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Addressing the needs of people with disabilities in ESF programmes in the 2007-13 period

1. Policy background

People with disabilities represent at least 16% of the EU's working age population. Only 40% of disabled people are employed, whereas this rate is 64.2% for the non-disabled. **In order to achieve the employment targets set out in the revised Lisbon Agenda, vulnerable groups need to be better integrated into the labour market.** In this context, the European Employment Strategy pays special attention to the needs of people with disabilities. In particular, under Guideline 18 of the Integrated Guidelines which aims to "*Ensure inclusive labour markets, enhance work attractiveness and make work pay for job-seekers, including disadvantaged people, and the inactive*", specific reference is made to people with disabilities.

General legal background for disability policies

Promoting the full integration and participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society is a key element of EU policies. Article 13 of the Treaty provides the legal basis for community action "*to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation*". Even though the specific needs of people with disabilities are primarily addressed through national policies, the **EU directive against discrimination¹ (EC 2000/78/EC)** constitutes an important step forward in the fight against discrimination which in certain Member States has required major changes to existing rules². This Directive must be implemented in all Member States by December 2006 at the latest.

Community Actions to address the needs of people with disabilities

The year 2003 was declared the European Year of People with disabilities. In this context, the Council Resolution on promoting the employment and social integration of people with disabilities sets out a clear line to be followed by the Member States and the Commission. It calls for the **reinforcement of mainstreaming of the disability**

¹ Council directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. OJ L 303, 02/12/2000 p. 0016-0022

² For example, the Directive stipulates that "employers shall take appropriate measures, where needed in a particular case, to enable a person with a disability to have access to, participate in, or advance in employment, or to undergo training, unless such measures would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer. This burden shall not be disproportionate when it is sufficiently remedied by measures existing within the framework of disability policy of the Member State concerned."

perspective into all relevant policies at the stages of policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation³.

In addition, to ensure a coherent policy follow-up to the European Year of Disabled People, the Commission launched an **EU Disability Action Plan** (DAP) for the period 2004-2010. Three operational objectives are central to the DAP: (1) full implementation of the Employment Equality Directive; (2) successful mainstreaming of disability issues in relevant Community policies; and (3) improving accessibility for all.

2. ESF support to people with disabilities

The issue of disability is addressed in the Structural Funds' General Regulation, which prohibits discrimination in the implementation and access to the funds on the basis of gender, race, or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Article 16 General Regulation)⁴. Moreover, it requires that "*accessibility for disabled persons shall be one of the criteria to be observed in defining operations co-financed by the Funds and to be taken into account during the various stages of implementation*".

ESF aims at improving employment opportunities for all. Since disabled people constitute a particularly vulnerable group with low employment rates, it is important to pay particular attention to their integration in the labour market. Therefore, the ESF Regulation emphasises that ESF actions need to take into consideration the relevant priorities and objectives of the Community to combat the social exclusion of disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities (Article 2.2 ESF Regulation). The Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion also highlight the importance of addressing the employment needs of disabled people.

Furthermore, the ESF Regulation provides for specific actions for the social inclusion of disadvantaged people, including disabled persons (Article 3.1.c (i) ESF Regulation). In addition the relatively low employment rates of disabled people justifies support to this group under any of the ESF priorities (the priorities "enhancing access to the labour market" and "increasing adaptability of workers" are particularly well suited to having disabled people among their target groups).

3. Main differences compared with the current programming period

Actions aimed at promoting the integration of people with disabilities have been eligible also in the 2000-2006 programming period, although no specific mention was made to

³ Council Resolution of 15 July 2003 on promoting the employment and social integration of people with disabilities

⁴ Article 16 par 2 stipulates that "*The Member States and the Commission shall take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination on the basis of gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the various stages of implementing the Funds and, in particular, access to them*".

this target group. The draft Regulations for the 2007-13 place a greater emphasis on this issue, by

- introducing a specific requirement in the General Regulation as regards accessibility, when it stipulates that "*accessibility for disabled persons shall be one of the criteria to be observed in defining operations co-financed by the Funds and to be taken into account during the various stages of implementation*" (Article 16 of General Regulation)
- making specific reference to people with disabilities as a target group: "*promoting pathways to integration and re-entry into employment of disadvantaged people such as people with disabilities (..)*"(Art.3.1.c (i) of ESF Regulation)
- providing for "*acceptance of diversity in the workplace and combating discrimination in accessing and progressing in the labour market*" (Art.3.1.c (ii) of ESF Regulation).
- requiring that the annual and final implementation report should contain information "*on action to strengthen integration in employment and social inclusion of other disadvantaged groups, including people with disabilities*" (Art 10.d f ESF Regulation)

Another relevant change for the next programming period is that the "**flexibility clause**" introduced by the General Regulation (Art.34.2) provides the possibility to finance infrastructure investments within ESF programmes (up to 10% of each priority axis)⁵. This flexibility could be used to ensure equal access of people with disabilities to the ESF-funded activities (e.g. training facilities).

Furthermore, from January 2007 at the latest, when establishing national rules, all Member States will be bound to **comply with the EU directive against discrimination**. This might imply stronger obligations in certain Member States as regards accommodating the needs of people with disabilities to ensure that they have equal opportunities to compete on the labour market.

⁵ Art. 34.2 of the General Regulation reads as follows: "Without prejudice to the derogations laid down in the specific regulations of the Funds, the ERDF and the ESF may finance, in a complementary manner and subject to a limit of 10% of each priority axis of an operational programme, actions falling within the scope of assistance from the other Fund, provided that they are necessary for the satisfactory implementation of the operation and are directly linked to it."

4. Methods to address the issue in the Operational Programmes

4.1 Specific actions

Specific actions for disabled people can be implemented under the priority "reinforcing social inclusion of people at a disadvantage" by promoting pathways to integration and re-entry into employment and combating discrimination in the workplace for disabled people. In addition, as explained above, disabled people can be specifically targeted under any of the ESF priorities.

Specific actions can cover a wide range of actions, such as: counselling and training adapted to the specific needs of disabled people; rehabilitation; job creation for disabled people in sectors such as the social economy; special support to promote the entrepreneurship of disabled people; awareness raising campaigns to combat discrimination; etc. By use of the flexibility clause, the adaptation of premises and equipment to facilitate access (e.g. construction of wheelchair ramps, elevators, etc) can also be financed under this priority *provided that this is necessary for the successful implementation of the ESF operations*. Examples are provided in the Annex.

4.2. Mainstreaming actions –Accessibility for disabled people as a horizontal principle

In line with the requirements of Article 16 of the General Regulation and the Council resolution above, Member States should address the needs of people with disabilities not only by implementing specific actions but also by following a mainstreaming approach. In particular, Member States should demonstrate how accessibility for disabled people is taken into account in the various stages of implementation. Such information should be included both in the National Strategic Reference Frameworks (general orientation towards the issue) and in the Operational Programmes.

Operational Programmes should contain specific information on how the special needs of people with disabilities are addressed. This could be done either by a separate section or by integrating this information under the relevant chapters (e.g. description of priority axes, implementing provisions). In any case, Member States must demonstrate that accessibility is one of the criteria that will be observed in defining operations by the ESF (i.e. project selection criteria) Member States should be also encouraged to adopt appropriate measures to ensure the participation of disabled people to all ESF-related activities (e.g. provision of Braille course material, provision of sign-language translation, etc).

5. Potential problematic issues

Problems may be incurred concerning compliance with the new requirements resulting from the transposition of the EU Directive against discrimination⁶. Nevertheless, irrespective of the national rules transposing the new Directive, it must be noted that the principles set out in the General Regulation are directly applicable in each Member State.

⁶ Council directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. OJ L 303, 02/12/2000 p. 0016-0022

In relation to the use of the flexibility clause to finance infrastructure related to accessibility, it must be emphasised that these actions can be implemented only on a complementary basis, when they are necessary for the successful implementation of other ESF operations. By no means should infrastructure investments to improve accessibility be stand-alone activities within ESF programmes.

6. Other relevant reference papers

Toolkit for accessibility of ESF projects. Under preparation by unit G3/ DG EMPL

The Council decision on the European Year of People with Disabilities (EYPD) 2003:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2001/dec/cd903_en.html

Communication on the European Disability Action Plan: phase 1 - 2004-2005

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2003/oct/com650_final_en.html

Situation of disabled people in the enlarged European Union: the European Action Plan 2006-2007 (phase 2) :

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index/com_2005_604_en.pdf

Disability mainstreaming in the European Employment Strategy:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/disability/emco010705_en.pdf

Council Resolution on promoting the employment and social integration of people with disabilities

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2003/oct/resolution150703en.pdf

Council Resolution on equal opportunities for pupils and students with disabilities in education and training:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2003/oct/134_04_en.pdf

Council Resolution on 'eAccessibility' — improving the access of people with disabilities to the knowledge based society

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2003/oct/eAccessibility_en.pdf

ANNEX

The examples below have been extracted from the paper presented to EMCO on the 29 June 2005, entitled "Disability Mainstreaming in the European Employment Strategy"

The new Employment Guidelines 2005-2008 and their potential for disability mainstreaming

1 More and better jobs

Reflecting the revised Lisbon Strategy, the new Employment Guidelines identify three core objectives which Member States' policies shall foster in a balanced manner: achieving full employment, improving quality and productivity at work and strengthening social and territorial cohesion:

Guideline 16: Implement employment policies aiming at achieving full employment, improving quality and productivity at work, and strengthening social and territorial cohesion.

These core objectives are of general relevance with regard to the situation of disabled people in the labour market.

- Full employment

As one in six of the EU working-age population has a disability⁷ of some sort and given the low employment rate of this group, increasing the employment rate of **disabled people contributes significantly to the Lisbon objective** of an employment rate of 70% by 2010. People with disabilities are a much-underused source of labour in Europe, which could contribute to overall economic growth. Raising employment and participation rates are vital for economic growth and social inclusion. This requires a good supply of labour and calls for a broad policy mix incorporating both demand and supply side measures.

- Improving quality and productivity at work

Not just more jobs, but better quality jobs, as was called for by the Council of Ministers at Lisbon and reconfirmed in Brussels in April 2005 should be pursued. This includes, in particular, satisfaction with pay and working conditions, health and safety at the work place, the availability of flexible work organisation, working time arrangements and the balance between flexibility and security.

⁷ This figure is based on the EUROSTAT survey on "Employment of disabled people in Europe in 2002" Statistics in focus, Theme 3 - 26/2003 in which 15.7 % of population aged 16-64 stated that they have a long-standing health problem or disability. As the definition of disabled people varies among Member States, there are no harmonised figures on the number of people recognised as disabled available for the EU.

This is in particular relevant for disabled people as a survey carried out by European and national disability organisations showed that disabled workers are more likely to be in low paid jobs and are often discriminated against in access to training and career promotion.

Only 15.7% of working-age people with disabilities in the EU 15 and 11.4% of those in the New Member States, who faced work restrictions (as regards the type of work, the amount of work, or mobility to and from work), were provided with some assistance to work in 2002⁸. However, 43.7% of non-working persons with disabilities consider that they would need some form of assistance to work.

Table 1: Working disabled persons with restrictions receiving assistance to work (%) in 2002.

	EU15	New MS
% receiving assistance to work	15.7	11.4
Type of assistance provided to work		
Kind of work	37.1	51.5
Amount of work	13.1	33.3
Mobility to get to and from work	6.4	1.6
Mobility at work	2.7	3.3
Support and understanding by superiors and colleagues	14.8	6.1
Other	26.0	4.2
All	100.0	100.0

Source: Eurostat News release, 142/2003 of 05.12.2003

It is important to keep in mind that most people become disabled during their working lives and yet relatively very few return to work but go instead onto benefits, which constitute a substantial amount in Member States' social budgets⁹. In order to change this practice, employers should support their employees who become disabled in the course of their working career. Positive actions such as a period of leave combined with further training, change of their job descriptions or alternative assignments should be envisaged before considering the person to be invalid. In this context, it is important to propose these measures at an early stage.

Measures to address this issue should therefore include, among others, initiatives targeted at employers to ensure that their human resource policies also take more and better account of the needs of disabled employees.

⁸ Employment of disabled people in Europe in 2002, Statistics in focus, Theme 3 - 26/2003 and Eurostat News release, 142/2003 of 05.12.2003.

⁹ Due to the different systems in Member States, no harmonised EU figures on the expenditure on disability benefits and other relevant schemes are available. However, one striking figure is that 2.7 million people receive sickness/disability benefits in the UK, twice as many people as those receiving unemployment benefits.

- **Strengthening social and territorial cohesion**

Most social expenditure on health and social policies represents an investment in human resources with positive economic effects. Social policies should have sufficient financial resources in order to contribute to an increased labour supply and to be able to alleviate the difficulties faced by disabled people in accessing or remaining in the labour market.

Access to a job, ensuring opportunities to acquire the skills necessary to facilitate participation in the labour market and remain in the labour market (reflecting in particular the wide use of ICT and the move towards a knowledge-based society), and the possibility to progress in terms of pay and qualifications are major factors for promoting social inclusion.

The Guidelines stress the need that Member States, in taking action, should ensure good governance of employment policies. Implementing disability mainstreaming in an effective way requires the active participation of employers, trade unions, public authorities, civil society and other relevant actors. This active participation should be organised in a systematic and structural way in order to ensure continuity in the pursuit of this important goal.

One of the most striking points from a survey among 24 Development Partnerships (DPs) under the EQUAL programme was that more than half of the DPs mentioned their composition and cooperative work as being the most important element in their achievement of good practice. The survey showed that the principle factor of success is often a very strong co-operation among public and private health and rehabilitation bodies, training organisations and enterprises' associations.

Examples

Access Ability in Dublin is an EQUAL DP with the mission to maximise employment opportunities for disabled people by addressing the structural, attitudinal and policy issues which currently prevent employers from recognising the abilities of individuals. It has created a comprehensive package of services for employers that enables them to take on a person with a disability without any attendant concerns or administrative inconveniences by providing a complete package of training and consultancy services.

The Hungarian Ministry of Employment and Labour supports so-called 'model programmes' that are essentially pilot programmes developed in close co-operation with non-governmental organizations and research activities related to the rehabilitation and employment of people with disabilities. Co-operation ensures that the results of these pilot programmes are channelled into mainstream policy-making and experiences are used for changing and improving measures.

The new Unizo (Flemish Federation of SME) service point promotes diversity plans which are a subsidy measure of the Flemish Community. Diversity plans encourage employers to review and adapt the traditional business policies in the field of recruitment, welcoming and training. The aim is to stimulate the work floor in its human resources management towards persons with disabilities, elderly people and persons with a different ethnical (? ethnic?) and cultural background. Furthermore, all questions about diversity management can be addressed to the 'diversity consultants' of the service point. The consultants also organise training for managers of SMEs and translate the extensive literature on diversity

2 Priority areas in the new Employment Guidelines

In the new guidelines, three priorities have been identified on which action should concentrate in order to address the policy objectives:

- Attract and retain more people in employment, increase labour supply and modernise social protection systems
- Improve adaptability of workers and enterprises
- Increase investment in human capital through better education and skills

The guidelines corresponding to these priorities bear a great potential for introducing the mainstream disability approach in policies and measures that will be formulated by Member States when addressing these guidelines. There follows an analysis of each of the guidelines in this respect with examples of Member States practices.

2.a Attract and retain more people in employment, increase labour supply and modernise social protection systems

- *Guideline 17: Promote a lifecycle approach to work*

People with disabilities constitute a group which could offer **extra labour supply**. This becomes even more relevant since the share of the working-age population is decreasing due to demographic trends. In this context, it is important that policies target **both people with disabilities looking actively for a job as well as people with disabilities who have given up job search**.

Policy makers and labour organizations should be aware that disabled women are at risk of double or multiple discriminations and therefore require special attention. Gender policies should take this element into account in order mutually **to reinforce** policies for disability mainstreaming.

As regards reconciliation of work and private life, the **provision of care services for people with disabilities should be available** in order to allow workers having a family member with a disability to continue to work. These provisions should be gender neutral in the sense that working men should also be encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities for leave or reduced working time to care for a relative with a disability.

Example:

The project "Developing entrepreneurship among women with disabilities in the Baltic States" managed by the Latvian Association of Disabled Women aims to promote the economic empowerment of women with disabilities in the Baltic States through the development of a small enterprise development strategy which specifically targets this group. The preliminary phase of the project involves the commissioning of a situation analysis on women with disabilities in small enterprises or those who wish to enter small

enterprises in the selected countries. In addition to the situation analysis, case studies of successful women entrepreneurs with disabilities will be compiled.

- *Guideline 18: Ensure inclusive labour markets, enhance work attractiveness, and make work pay for job-seekers, including disadvantaged people, and the inactive*

In many Members States the benefit system provides few incentives for people with disabilities to start working due to the benefit trap and/or the risk of being excluded from the benefit system if they are not able to continue working. Therefore **disability benefit systems** should be reformed **to make work attractive** by for example continuing the payment of (reduced) benefits in case of work uptake. In addition, the disability benefit system should allow disabled people to return to disability pensions after **a trial work period**.

People with disabilities should also be able to **receive accurate information about the implications on their benefits status** if they pick up a job.

Examples:

Under the Irish "Back to Work Scheme" managed by the Irish Department of Social and Family Affairs, people on long-term illness and disability payments are allowed to retain a portion of their social security payment, in addition to their wages, when they move into full-time employment. The scheme is designed to provide a financial cushion to people getting long-term illness and disability payments who return to work for a minimum of 20 hours a week. In addition to their wage, participants can retain a percentage of their weekly social security payment for up to 3 years (75% in the first year, 50% in the second year and 25% in the third year). Secondary benefits may also be retained, subject to certain conditions. People taking up self-employment can retain their social security payment for a 4-year period (starting at 100% for the first year).

The UK has two particular programmes: the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) and a complementary programme called 'Pathways to Work'. Reforms have been introduced to provide more advice to incapacity benefits (IncapB) recipients with mandatory interviews and the appointment of personal advisors. The related pilot exercise 'Pathways to Work' is being rigorously evaluated and early indications are that in the pilot areas, there is improved job entry performance. New Jobcentre Plus offices are coming on line thus strengthening the capacity of the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP).

The Danish 'Flex jobs' scheme permits disabled employees with reduced capacity to work to integrate into the labour market on an equal basis with non-disabled workers.

Although the disability perspective should be mainstreamed in employment policy and other relevant policy fields, **complementary disability-specific measures** are still needed to prevent any forms of discrimination and to break down barriers to the regular labour market as well as to provide support for people with disabilities who take part in mainstream programmes.

In addition to the transposition of the **EU directive on equal treatment in employment and training**, Member States should consider the opportunity to introduce more favourable provisions than those imposed by the Directive in order to

eradicate discrimination. An example of more favourable provisions is the obligation for large organisations to draft an equality plan.

Awareness raising actions underlining the **benefits of a diversified society and workplace** should be intensively developed in order to reach all relevant actors.

Example:

As part of the activities of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK) for the EU Year of Persons with Disabilities (2003), department II conducted a survey in November 2003 on the topic of “vocational training for young people”. The aim of this survey is to hold a public discussion between school and extra-school partners on the existing possibilities in educational establishments and enterprises for providing disabled young people with the skills they need in order to exercise an occupation. A panel discussion will give social partners, representatives of schools and school authorities, organisations representing disabled people and ministries the opportunity to air their views on how models of choosing an occupation, vocational training and placement can help to improve the chances of disabled young people on the labour market. These models will be presented in more detail and discussed with a group of experts from education and business circles in the ensuing study groups.

In York (UK) the vocational training project 'MATES' financed by the ESF is helping to place disabled people into employment with the support of trained job coaches. The latter train colleagues to become workplace mentors for the disabled worker so that support is maintained when the job coach withdraws.

- *Guideline 19: Improve matching of labour market needs*

Employment services should in a **proactive way** take into account the heterogeneous needs of people with disabilities and be accessible for them. This means that employment offices and services should be fully accessible and moreover that their **information and communication actions** should be adapted to disabled jobseekers. When necessary, **personal support** should be available. In addition, in order to ensure that these services take into account the needs of people with disabilities, it is necessary to develop **disability awareness training for both staff and managers**.

It is also important that employment **measures are regularly assessed** from a disability perspective and that the **impact** of the measure on the situation of disabled workers is evaluated.

Indicators to assess the impact on disabled people should be put in place. A good indicator could be the percentage of disabled participants in a particular employment scheme as well as the inflow rate into employment compared to inflow rate of non-disabled participants after finishing an employment scheme. The data collection should be done in a systematic way.

Examples:

A 9-day course for training employment consultants in the Czech Union for supported employment organized by the Training and Information Centre of the Czech Union for supported employment aims at improving the skills and competences of employment

consultants in counselling disabled people.

The Irish public employment service FAS manages a grant scheme for job seekers who are deaf or who have a speech impairment and are attending job interviews. These job seekers may apply for funding to have a sign language interpreter to attend the interview.

Mobilisation of local communities in increasing employment is crucial. Local authorities and organizations operating at the local level are best placed to translate national and regional strategies into action on the ground. Local actors can also best understand local conditions, aspirations and needs regarding the situation of people with disabilities. Moreover, it is at the local level that most services are provided to help integrate people with disabilities into the labour market and into society. Therefore the principle of mainstreaming should be considered as a key priority for organizations active at the local level.

The **social economy** is an important generator of employment and can provide many employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Employment in the social economy often allows greater flexibility and individualised support, which contribute to eliminating barriers to employment for disabled persons.

Examples:

Hungarian labour centres can launch so-called integrated labour market programmes based on local needs and promoting the employment of disadvantaged groups, including people with disabilities. These programmes build upon a synergy of employment services and other active measures, and allow for a flexible combination of training, subsidised employment and psycho-social support services adapted to the needs of the target group.

The recently adopted Lithuanian law on social enterprises aims to improve employment opportunities for persons from disadvantaged groups. 40% of employed workers in social enterprises should be persons from disadvantaged groups such as lone parents, older people, disabled people, long-term unemployed, etc. The wage compensation is 50% of the gross salary and 60% for people with severe disabilities. This support is limited to one year except for people with disabilities who may receive it for longer periods. Social enterprises with no less than 50% of disabled workers can have the status "social enterprise for disabled" and in this case can receive additional State financial support, notably for the adaptation of work premises, for administrative expenditures and transport costs and for personal assistance.

2.b Improve adaptability of workers and enterprises

- *Guideline 20: Promote flexibility combined with employment security and reduce labour market segmentation, having due regard to the role of social partners*
- *Guideline 21: Ensure employment-friendly labour cost developments and wage-setting mechanisms*

Initiatives at workplace level for flexible, **individual based solutions** in terms of working hours, work place adaptation and access to technological assistance, all facilitate employment for disabled people. In many cases, these adaptations lead to no or only few additional costs.

It should be underlined that the EU directive on equal treatment in Employment and Training obliges employers to provide **reasonable accommodation**. Taking into account the disability perspective **as from the conception of a project**, will reduce the need for further adjustments. Training measures on accessibility targeted at architects and engineers would in this perspective be very useful.

The above-mentioned initiatives should be implemented in **cooperation** between the employers and employees. The **social partners** have therefore a crucial role to play in increasing the adaptability of the workplace.

Corporate social responsibility often includes actions in favour of disabled people and provides a positive contribution to breaking down barriers in access to the labour market for people with disabilities and in changing the attitudes of employers and co-workers. CSR initiatives should receive the necessary attention and be followed on a **large scale** in order to use their full potential.

The **fight against accidents at work** should be further increased. It is also important to pay more attention to situations where the safety of a person may be in danger due to her/his disability.

Job retention schemes are important for people who become disabled during their working life. **Innovative and flexible forms of work organisation** can contribute to achieve this goal.

Examples:

A special grant is available from the Irish public employment services FAS for employers in the private sector to re-train workers who acquire a disability in the course of their working lives so that they can continue to work in the same company. The grant is supported by a significant national media advertising campaign.

In Spain, income tax credits are granted to disabled workers.

Many disabled people are helped to work by other people in their daily life. Given the tax and benefits structure, these jobs are often not declared. Tax and benefit systems should therefore provide incentives **to transform these jobs into regular employment**. Regular employment does not only provide an increased social protection, but often leads also to more training opportunities for the employees concerned, which would also be beneficial for disabled people.

Sheltered work and other employment aids can create more and better job opportunities for disabled people. Nevertheless, it is important that at the same time **measures facilitating the transition from sheltered employment to mainstream employment** are also developed.

Some disabled people prefer setting up their own company given the difficulties of finding a job. Although entrepreneurship **grants** for disadvantaged groups to create their own businesses are available in most Member States to disabled people, these do not always take into account the **specific needs** of disabled people, and in particular the extra costs linked to their disability (transport, accessibility of ICT equipment...).

Example:

The Greek public employment service OAED provides subsidies for new self employed persons. The amount of the subsidy is increased for persons with disabilities.

2.c Increase investment in human capital through better education and skills

- *Guideline 22: Expand and improve investment in human capital*
- *Guideline 23: Adapt education and training systems in response to new competence requirements*

People with disabilities should have better access to education and special measures should be taken to enable disabled children to attend **mainstream education**.

Life long learning initiatives should **systematically include a special focus on the needs of people with disabilities** and training providers should look proactively for potentially interested disabled people and widely advertise their activities to them. In some cases, greater flexibility in the organisation of training activities should be provided. Furthermore, the EU directive on equal treatment in employment and training is relevant in this context and obliges training providers to foresee **reasonable accommodation** for people with disabilities.

Distance learning can be useful for people with disabilities, but should complement and **not replace** initiatives to make **training accessible**. Making transport and buildings accessible to people with disabilities would be a better option in most cases and makes the people concerned more familiar with the labour market environment and increases their social inclusion.

Equal development partnerships have shown that 90% of people underestimate their own competences upon initial assessment. **Validation of existing skills including non-formal and workplace learning** can also be a good tool to empower people with disabilities and promote their integration into society.

Examples:

In Germany, the joint initiative "**JOB – Jobs ohne Barrieren**" ("jobs without barriers") has been launched. The German Government, employers, trade unions, disability associations and organizations, institutions responsible for rehabilitation and other institutions and authorities at the regional and national level cooperate to promote the training and employment of people with disabilities.

In Sweden, 'folk high schools' arranged 'adjustment courses' to provide social and practical skills training for disabled adults and 'activation courses' in cooperation with disability organisations. The Swedish National Agency for Special Educational Support provides annual funding for the folk high schools and higher educational establishments. This is supplemented by grants for disabled students and a special programme 'Added Value' which is a Development Partnership with EQUAL funding: it deals with all disadvantaged groups but gives particular attention to disabled people Under this scheme, social enterprise workplaces are created to provide work-related experience to enhance

employability.

In Hungary, the normative state support of adult training for people with disabilities is twice as high as the general normative support. Accredited training institutions that design and organise training courses for disabled persons can apply and receive this state support. The Ministry of Education organises each year a communication campaign to increase the number of students with disabilities taking part in higher education.

Ergonomic improvements have been incorporated in the new certification system for vocational training centres in Greece (responsible authority: Greek Ministry of Employment and Social Protection). The objective here is to meet the requirements of today's vocational training needs and in particular to implement the mainstreaming principle for people with mobility problems and disabilities of the sensory organs in accordance with the Ministry of Environment's regulation on "Designing for all". In addition, the allowance for people with special needs is 5€ compared to 3.5€ for other unemployed job seekers.