation field and leads development groups on a national level (vocational rehabilitation and cooperation with employers, standards of knowledge of vocational rehabilitation experts and evaluation the work results of employed disabled). She is study on the doctoral programme 'Economic and Business Sciences'.

**Mag. phil. Barbara Plasonik** finished her translation studies at the Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, Austria (Faculty of Humanities at the *Institut für theoretische und angewandte translationswissenschaft*), in 2004.

Since 2007 she has been employed at the OZARA d.o.o Service and Disability company as a project manager for national and international projects, within the following programmes:

EQUAL; OP SI-AT 2007-2013; TAMOP-2.2.4-08/1-2009-008; GRUNDTVIG partnership; LLP-MP-LdV-Development of Innovation; Operational Programme for Human Resources Development (OP HRD) 2007-2009, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA); Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013.

She believes that education and training are absolutely necessary, and has thus participated in several workshops, and attended seminars, and training courses in the management of international projects, as well as the education, training, and social inclusion of persons with disabilities.

She has a great deal of experience in teaching English and German to both children and adults. She has previously worked as an additional Language Tutor for pupils from Primary and Secondary schools having problems with English and German. In addition to teaching foreign languages, she has a great deal of experience in translation covering many different fields, such as organic farming, the implementation of European Structural funds in Slovenia, newspapers etc.



INCLUSION: Long Night of Research at the University of Klagenfurt hand in hand with the stereOTIP and ACTTrain; LNF <http://www.lnf2010.at/> and Univ. Klagenfurt [http://www.uni-klu.ac.at/main/inhalt/uninews\\_40713.htm](http://www.uni-klu.ac.at/main/inhalt/uninews_40713.htm)

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# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## The Employment Centre as a New Approach to Employing People with Disabilities in Slovenia

Valentina Brecelj, Slovenia

### 1. LEGISLATION

Employment centres provide sheltered employment for people with disabilities, and are thus organizations with a special cause. These centres began their work of providing employment for persons with disabilities in 2006, when the first employment centre was established, and they have worked hard to create possibilities for the employment of disabled people. Because of barriers and obstacles, people with disabilities often require higher degrees of specialized help, including counselling, advice, training, psychosocial help and other assistance in the workplace.

The work of the employment centres is defined by Slovenia's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities Act, which defines the employment centre as a legal entity exclusively providing sheltered employment for persons with disabilities. The law stipulates the professional, organizational, technical and other requirements for establishing an employment centre. Sheltered employment is the employment of a person with disabilities in a working environment adapted to his/her particular abilities and needs and who cannot be employed in a regular workplace. Sheltered employees can conduct their work at the employment centre itself or at the employer's site, provided the employer meets the legal conditions. The person with disabilities may also elect to work from home.

The legislation also determines that all persons with disabilities signing a sheltered employment contract have the right to a subsidized salary. Salaries are subsidised in percentages that are individually calculated for each person, depending on the amount of work accomplished, and can range from 30 percent to 70 percent. The subsidy is a part of payment for work carried out under the contract of employment; however, the total income from the employment relationship must not be less than the minimum wage as defined by the Act.

The assessment of work ability is based on comparison of working results between a worker with disabilities and one without. If working ability for the person with disabilities is changed, the person with disabilities and the employer maintain the option to request that a new assessment be carried out. In carrying out the assessment, vocational rehabilitation providers must comply with the following principles: individual treatment, respect of privacy, impartiality, ensuring the possibility of control over the assessment and adapting the procedure to an understandable level for the person with disabilities.

According to the legislation, every employment centre must employ at least 5 persons with disabilities with sheltered employment status. The work of administrative staff and co-workers is financed with public resources. Employment centre must always provide appropriate programmes for persons with disability, and these programmes must provide permanent and continuous work and all employment rights guaranteed in the employment contract. The programs must be available on the open market, and the state can only provide them with particular abatement of costs as a means of balancing competitiveness.

### 2. DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYMENT CENTRES IN SLOVENIA

Employment centres are a new way of employing people with disabilities in Slovenia, and an evaluation of their activity is performed every year. This is a summary of the results of four years of employment centre activity in Slovenia (2006 – 2009).

#### 2.1 THE FOUNDERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF EMPLOYMENT CENTRES

The legislation alone does not require any particular status for the founders of employment centres. Consequently, the founders in practice have been institutes, associations, and individuals, and companies already employing people with disabilities.

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As regards the organizational type, employment centres work either as business associations or as institutes, with the latter being the dominant organizational form. Although employment centres are independent units, the majority of them are part of a wider organizational structure that includes social welfare and social inclusion programmes as well as vocational rehabilitation services. Some employment centres are also involved in implementing active labour policy programmes, as well as programmes for the elderly, victims of crime, and national and international developmental projects. Previous experiences have shown that such organizational structures allow for a reasonable level of synergy and more rational use of all resources (space, management, personnel, and sometimes also financial). In addition, organizations for people with disabilities and/or vocational rehabilitation providers have proved to be a good employment centre basis, because of their know-how and ability to deal with issues surrounding disability in the workplace. In the future we can expect even further development of complex structures and greater organizational and programme interconnectedness, as such a structure is more reliable, allows for the rationalization of all costs and higher stability, which together make the existence of employment centres viable. In addition such organization makes it possible for the person with disabilities to transition between different forms of employment, according to their working ability.

The legislation outlines the role of the municipality in stimulating the establishment of employment centres, but it is not clear, so the local community is not obliged to establish such centres. Local communities are in principle familiar with the activities and missions of employment centres; but aside from the moral support they offer, most communities fail to show the elementary attention that the practice of employing person with disabilities demands. Thus far, we have only one example of good practice – providing offices and public work employment projects: war cemetery grounds maintenance. Despite this, our practice has thus far shown a decrease in local community participation in the activities of employment centres. Employment centres view the local community as an

important factor in their development, and have plans to reach out to the local community and include employment centres in their regional development programmes. Connecting employment centres with local employers and companies has shown to be far more successful. Within only a short time of operation, employment centres have developed, a form of cooperation wherein employment centre employees are working full-time at the premises of participating companies. This is a good method of integrating people with disabilities into a regular working environment. We can also find interesting practices when people with disabilities work in different organizations under the supervision of a mentor/tutor. We are discovering that employers still have a negative perception of the working abilities of disabled people, which presents the greatest obstacle to employers agreeing to cooperate with employment centres.

Employment centre management has shown that the existing legal solution, which provides for sheltered employment at the employment centre, is optimal, and aside from working programmes, employment centres also ensure high-quality professional help and the opportunity for developing various competencies. They also expressed the opinion that sheltered employment should be part of organizations for the person with disabilities as well as part of the regular working environment, naturally, with the support of the existing staff. Suggestions were also made that employment centres should have the option to employ a smaller number of persons with disabilities with higher work efficiency to work alongside workers without such health problems, as this would increase the efficacy of the employment centres and enable completing the working process in a way that is not currently possible, especially within work processes that are not appropriate for people with disabilities. With work at home these opportunities may be extended also to people with severe disabilities.

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## The Employment Centre as a New Approach to Employing People with Disabilities in Slovenia Valentina Breclj, Slovenia

### 2.2 THE DYNAMICS OF ESTABLISHING EMPLOYMENT CENTRES AND THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN SHELTERED WORKPLACES

The first employment centre was established in January 2006, and by the end of that year, 9 employment centres had been established with 118 people with disabilities in sheltered employment under this specific legal status.

The creation of employment centres continued in 2007, when 6 new employment centres were founded, which amounted to 15 employment centres in operation, with 156 employees by the end of 2007. By the end of 2008, 18 employment centres were in operation with 196 persons with disabilities employed. The number of employment centres and the number with persons with disabilities with the sheltered employment status increased also in 2009 and in 2010. In 2009, 6 new employment centres were established, which meant that by year-end 24 employment centres were operating with 235 persons with sheltered employment. In 2010 there were 27 employment centres with 258 persons with disabilities employed.

No. of centres	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
No. of employees	118	156	196	235	258

Table 1: The number of employment centres and the number of people with disabilities employed in sheltered workplaces from 2006 – 2010

Since the establishment of the first employment centre in Slovenia, their numbers have continued to increase. It should also be noted that all the employment centres established during this time are still in operation and successfully compete on the open market. Hence employment centres are an attractive solution for the employment of those people with disabilities, who cannot achieve the required working results in regular working environments due to their disability.

Aside from the growing number of employment centres, there is also noticeable growth in the number of persons with disabilities in sheltered employment, except for the 3 employment centres where the number of employees with sheltered employment decreased and the 4 employment centres where it remained at the same level. The number of persons with disabilities employed with sheltered employment is between 5 and 34, with 5 being the minimum required for the establishment of a centre.

A comparison of the number of sheltered employment provisions with the number of persons with disabilities employed in sheltered workplace shows that between 2006 and 2010, 447 provisions for sheltered employment were issued, and from that 258 persons with disabilities were employed.

As regards regional distribution, employment centres are located throughout Slovenia, however their number and scope of business varies by region. Irregular distribution is mostly the consequence of shifts in the labour market and changing demands in the last few years. The establishment of employment centres was generally connected to overall development drives in areas with other problems, which often especially centred on finding employment opportunities for people with disabilities in their region. Most employment centres were developed in the Maribor region, where vocational rehabilitation providers, associations, the Employment Service of Slovenia, and other regional and local institutions were part of an experimental programme to develop employment centres.

### 2.3 THE FINANCING OF EMPLOYMENT CENTRES

Employment centres receive financing from three sources: budgetary sources represent the largest share, followed by active sources, and a nearly negligible share of funds from occasional sources.

1. Budgetary sources – funds for employment centre management and staff, funding sources from the Foundation for the Promotion of the Employment of Persons with Disabilities, subsidised salary and funds earned for the abolishing long-term reservations for donated funds, and other revenue.

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2. Active sources – sales and market service revenue and any eventual sponsorship funds.
3. Occasional sources – funds from the municipalities and local communities, various donations, which are generally one-off contributions

Employment centres are non-profit organizations, and excess funds must be spent for operational and development activities, the improvement of the working environment, the creation of new sheltered workplaces, and/or technology improvement. All costs are divided into the main areas of costs of work, which present the largest share, material costs; costs of service and other costs.

Current financial sources are sufficient for covering the cost of work, but not for the employment of those workers from remote locations (who have a higher cost of work) or for awarding bonuses to employees -- something that, due to the structure of employees and the minimum wage, is a very important motivational factor. There is a lack of start-up funds for establishment of the employment centres, and later, once the centre is in operation, there is a lack of funds for programme development and investment in technology. It is important to ensure stable financial sources for the development and optimal operation of the employment centre. It must be emphasized that unstable operations within an employment centre can lead to increasing uncertainty among the employed people with disabilities, and they can usually react very intensely and need an extended time under professional care in order to stabilize conditions.

### 2.4 EMPLOYMENT CENTRE WORK PROGRAMMES

Employment centres operate under the same conditions as regular businesses; however, the abilities of employees with disabilities, their special limitations, and also any spatial or technical conditions for working should be considered in selecting appropriate work for the individual.

The majority of work programmes are appropriate for all groups of people with disabilities, and there is also the option of making adaptations to the work environment depending on the type of disability. As regards the content of a work programme, employment centres perform different kind of jobs in the framework of productive and service activities.

People with disabilities in sheltered employment can in principle perform only simple manual work where large investments in technology are not necessary; however, this means that they are poorly paid. Moreover, the difficulties in adjustability of majority of employees, is another obstacle for frequent changes of work.

Work in production includes such tasks as the assembly of smaller parts for vehicles, domestic appliances, cables and electrical components, food processing and preparation work, manufacturing paper packaging and other paper products, art and handicraft manufacturing, simple sewing jobs, joinery and creation of different products in civil engineering. We have noticed growth in the amount of work being carried out in the area of agricultural production and processing, including oil production, fruit drying, seed and herb gathering, mushroom cultivation and processing, and growing sheep and goats.

Service activities mostly include partnership programmes, preparatory works for data import in computer databases, packing and labelling, office cleaning, and various kinds of maintenance work, kitchen and laundry help, photocopying, administrative services, laminating, and also publishing scrapbooks illustrated by people with disabilities employed in sheltered workplaces.

Providing work is a demanding task, which requires on-going presence on the market. Those employment centres that have their own programmes emphasize the importance of heavy investment in the development of employment centre programmes in order to ensure the year-long programme. At the same time they observe that their own programmes function relatively well on the market. Normally those employment centres that perform services for more clients are more successful; when they lose commissions or orders, they can more quickly adapt to new situations than those who are dependent on just one client.

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### 2.5 THE EDUCATIONAL AND AGE STRUCTURE OF EMPLOYMENT CENTRE EMPLOYEES

Among people with disabilities employed in protected workplaces, the majority have only reached elementary school education, followed by those employees who have completed some schooling for people with special needs, while those who have completed secondary school, higher vocational programmes, and/or professional and academic education represent the smallest percentage of people with sheltered employment.

Regarding age, all age groups between 18 and 60 years old are represented among people with sheltered employment; however, the majority are in the age range from 30 to 50 years old, follow by people with disabilities in the 18-29 age range, and people above the age of 50 represent the smallest percentage of people with disabilities working through this programme.

### 2.6 THE ROLE OF EXPERT WORKERS IN EMPLOYMENT CENTRE

Data about the educational structure of expert workers shows that expert workers with higher education levels prevail and are followed by expert co-workers who have completed vocational and/or secondary school.

The legislation stipulates that one expert worker must be employed in each employment centre. "Expert Worker" means that the person is qualified to work with persons with disabilities, and, in fact, in four of the employment centres the expert workers are qualified to work with specific groups of people with disabilities.

Most of the expert workers regularly participate in professional education meetings, where they express a specific need for further training and education on working with different groups of people with disabilities, in terms of developing communication skills and familiarity with leadership and psychosocial support, stress management,

management of behavioural problems, employee motivation, mental illness in the workplace, sign language and other forms of communication with deaf people, business and economics, ergonomics in the workplace, workplace adjustment, news about legislation regarding disability, and special education for experts.

Education programmes for people with disabilities in sheltered employment mostly apply to new work training programmes along with occupational safety and fire safety. However, in two of the employment centres, employees participated in a workshop on good manners, communication skills, personal growth, and problem solving.

Expert staff training should also be connected with the training of vocational rehabilitation service providers, and at the same time it would be reasonable to develop specific training programmes for employment centre employees.

Individual conversation and psychosocial help among employees with disabilities is of crucial importance, and many also require permanent support in the workplace. Hence mentors are key in employment centres, both in the workplace as well as in rehabilitation. Employees see mentors as trustworthy people who they can turn to first with their problems, including those connected with work, relationships with co-workers, and even with personal problems.

### 2.7 EMPLOYEES' OPINIONS ON EMPLOYMENT CENTRES

Most employees in sheltered employment are satisfied with their work. They think that they are suitably trained for their positions, because they had qualified before for the same or similar work. They have enough and understandable instructions for performing work. The majority of them think that they almost don't need any instructions, because they have suitable knowledge and experience in the field of work they are performing.

The majority of them find their work in employment centre appropriate for their abilities, just few of them believe they are more capable, but however most of them are not

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## The Employment Centre as a New Approach to Employing People with Disabilities in Slovenia

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looking for a new job in regular working environment because they are satisfied with work, work conditions and interpersonal relationships. On the basis of previous work or training experience most of them believe that they are not capable of reaching the demands of regular workplace especially not monthly production quota. In an employment centre this is not set, but employees know what expected results about quality and quantity are.

People with disabilities employed through employment centres find that they provide them with appropriate forms of employment. Most people with disabilities also hope to maintain their current positions into the future. They are satisfied with their work, are not stressed, and they feel useful and important. These employees also appreciate the management's efforts in ensuring they always have work, and they extend their compliments to the atmosphere in the employment centres and the attitude of the management and mentors towards the employees. The employees have not listed any particular complaints, but they do desire higher wages, a more motivating rewards system, and the improvement of some spatial conditions.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The employment centre, this new approach to employing people with disabilities in Slovenia, has a special social meaning, because from the time of their inception they have proved themselves to be a good legislative solution and an optimal opportunity to employ people with disabilities, who, depending on their disability, can accomplish from 30 to 70 percent of normal expected working results.

The network of employment centres is spread throughout Slovenia, and the current capacity covers almost two-thirds of the need. The fundamental basis for successful employment centre operation is an employee-oriented approach and the maintenance of both their work persistence and motivation, because this represents the greatest success for the employment centre.

A very heterogeneous population has gained the right to sheltered employment; therefore, we can conclude that their reasons for achieving reduced working results are very diverse and complex, as this group includes people with primary reduced potential as well as people with a progressive decline in functional abilities. The majority of them accept sheltered employment as a high-quality solution to their problem of finding suitable employment. Adapted work conditions and appropriate professional support, management and professional workers are making employment centres an increasingly attractive option for those persons with disabilities who are already employed. Because only persons with disabilities with reduced work ability can be employed in employment centre, employment centres are making connections with the local environment and local employers with intention of increasing the integration of persons with disabilities into Slovenian society.

Employment centres still have ample potential for further development, because they represent a very important approach for providing employment for those people with disabilities who are otherwise unemployable, but these activities can only be built with permanent legislation and stable financial conditions.

**Valentina Brecej** was born in Postojna (Slovenia) on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1975. She graduated from the secondary school (Gymnasium) in Ajdovščina in 1994. After that, she began to study at the department for Pedagogy and Andragogy at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana and finished in 2002 with a Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy and Andragogy. Her first job was in a company for consulting, social development, vocational rehabilitation and training, working as an expert worker in the field of adult education, employment, vocational and employment rehabilitation. She is also works as a teacher in literacy programmes for different target groups (family, rural, workplace, and people with special needs). She currently works in the Development Centre of Vocational Rehabilitation in the University Rehabilitation Institute, Republic of Slovenia, as researcher and project manager.

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## The Women & Youth Crossborder Project and its Contribution to Lifelong Learning Processes in Slovenia and Hungary

### Vida Perko, Slovenia

#### 1. About the project "Women & Youth"

On 1st September 2009 we started the cross-border project "Cross border initiative for lifelong learning of women and youth" (known as "Women & Youth") which is specifically aimed to involve women, young people, people with disabilities, unemployed people, etc., but also all other inhabitants in cross border regions of North East Slovenia and South West Hungary (see picture below).

The purpose of the project is to contribute to a better understanding of the individual person as an important part of our community and the importance of self-initiative for reaching goals in the field of lifelong learning and personal development. Also (in a broader sense) it was to contribute to the regional development of cross-border areas of Slovenia and Hungary.

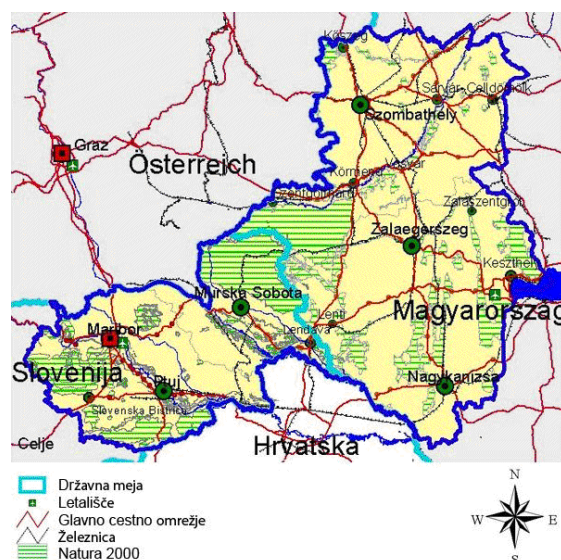
With this project we want to achieve:

- support in the field of lifelong learning processes in the cross border regions of Slovenia (Podravje region, Pomurje region) and Hungary (Zala county, Vas county),
- support and involvement of the most vulnerable target groups (women, youth, etc.) to intensify their activities in lifelong learning processes (through ICT support, distance learning, e-learning, etc.) to rise their self-confidence, their knowledge level, etc.
- better co-operation between the people on the both sides of the border,
- increased competitiveness among target groups,
- programmes, workshops, trainings, etc. adapted to the needs of specific target groups
- organisation of workshops, exchanges of good practices, transfer of knowledge, etc.
- the offer of professional support for employed and unemployed people in the field of self-initiatives for their better life,
- participants in different trainings programmes will get new and practical knowledge, new skills and new

experiences to find new ways and new possibilities in their life (better employment possibilities, new business ideas, self-employment possibilities, etc.).

All these will contribute to the overall development of these cross-border areas. The project will support people who live in these rural areas and contribute to the sustainable development of cross-border areas. This is also the main goal of the whole operation.

Project partners come from Slovenia (4) and Hungary (3). These are: the Association Zitek (SLO), Bögöte Fejlesztési Közhazsnú (HUN), Celodin Zalai Alapitvány (HUN), Economic Institute Maribor (SLO), Zalai Falvakért Egyesület (HUN), the Association Goricko (SLO), Egida Centre (SLO).



Picture No. 1: Cross-border regions involved into the project

At the end of 2010, after a year and a half of the project (and very intensive work on this project), it is the right time to look back and to summarise the results of the project.

#### 2. Activities in the project and project goals

At the beginning of the project we prepared a common document named "Research into the existing situation and concrete needs of target groups of women and youth in, the field of training in Slovenia and Hungary".

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## The Women & Youth Crossborder Project and its Contribution to Lifelong Learning

### Processes in Slovenia and Hungary

Vida Perko, Slovenia

In the document we found out that after joining the European Union in Slovenia and in Hungary, we have had a lot of measures aiming to develop the knowledge and the skills of target groups like women and youth (to raise their competitiveness on the labour market). But there is still a lot of work to be done.

Between Slovenia and Hungary there are many similarities and also some differences, but we now share a similar way forward.

In the field of lifelong learning (Statistical Offices of Slovenia and Hungary, European Statistical Office) in the year 2008 in Slovenia about 14 % of the population were involved in such activities and in Hungary only 3 % (the average of EU-27 is 9,5 %). On the other hand, in the field of computer skills there are almost no differences between countries. Even the most developed European countries (like Germany and Austria) are almost at the same level.

Further, we concentrated on the target groups of women and youth. The population of women in both countries is similar (in different European countries in average about 48 to 53 % of the whole population).

There are some differences in the definition of young people. Young people are those between 15 and 29 years old according to the definition of the Slovenian Statistical Office and the Slovenian Office of Youth. In Slovenia this population represents about 19% of the whole population and it is decreasing. In Hungary young people are defined as people aged between 15 and 29 years old which represent about 21 % of Hungarian population. They speak about "young adults" (aged from 15 to 39) which represent about 36 % of the whole population. But a common problem is that young generation in recent years, just as in Slovenia, is decreasing. The education system in Slovenia and in Hungary is similar and is supplemented with other institutions and organisations which offer additional programmes of education and trainings.

The main points (for Slovenia and Hungary) in the field of lifelong learning are:

- we have similar educational systems,
- we have almost the same needs,
- there are not enough opportunities to gain practical knowledge and experiences,
- people from these critical target groups (young people, women, people with disabilities, etc.) have not enough opportunities to be involved in such programmes,
- there is still not enough cooperation between different institutions and organisations offering such programmes,
- we are aware that because of constant changes in our environment we always need some new knowledge, but we don't use lifelong learning possibilities enough (especially in Hungary),
- lifelong learning offers possibilities for faster adapting to change and needs of the market and the economy,
- lifelong learning is also very important for career development and to maintain competitiveness in work force;

Similarly here are some key points for distance learning and e-learning, where we found out following issues:

- including people into e-learning means for them broader bases of knowledge, better access to the literature and all other bases of data and information; it means higher flexibility, lower costs, etc.
- distance learning and e-learning represent practical tools for lifelong learning which is more individual and more flexible,
- it is the base for future employment and self employment possibilities and work at home or more flexible business ideas,
- it is especially suitable for target groups of women, young people, people with disabilities, etc.

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## The Women & Youth Crossborder Project and its Contribution to Lifelong Learning

### Processes in Slovenia and Hungary

Vida Perko, Slovenia

#### 2. Conclusions

With our project "Woman & Youth"<sup>1</sup> we wanted to achieve some changes in the minds of individuals, especially so that they will know that they are not alone and that they are an important part of our society. We also have the tools to support individuals with their own initiatives as regards reaching some specific goals in the field of lifelong learning. During the project (after one and a half years) we have reached the following (interim) results (one SLO partner):

- 1 info point opened (together 7 - by each project partner one),
- 2 workshops for Moodle application mentors realised,
- 5 entrepreneurship workshops on SLO side realised,
- 98 participants involved into these entrepreneurship workshops,
- 15 business plans prepared for potential entrepreneurs,
- 7 people / participants realised their business idea and self employment,
- a lot of participants involved in other programmes (like visits to share good practice, different workshops, information, consulting, etc.).

We are aware that these are not big results, but they represent an important part in the overall contribution to the development of these cross border regions. At the end of the project these results will be even bigger and more important.

As an artist is working with small stones in a mosaic, we are working on our better future. We know that contribution of these project is not so important for the whole country (or both – Slovenia and Hungary), but it is an very important part of the development of relations and cooperation between two neighbourhood countries and especially their cross-border

regions (Pomurje, Podravje, Zala, Vas). People there have been developing differently in the past and have different experiences. But we are very close to each other and we would like to go the same way in the European Union, so we have to work with each other and for each other.

Finally, we must not forget that through projects like this, a proper place for women, youth and other weaker groups of our population can be found and their role in overall development can be promoted and strengthened.

**Vida Perko** was born in Maribor (Slovenia) on 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1965. She finished secondary school (Gymnasium) in Maribor in 1984, and after that began to study economics at the Faculty of Business and Economics in Maribor. She graduated in 1989 with a Bachelor in Economics (International Marketing). Veda began to study at post graduate level and completed a Master of Science (Business Policy and Organising) in 1993. After leaving university, she was employed in few different places (secondary school, trade company, consulting company) and now is employed as a consultant and project manager at the Economic Institute, Maribor, working on various (EU and national) projects with a particular specialism in working with potential entrepreneurs and SMEs.

<sup>1</sup> More about project on <http://www.women-youth.eu/>

# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## Young Unemployed People

### Influence of Transnational Mobility on Integration in the Labour Market

Jani Lici and Silvia Flaismann, Austria

Youth unemployment is one of the most important problems at this time and many European states are facing it. As we can see in many surveys, over the last three years this phenomenon has rapidly developed. More specifically, based on the eurostat (the statistical office of the European Union), in January 2011 the youth unemployment rate under 25 was 19.9% in the euro area and 20.6% in the Europe of 27. In January 2010 it was 20.2% and 20.7%. The lowest rates were observed in the Netherlands 7.8%, in Austria 8.0% and in Germany 8.3%, and the highest in Spain 43.1%, Slovakia 37.7% and Lithuania 34.4% in the fourth quarter of 2010, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>.

These statistics lead us to the conclusion that in many European states young people don't have the opportunity to enter the labour market. At this point it should be mentioned that there is a trend towards greater flexibility in contractual relationships. This makes part time jobs, fixed term jobs and temporary agency work more common than the traditional full time jobs. Unfortunately the lack of decent job opportunities for young people is a widespread challenge throughout the global economy.

In many European State Members the unemployment rate affects almost half of the youth population. The reasons for this specific condition are many and vary depending on the case of each country. Five of them that should be mentioned are:

- The decision on choosing the right profession. It is hard for a young person to choose the occupation that he/she will have to do for many years. This is one of the most complex and continuing problems nowadays and is at high rates in the most of the E.U states.
- The economic crisis that appeared over the past few years was a huge obstacle for employment opportunities, especially for young people. The reason why to do with companies wanting to reduce their costs and to get rid of some of their employees, rather than hiring new ones.

- The fact that the most of the young people are inexperienced makes it more difficult for them to find a job. Employers, when offered a choice between an experienced worker and an inexperienced, will often prefer the former.
- The connection between the education system and the labour market. School leavers have to be judged from their school results. The school rating has nothing to do with the market value of a person/student. The education system must be more adapted to the labour market needs and these two sectors should be complementary.
- The young people who leave school (drop-outs) without completing their tertiary education. These groups are always the most vulnerable on the labour market, because they have not developed their skills. This group mainly works on jobs that don't need to have special skills and expertise. These jobs are the most expendable and employees are covered by an unstable employment relationship.

One of the Lisbon goals for the year 2006 was mobility in the labour market, so that a more competitive and dynamic economy can be created in Europe. That requires a labour force that is skilled, flexible and adaptable, and a labour market that is more open and accessible to European jobseekers. That was the strategic plan on the 2006. A lot of things have changed since then. Based on the success that mobility has had in recent years it is easy to understand why one of the main strategies of Europe 2020 is to support people taking part in mobility-related projects.

Other Europe 2020 Strategies include innovative, inclusive and eco-friendly growth. Young people have the responsibility of achieving these goals. Education and training quality, a better integration system between education institutions and the labour market and the mobility of young people are the tools to unleash their strength and achieve the European 2020 strategy goals.

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# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## Young Unemployed People

### Influence of Transnational Mobility on Integration in the Labour Market

Jani Lici and Silvia Flaismann, Austria

The European labour market needs are for:

- People,
- Strategies,
- Techniques,
- Cultures,
- Technology,
- Innovative ideas.

At this point it must be mentioned that free movement for people is one of the most fundamental freedoms guaranteed by community law. The European Commission tries to make it easier for young people to have a learning experience abroad and that's why joining a mobility project is easier than it used to be and more simple. Mobility is young people's weapon in the knowledge economy. Through mobility young learners strengthen their future employability. Europeans who were mobile as learners are more likely to be mobile as workers in later life.

The European instrument that helps carry these projects forward is the European Social Fund (ESF). The ESF is the main European financial tool that supports youth employment and the mobility projects. 60% of the E75 billion for the year 2007 to 2013 benefits young people who join mobility projects. The ESF supports the educational changes for Member States and provides 20.7 billion euros for the long life learning programs (LLP). An example of the development of new actions is "Yours first EURES Job". This is a pilot project and helps young people find a job in any of the 27 Member States and moving abroad. It provides all the needed help from advice to financial support.

A tool that is being used for showing young people and employment advisers where the jobs are in Europe and which skills are needed, is the "monitor of the mobility results" (MMR). The MMR will improve transparency and information all over Europe.

Students get to live new experiences and they learn new skills. From mobility projects students get new competencies, and because of that they become more flexible, active and open-minded. Another reason is that participation, by itself, improves a person's CV. Mobility increases the chances of finding a job on the international labour market and of course European labour market is included in this.

Those facts tend to be the European reason why people choose mobility projects more than ever, because there is the community support, and that's why over time the number of participants has greatly increased. Through mobility young people earn a job, they change their residence place and they acquire skills, gain experience and learn different cultures, feel the European spirit and get adapted to the European ideals. The companies that want to engage in the European market are interested in applicants who have experience from abroad, and that is an advantage for the applicants because they get to be chosen for a job placement before other applicants.

Until June 2010, more than 2 million students participated in an Erasmus program in one of more than 4 000 higher education institutions in 33 participating countries, and it is expected that the number will reach 3 million students by the end of 2012. These include all the EU Member States, also Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, Croatia and the F.Y.R.O Macedonia. The period for living abroad for studies or placement can last from 3 to 12 months or can be combined and last up to 24 months. These facts tend to inform us about the economic outcome from mobility. There are almost 2.5 million Europeans who travel abroad and stay in another country for at least 3 months.

Based on the long experience that karriere club has in European mobility projects, the young people who took part in mobility projects gained experience, they found the most suitable place for them to improve their skills and they chose the best company for them according to their needs and to their choices. Mobility projects have made it easier for many young people to change their place of residence and move to a different European country.

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# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## Young Unemployed People

### Influence of Transnational Mobility on Integration in the Labour Market

Jani Lici and Silvia Flaismann, Austria

They say in most of the cases that the experience of participating in mobility projects was a strong weapon on their side for the next stage which was moving abroad. In addition companies (employers) gained from this transaction because they found the new staff that they were looking for. They minimised the cost of seeking new employees and also got flexible and multicultural employees.

In conclusion, it is obvious that European Union is putting the mobility and the training of young people at the centre of their agenda. The people who participate in those programs become more self-aware, they get a higher level of education and skills. They become multicultural, become independent and creative. They become more adaptable to meet changing labour market needs and because of that they become flexible. Finally they feel the European bonds that connect all Europeans.

with disability, young entrepreneurial woman, integration in the labour market of those at risk, and also in management of national and international projects for the last 10 years as promoter, coordinator and partner.

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**Jani Lici** comes from Athens, Greece, has an educational background in business administration and work experience in project management and intercultural dialogue. For example, at the technological educational institute of Athens in the department of public and international affairs, he was responsible for the organization of Erasmus mobility projects and the support of students abroad. He supported the process and made it better known among students. Additionally he has gained personal experience from participating in an Erasmus mobility project as a student.

**Silvia Flaismann** is General Manager of karriere club Austria, and has an economics education with a teaching background. She is additionally educated in the areas of training, coaching, human resource management, diversity management and positive psychology. She has 20 years experience in the fields of career counselling, innovative training and working with people

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# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## Emergency in Care

Jani Lici and Silvia Flaismann, Austria

The European Union is facing an unprecedented demographic change that will have a major impact on the whole of society. Statistical information shows that by 2030 Europe will lack 20 million people of working age. In 2030 roughly two working people will have to take care of one economically inactive person (65+). By 2030, the number of workers that are aged 55 to 64 will have risen by 24 million as the baby-boomer generation\* become senior citizens and the EU will have 34.7 million citizens aged over 80 compared with 18.8 million today.

Reading these numbers, it is easily understandable why the needs for health and social services are increasing. The situation is further exacerbated since we have the economic and financial crisis which forced the governments of each country to cut funding and reduce the costs of every social service provided. The social and health care sector was the biggest source of job creation in Europe in recent years: it contributed to the creation of 3.3 million new jobs between 2000 and 2007. In general, the health care sector has created almost 20% of all jobs created in Europe in the last 15 years.

In many countries, entering the labour market is a hard thing to do because of regulations and policies. Interestingly, this doesn't happen when it is for the health care sector. Immigrants who want to work there find easy and fast placement in health care. In many countries there are special regulations for immigrants entering the labour market in this sector. That is happening because it is the easiest sector to find a job as there is always a need for employees. Immigrants choose to work there for various reasons: better work conditions, better salary, better position etc.

People are seeking a better work and life balance and of course a better salary. A good example for this is the Czech professionals in the health care sector. They have been moving to Germany over the few last years. The Czech Republic is dealing with a lack of staff shortage because of that and is trying to attract professionals from Slovakia and the Ukraine with campaigns in each country respectively.

On the other hand, professionals from Germany, France and Italy are moving to Switzerland, where they have unrestricted access to jobs. That is something that every European Member State accepts and not only for European citizens but also for citizens from third world countries.

In some areas, the job is part time or there is the shift work or night hours. People who are working in these conditions don't get paid well. In many cases there are many people who are trying to avoid these jobs and the only ones who are willing to participate are women or immigrants. This finding is confirmed by Eurostat's research on low earners, showing that 77% of all low paid workers are women. That often has the consequence that local people are not willing to work in these areas.

As was referred to above, a large number of workers in the health care sector are immigrants. In a survey carried out by Tanya Dejesus for the Survive and Thrive Boston, many immigrants were asked why they chose to work in the health care sector and they said, "I asked for the job because I knew many Tahitians prefer working in hospitals and nursing homes because it's less difficult" - apparently she meant it is less difficult to find a job than in other sectors. One other participant said that she had a tertiary degree from her home country but she couldn't get a job in the sector that she studied so she started working in a nursing home to make money to pay her tuition. As she says "It was one of the few jobs available for me".

Immigrants very often find jobs in the health care sector because they often don't have to be expert in speaking the other language. In many instances they are only just able to communicate. In other cases the structure of their society is like this, so this is the best they can do. For example in the Philippines the structure of society is that all the family lives together, parents, grandparents and children, and the children in many cases are taking care of their grandparents. So the transition from their house to another country in the health care sector in order to take care of elderly is not so hard and they are familiar with it. It is not something new for them and they know what to do.

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## Emergency in Care Jani Lici and Silvia Flaismann, Austria

On the other hand, this is something that organisations acting for the health sector are looking for, so for these immigrants it represents an advantage in comparison with people coming from other countries.

In conclusion, the health care sector is expected to grow bigger over the next few years and will create more job opportunities for a larger number of people. As there are special regulations for the health care sector, the chances of immigrants finding a job and entering the labour market are higher.

In the most of the European states and in the United States from the period after the second world war until eighteen years later (1946-1964) (in Ireland it lasted 36 years) many babies were born and it is estimated that in that period the number of births was the highest since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

management of national and international projects for the last 10 years as promoter, coordinator and partner.

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**Jani Lici** comes from Athens, Greece, has an educational background in business administration and work experience in project management and intercultural dialogue. For example, at the technological educational institute of Athens in the department of public and international affairs, he was responsible for the organization of Erasmus mobility projects and the support of students abroad. He supported the process and made it better known among students. Additionally he has gained personal experience from participating in an Erasmus mobility project as a student.

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# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## Away from Home and Back: How Migrants in Veneto View their Life and Work Experience Abroad Enrico Rampazzo, Italy

### 1. What is circular migration?

Circular migration can be defined as a kind of temporary migration where the migrant goes abroad and, at some point, either out of free will, or, forced by circumstances, she/he decides to go back home.

This migration pattern has the potential to be a triple-win situation: the host country has a labour intake willing to perform jobs usually disdained by the natives, the individual has the chance to avail him/herself of job and training opportunities otherwise unavailable to her/him, and the origin country can benefit from the training received from their nationals when they come back home, i.e. a net brain gain, in addition to the income flow. Circular migrants are those who move between origin and destination countries on a regular basis as a result of transnational businesses and/or personal relations.

Needless to say, this is a great opportunity for Vocational Education and Training (VET) experts to provide skills targeted to the profile of the individual migrants.

### 2. The survey on the willingness to return of immigrants residing in Veneto

Veneto Lavoro, Agency of the Veneto Region for employment, provides immigrants willing to go back home with information support via the Return Information Desk (RID), which gives advice on the current opportunities for entrepreneurship in the origin countries. In addition, the Veneto Region is lead partner on the Successful Paths Project, which encourages Senegalese people coming from Veneto, Marche (Italy) and France to go back in the Kaolack region (Senegal) and start up a new business there. One of the outputs of the Su.pa. project is a survey on the willingness of return of immigrants and their experience in Italy.

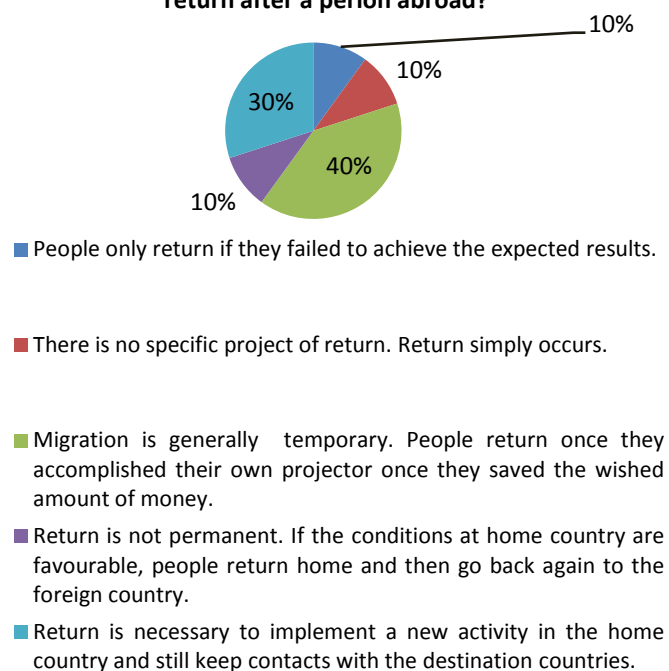
This survey has been distributed to the migrants who visited the Return Information Desk, and in this article I will present and analyse the trends coming from their responses. The RID

recorded responses from 43 interviewees, 41 males and 2 females, whose country of origin is Senegal. The average age is 38 years. The questionnaire featured multiple choice questions: I will show and discuss the frequency and possible meanings of each.

### 2.1 Answers to the question “How do you perceive the idea of return after a period abroad?”

In the picture n. 1 (see below) you can see the possible answers to this question. The first two indicate an attitude where return is forced (people only return if they failed to achieve the expected results) or unplanned (there is no specific plan for return. Return simply occurs). The last three, on the other hand, indicate a willingness to return, and therefore a decision which is part of a previously conceived plan. Interestingly, most of the interviewees (40%) are non-circular migrants, that is, they planned to temporarily migrate to the destination country, save money, and go back home permanently. On the other hand, the second largest answer group is composed by migrants open to the possibility of circular movement between origin and destination countries.

**Question 1: How do you perceive the idea of return after a period abroad?**



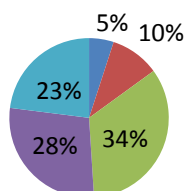
# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## Away from Home and Back: How Migrants in Veneto View their Life and Work Experience Abroad Enrico Rampazzo, Italy

### 2.2 Why do they want to go back home? Do they plan on coming back?

As you can see in picture 2 (see below) once again the first two answers imply no return plan whatsoever, and the people who chose these answers represent 15% of the total. They go back because their experience abroad did not go well. 34% can be considered non-circular migrants, that is, their experience abroad was meant to be temporary from the beginning, so they go back when the expected results are achieved. Interestingly, more than half of the people interviewed consider the possibility of going back to Italy after spending a period at home: for 28% of the interviewees this depends on unforeseen events which could happen, whereas for the 23% this is certain, and due to a transnational business managed by the migrant, which is thus fully circular.

**Question 2: Which of these sentences fits better to your situation of returnee?**



■ I go back cause I feel disillusion about how things work here.

■ I'll go back just cause I'm tired of being here. No idea of what to do in my country.

■ I reached the goals I came for. Then it's time to go back home. Not thinking about coming back.

■ I'll return to my home country for a while cause I have some better opportunities there. I already know I'll be back again here as soon as it is needed.

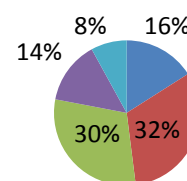
■ I'll go back to take care of my business there and to reinforce the links between this country and my country. My work makes me live in both places.

### 2.3 Were they able to save enough money during their experience abroad?

As pointed out earlier, many migrants come here in order to save money: do they think that what they saved will be important for their future?

For the biggest answer group, 32%, the savings made during their experience in Italy will probably not have an impact on their future life, and 8% reports no savings of any kind to be brought home. 30% of the population state that they achieved the desired amount of savings, and therefore will go back home and start a new activity there, and do not foresee coming back. This represents the non-circular approach to migration. The last two groups instead shows a circular approach to migration: 14% declared that they saved enough to claim pension and social benefits in the foreign country, therefore they live in both countries, having the best of both worlds, whereas 8% went further and were able to invest on productive activities both in their home country and in the destination one. While this last group is the smallest, it also shows the potential of circular migration as an opportunity for the development of both countries.

**Question 3: how do you judge your financial situation right now?**



■ I don't really have income or savings to bring back home.

■ My savings will not have a big impact on my future life. We'll see what to do once I'll be back.

■ I have saved exactly the amount of money I needed for myself and for my family. I'll be back and start another job there.

■ I have enough money to secure pension and social benefits. To live in both country allows me to maximize my income.

■ The money I have made allows me to invest in productive or commercial projects in both countries.

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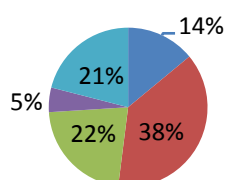
## Away from Home and Back: How Migrants in Veneto View their Life and Work Experience Abroad Enrico Rampazzo, Italy

### 2.4 Will the skills acquired abroad be useful to get a job in their home country?

This issue is of particular interest for VET specialists, because giving the right skills to circular migrants is a win-win for both the trainers and the trainees.

The result of the survey hints that the need for targeted skills is not fully addressed right now, considering that more than half of the interviewees stated either that the skills they acquired were not useful (14%), or that they're not sure about it (39%). This calls for a better coordination between public information services, like the Return Information Desk, the consultancies that help new entrepreneurs in writing their business plan and VET specialists, so that the new business likelihood of success are increased, thus contributing to the betterment of origin countries' economic situations.

#### Question 4 What do you think about the skills you have acquired abroad?



- The skills I have acquired in here cannot be transferred in my origin country. They are of no use.
- I don't know if the skills I have acquired here can be of any use in my home country.
- It depends on what will be the opportunities I will find in my home country. I think I can use my skills but I'm still not sure how.
- My education and my skills are the background that allows my transnational mobility.
- Skills acquired abroad as well as knowledge and experiences are the factors that secure the success in my job.

### 3. Conclusions

Circular migration can help developing and developed countries at the same time, but, to maximize its impacts, it is necessary to coordinate the actions of different agents, namely public and private services, to raise awareness about the economic opportunities migrants can have in their home country, banks to enable better access to financial services<sup>1</sup>, consultancies to help prospective entrepreneurs in the writing of a successful business plan and vocational education and training experts to provide them with the necessary skills.



**Enrico Rampazzo** graduated in International Relations, and he has dealt with migration and employment issues working with the International Organization for Migration and the Regional Agency for Employment of Veneto (Italy). He is particularly interested in international development and humanitarian aid, and has worked in the Democratic Republic of Congo with the Danish Refugee Council, a non-profit organization. He is a strong advocate for European Integration and maintains that no single country, no matter how influential, can manage today's problems in a globalized world. He currently lives in Padova, Italy.

# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## Analysis of the Economic Situation of People from Different Age Groups in Poland, 1992-2008

Elżbieta Nosal-Szczygieł, Poland

### Abstract

The aim of this article is to present the changes in vocational and material situation of people from different age groups in Poland in the years from 1992-2008. The analysis was carried out based on the raw data from periodical research taken from the Polish General Social Survey conducted by the Institute of Social Studies (University of Warsaw). Besides the presentation of the structure of the analysed population in terms of the labour market situation, income and demographical situation, the article also presents the analysis of similarities between the studied groups. By structuring the material in this way, we have been able to present statistics indicating similarities and differences between the studied groups. Moreover, it may give raise to comprehensive analysis of the studied phenomena.

### Introduction

The labour market influences many spheres of human life. People's vocational situations impact directly not only on their social position or career but also on the material situation of employees, as well as those who remain unemployed for various reasons. This phenomenon is observed in every age group, however not at the same scale. The article aims to track the changes in vocational and material situation of individuals from different age groups in Poland, 1992-2008.

#### 1. Description of the sample covered by the research of Polish General Social Surveys

Research for the Polish General Social Surveys was carried out in the following years: 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2005 and 2008, which allows us to conclude that this phenomenon is studied and observed in a continuous manner. The research includes quantitative and qualitative variables, which fully cover the range of those studied.

For the sake of this analysis there were three years chosen, i.e. 1992, 1999 and 2008 as well as the following variables:

( $x_1$ ) vocational condition, ( $x_2$ ) dwelling-place, ( $x_3$ ) education, ( $x_4$ ) number of persons in a household, ( $x_5$ ) respondent's age, ( $x_6$ ) satisfaction with one's financial situation, ( $x_7$ ) number of months unemployed, ( $x_8$ ) number of years of education, ( $x_9$ ) fact of being unemployed for last 12 months, ( $x_{10}$ ) fact of having higher education degree, ( $x_{11}$ ) income of the household. The last variable ( $x_{11}$ ) is a dependent variable in the analysed model. Numbers in the sample in each year, after the incomplete answers were deleted, were: 1992 = 1611 respondents, 1999 = 2097 respondents, 2008 = 1146 respondents. Due to the topic chosen, the studied whole group was divided into four age groups: 18-34, 35-44, 45-64 and older than 65.

Tables 1-2 show the structure of the studied whole group in terms of vocational condition and analysed age groups. Graphs 1-3 show the distribution of general income in the particular years.

VOC. CONDITION	1992	1999	2008
Retired/pensioners	30,60	36,77	33,72
Part-time worker	2,25	3,72	7,19
Full-time worker	48,03	39,18	40,45
House/not looking for work	6,98	4,65	3,79
Unemployed/looking for work	6,98	10,04	7,19
Career break	1,58	1,31	0,62
Learns/studies	2,25	4,34	7,04
Other	1,34	-	-

**Table 1.** Structure of the studied collectivity in terms of vocational condition

Source: own elaboration based on the results of research by Polish General Social Surveys



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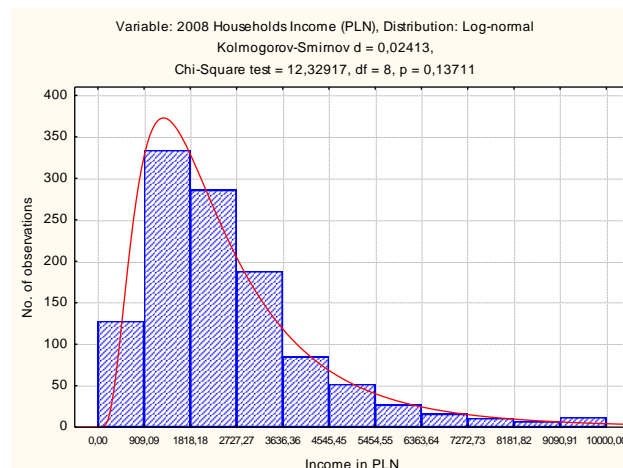
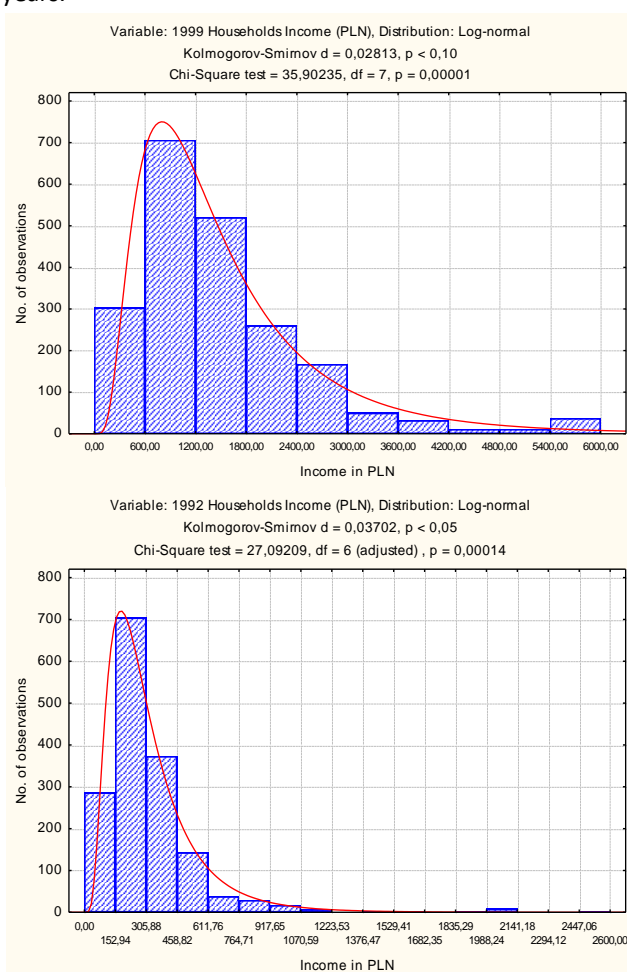
## Analysis of the Economic Situation of People from Different Age Groups in Poland, 1992-2008

Elżbieta Nosal-Szczygieł, Poland

AGE GROUP	1992	1999	2008
18-34	26,40	24,75	26,35
35-44	7,83	20,31	15,10
45-64	31,93	36,24	37,35
65+	3,85	18,70	21,20

**Table 2.** Structure of the studied collectivity in terms of age  
Source: own elaboration based on the results of research by  
*Polish General Social Surveys*

**Graphs 1-3.** Distribution of general income in the analysed years.



Source: own elaboration based on the results of research by *Polish General Social Surveys*

The analysed whole group mainly covers employees working on both a full-time and part-time basis, and also people who are already retired. The random stratified choice of the sample, that took place within the research, ensures a precise reflection of the society structure. As regards age, people between 45 and 64 years of age were quite a significant group, who usually ceased their vocational activity in that period. The distribution of income in the studied whole group was significantly moved towards the right, not only because of the increased net income (induced by inflation), but also because of a better material conditions, which is clearly shown by the flattening of the distribution.

### 2. Analysis of the vocational situation among people covered by the research within the age groups in the studied years in Poland

The vocational situation in particular age groups is shown in Table 3. It is noteworthy to have a look at the changes that took place during the period of 18 years, particularly in the area of full-time employees and retired or pensioners. The percentage of young people that work full-time has decreased but the percentage of pensioner learners and students has increased. The decrease in the percentage of unemployed is connected not only with part-time working but also with the increased take-up of higher education.

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Such tendencies are justified by the fact of the increased number of 45-64 unemployed. In the case of people between 35 and 44 years of age, the decrease in values in every aspect of activity is connected rather with the lower percentage of this sub-group in the whole group (Table 2) than with general tendencies.

Another important aspect is that the percentage of pensioners or retired people has significantly increased within the 45-64 group. Increased part-time vocational activity and resignation from work in favour of being at home may be observed within this group. Among people older than 65, the highest percentage was represented by retired people or pensioners, however the percentage of not-retired householders has increased. This may result not necessarily from conscious choice of such lifestyle, but from the lack of ability to qualify for social benefits (e.g. among people, who worked at their home and cannot prove the adequate number of working years in such a household).

VOCATIONAL CONDITION	45-64			65+		
	1992	1999	2008	1992	1999	2008
Full-time worker	12,61	11,56	13,67	0,56	0,13	0,15
Part-time worker	0,99	1,66	1,70	0,12	0,45	0,31
Career break	0,00	0,18	0,00	0,00	0,04	0,00
Unemployed and looking for work	0,93	2,06	2,78	0,00	0,00	0,15
Retired/pensioner	14,35	17,88	14,67	13,85	18,60	18,38
Learns/studies	0,00	0,00	0,08	0,00	0,00	0,00
Householder /not looking for work	1,55	1,17	3,09	0,50	0,45	1,31
Other	0,19	0,00	1,24	0,12	0,00	0,39

**Table 3.** Structure of the vocational conditions according to particular age groups.

Source: own elaboration based on the results of research by *Polish General Social Surveys*

### 3. Analysis of material situation among persons covered by the research in Poland in 1992-2008 in various age groups

It is assumed that the chance to engage in vocational activity appropriate to age may significantly influence the income [Podolec et al.]. Table 4 shows the net values of average income, median level and standard deviation in each of the analysed age groups. The increase in income levels in particular years results from inflation changes (already mentioned above), however the distribution of income has changed as well. Graphs 4-6 show the level of income distribution in particular years divided into age groups.

VOCATIONAL CONDITION	18-34			35-44		
	1992	1999	2008	1992	1999	2008
Full-time worker	15,28	11,30	11,43	19,94	13,45	9,81
Part-time worker	0,56	1,57	1,39	0,56	0,72	0,31
Career break	1,06	0,81	0,54	0,50	0,18	0,08
Unemployed and looking for work	3,60	4,44	2,24	2,36	2,73	1,85
Retired/pensioner	0,31	0,36	1,00	1,99	1,48	0,46
Learns/studies	2,17	5,92	8,80	0,00	0,22	0,08
Householder/not looking for work	2,42	1,52	1,85	2,42	1,12	1,47
Other	0,99	0,00	0,39	0,06	0,00	0,39

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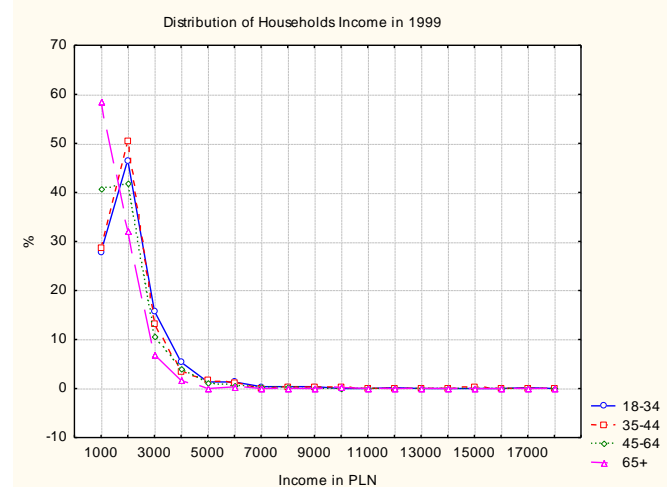
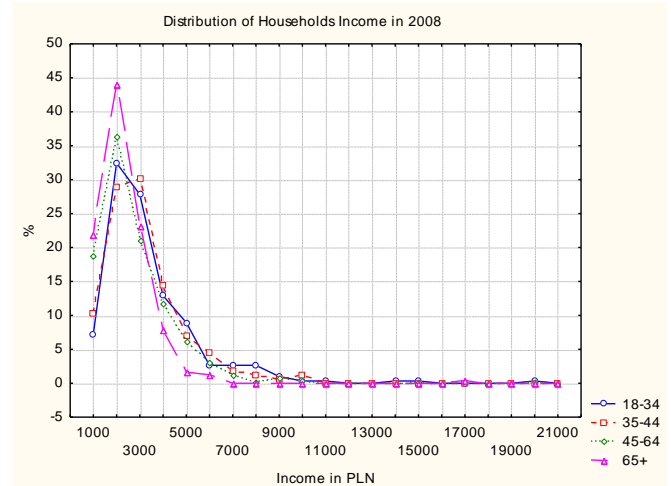
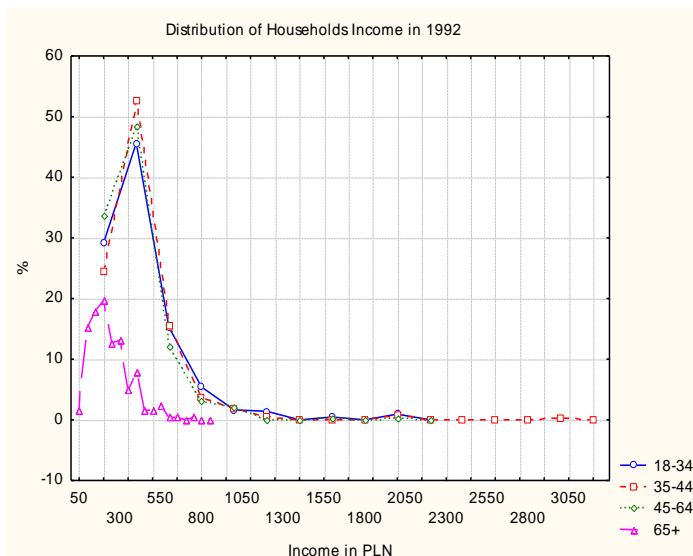
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	18-34			35-44		
Descr. statistics	1992	1999	2008	1992	1999	2008
$\bar{x}$	357	1848	3130	355	1745	2889
Me	300	1500	2500	30	1500	2500
$\delta$	272	1465	2267	266	1348	1757
	45-64			65+		
Descr. statistics	1992	1999	2008	1992	1999	2008
$\bar{x}$	310	1499	2442	225	1146	1911
Me	270	1200	2000	200	910	1670
$\delta$	200	1158	1935	125	818	1367

**Table 4.** Chosen descriptive statistics for income in particular age groups.

Source: own elaboration based on the results of research by *Polish General Social Surveys*

**Graphs 4-6.** Statistic distribution of income in particular age groups.



Source: own elaboration based on the results of research by *Polish General Social Surveys*

The distribution of income has visibly changed in every of the analysed age groups. Among people between 18 and 34 years of age, income in particular years decreased their focus rate and the distribution moved towards the right. Supporting an hypothesis of increased wealth of these people is the fact of the increased percentage of people with higher income.



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Among 35-44 the leptokurtic distribution however the movement of median towards the right (marked as a peak of particular distributions) was accompanied by an increase in previous values. However, it may mean an increase in the percentage of people with lower income than median. Nevertheless, taking into account nominal values of income, there was a significant increase in wealth of such people. In case of the 45-64 group, flattening of the distribution was accompanied by increased median values and movement of the distribution towards the right. Linking this situation to the assumptions about life cycle for income and savings, the hypothesis is proven here [Henderson and Poole, 1991:516]. It is assumed that the households in this age range are predominantly families with growing children, where parents are usually at the peak of their vocational career having their maximum income. Switching into a family model with adult children remaining in the joint household or a model with parents only, after their children have their own households, may drastically change the financial situation of such households. It is reflected by the results for the 65+ group, where income significantly decreases in every year comparing to other age groups, however their material situation has improved in the last year of analysis. Unfortunately, these are the people who have a lower income, which is proved by the median value and visible movement of the distribution towards the left in comparison to income of other groups. It may result also from a retired person/pensioner living alone (benefits are not high and are estimated at 700-800 PLN in case of retirement, but the pension is even lower) as well as remaining in a household with children who are already vocationally active but because of lack of experience they cannot earn a lot.

### 4. Dependencies between material and vocational situation within the studied sample

In an attempt to estimate the impact of particular socio-demographic factors on material situation, a regressive model covering ten independent qualitative and quantitative variables has been considered. The income of particular people was adopted as a dependent variable. Table 5 shows the results of variables fitting in particular models according to age groups. It is noteworthy that in particular years, but also among groups, particular factors had, or not, an impact on the dependent variable. The received models did not include variables  $x_5$ ,  $x_7$ , i.e. respondent's age and number of months of unemployment. Average adaptation of variables to model, reflected by the determination coefficient  $R^2$ , varied from 0,246 to 0,470, which means that in some cases the models justified the analysed phenomenon from 24,6% to 47%. While comparing the average values of this parameter using regressive research regarding income determinant, it is possible to state that the value is satisfactory. It necessary to note that any increase or decrease of indicated factors by unit will cause increase or decrease of income by defined value making the value of B parameter prior to variables in each year of analysis (if value B is 17,691 it means that the increase of variable by unit will cause increase in income by 17,691 PLN).

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		Intercept	X <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>	X <sub>4</sub>	X <sub>5</sub>	X <sub>6</sub>	X <sub>7</sub>	X <sub>8</sub>	X <sub>9</sub>	X <sub>10</sub>	R <sup>2</sup>
<b>18-34</b>													
1992	B	193,083		17,691		37,859	-158,891	31,822					0,2914
	ξB	95,06342		4,92642		6,80138	19,32682	5,73070					
1999	B		-85,428	88,312		172,157	-714,302	99,506	412,437				0,2460
	ξB		26,7618	24,6928		36,3429	87,8457	23,9397	131,4804				
2008	B			215,01		352,40	-1046,29	232,46					0,3100
	ξB			43,393		82,115	151,125	64,683					
<b>35-44</b>													
1992	B	301,472		21,208		28,134	-168,121	28,314	-119,347				0,2602
	ξB	107,5630		4,8851		7,4456	20,0876	6,8009	40,0045				
1999	B			81,981			-917,335	172,200	478,377				0,3260
	ξB			24,1756			98,9967	34,2705	148,9221				
2008	B				243,376		-642,397		727,224				0,3440
	ξB				68,6127		161,3588		289,0063				
<b>45-64</b>													
1992	B	369,139	-13,528	11,159		37,102	-104,952		-94,516				0,3849
	ξB	56,95845	3,47914	3,03853		4,13190	12,06083		42,03578				
1999	B	1538,727	-62,213	72,749	113,790	176,011	-634,617		273,168	486,708			0,4086
	ξB	317,7474	17,7657	15,0529	21,1016	20,9231	58,3028		116,4817	158,3826			
2008	B		-128,815	90,248	356,982	384,759	-886,598		652,000	1340,522			0,4700
	ξB		42,988	29,844	128,080	50,368	108,535		239,807	356,108			
<b>65+</b>													
1992	B	262,7746			23,5384	27,3586	-29,8654						0,3134
	ξB	92,66356			4,82363	3,87152	9,61112						
1999	B	1517,887	-149,053	29,692	115,670	209,227	-225,096						0,3534
	ξB	284,9262	50,2359	14,1729	14,9896	20,4575	49,5633						
2008	B	1792,308		84,245	89,954	417,883	-570,019						0,2720
	ξB	352,1356		31,2595	34,5401	66,8544	109,1661						

**Table 5.** Results of adaptation of variables to regressive models in particular age groups

In the case of 18-34 group, the main determinants of income values were the dwelling-place, number of people in household, satisfaction with own financial situation and years of education. Additionally in 1999, the model included also vocational conditions and unemployment for last 12 months. In the case of vocational condition and satisfaction with own financial situation there was a negative correlation with income because of marking these qualitative variables in numbers from full-time work to other vocational situation *not*

*satisfied*. Therefore, the increase in value of a characteristic number of these variables caused intensity of the negative situation (higher value of a characteristic means lower income). The shown variables have a significant impact on income according to the lower costs of living in smaller agglomerations (variable is ordered from the biggest agglomerations to villages), distribution of some constant costs in household for larger number of persons, which creates savings, and on advantage (on labour market) – education (the higher the education, the better chance to work).

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In the 35-44 age group, dependent variables for the models above mentioned were included without vocational situation and, additionally, level of formal education (concrete education from primary to higher). In case of 45-64 group, the model included all the variables besides  $x_5$ ,  $x_7$  and, present in previous models,  $x_8$  i.e. years of education. In this case, experience gained while working and not the years of education, plays the significant role. In case of the last group – 65+ - the key role in income value was played by the variables  $x_1$ ,  $x_2$ ,  $x_3$ ,  $x_4$ ,  $x_6$ . No particular impact (statistically unimportant) is caused by the variables: years of education, fact of being unemployed for last 12 months and higher degree. These variables could not impact retirements or pensions, and therefore the basic source of income for this age group.

### Conclusions

The economic situation of people belonging to different age groups varies in terms of income but also in its distribution among particular members of a group. Additionally, vocational situation, which in a more significant manner determines the main source of living, impacts the income. Differences between particular age groups are clear, which results from different factors influencing economic situation. Each group was influenced, to a different degree, by the socio-demographic variables, which may show the transformations that are taking place within Polish society in the course of time as well as among the studied whole group differentiated by age. Detailed analysis of the variables' values in the presented regressive model allows us to assess the degree of changes in a beneficial or unbeneficial way, which may encourage further and deeper research on this matter.

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## Chronic Pain and Employment: The Role of Multi-Disciplinary Pain Management Programmes

Cara Lovell and Lucy Swift, United Kingdom

### Abstract

It is apparent that chronic pain affects a large number of people across the UK and Europe and that this appears to have a significant impact on their ability to sustain or return to employment.

This article will consider the use of CBT-based Pain Management Programmes (PMPs) to tackle the functional and vocational needs of people with chronic pain. It will suggest that PMPs similar to the programme based at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in the UK can play a useful role in helping people with chronic pain to maintain or return to work. The means by which this can be facilitated will be discussed, specifically the need to recognise the psychological journey and 'Stages of Change' through which patients move towards work. The need to increase the self-efficacy of people with chronic pain will be highlighted as of particular importance in enabling them to return to daily activities, including employment.

A recent review (Lovell, 2010) of the PMP at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in the UK has identified a number of ways in which work-related self-efficacy can be addressed in such programmes. It is suggested that a focus on work as a key part of treatment should be recognised as a part of the functional restoration remit of PMPs, particularly in the current economic climate.

### Defining Chronic Pain

Chronic musculoskeletal pain is a widespread and costly condition that has a significant detrimental effect on the lives of many people and also on the wider economy due to its impact on employment (Breivik et al, 2006).

It has long been of interest why some people experience pain which persists beyond the acute healing phase (Main et al, 2008). This 'chronic pain' differs from 'acute pain' as it does not always have an easily identifiable source and medical interventions cannot bring about its resolution (British Pain Society, 2007).

Over recent years it has become apparent that chronic pain cannot be understood simply in terms of disease management or medical diagnosis and instead needs to be appreciated as 'a complex interplay between physical and psychological factors' (Main and Spanswick, 2000: 17). Melzack and Wall (1965 and 1983) were highly influential in recognising both the physiological and psychological aspects of pain when proposing Gate Control Theory which considered factors that could inhibit pain. This has since been updated by Melzack (1999) as the Neuromatrix Theory which highlights the holistic nature of pain and the influence of both physical and psychological factors in pain management.

### Prevalence and Economic Impact of Chronic Pain

Despite the difficulties in understanding and treating chronic pain, it is apparent that it affects a significant number of people. The *Pain in Europe Report* (Breivik et al, 2006) investigated the prevalence and impact of chronic pain across Europe, including data from 3,800 people in the United Kingdom (UK). This survey found that one in seven people in the UK suffers from chronic pain and that one-third of UK households are affected. Participants in this study reported that the pain had a significant impact on their lives, including one in five UK participants who said the pain was sometimes so bad they wanted to die and nearly 50% who reported that the pain reduced their ability to function normally, think clearly or concentrate (ibid).

The multi-dimensional nature of chronic pain means it often has a profound impact on a person's functional performance, including their performance at work (Strong, 1996). Breivik et al (2006) found that 25% of UK participants reported losing their job due to pain, 16% had changed their job responsibilities and 18% had changed jobs entirely.

This loss or enforced change to employment often has wider implications. Not only does it have a detrimental financial impact on people with chronic pain and their families, it can also adversely affect their self-image (Kosciulek in: Martz and Livneh, 2007).

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In Western societies employment is an important way in which individuals define themselves (Noon and Blyton, 1997) and their relationship to others (Brown et al, 2001). Due to this, worklessness can have a negative impact on an individual's self-esteem, sense of control and feelings of self-determination (Svensson et al, 2006).

### Chronic Pain and Self-Management Programmes

Due to the wide-ranging impact of chronic pain and the limitations of medical and surgical treatments in addressing it, holistic models of intervention are required to help individuals to manage pain and its consequences.

Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) approaches have now been widely accepted to be most effective in the management of chronic pain as they help individuals challenge unhelpful thinking patterns regarding their pain (cognitions) and develop self-management strategies (behaviours) (Morley et al, 1999; British Pain Society, 2007; Main et al, 2008). CBT can be delivered on an individual basis or in a group setting and can consist of a mixture of strategies as appropriate for the client group. In chronic pain management, this may include: the development of coping strategies, challenging of maladaptive beliefs about pain, increasing assertiveness, educational sessions, relaxation techniques, and goal setting (Main et al, 2008).

Several styles of self-management programme delivery based on a CBT framework have been suggested. These include patient education programmes and patient-led community-based programmes. However, for those whose pain problems are more complex or who have found other forms of self-management programme delivery inadequate, multi-disciplinary Pain Management Programmes (PMPs) may be indicated (Clark, 2000).

PMPs are founded on CBT principles and help people with chronic pain to learn and implement self-management strategies to manage their pain and improve their quality of life (Main et al, 2008; Dysvik et al, 2004; British Pain Society, 2007).

They reflect the multi-dimensional nature of chronic pain in their delivery by a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) of health care professionals, commonly including psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and medical staff (British Pain Society, 2007; Fenton, 2009).

The focus of PMPs is 'on improvement of function rather than cure of pain and the development of personal responsibility and self-help skills' (Main and Spanswick, 2000: 253). Main et al (2008) outline five major therapeutic aims for PMPs: i) Treatment of stiffness and immobility; ii) Increasing fitness and reversing 'disuse syndrome'; iii) Minimising the psychological impact of chronic pain; iv) Modifying unhelpful pain behaviour; v) Restoring function, including occupationally-orientated rehabilitation.

These aims are generally achieved by a mixture of individual and group sessions delivered by the MDT in either an inpatient or outpatient context (ibid).

### Pain Management Programmes and Return-to-Work Outcomes

Although one of the central goals of PMPs outlined by Main et al (2008) is vocational rehabilitation, it appears that issues around work are infrequently directly addressed with the participants of such programmes (Main and Spanswick, 2000).

Adams and Williams (2003) investigated the employment outcomes for people with chronic upper limb pain following completion of a PMP and commented that return-to-work rates were disappointingly low. This corroborates the opinion of Main et al (2008) who suggested that the focus of many PMPs on decreasing the emotional distress and physical effects of pain may not be sufficient on its own to help participants return to work. It has been suggested that PMPs may need to address issues around employment more directly in order to enable participants to return to or maintain work (Watson et al, 2004; Adams and Williams, 2003; Main and Spanswick, 2000).

Part of the difficulty PMPs experience in addressing vocational issues may be related to the lack of a clear conceptual model of practice to guide intervention and a lack of appreciation of the multi-factorial barriers that make return-to-work difficult for people with chronic pain.

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When the perspectives of people with chronic pain are elicited in qualitative studies, a wide range of factors are identified as influencing the return-to-work or the retention of employment for this client group. These include: physical limitations, the pain condition, feelings of uncertainty, the unpredictability of pain, financial concerns, lack of healthcare advice, interactions with benefits services, psychological and personal factors, lack of qualifications or experience, perceptions of the workplace or employers, job availability, and age (Patel et al, 2007).

Adams and Williams (2003) commented that employment outcomes for people with chronic upper limb pain following completion of a PMP indicated that psychological variables, specifically individuals' beliefs, perceptions and expectations about work, were predictive of their return-to-work outcome.

### Psychological Aspects and Vocational Rehabilitation

The suggestion that the return-to-work outcomes of participants in a PMP are related to psychological variables has been substantiated by investigations into the relationship between perceived work readiness and vocational outcomes. Lam et al (ibid) and Xu et al (2007) evaluated the outcomes of vocationally-targeted programmes for people with musculo-skeletal problems and demonstrated that a successful return-to-work was correlated with and could be predicted by individuals' perception of their readiness for work.

Similarly there is a growing awareness that measuring the vocational outcomes of programmes using dichotomous outcomes of 'working' versus 'not working' is not helpful nor sensitive to the significant shifts that participants may have made towards returning to work (White et al, 2008). Instead increased awareness and understanding of participants' perceptions of work readiness could enable programmes to better address vocational needs (Lam et al, ibid; Franche et al, 2007; Franche and Krause, 2002; Wasiak et al, 2007; Mannock et al, 2002) and be a useful indication of progress and change over the course of a PMP.

### The Transtheoretical Model (TTM)

Due to increased awareness of the influence of psychological factors involved in the return-to-work process, practitioners engaged in vocational rehabilitation have turned to models of behaviour change developed by health psychologists conceptualising this process. The most influential of these is the 'Transtheoretical Model of Behaviour Change' (TTM) developed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1984) in an attempt to draw together a wide range of models, theories and techniques relating to behaviour change into one comprehensive model.

Kerns and Habib (2004) summarise the TTM as follows: 'the core constructs of the TTM are stages of change, processes of change, decisional balance, self-efficacy and temptation' (pg 357). Despite this wide range of concepts and constructs embraced within the TTM, the greatest amount of attention has been paid to the notion of 'Stages of Change', possibly because it is a concept which it is easy to directly apply within clinical practice (Armitage, 2009).

The TTM (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1984) suggests that individuals go through five 'stages of change' when seeking to modify a specific behaviour and that this influences their readiness to make the identified change. These stages of change are: 'precontemplation', 'contemplation', 'preparation', 'action', and 'maintenance'.

Velicer et al (1998) describe 'precontemplation' as the stage at which there is no intention to change behaviour in the foreseeable future. 'Contemplation' is the stage at which people are aware that a problem exists and are seriously thinking about overcoming it but have not yet made a commitment to take action (ibid). 'Preparation' is a stage that combines intention and behaviour and where there is an intention to take action soon (ibid). 'Action' is the stage in which individuals modify their behaviour, experiences, or environment in order to overcome their problems (ibid). 'Maintenance' is the stage in which people work to prevent relapse and consolidate the gains attained during action (ibid). Of course, movement through these 'stages' is not thought to be simply linear, instead people move backwards and forwards through these stages and relapse is possible (particularly from 'Action' and 'Maintenance' stages) and

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can also be an important target for support or intervention (Marcus and Forsyth, 2009).

It has been suggested that the Stages of Change aspect of the TTM may be operationalised in two ways. Firstly, in identifying individuals who are 'ready' to make health-related behaviour changes prior to accessing service provision (Jensen et al, 2000) and secondly, by providing 'stage-matched' interventions to ensure their appropriateness and relevance to the individual involved (Aveyard et al, 2009; Marcus and Forsyth, 2009).

### Stages of Change and Vocational Rehabilitation

Over recent years there has been increasing interest as to whether the concepts and constructs of the TTM can be usefully applied to the return-to-work process. Lam (unpublished data, 1997, cited by Li et al, 2006) used the TTM's stages of change framework to develop his 'Stages of Work Readiness Model'. This model suggested that people may be in any one of five stages of work readiness. In the 'Pre-contemplation' stage they are not interested in or have discounted their ability to work (An example of this 'Pre-contemplation' stage can be seen in Case Study 1). In the 'Contemplation' stage they are considering work but have not started to pursue it. In the 'Preparation' stage they may have decided to work but do not yet possess the skills to do so. In the 'Action' stage they are ready to enter work and are actively seeking work (Case Study 2 provides an example of a patient in the 'Action' stage, but who was at risk of becoming disillusioned and regressing to earlier stages because of his lack of success in obtaining work). Finally, in the 'Maintenance' stage they have a job and are trying to sustain their performance in that position. Franche et al (2007) further divided this 'Maintenance' stage into 'Uncertain Maintenance' and 'Proactive Maintenance' where some people are understood to be successfully and comfortably maintaining their working role, whereas others are at high risk of relapse and losing their employment because they are

struggling to manage their health condition within the workplace. The existence of such a state has been corroborated by Hammond (2008) and Buck et al (2009) who term this 'presenteeism' or 'work instability'. (An example of this stage of 'Uncertain Maintenance' can be seen in Case Study 3.)

Franché and Krause (2002) also developed a theoretical model of work readiness based on the stages of change concept. In their 'Readiness for Return-to-Work Model' they sought to provide a holistic model of work readiness by combining the psychological focus of the 'Stages of Change Model' with the environmental and temporal aspects of the 'Phase Model of Disability' (Franché and Krause, 2002). They then developed The Readiness for Return-to-Work (RRTW) Scale (Franché et al, 2007) as an outcome measure based on their theoretical model. The RRTW Scale has undergone a rigorous psychometric testing process to establish its validity with a musculoskeletal client group and has been proposed to be of use in both clinical and research contexts (ibid).

### Pain Management and Self-Efficacy

A closely related psychological variable in chronic pain management which has attracted considerable attention and research interest is the concept of 'self-efficacy'. Self-efficacy refers to beliefs about one's own capability to accomplish a task by one's own action and resources even in the face of obstacles or barriers (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy beliefs do not only relate to actions, they also influence self-regulation of thought-processes, motivational, affective and physiological states (Bandura, 2001). For these reasons Prochaska and DiClemente (1984) included self-efficacy as a key component of their TTM of Behaviour Change because an individual with high self-efficacy is more likely to make and sustain behaviour change despite challenges than someone who has lower self-efficacy. In relation to pain management, self-efficacy has been defined as, 'the expectation that a person could perform a particular behaviour or task [and] their confidence in being able to do it despite their pain' (Nicholas, 2007: 153). It has been found that low self-efficacy is the strongest predictor of pain-related disability when compared with other

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cognitive factors and that increased self-efficacy is associated with an improvement both in pain and disability (Woby et al, 2004).

### **The PMP at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore, UK**

The PMP at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital (RNOH), located in North West London was established twenty years ago. Referrals onto the PMP are received from consultants in rehabilitation and anaesthetics who screen participants for any relevant medical concerns and ensure that their pain medication is optimised prior to admission.

As recommended by the British Pain Society (2007), all participants are assessed by members of the multi-disciplinary team at a pre-admission clinic to ensure their appropriateness for the PMP. In order to participate in the PMP, patients need to meet the following criteria:

- Experience chronic pain causing functional difficulties and/or emotional distress
- Have completed all investigations, medical treatments and analgesic reviews
- Able to understand and communicate in English
- Willing to participate in group sessions
- No ongoing psychological, psychiatric or addiction issues which may preclude the use of CBT treatment

The PMP is delivered over three-weeks during which participants are admitted as inpatients onto a hospital ward with a rehabilitation ethos. This enables participants with a variety of needs to participate in the PMP, including those with limited mobility or self-care difficulties. They go home for the weekends.

The European-wide prevalence survey conducted by Breivik et al (2006) found two-thirds of pain sufferers reported 'moderate' pain (defined as an NRS score of 5-7) and that one-third described 'severe' pain (NRS score of 8-10). Recently 28 participants in the PMP were asked to rate the intensity of their pain on an average day using a ten-point Numerical Rating Scale (NRS) where 1 was 'no pain' and 10 was 'the

worst pain I can imagine'. The median score of pain intensity was 7 (IQR=1). This indicates that participants in this PMP experienced moderate to severe pain and were amongst chronic pain sufferers experiencing the greatest intensity of pain (Lovell, 2010).

The PMP is delivered by an MDT consisting of Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and a Health Psychologist. PMP participants attend group sessions addressing pain self-management strategies, including educational groups, stretch/exercise sessions, and cognitive groups. Participants also attend individual sessions with members of the MDT during which their individual goals are addressed. At the end of the three-week PMP, patients set goals and these are reviewed at follow-up appointments three and twelve months after the programme.

In a recent survey of patients participating in the PMP at the RNOH (Lovell, 2010), a majority, 19 of the 28 participants (67%), were not currently employed and very few of these (n=2) were engaged in any voluntary work. This concurs with the findings of Breivik et al (2006) who found that people with chronic pain struggled to maintain employment and that a high proportion were unemployed due to pain.

In order to tackle these vocational difficulties, a 'Work Support' group was started four years ago by the Occupational Therapist (OT) on the PMP. Attendance at the Work Support Group is mandatory for PMP participants under the age of 65, and optional for those over the age of 65. Participants attend the group during the second week of their three-week admission, allowing them time and opportunity for further discussion of work-related aspects with their therapists prior to discharge at the end of week three.

This educational group focuses on the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) as it applies to employment and other relevant legislation and discusses strategies to return to or maintain employment, including organisations designed to support people with disabilities with regards work. Throughout the session participants are encouraged to ask questions and reflect on their own experiences.

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### Pain Management Programmes, Self-Efficacy and Employment

In the literature, increased self-efficacy is highlighted as an important outcome of PMPs (Nicholas, 2007; Shaw and Huang, 2005; Adams and Williams, 2003; De Rijik et al, 2007; Brouwer et al, 2009; Busch et al, 2007; Cheng and Li-Tsang, 2005). Using the Pain Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (PSEQ) devised by Nicholas (2007), a statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) increase in pain self-efficacy scores measured using the PSEQ was found amongst the 28 participants on the PMP at the RNOH (Lovell, 2010). On commencement of the PMP, participants scored a mean of 21.607 (s.d.=8.54) on the PSEQ, compared with 33.52 (s.d.=11.14) on completion.

Interestingly, this increased self-efficacy to manage pain appeared to be reflected in participants' views about employment (ibid). The 28 patients were asked to indicate their perceived confidence to work, their confidence to find/remain at work and their confidence to manage their pain condition at work. It was suggested that overall levels of self-efficacy had an impact on individuals' anticipation of their ability to perform at work, which might be termed their 'work self-efficacy' and that these were increased during the three-week PMP (ibid).

Bandura (1997) has suggested that there are four mechanisms for changing self-efficacy or perceived ability to carry out certain activities, such as work, despite difficulties: i) Experiences of success in performing a particular activity or task; ii) Social modelling or vicarious experience where others who are similar to yourself are seen to be successfully carrying out the task; iii) Social or verbal persuasion and encouragement which can help to overcome doubt; iv) Awareness and control of physiological and affective responses to situations.

By reflecting on these mechanisms for change suggested by Bandura (ibid), it is possible to surmise how certain aspects of the PMP contributed to increased levels of self-efficacy and increased perceived confidence to work, however further research into this aspect of the PMPs would be helpful in order to identify exactly how these changes occur.

The PMP provides opportunities for participants to engage in increased physical activity, such as stretch and exercise, and to practise the application of pain management principles to activities, such as cooking and gardening. It is common for PMPs to incorporate elements of exercise into their programmes (Hammond and Freeman, 2006; Clark, 2000; Fenton, 2009), and this has been recommended by NICE (2009), the British Pain Society (2007) and the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (2009). However, a smaller number of programmes have access to the facilities to enable people to participate in activities such as gardening (Fenton, 2009; British Pain Society, 2007).

These experiences of physical exercise and functional activity may contribute to a sense of successful mastery which Bandura (ibid) suggests is the most effective way to increase self-efficacy. However, there are few opportunities within the PMP in its current format to practise specific work-related tasks within a work-like environment, such as would be included in a work conditioning programme. Work conditioning programmes have been described for people with back pain by Schaafsma et al (2010) as those which simulate or duplicate work tasks to allow participants to practise them in a safe and supportive environment, with the goal of increasing their physical work capabilities. The inclusion of such work simulation tasks could be considered as a future development for the PMP in order to further impact on work-related self-efficacy.

Social modelling is an important part of the PMP as group sessions enable participants to learn from one another. With regard to work, this includes people who are employed and people who are unemployed discussing their experiences which can increase the belief that work is possible with chronic pain and in turn increase self-efficacy. Abraham and Gardner (2008) also described this process occurring during a self-management programme. In their study participants described making 'upward social comparisons' (ibid: 1158) when learning from others who were succeeding despite similar difficulties, and also 'downward comparisons' (ibid: 1158) which provided individuals with motivation and a desire to maintain change.

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It is also possible that vicarious experience could be used in future to inspire and encourage through the use of success stories relating to work told by previous participants of the PMP either in person or in a written format, such as is included in expert patient programmes (Abraham and Gardner, 2008; Wilson and Mayor, 2006).

Social/verbal persuasion is provided in group and individual sessions considering the benefits of work and practical steps that can facilitate returning to or remaining at work. Specifically, group educational sessions on the PMP consider practical strategies for returning to or remaining at work, including education regarding the application of the Disability Discrimination Act (2005), the availability of return-to-work services, and the use of pacing, ergonomics, and lifting and handling techniques to manage pain. Similarly Hammond (2008) recommended the use of educational sessions regarding employee rights as one means by which work-related barriers may be overcome for people with musculoskeletal problems, however it appears that this may not be included on other Pain Management Programmes (Main et al, 2008; Adams and Williams, 2003). Hammond (2008) also described the importance of encouraging employee and employer collaboration to address work-related issues and this was mentioned by several participants in this study. For example, a recent patient commented that one of the most useful aspects of the PMP with regards work was learning 'how to deal with my own thinking about what work colleagues will think about me returning to work'. For patients who are out of work and for whom a return to their previous job is unlikely, an online skill/personality assessment is often completed to provide them with ideas regarding job opportunities and career paths. Similarly, a website regarding local volunteering opportunities can provide patients with access to appropriate voluntary work which in turn can increase confidence and skills towards a return to paid employment.

Finally the effect of physiological and affective states is taken into account on the PMP when teaching the use of relaxation. Relaxation is considered an important component of pain self-management (Main et al, 2008) and is included in many

programmes (Hammond and Freeman, 2006; Fenton, 2009; Wilson and Mayor, 2006). This may directly relate to the ability to manage stress and pain in the workplace.

### Limitations of Pain Management Programmes

As well as recognising those aspects of the PMP which facilitate changes in perceived work-readiness amongst participants, it is also important to consider aspects which limit the cognitive shifts participants make over the course of the programme.

Main et al (2008) highlighted the significant impact of environmental and social factors when discussing why programmes such as a PMP can fail to help participants return to or retain work. They suggested that, although PMPs can be successful in challenging and changing the negative perceptions of work held by individuals, generally PMPs are less successful in resolving organisational obstacles to return-to-work, such as objective work requirements, sick leave policies and terms of employment. When working with people with musculoskeletal conditions, the 'flag' system is often used by clinicians to screen people according to their needs on initial presentation. 'Red flags' relate to conditions which indicative of serious underlying pathology (CSAG, 1994; AHCP, 1994) and 'yellow flags' relate to psychosocial factors which indicate those who are at greatest risk of developing chronicity (Kendall et al, 1997). Main and Burton (2000) have suggested that this widely-used system could be supplemented with 'blue flags' and 'black flags' in order to understand the employment needs of the individual and target clinical intervention towards return-to-work. 'Blue flags' focus on the perceptions of the individual regarding work which are 'generally associated with higher rates of symptoms, ill-health and work loss, which...may delay recovery, or constitute a major obstacle to it, and for those at work may be major contributory factors to suboptimal performance or 'presenteeism' (Main et al, 2008: 50). Whilst 'blue flags' focus on subjective perceptions, 'black flags' focus on objective organisational obstacles to recovery, such as the characteristics of the work, the conditions of employment and national social policy and legislation (Main and Burton, 2000).

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It has been found that 'blue flags' relating to perceptions around work have a more significant correlation with sickness absence and self-rated work performance than 'black flags' (Main et al, 2005; Parquette, 2008). This gives weight to the suggestion that 'blue flags' are an appropriate target for work-focused intervention by PMPs, whilst 'black flags' can either impede or facilitate a return to work for people with disabilities but are more difficult to change (Main and Spanswick, 2000).

The RNOH PMP, in common with many PMPs in the United Kingdom (Main et al, 2008), does not have a defined vocational focus and instead has a more general remit of functional restoration. The difficulties that this presents in helping participants return to work have been commented on by Adams and Williams (2003). They highlighted that PMPs tend to focus mainly on cognitive aspects without taking account of the physical and social environment in which participants work, in comparison to targeted Work Rehabilitation Programmes which tend to address environmental issues whilst failing to recognise the potent impact of cognitive and pain-related aspects (ibid). Shaw and Huang (2005) also discussed the need for a broad range of input and suggested that, 'self-efficacy for return to work consists not only of beliefs about the ability to perform discrete physical tasks, but also the ability to fulfil more complex occupational roles and functions' (pg 1277), thus highlighting the multifaceted nature of vocational rehabilitation and the need to address these issues in a holistic manner.

It may be appropriate therefore for PMPs to review their focus and content regarding employment issues to ensure that a holistic approach is taken to the return-to-work process, including both cognitive and environmental factors, whilst retaining their existing remit of generalised functional restoration. However, practitioners in the field have expressed their concern that issues of employment should not be addressed in isolation from the other necessary building blocks of daily life, such as washing, dressing, cooking and sustaining a family life (Thompson, writing on: <http://healthskills.wordpress.com/2010/10/19/working-and-chronic-pain/>).

It has also been recognised that the inpatient PMP in its current format offers limited work-specific opportunities for gaining 'mastery' which is an important means by which self-efficacy can be increased (Bandura, 1997). It may be that PMPs could provide further opportunities to trial work-like activities in an unthreatening environment, for example by arranging voluntary work opportunities or by replicating specific work-tasks which participants can use to practise newly-acquired skills. This would also enable environmental and social factors to be taken into account and addressed in a way which builds work-related self-efficacy.

### Future Developments

In the current economic climate, there is an added impetus to help people with disabilities to maintain or obtain employment. In the UK the benefits system is being reviewed to ensure that benefits are targeted at those who need them whilst encouraging those who are able to work to do so. The Welfare Reform Bill 2011 includes a review of Disability Living Allowance and Employment Support Allowance which, whilst being undertaken with a stated aim of 'fairness' and a desire to 'protect the needy' (DWP, 2011), has anecdotally caused some concern to be expressed amongst people living with chronic pain as they fear the variability of their condition and the nature of their difficulties in accessing employment will not be fully understood.

It is therefore even more important for Pain Management Programmes to address vocational issues and for the professionals involved in such programmes to keep their guidance up-to-date in accordance with changes and developments in legislation and social policy.

### Conclusion

It is apparent that sustaining or returning to work are issues of importance for people living with chronic pain and that there are multi-faceted reasons why this is often difficult. It has been suggested that multi-disciplinary PMPs can be one method by which these difficulties can be addressed. In particular the psychological journey that people make and the 'Stages of Change' through which they pass as they consider how to work whilst living with chronic pain have been recognised.

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The concept of 'self efficacy' has been identified as central to increasing individuals' perceptions around their readiness and ability to work.

Thus the role that PMPs can play in the current financial climate has been emphasised. There is clearly a need for staff delivering such interventions to remain up-to-date with legislation and to be innovative in developing services which target the employment needs of people with chronic pain.

### Case Study 1

Kate\* was a 23-year-old woman with benign joint hypermobility syndrome. This caused pain and laxity in all her joints, and she experienced frequent dislocations, particularly at her hips and knees. She previously worked as a nursery nurse and also worked Saturdays in a local shop. As her symptoms became worse (pre-diagnosis) she was struggling to manage looking after babies and asked to be transferred to the pre-school group. Her employer ignored her request and she continued to struggle. She then had an accident one Saturday in the shop, where she fell and fractured her wrist when her hip dislocated. When she tried to return to the nursery after a period of recovery, she was told that she could no longer work there, as she was a "health and safety risk".

Since stopping work, Kate's mobility had deteriorated and she had started to use a wheelchair. She was adamant that no one would employ her, "especially when there are so many unemployed people out there who don't have disabilities".

During her admission, Kate learned how to manage her dislocations herself, rather than having to attend her local hospital to be immobilised in a cast. She started an exercise programme designed to strengthen her muscles, and learned pacing techniques, both of which helped to make dislocations and the subsequent pain slightly more predictable and manageable.

Kate described herself as a practical person who had always had physical jobs, and she had little faith in her academic abilities. In spite of this, having established a routine on the ward, she started to discuss her hopes for the future and to consider retraining. She had always been interested in sugar craft, and had helped friends to decorate wedding cakes in the past. With encouragement she started to practise this activity during the programme and started investigating training courses close to home.

### Case study 2

Paul\* was a 40 year old man who previously worked as an engineer. He had ankylosing spondylitis and chronic back pain. He was separated from his wife, who lived several hours drive away with their 13-year-old son. Every school holiday he drove to collect his son and brought him back to spend the holidays at his house. He tried to make this time "as fun as possible" doing lots of activities and trips with his son and his friends, but found that by the end of each holiday his pain was flared up and he felt exhausted, often taking several weeks to recover.

Paul felt that the time he spent with his son was precious and hard-won, and although he had tried to get part-time work, he had run into conflicts with employers over his lack of availability during school holidays. He reported having applied for over 60 part-time posts, but said "I haven't even been offered any interviews". He always declared his disability on his application forms "because I like to be honest". It was suggested to Paul that he ask for feedback from the employers about why he had not been shortlisted. He replied "they will never tell you the truth" but on further discussion it became apparent that he had not really sought feedback, and had already pre-judged that they wouldn't employ him due to his disability.

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During OT sessions we looked at a different approach to interviews, and Paul was encouraged to sell the strengths he had gained from having a long-term health condition, rather than focussing on his disability. Initially he was sceptical about this, but acknowledged that he had had to learn problem-solving skills and how to be more patient, and that he also had empathy with others in a similar situation. All of these strengths could be useful in the work setting. As part of a long-term plan to return to paid work, Paul decided to start by establishing a structured routine around his exercises, and was encouraged by his OT to investigate a volunteering opportunity at a local school, so that he could work in school term times only.

### Case study 3

Janet\* was a 59-year-old woman working full time in a plant disease research centre. She had been employed in the same post for 12 years, and stated that she would like to continue working for at least another 3 years. She had chronic back pain and bilateral hand pain. "Other people at work have bad backs, they're always taking time off. I never had a day off for back pain except after my surgery" she said. "If I start taking time off for my back, I'm an obvious choice if they want to get rid of anyone, at my age. So I just keep my head down and get on with it".

During her admission on the Pain Management Programme it became apparent that while Janet was maintaining her work role, she tended to "crash out" each evening when she got home. She then struggled to prepare dinner and was usually in bed by 7pm. The pain had impacted hugely on her social life and her ability to carry out housework, which she attempted to do at weekends. Her husband was frequently impatient with her and did not help around the house. Most of her working day was spent standing in one position leaning over a table – she and her colleagues were "not allowed" to sit down. We discussed how she might pace her sitting and standing (i.e. change position more frequently to manage her back pain).

She stated that "there is nowhere to sit down – if I leave the room I have to take off all the protective clothing, then put on a new set when I come back in again. We can only have breaks in the tea room, and if people see me in there it's like – Oh there she is again, skiving".

Janet was aware of the Disability Discrimination Act (now superseded by the Equality Act) but like several others on the programme did not identify herself as "disabled". When it was explained (during the work support session) that due to her long-term pain she was protected from discrimination and had the right to "reasonable adjustments" to her work under this act, she began to see how these rights applied in her particular situation and to consider what adjustments could be made to enable her to sustain employment.

Janet started to improve her posture with an exercise regime and by using a walking stick on the advice of her physiotherapist. In occupational therapy sessions she carried out cooking and craft activities using a perching stool to pace her standing, and found that she reduced the impact of her pain. She started to apply these strategies at home and found that she was able to complete some of her housework without causing a flare-up of her pain. She was encouraged to discuss these changes with her employer, whose response was "Well you can't start back until we've done a risk assessment, now you're using a stick and a stool". A supporting letter explaining the programme and giving recommendations about her work environment was provided, for her to take to her employer, and over the course of 3 weeks Janet's attitude to her job changed – "If I can do these things at work, I might be able to work a few more years".

\* Patients' names have been changed to protect their confidentiality.



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**Lucy Swift** is currently Occupational Therapy team leader in the Pain Management and Rehabilitation team at The Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital. After qualifying in 2005, Lucy completed a 2 year rotational post in both physical and mental health, before joining the RNOH. She gained experience in acute orthopaedics including paediatric spinal deformities, and sarcomas, before joining the Pain Management Team. Lucy co-runs the Active Back Programme for patients with chronic back pain, and has recently been involved in developing the service for patients with joint hypermobility syndrome and complex regional pain syndrome. Lucy also has a BSc Honours Degree in anthropology and sociology.

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# European Journal of Employment and Disadvantage

## Less is more – Potential Assessment with Underprivileged Young People

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### Abstract

The article deals with accurate and valid assessment of competency profiles of disadvantaged young people. Within the framework of a pilot project, pioneering work has been accomplished. A product has evolved that bridges a gap in the market. Previous procedures were time consuming, cost intensive, hardly significant and conformed only roughly to DIN 33430. A procedure for potential assessment for underprivileged young people will be presented that fulfils the quality standards of DIN 33430.

### 1. How Young People are Prepared for Training opportunities and Occupational Fields.

There is a vast number of possibilities in training opportunities and vocational choices for young people. From their perspective almost any course of life seems possible.

Young people often have to make decisions for which they have no adequate background/basis. Owing to the curricula of schools for general education but also due to a highly one-dimensional depiction of occupations in the media, young people are rather under-supplied with information.

When assisting and supporting young people there are special demands to be made on techniques and methods of personnel psychology which can assist them in their decision making on vocational training and the planning of their future.

During the last two years many actions have been taken to bring young people into training or jobs. This is how politics has reacted to a mounting unemployment among people. Among the target group of young people there is a growing number who exhibit (to some extent) various multiple impediments in finding employment. These impediments might be caused for instance by physical or mental illness, difficult social environments, a migration background or language problems.

The federal employment agency has developed a number of instruments, which are largely implemented by educational institutions.

Among them are preparatory measures for entering the occupational field as well as individual support for these youths. One example is the model of learner's coach (in Germany called *Lerncoach-Modell*). For a certain timespan a learner's coach is available for one of more coachees. Also for this model the evaluation of the young people's strengths and weaknesses plays an important role. In Germany so-called profiling or more generally instruments for identification of potential are used to achieve a maximum matching of skills, interests and dispositions, aptitude of the young people with demands in vocational training or occupation. A high matching will safeguard success in vocational training or occupation, enhance the young people's and their trainers' and employers' satisfaction and minimize the rate of failings and dropouts. Therefore the quality of profiling or instruments for identification of potential is of utmost importance.

This article describes a two-tiered pilot project. The first stage aimed at examining whether the instruments for identification of potential of an educational institution are in accordance with DIN 33430. The second stage aims at developing and implementing a procedure for potential assessment that meets the standards of DIN 33430.

### 2. How a Profiling Technique Was Examined

The profiling technique aimed at analysing the strengths and weaknesses of disadvantaged young people and the compilation of a competency profile. The profiling technique is embedded in a mentoring process: learner's coach model.

The actual assessment of individual strengths and weaknesses started out with a biographical interview, that was however not interpreted as it served merely as advance information for a personal interview. It was followed by an assessment centre (AC), covering a ten day period, that had been developed over a course of five years by the company. The AC-exercises comprised motor and organisational skills, and ability for teamwork. Furthermore the following standardized tests were employed:

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- IST 2000R Intelligenz-Struktur-Test (Intelligence Structure Test),
- MTVT Mechanisch Technischer Verständnistest (Mechanical Technical Comprehension Test),
- BMT Bildungsmotivationstest (Test of Motivation for Qualification).

Additionally a work sample had to be accomplished. The work sample covered several fields, which are important for the training program curricula (eg building a wall). For evaluation of the work sample, evaluation criteria were prescribed which were examined by qualified personnel. The closing meeting consisted in feedback about the results and a career recommendation for the young people. The profiling process took two weeks to be completed.

For examination on the conformity of the whole profiling process the checklist by Hornke & Kersting was used. The analysis of the profiling process showed that accordance with DIN 33430 could not be stated. Among others, deficits were apparent as to the specifications of the procedures employed, the qualification of the personnel involved in the assessment of occupational aptitude as well as the procedure of implementation and the process of research. In detail (among others) the following deficits had to be ascertained:

- the time frame for the AC-exercises was adequate neither in respect of the problem nor the target group
- the standardized tests were insufficient or not at all described (test sample, construction, weaknesses of the testing method)
- standard values were out-dated (exception: IST 2000R), i.e. that standard values had not been reviewed for longer than eight years
- contractors were lacking profound skills for instance on the quality of procedures employed, basic methodology of statistics, testing theory etc.
- confirmation of voluntary participation had not been obtained from the participants
- participants did not receive information about circumstances and further purposes of the investigation.

As for the examined educational institution it is a company strongly interested in quality management. In our experience the detected deficits are to be considered not as a single case and were also to be stated in similar ways at further investigations in other companies. For companies involved in the field, DIN 33430 is a valuable instrument, to state clearly and articulately a need for improvement. In the case at hand results were used to specifically develop a procedure of assessment of potentials conforming to standard norms.

### 3. How a Programme for Potential Assessment Conforming to Standard Norms Was Developed

The revision of the concept of profiling was carried out on a scientific basis, in accordance with clear standards and rules aiming at obtaining reliable, repeatable, resilient, and comparable statements about the young people. DIN 33430 has been decisively conducive to reach that goal. Approaches and instruments of aptitude testing were examined and used, which are adequate for the target group and yield important hints for the mentoring process.

If working as a learner's coach it is important to be proficient in methods on aptitude testing. This includes experimenting with different instruments for aptitude assessment as tests, questionnaires, AC, and interviews in the coaching process. Consolidated findings and information are to contribute to support the coaching process and to yield additional information to the partners involved in a process of efficient improvement of occupational integration.

The aim is to support the mentoring process for young people by a method for assessment of aptitude that can be carried through effectively in a short time. For this purpose the learner's coaches have to be able to plan, perform and evaluate an assessment of vocational aptitude and communicate the results to the young people.

The profiling process hitherto in use took about two weeks and was therefore to be modified and overall be made more effective and more efficient.

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### 3.1. Which Problems Were Taken into Consideration?

In the course of revising the profiling procedure mainly three problems could be identified, to which reliable answers were to be expected.

- How far are the young people able to be trained vocationally? It is important here to distinguish between an ability to be trained and an ability to work in a certain job for which different criteria apply.
- Which field of occupancy complies with young people's abilities and personality?
- If the young people have already started some vocational training, how far do they fulfil the necessary requirements for the respective occupational field?

### 3.2 How Did We Proceed?

Potential assessment of the young people in the pilot project took the following steps:

1. Specification of the problem
2. Definition and operationalisation of the requirements
3. Allocation of requirements to employable methods
4. Choice of methods (interview, questionnaire, test, AC etc.)
5. Determination of specific profiles of requirement
6. Implementation of the potential assessment
7. Evaluation of results, compilation of a detailed individual professional expertise and deduction / conclusion of actions of advancement

### 3.3 Giving Feedback to the Participants

The greatest challenge consists in matching the established criteria with appropriate methods (pace 3): how can we measure, what we would like to find out?

### 3.4 Which Specifications and Methods Were Employed?

The specifications were defined and operationalized by a group of experts. The group of experts chose the following specifications because of their relevance for the ability to be trained and ability to work according to the target group:

- tolerance of frustration
- orientation towards aims
- fields of interest
- competency for co-operation
- ability to convince others
- ability of verbal expression
- general intelligence/intelligence structure
- motives, needs

For the pilot project a multi method procedure was selected. Biographical interview, four AC-exercises and four test procedures are employed.

The selected requirements and the different methods have been matched in the following way:

Requirements	Methods	Biographical interview	AC-exercises	Testing procedures
Tolerance for frustration			X	
Orientation towards aims			X	
Ability to convince			X	
Competency for co-operation, capacity for teamwork			X	
Competency to master conflicts			X	
Ability of verbal expression			X	X
Cognitive capacities				X
Motives, needs				X
Fields of interest		X		X
Schooling / vocational training		X		
Learner's biography		X		
Social background		X		

X= the requirements were recorded by means of that method

Fig. 1: Matching the methods and requirements

X= the requirements were recorded by means of that method

### 3.5 How Can the Methods Be Described?

#### 3.5.1 Biographical interview

For the target group of underprivileged young people there is no biographical interview ready to be used or modified. Therefore an interview had to be developed. By means of that biographical interview the data were collected in the following categories:

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- Personal information
- Family background
- Social contacts/own family
- Schooling
- Vocational training
- Self-concept concerning occupancy
- Fields of interest
- Mobility
- General health status

### 3.5.2 AC-Exercises

Four AC-exercises were developed respectively selected, which will further on be explained in terms of their content:

#### Planning the use of rooms

By way of this exercise the participants are supposed to form a working party and develop common suggestions on the use of the former janitor's apartment in a school. New possibilities of utilization are to be found for the two-room-apartment. The participants are assigned different roles entailing concrete usages for the rooms. The task aims at discussing with the other members of the team which new modes of usage are to be realized. Each single team member is asked to try to convey his conceptions (as indicated in the description of his role) to the others.

#### Choose a Colour

The exercise "Choose a colour" comprises a group discussion in which the participants' task is to gain as much profit as possible. In every round they have to decide either for the colour red or green. Before the second, the fourth, the sixth, and the eighth round they can discuss for three minutes at a time before they will be asked to decide for themselves. In the discussion rounds gains as well as losses are multiplied. If and how much they gain or lose is written down in a list (fig. 2)

Combination (4 participants)	Gains / Losses
GGGG	+ 100
GGG R	- 100 + 300
GG RR	- 200 + 200
G RRR	- 300 + 100
RRRR	- 100

*Fig. 2: Winning list for "Choose a colour"*

#### Inventing a Board Game

The scenario: a company developing games is holding a competition for young people, in which they can win a very attractive prize. The task for the participants consists in putting the team to work on thinking out a board game by making use of certain guideline questions, and implementing the concept by making use of materials offered for that purpose. The task is to develop ideas, to organize jobs to be done and to use special care in the course of their realization. Subsequently the results are to be presented.

#### Designing a Newspaper

Here the participants are asked to put themselves into the following situation: in their school or their training centre a newspaper is to appear every three months. The participants are asked to design the next issue. The main focus is to be laid on alcohol at work/in school. Finally the class/team is to be introduced in an advertisement.

The task aims at leading the participants into using diverse resources for planning and careful implementation of their assignment. Subsequently the results are to be presented to the observers.

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### 3.5.3 Test Procedures

For collection of data on cognitive abilities the IST 2000R by Amthauer et. al. or alternatively WIT, (Wilde-Intelligenztest von Jäger & Althoff (2002) were used. Young people's interests were recorded by way of AIST-R Allgemeiner Interessen-Struktur-Test von Bergmann & Eder (1999). Motivation to perform was covered by way of *Leistungsmotivationsinventar* of Schuler & Prochaska (2000) (a German psychological test to assess motivation to perform; ed.). All tests were processed in their computer based version.

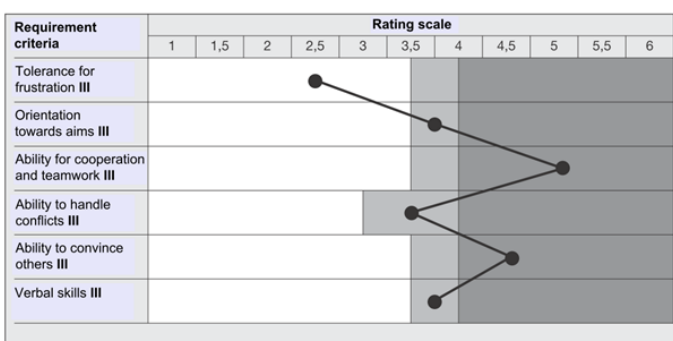


Fig. 3: Example for a requirement profile with marked down individual profile (The person in question resides in the requirement interval twice, in an interval with potential for development and once in the interval classified as insufficient).

Fig. 3: example for a requirement profile with marked down individual profile (The person in question resides in the requirement interval twice, in an interval with potential for development and once in the interval classified as insufficient).

Requirement criteria:

Tolerance for frustration

Orientation towards aims

Ability for cooperation and teamwork

Ability to handle conflicts

Ability to convince others

Verbal skills

### 3.6 How Was the Requirement Profile Transformed into an Assessment Centre?

Using the example of distributive trades/sales we will show how specific requirement profiles were developed for the respective occupations. Incorporated were characteristics, which describe

a standard requirement (III) and a requirement to be desired (II) as well as requirements which are to be rated as optional (I - not represented in our illustrating example). Standard requirements are those which are indispensable, and requirements to be desired are those which can count as very important either for training or the occupation itself.

The rating scale for observers ranges from 1 (insufficient achievement) to 6 (outstanding achievement).

For all different characteristics a differentiated determination is accomplished as to what covers the range of requirement, for what range a sufficient potential for development can yet be seen, and for what range potential is to be assessed as insufficient in order to meet the requirements of an occupational field. (Fig. 3)

### 4. How Was the Implementation Enacted and What Results Were Achieved?

The complete program for potential assessment was carried out with several groups of altogether 18 young people in an age range of 15 to 23 years. The results were documented in individual advisory opinions. Each of the young people obtained feedback on achievements shown and on his/her individual fields of development.

The development of a potential assessment in the framework of the pilot project has yielded important information for the code of practice in the advancement of the underprivileged:

The procedures hitherto used for potential assessment of young people could be shortened successfully without loss of quality from two weeks to two days.

Efficiency of potential assessment in accordance with DIN 33430 can be increased by:

- employing multi method procedures (AC-exercises, biographical interview, test methods
- adoption of specially selected computer based test methods
- reduction on criteria of requirement of relevance
- examination of the relevance of requirement criteria.

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From the results of the potential assessment within the framework of the pilot project clear and individual statements can be drawn concerning their ability to be trained, their ability to work in a specific field, and their areas of learning. The results of the potential assessment will yield important information on the strengths, fields in which improvements can be expected as well as their fields of interests and personality. From these results, concrete references for the young people are formulated. The young people are given detailed verbal feedback. Each of the young people as well as his/her learning coach receives a written advisory opinion on the results of the potential assessment.

Ludwig & Melzer (2006) could state conformity to DIN 33430 in an evaluation on the potential assessment process.

### About the author

**Dr. Gerd Reimann** is executive director at the Gideon GmbH and executive director of Psychologen über Grenzen gGmbH (psychologists across borders).

He specialises in organisational development, quality management, service and customers, aptitude testing according to DIN 33430, security and prevention, developing of instructions and statistics.

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