

# Report

INVESTT National seminar

22. 1. 2015  
Celje, Slovenia



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## **1. Introduction**

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The School of Business and Commerce Celje in cooperation with Education, Work and Care Centre Draga and the Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia organized the National Seminar (panel discussion) on the topic of Inclusion of persons with special needs in the vocational education system and employment.

## **2. Aims and objectives**

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- to support the discussion among stakeholders on the subject of inclusive vocational education and the transition of the adults with special needs to the labour market;
- to create an opportunity to discuss the critical issues directly with representatives of legislation;
- to create an opportunity to present models of good practice;
- to present project INVESTT.

## **3. Local Partnership**

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The School of Business and Commerce Celje

Education, Work and Care Centre Draga

The Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia

## **4. Date and place**

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National Seminar took place on 22.1.2015 at The School of Business and Commerce Celje, Slovenia.

## **5. Programme**

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Before the beginning of the seminar the participants had an opportunity to visit the Fair of Educational Companies, where the students have presented themselves and their work as aspiring businessmen, businesswomen.

During the first part of the seminar, the students with special needs from the School of Business and Commerce Celje presented their work at the school, talents, products and other outcomes of their study. The second part of the seminar was designed as a panel discussion with four guest, hosted by Dr. Valerija Bužan, with the main focus on transition of students with special needs from school to labour market.

The guests were:

- mag. Cveto Uršič, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities;
- dr. Slavko Gaber, Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana;
- Tatjana Dolinšek Pernovšek, director of the company employing people with special needs Racio, d. o. o. and Racio social;
- Anica Justinek, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training.

## **6. Participants**

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### **6.1 Number of participants**

80 participants attended the seminar.

### **6.2 Profile of the participants**

The discussion was attended by stakeholders from all Slovenia:

- students with special needs;
- teachers and special education teachers;
- directors and headmasters of secondary schools;
- consultants, coordinator and mentors of students with special needs from primary, secondary and vocational schools;
- parents;
- employers of persons with special needs.

## **7. Main conclusions**

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The systematic regulation for the education of persons with special needs as well as their employment is reasonably well regulated on the national level. This is especially true with the employment of disabled persons who have the option of inclusion into protective work centres, employment centres, disability companies or employment rehabilitation. Potential employment options include the programs in the framework of active employment politics and programs for social inclusion for persons with work efficiency lower than 30 % (in this target group social skills acquired by persons included into these programs is valued more than work experience). Furthermore, the state also offers tax reliefs to companies. Disabled students have the right to a

companion and transportation – these measurements are financed by the state within a call for applications.

The problems occur in practice, which is why it would be important to upgrade and eliminate mistakes that appear in the implementation of system regulation. The process of modernisation and improvements should draw from initiatives of individuals and organisations that are directly affected by education and employment of persons with special needs.

In the discussion, the following was stressed as the main obstacles which should be addressed with adequate measurements in the future in this area:

The unfavourable economic situation in the country is not inclined to the introduction of changes in this field, which are in any case connected with measures that have financial consequences. The support equipment necessary for the education, practical training, and employment of persons with special needs represents a substantial cost. For example, the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia warns that employers lack financial funds to include pupils with special needs into practical training. It has been foreseen that the state administration would enable practical training and employment for the aforementioned target groups, which has never been realised in practice due to lack of ensuring additional support from the Ministry of Finance.

The insufficient awareness of target groups, not only persons with special needs (for example the deaf do not exercise their option of supportive employment sufficiently; as they have the right to an interpreter for 30 hours per month), but also experts who work in this field, that is, who are directly affected by this field (the employers are not sufficiently acquainted with the characteristics of special needs in the context of the work market and consequently do not manage to properly prepare and adapt the work space for a person with special needs).

Persons with special needs are also difficult to employ due to their lack of social skills such as for example independence.

The transition from schooling to the labour market is largely obstructed due to the weak interaction between both spheres.

The transition is also made difficult by the fact that persons with special needs have the right to various types of support and help during schooling, but with the entry into the labour market they are no longer entitled to them, that is, only a smaller group of persons with special needs is entitled to them (these are disabled persons, whereby persons with behavioural and learning difficulties are no longer treated groups with a special status). The difference already arises earlier, at the level of schooling when only the disabled students are entitled to benefits.

The irregular access to support and help. Only students from certain towns have the right to a companion and transportation; there is no principle of universal access at the national level.

Certain modifications are being prepared, that is, the amendment of the Act Concerning Social Care which would enable the transition from social security system into employment and back, which is not possible now. At the same time, financial support is foreseen for projects which will function in the framework of implementation of the operative program for implementation of the Slovenian cohesion politics on social inclusion and employment activation, where young people are exposed as an especially vulnerable group. Recently, the new Rules came into effect which enables financing of technical accessories to the blind (such as for example the purchase of a computer or tablet) to ease their education and employment.

## **8. Specific suggestions from the participants**

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An information flow system should be established between the educational system and the labour market. It is important that employers become familiar with the problematics of special needs at the time of the person's schooling.

Info points for target groups should be established – an initiative has been made in the past, but has yet to be realised.

The education system should also include other programs for children with special needs, that is, on all education levels (from preschool education, primary school to high school education) as schools with an adapted program have a very limited choice of studies. This is why everyone interested should submit an initiative to the Centre of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education for the formation of new educational programs.

The support in the education of the blind and weak of sight should be improved as they are not entitled to the one year extended period of education. The number of practical training in regular programs is also problematic as it is set in the same extent as for the other students.

The participants often stressed the importance of cooperation at the mezzo level (in the sense of finding employment for persons with special needs within the framework of non-formal networks and with the support of donators and sponsors) as well as at the macro level in the sense of inter-ministerial cooperation of the competent agents that operate in the field of education and employment of persons with special needs.

## 9. Media

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The event was presented in various media: articles in 3 newspaper and 2 TV presentations.

## 10. Annexes

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- List of participants

Draga, 23. 2. 2015

