



## **Our Strength is Experience - innovative training program for Experts by Experience**

### **EXPERIENCE**

#### **EVALUATION OF WORKSHOP**

Place: **Carola Café,  
Iris House, 520085, Covasna**

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## Content

<b>1. Participants</b>	3
<b>2. Agenda</b>	3
<b>3. Description of the workshop (World Café Method)</b>	4
The procession (method)	4
The suggested topics	4
<b>4. Results and conclusions of the workshop</b>	5
<b>5. Recommendations for the content of training material for Experts by Experience</b>	9

## 1. Participants

- Representatives of the Project coordinator organisation –Fundatia Crestina Diakonia
- Representatives of the Labour Office of Covasna County
- Employers - operators of sheltered workshops
- Mentor of the disabled employees
- Private entrepreneurs who has disabled employees
- Other private entrepreneurs

The list of participants is attached in the attendance register.

Number of participants: 11

## 2. Agenda

10:00 – 10:10	<b>Registration</b>
10:10 – 10:20	<b>Opening speech</b>
10:20 – 10:35	<b>Presentation of international project „Our Strength is Experience - innovative training program for “Experts by Experience “</b>
10:35 – 10:50	<b>Short introduction of participants</b>
10:50 – 11:05	<b>Improving the quality and professionalization of career counselling in Covasna county.</b>
11:05 – 11:20	<b>Coffee break</b>
11:20 – 11:50	<b>Discussion using method of World Café – 3 workshops</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Exchange of experience in the field of training and employing people from disadvantaged groups with particular emphasis on people with disabilities.</li><li>2. Factors affecting the current situation for ex. as legislation or preconceptions on the labour market.</li><li>3. Possibilities to improve the quality and professionalization of career counselling at local and regional level.</li></ol>
12:00 – 12:15	<b>Conclusions, recommendations</b>

### 3. Description of the workshop (World Café Method)

#### The aims of the WORLD CAFÉ

Evaluation of the topic: Exchange of experience in the field of expert advisors training dealing with disadvantaged groups with particular emphasis on people with disabilities (PWDs).

The aims of workshop were to identify the opinions, experiences, achievements, possibilities, suggestions and recommendations of labour market actors (employers, educational institutions, counselling organizations for disabled citizens, sheltered workshops and workplaces, AJOFM – Offices of Labour Covasna County, NGOs) through informal discussions that are related to:

1. examples of good practice in the field of counselling and training in the preparation of people with disabilities for the labour market,
2. examples of good practice in the field of training services for advisors dealing with people with disabilities
3. shearing experiences according to the issue/ employing people with disabilities
4. the involvement of "Expert by experience" in the counselling process.

#### The procession (method)

- The host of World Café introduces the program.
- Groups of around 5-6 participants sit around the three tables. At each table a „Table Host” facilitates the conversation in a given topic. At the tables 3 different topics will be discussed parallel within 20 minutes. After 20 minutes, the participants – except the Table Hosts – change the table and they continue the conversation in another topic for another 20 minutes. Participants are also encouraged to write or draw their ideas, suggestions on a flipchart paper so that when people change tables they can see what previous members have expressed in their own words and images.
- Each participant will take part in the discussion of all the three suggested topics.

#### The suggested topics

1. Did you meet some best practices, which helped in preparation of the people with disabilities for labour market? Why did you consider these examples as the best practices?
2. a) What kind of training programmes, best practices do you know, which are focused on the skills development of professional counsellors and career advisors, who are providing the counselling services for people with disabilities?  
  
b) How do you evaluate the effectiveness of existing counselling services for people with disabilities?
3. a) What is your opinion on the involvement of “Experts by Experience” into the counselling process?  
  
b) According to your opinion which skills would be necessary for advisors (Expert by Experience), to be able to prepare the people with disabilities for managing to handle the challenges in the continuously changing labour market?

## 4. Results and conclusions of the workshop

1. **Did you meet some best practices, which helped in preparation of the people with disabilities for labour market? Why did you consider these examples as the best practices?**

The following examples of good practice identified in the workshop have helped to prepare people with disabilities for the labour market:

**Integration with assisted employment** - The Supported Employment is an international specialized integration service at a workplace implemented in order to assist and mediate an employment for a category of vulnerable persons performing a transitional period, from school to a place of work or from an extended period of inactivity to employment resumption. Supported Employment may be regarded as a form of integration approach because emphasizes the right of all persons at mutual respect of dignity, the right to free choice, entitlement to safety and the right to society integration as a citizen with full rights. Supported Employment Centres wish to facilitate implementation of integration and development system through employment, giving support, consultancy and collaboration to those institutions which deal with the integration of persons belonging to vulnerable groups. 5 The purpose is to facilitate the integration services development into three directions: services offered to vulnerable person, consulting services and training to companies, training of specialists and assistance of specialists in supported employment. The main objective is the integration of people with disability, based on an integrated methodology of professional training, integration at a place of work and monitoring of those engaged, involving several actors.

**Vocational education: a successful road towards independence** - The purpose of the Vocational Education Program is to offer young people the opportunity to acquire an independent life, although they belong to a vulnerable group. This independence refers to obtain a workplace and a salary in accordance with the skills and abilities of their work. The successful road to independence is based on a structured curriculum that covers the period of transition from school or other forms of special education or day care centre in case of people with disabilities to work. The objective of the Vocational Education program is in the first place dedicated to young people, regardless of their type of vulnerability, to be ready for employment, and secondly, to employers to become partners in their engagement through opening and acceptance. Vocational training is not a preparation for some profession; it is an activity through which required necessary knowledge is learnt for employment in a workplace: rules at the workplace, responsibilities, adult behaviour, communication at the workplace, socializing with superiors, and orientation in a new space. Such a project was implemented by Alpha Transilvania – Atrium- and where more than 60 people with disabilities attending the training.

**Employer Outreach Program**- Method and training developed and used by Iris/House-Centre of Assisted Employment- maintaining a long-term collaboration with companies or employers. This helps them to identify various roles that the differently abled can perform with each employer and further negotiate terms for them. We catalyses sensitization workshops for employers in which a business case for employing disabled is made, to enhance their understanding about the essence of having PWD sin the teams. Such presentation sensitizes employees towards the essence of inclusive organization building and the empathy that they would need to have in order to encourage their colleagues who are disabled.

The demand creation is one of the crucial steps in the process, whereas the supply side is yet another complicated and most challenging task. This requires a fundamental focus on empowering the candidates which takes a lot of time and most energies from the organization. As discussed, not all the employers are ready to accept the proposition expressed by Iris House committee to recruit PWDs. Though some organization may immediately accept, a few employers do not see it as a feasible option due to their misconception about the capabilities of the PWDs.

**Innovative Training Programme for People with Disabilities** - Motivational training to promote the reintegration of people with disabilities on the labour market was developed within the framework of the international project SUCCESS. Training has been developed by partner organizations based on identified factors of successful reintegration into the labour market on the basis of international experiences and focused on developing competencies and increasing the employability of people with disabilities.

Unfortunately, the director of the Labour Office Covasna Tibor Kelemen could not identify any training for people with disabilities regarding to employment. Anyway all these trainings mentioned above contribute to the motivation of participants and thus encourage their efforts to work further for the integration into the labour market of PWDs.

2. a) **What kind of training programmes, best practice do you know, which are focused on the skill development of professional counsellors and career advisors, who are providing the counselling services for people with disabilities?**

**The only one / The training of Expert in Assisted Employment of Alpha Transilvana-** In this training where trained 14 psychologists to be able to evaluate the skills of people with disabilities and where identify different instruments for evaluation / and where trained 29 experts in assisting employment.

Sadly was concluded that in our region is lake of such a trainings but also the low and the behaviour of authorities do not make possible the development of such a initiatives and training projects-

- b) **How do you evaluate the effectiveness of existing counselling services for people with disabilities?**

Counselling services for people with disabilities can be carried out **by state** (special schools, offices of labour, social affairs and family) and **non-governmental organizations** (supported employment agencies).

#### **State employment services – Offices of labour, social affairs and family**

The Labour Office provides information and advisory services free of charge to the citizens, job seekers, candidates as well as to employers.

**The information and advisory services** include services in the field of:

- career choices,
- finding or changing a job
- recruitment

**There are no Professional Advisory Services** who are addressing the problems associated with the active involvement of job seekers, synchronisation of their personal capabilities to comply with the requirements for a specific job, facilitate the decision-making and adequate behaviour of job seekers, as well as their social and occupational adaptation.

The Labour Office, has no special education or counselling services for disadvantaged people specially for PWDs. Some isolated initiative where held but not with long term results even in training specialist in assisting employment even for people with disabilities seeking for job. The EU projects (POSDRU 2007-2013) in this sense created some organs but where not sustainable. When the grand was finished most of them where closed and disappears (ex Brasov)

**There are Information and Consulting Centre (ICC)** is a facility of the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family with computers, internet and a printer available to the clients. If needed, professional staff is available to help but not for people with disabilities.

**Strengths:**

- public organisation, high-quality staff of consultants with years of experience,
- appropriate facilities for the provision of group and individual advisory services,
- good cooperation with employers in the region
- free services

**Weaknesses:**

- public organization – lower flexibility than private sector organisations,
- the staff is not educated to face the problem of people with special needs,
- the activity of professional advisor is focused on quantity rather than quality

**Non-State Employment Services -** The NGO s has no resources for develop such special services but they still working hard with the small but good trained and motivated staff in this lot of time foul battle.

3. **a) What is your opinion on the involvement of “Experts by Experience” into the counselling process?**

It is important to involve Experts by Experience in the counselling process, make use of their potential as they have experiences that can be effective and motivating for other people with disabilities in a similar situation. By appropriate training tailor-made to these skilled citizens, we can prepare suitable mentors – experts by experience for people with disabilities.

**b) According to your opinion which skills would be necessary for advisors (Expert by Experience), to be able to prepare the people with disabilities for managing to handle the challenges in the continuously changing labour market?**

**The most important knowledge of Experts by Experience:**

Vocational knowledge - knowledge of the labour market, basic knowledge of relevant laws, knowledge of who provides employment services for people with disabilities.

**The most important characteristics of Experts by Experience:**



Know how to define boundaries of competence, individual approach to each PWDs, ability to increase the empathy of healthy citizens, increasing self-confidence and motivation of PWD, individual approach to each PWD, positive relation to the target group, knowledge of the situation of the target group, positive relationship to life, support to involve into the society, self-development. It is also important to be able to communicate and motivate the potential employers who can create working places for PWDs.

### **The most important Skills and Competencies:**

communication  
empathy  
conflict management  
management  
ability to pass on information about the labour market  
creativity  
flexibility  
assertive behaviour

### **Recommended forms of training:**

Experiential learning, group training, e-learning, blended-learning

## **5. Recommendations for the content of training material for Experts by Experience**

1. Basic terminology and related legislation in the field of lifelong counselling, training on the labour market (each partner country separately)
2. Personality of “Expert by Experience” (knowledge, professional skills, personal, methodical and social competencies, key competencies, ethics)
3. Counselling process (communication in contact counselling, identification of client needs, client motivation, development of client self-efficacy, planning)
4. Individual (individual action plan) and group counselling
5. Conflict management, assertive behaviour, feedback and evaluation
6. Organizational skills, time management
7. The psychological and psychopedagogic assessment
8. Special instruments used in evaluation of PWDs skills and competences etc.

9. Special instruments to evaluate the accessibility of the working places
10. Building and the importance of partner networks of experts by experience
11. Information on how a workplace can be made accessible for a people with disabilities
12. Preparing the citizens for the labour market in accordance with the requirements of the employers (self-evaluation, self-presentation, communication skills, corporate culture)
13. Developing of "soft skills" for the labour market: personal and social competencies that will enable them to integrate into a new working team and contribute to job maintenance, teamwork
14. Application of experience in practice in addressing life situations and (re) integration of PWDs between the inter-market of labour and the open labour market (reframe of client beliefs, counselling in finding, choosing a job, changing job and its maintaining)

Recommended duration of the training program: 6 days face to face – 6x6=36 hours