**Support to Special Employment Centres (SEC)**

People with disabilities participate in the Spanish labour market to a lower level. The crisis further aggravated the prospects for disabled people to access the labour market: their unemployment rates have doubled since 2008 (16.3% and 26.9% respectively). Special Employment Centres (SECs) are Spain’s sheltered employment practice. The development of sheltered employment through the establishment of SECs is the most significant activity designed to ensure the participation of disabled people in the labour market. Support is provided for new or existing SECs that create new jobs; for SECs maintaining jobs; and for the activities of supporting units, which are intended to help newly hired disabled workers to overcome any difficulties that they might experience during the initial adaptation period.

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<tr>
<th>Name of the PES</th>
<th>Centros Especiales de Empleo Special Employment Centres</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>When was the practice implemented?</td>
<td>1985 – on-going</td>
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<td>Which organisation was involved in its implementation?</td>
<td>PES are allowed to outsource auditing and accounting services (to private or third sector legal bodies) to verify the management of SECs in case they apply for public subsidies (in order to re-balance their budget).</td>
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| Which social groups were targeted by the practice? | Jobseekers:  
- People suffering from physical disability or illness  
- Disabled (physical)/disabled (mental/psychological)  
Employers:  
- Special Employment Centres |
| What were the practice’s main objectives? | The primary focus of SECs is to provide workers with disabilities with remunerative employment and to facilitate their access to the labour market. SECs may be created by public administration bodies either directly or in collaboration with other bodies, by entities, or individuals, legal entities or legally associated partnerships that have a legal capacity to operate as businesses. Depending on the legal status of the founding body, SECs may be public or private for-profit or not-for-profit centres. |
| What activities were carried out? | The practice is run by the PES. PES officers must certify that the SEC fulfils all legal requirements, they may then register the SEC in the SEC registration office within the PES. At this point, the SEC is able to start its activities and to apply for financial support directly with the PES at national or regional level. Grants for supporting units are awarded on a competitive basis. |
| What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved? | SECs are regulated by the Royal Decree 2273/1985 while conditions for supporting units are established by the Royal Decree 469/2006. The PES decides on a case by case basis if a company fulfils the requirements to be considered as a SEC and the adequate composition of the supporting units within the SECs. |
| Source(s) of funding | National and regional budget (tax revenue)  
European Social Fund |
What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?

People reached:
In terms of the amount of benefits, the creation of new jobs at new SECs was financed with EUR 17 million, 38% less than the average for 2007-2010. There was no change regarding the amount of subsidies for maintaining jobs and the aid to support SECs in 2011 were similar to the average of the previous four years.

Products:
N/A

What outcomes have been identified?

According to the 2011 Statistical Yearbook (produced by the Employment Ministry), the main outcomes since 2007 are the following:
1) The number of SECs decreased from 272 in 2007 to 210 in 2011;
3) The workers involved in supporting units increased from 9 430 in 2007 to 17 672 in 2011.
   In 2011 210 SECs were created (down 18% compared to the average between 2007 and 2010). However, the number of jobs, which reached 4 002, was 12% higher than the average of the previous 4 years. The number of supporting units assisted was also higher in 2011 showing an increase over the last four-year period (+37%).

What are the lessons learnt and success factors?

The main findings of the evaluation are the following:
- Quantitatively, SECs constitute the most important stimulus for job creation among disabled people whose integration in the standard labour market is hampered by significant barriers. Between 2005 and 2007, around one-half of all the employment contracts with disabled people are signed within SECs.
- The presence of supporting units within SECs has much room for improvement; just one in four companies currently have one. The main barriers are related to the relatively low concern for quality control in the workplace. The importance of quality processes and evaluation is still generally ignored. The financial crisis has also generated serious financial difficulties with establishing supporting units.
- SECs are highly dependent on public subsidies, although they profit-oriented.
- The total funds allocated to creating employment in new or existing SECs fell, largely due to the financial crisis (on average, down by 38% in 2011 for the period 2007-2010).

Finally, the study formulated 25 proposals to improve the regulation of SECs. Some of the most significant ones are the following:
- Increase the maximum proportion of non-disabled people at the SECs to 80% in order to stimulate higher numbers of SEC and ‘normalise’ the employment of disabled people.
- Eliminate the distinction for SECs having between 70-90% of disabled workers.

More information on the practice