

## EMPREGO APOIADO - SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT IN THE LISBON REGION

*The Emprego Apoiado (Supported Employment) DP operated in a neighbourhood which comprises mostly migrants from Africa, mainly from Cabo Verde and many of its members of staff and its associates live in the same area. This EQUAL project has enabled a comprehensive local employment service to be created that adopts strategies which respond to the needs, interests and competences of the people looking for a job.*

The idea of Supported Employment originated in the USA in the early 1970's as an alternative model to traditional vocational training and employment opportunities for people with significant disabilities. The Emprego Apoiado DP used the methodology of Supported Employment to increase access to the open labour market for severely disadvantaged individuals in the open labour market through **individual integration pathways**, underpinned by an **empowerment approach** that promotes and recognises the individual's abilities, interests and needs and backed by comprehensive support for both the individual and the employer. Support includes: job analysis, assessment of individual training needs, provision of training and workplace tutoring, sensitisation of co-workers, language instruction related to the requirements of the workplace, handling of administrative procedures related to the individual's employment, dealing with health issues, stress factors and ergonomic aspects in the workplace.

A particular aspect of the work of the DP was that it closely articulated this approach with the movement for **Corporate Social Responsibility and Diversity** in the Lisbon area.

To achieve these aims, the DP adopted a Territorial Approach that brought together people in disadvantaged situations, NGOs, public organisations and services including employment agencies, education agencies and vocational assessment centres and, of course, employers. These cooperative actions, or inter-cooperation networks are aimed directly at supporting the vocational integration of the target groups and ensuring as smooth a pathway as possible towards integration. Departing from a clear life-project definition (self-determination) and applying instruments for skills recognition, validation and certification (based on a "portfolio" of evidence), an initial link is then made with training courses leading to professional qualification that are supported by flexible learning processes and then a further link is established with companies that might also offer vocational training in an enterprise context.

Emprego Apoiado developed a range of tools to strengthen the role of its target groups. A local **Forum on Diversity** was formed from individuals from the target groups and organisations that represented their interests. Members of the Forum participated in every project activity, including the training of employers and enterprise managers, the training of employment specialists, the production of good practice guides and the transnational exchanges. The DP also developed a training course entitled *Self Advocates for Leadership* and aimed at generating community leadership and citizenship. The main elements of the course are sharing values, appreciating different cultures, tackling social problems and dealing with local and central authorities and strategic planning. Other fundamental contents include issues concerned with citizenship, gender, legislation and producing a sense of community and community power.

A key element in paving individual pathways to integration was the DP's approach to the **recognition, validation and certification of personal and professional competences** of the members of immigrant communities. This activity was built on:

- instruments developed by ANEFA, the National Agency for Adult Education and Training, that identified formal and informal academic skills;
- the assessment of social skills, not only one's ability to design a life project but also the ability to access community resources..;
- the development of a practical guide on skills "portfolio" development, with a special emphasis on empowerment and self-determination.

The experience of the DP in these activities has led to the production of a *Manual of Recognition and Validation of Competences* acquired both formally and informally throughout life. This innovative instrument is being distributed in printed paper support, on CD and by internet. It is

backed up by several practical tools: an Inventory of Transversal Competences, a skills-matching tool, an evidence tool (the drafting of a skills portfolio), an advisory tool aimed at employment specialists and a training tool to determine the domains in which the person needs additional skills and to provide advice about how to supply the necessary training.

**Employers** took an active part in the work of Emprego Apoiado through their local representative associations AERLIS (Lisbon's Entrepreneur Association) and AIP/CCI (Portuguese Industrial Association/Chamber of Commerce and Industry). These organisations were particularly committed to motivating their associated employers to become involved in the establishing of inclusion practices. They introduced specific training modules into the standard training that they provided for their members and they also established a "Good Practices on Supported Employment" Award. The award recognises the valuable contribution of employers to the employability and vocational inclusion of people in disadvantaged situations.

The DP found that employers were willing to try out an integration process, without fully committing themselves at the beginning. However, the fact that progress was closely followed by the DP's employment specialists helped to motivate employers as they knew that practical support was always at hand. The employment specialists provided assistance in the process of job matching and their ongoing and the rise in the integration rates into the open labour market was an impressive testimony to its success. Ongoing support from was often applied to integrate a gender dimension into all of the activities.

The fact that both AERLIS and AIP were partners assisted the creation of a **regional entrepreneurs' network for the employment of disadvantaged people**, which underpinned all of the DP's activities with individual enterprises.

The DP also created a data base that contains companies that are actual or potential employers, together with data from trainees, tutors in enterprises and employment specialists, which makes it possible to establish the "history" of each individual integration pathway.

### Contact and further information

Augusto Sousa

Email: [rumopent@mail.telepac.pt](mailto:rumopent@mail.telepac.pt)

or

Teresa Duarte

Email: [aeips@mail.telepac.pt](mailto:aeips@mail.telepac.pt)

[http://www.empregoapoiado.org/imagens/conteudos/ficheiros/MANUAL\\_percursos.pdf](http://www.empregoapoiado.org/imagens/conteudos/ficheiros/MANUAL_percursos.pdf)  
(in Portuguese language)

<http://www.empregoapoiado.org/templates/EmpregoApoiado>

Link to [EQUAL database description](#)

[Transnational Partnership](#)