Annex 2.1c) Good practice

Building a system of prevention of and support for the placement on the labour market of the long-term unemployed, persons with low qualification and other disadvantaged groups

Title of measure	**Member state**
1.1 Building a system of prevention of and support for placement on the labour market of the long-term unemployed, persons with low qualification and other disadvantaged groups	Slovensko

Output objective of the measure

To create a system of prevention of and support for placement on the labour market of the long-term unemployed, persons with low qualification and other disadvantaged groups

Summary of main results

- the research analysis has filled the existing void in the knowledge of the position of persons with disabilities on the labour market,
- the study has identified the inhibitors to the integration of persons with visual impairment in the labour market,
- the study has identified the education needs of persons with disabilities,
- the study has identified the attitudes of employers to the workforce with visual impairment,
- the study has shown the need for responsiveness of the services provided by the public employment services to the needs of persons with visual impairment.

Final beneficiaries

General population	☐
Children	☐
Single parent families	☐
Unemployed	☐
Older people	☐
Young people	☐
People with disabilities	☒
Immigrants /refugees	☐
Ethnic minorities	☐
Homeless people	☐
Specific diseases	☐
Other [Please specify:]	☐

Policy focus

Social exclusion	☐
Healthcare	☐
Long-term care	☐
Management	☐

Geographic frame

National	☒
Regional	☐

Implementing agency

Project leader: Slovak Blind and Partially Sighted Union
Partners: IVPR, NADSME, APZ

Context/background of the initiative	
The statistical data on the number of visually impaired persons and the availability of this data is a necessary prerequisite for the process of their integration in the economic and social life of the society. The analysis of the current state in the area of statistics relating to the blind and partially sighted has shown the absence in the Slovak Republic of a unified accessible up-to-date statistical database of all blind and partially sighted persons in the country. Research into the phenomenon of visual impairment in the association with access to employment and lifelong learning has not its tradition in Slovakia.	
Details of the initiative	
1.	**What is or was the timetable for the implementation of the initiative concerned?**
	07. 03. 2005 – 07. 03. 2008
2.	**Specific objectives**
	• Labour market integration of blind and partially sighted persons in dependent employment or self-employment • Increase employability of blind and partially sighted persons through training of rehabilitation skills and the development of the abilities for independent life, determining successful employment, with a special emphasis on the groups of blind and partially sighted with multiple disadvantages. • Extend the potential for employment of blind and partially sighted persons by enabling them to participate in standard retraining and education programmes primarily through the development of their skills to use the information and communication technologies. • Analysis of traditional occupations for the blind and partially sighted and of the potential for their innovation designed for the acquisition and retention of employment. • Analysis of the differences in employment of the blind and partially sighted persons by gender • Awareness raising of the blind and partially sighted, employers and the public about the possibilities of employment and the ways of increasing employability of this disadvantaged group with an emphasis on effective use of employment legislation and the equal treatment legislation. • Strengthening of the forms of cooperation of the interested partners in the area of counselling, training, supported employment, and integrated employment of the blind and partially sighted people.
3.	**How did the initiative pursue these objectives?**
	Assistance in gaining independence Although the loss of vision or its severe damage apparently presents many restrictions for the jobseeker, it does not imply insoluble problems. Before joining employment, the visually impaired person must acquire compensatory skills and regain his or her abilities that got limited as a result of the loss of vision or sight damage. These involve in particular: • spatial orientation and safe mobility required for increasing independence while coming to and from the workplace and the mobility in the employment, • self-care skills relating to hygiene, dressing, preparation and taking meals, … • reading and writing Braille, • social and communication skills, • mastering the use of basic assistive technology and optical aids.

The outcome is a client who has mastered the necessary skills and possesses basic prerequisites for coping in employment.

Computer literacy

To have the competence to work with information and communication technology is becoming inescapable requisite in searching for employment and in self-employment. We therefore create an effective model of preparation and education of visually impaired people to work with information and communication technologies.

- We focus on timely demands of the labour market,
- We prepare teaching/learning and methodological materials, extend opportunities for high-quality trainer training,
- We seek the most suitable way for each of the clients enabling them to work with computer.

Blind and partially sighted people can learn to use computer with speech software, tactile software or with screen enlargement software.

Assistance in job search

For a visually impaired person it is often difficult to orientate on the labour market. The Sizar Project facilitates this process by an effective work with visually impaired jobseeker. The objective is to place the jobseeker on the labour market and to retain the job opportunity. The process starts with the identification of the abilities and skills which the visually impaired person needs for the job search and for carrying out any particular job. Then follows the set of steps to be taken with a view to acquiring the necessary skills. The process involves:

- job searching,
- support on the job – designed for the jobseeker and for the employer,
- monitoring the success of the visually impaired in retaining the job.

Assistance in acquisition of new skills and undertaking retraining

Flexibility and the ability to acquire new skills increases the job prospects on the labour market. Therefore one of the goals of the Sizar Project is to enable blind and partially sighted people to take up the broadest possible range of retraining and education courses. Our aim is to:

- create a system that will provide access to standard retraining courses for blind and partially sighted people so as to allow them to acquire the same qualification as the sighted course participants,
- adapt the existing standard training course for the novice entrepreneurs,
- design a new course in telemarketing that would take account in a comprehensive way of the content of the work of telemarketing workers.

These courses will be suitable not only for visually impaired people but also for all people seeking employment.

Research into the employment of blind and partially sighted people

The research into the employment of blind and partially sighted people provides the Sizar Project with the relevant, statistical data permitting to get a clear idea of the situation in the employment of visually impaired people and the reasons for this state of affairs. Its remit includes also mapping the demand for the blind and partially sighted labour force,

identifying the inhibitors and the supporting factors of their employment on the part of employers, employment services and the visually impaired people.

Monitoring and evaluation

How is or was the measure monitored/evaluated?

We took down statistics. Every act with the client has been recorded. The statistics were included also in the monitoring reports that were submitted every 3 months to the National Support Structure and the MA + the final monitoring report. We put the data also in the mainstreaming reports and RIFE questionnaires for NSS and MA. At least once in 3 months we met with national project partners and were monitoring and planning activities.
Visually impaired clients from Bratislava, Banská Bystrica and Prešov (also other regions) were included in the project from January 2006 to March 2008. Regional offices of the Slovak Blind and Partially Sighted Union, the Supported Employment Agency and the National Agency for the Development of Small and Medium-sized Businesses worked with clients under the project.

At national level, 130 visually impaired persons have been included in the project, of which 65 were men and 65 women. Mostly clients from Bratislava, Banská Bystrica and Prešov Regions have been included: 75 clients within the Bratislava Region, 26 clients in Banská Bystrica Region and 18 clients in the Prešov Region. In the Košice, Nitra, Trenčín and Trnava we worked with 11 clients in all. The project involved 23 blind, 68 virtually blind, and 39 partially sighted clients. The greatest intensity of work with clients and the highest success in employment was reported in the first and second quarter of 2007. During the project we managed to fill 55 job opportunities. The job positions included: receptionist, teacher, lawyer, masseur, shop assistant, accountant, hospital nurse aid, goods attendant, key maker, assistant, and labourers.

Results

1. To what extent have the specific objectives been achieved?

Objectives have been achieved. We evaluate the project as very successful.

2. What obstacles or risks have been encountered in the implementation of the initiative?

- delayed money
- excellent cooperation with the NSS,
- complicated cooperation with the MA – problem of bureaucracy
- SIZAR Project constituted a great contribution not only for the visually impaired people alone, but also for the organisation itself that has gained partnerships with other organisations both in Slovakia and abroad.

3. How have these obstacles or risks been dealt with?

Some activities were implemented later than originally planned in the project due to the delayed financial resources

4. Have there been any unexpected benefits or weaknesses?

- Unclear competences in the beginnings of the project.
- Every partner was a great asset for the project and formed the project 's inseparable part.