

# Social cohesion

## Helping young people with severe intellectual disorders in Moscow (Russia)

*"I am impressed with the achieved results; not only are there tangible benefits for the disadvantaged youth; but also, this initiative has left its positive mark on the educational policies of this country."*

Marcus Cornaro, Director Europe, Southern Mediterranean, Middle East and Neighbourhood Policy



### EC Partners

Moscow Education Department

Centre for Curative Pedagogics, Russia

Technological College No 21, Moscow

Orton, Finland

### Facts and Figures

- EC contribution: €210 000 (80% of the total)
- Duration: 2007-2009

### Context

Russian employers are often unwilling to hire people with mental disabilities. Nowadays there is no unified state program for supporting people with intellectual and mental disabilities. In Soviet times problems of people with mental disorders were concealed. Although then mental hospitals and psycho neurologic dispensaries held curative workshops, in the '90s most of them were closed. The curative workshops are now seen as possible employment places for people with mental disabilities.

### Objectives

- To set up a model of vocational training, employment and social adaptation of young people with intellectual disabilities.
- To encourage the revision of legislation and regulations with regard to special vocational training in Russia.

### Impact

- Up to January 2011, 145 young students with disabilities have directly benefited from the programme.
- 30 teachers and specialists have been trained to work with young people with disabilities.
- A brochure "From the outside the view is worse – look from the inside" (published in 3 000 copies) and a book "Creative professions for handicapped people" (published in 1 500 copies) have been created.
- A successful working model exists in a college in Moscow and the programme has already been replicated in another of the city's colleges.
- The Moscow authorities have granted premises for setting up a Crafts Centre to become an employment facility for the target youth.



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### "It is good that I am as I am and not as others"

It's 10 a.m. on a sunny April day and the first group of young disabled people arrive at Technical College No 21. Some of them travel for more than 2 hours to get here. **Ms Olga Volkova**, from the Russian NGO "Centre for Curative Pedagogics" (CCP) proudly shows a number of well-equipped large workshops where training in pottery, woodwork, publishing, weaving and other arts and crafts is carried out.

The facility has 28 employees including craft workers, psychologists, social workers and assistants.

The initiative started by lobbying the educational authorities to recognise that these young people have a legal right to be educated. In the end, the authorities agreed to launch an experimental programme.

The European Commission supported the work of CCP bringing in expertise from similar facilities in Finland, which provided technical know-how and exchange of experiences between the partners and the stakeholders in both countries.

There are currently 46 students aged 16-25 with plans to increase numbers. The products of the workshops are being sold in charity events and the institution is looking forward to more stable outlets in a wider market. One boy's mother said: *"Now our children receive useful professional skills and this is a victory. This right should be given to every young person with a disability."*



"It is good that I am as I am and not as others"