

Conference Presentations

1st Plenary Session

Ms Maria Marinakou, (Greece), Project Co-ordinator, PROTEAS D.P.

Thank you Mr. Danilatos. I would like to begin by mentioning one portion of what Mrs. Schulte-Braucks mentioned earlier. She said that there are not many equivalent initiatives of co-operation between different programs within the European Union, such as this one today that PROTEAS has initiated with SDV NETJOB Hellas; programmes that are interrelated at the base level, also with respect to results.

The organization of today's conference is proof. Mrs. Schulte-Braucks, we are working in an open method of co-ordination and we found that this is the essence of the way we target, following the policy principles of Lisbon. We try to come to the year 2010 to combat exclusion and poverty for all who experience exclusion within the European Union as well as needing to reach competitiveness of the European economy and reach social cohesion and acceptance of diversity within the European Union.

PROTEAS tries to promote new prospects for employment of the disabled people. Now this reminds me of Mrs. Anna Diamantopoulou, who in September 2000, while in Crete, in a conference of NGO's, announced an open employment policy for the disabled people of Europe and stressed that the existence of European programs, particularly of the EQUAL which are fundamental for achieving this goal. The basic goal of PROTEAS is to create a holistic model for approach and adaptability methods for disabled people in targeted employment posts.

Our central message is "we must adapt the positions and employers in order to affect a better link between them". PROTEAS programme has a budget of 1.750.000 euros and duration of 3 years. Its main target is to investigate the conditions and the prospects of adaptation of the disabled people into the work places. We need to find which are the requirements to bring disabled people closer to jobs. We need to map the needs of the two target groups, we need to listen to the disabled as well as the employers and learn from them what is their opinion about the best solutions, about the best practices needed in order to achieve the linkage that Mr. Stavrianopoulos talked about.

To synthesize a harmonious and suitable technological environment, to effect adaptation of the disabled unemployed we need a model that puts the needs within the proper context in order to create educational packages that give the necessary qualifications to disabled people in order for them to cope in employment. To support employment of disabled unemployed people, we're using pilot projects; we need to adopt distance learning. For example, in PROTEAS we use an innovative approach for tele-work.

Finally, which is the most important, we need to sensitize the employers and society itself to educate all interested bodies that work with specialized actions and devise methodologies, as for example through this conference, to find innovative actions, strategies, so that we sharpen our actions that give rights to new policies and social attitudes within the national and European levels.

The coordinator of PROTEAS is the Social Work Foundation that I work with. This foundation in the last 25 years has worked actively for the rehabilitation of people with moderate disabilities. The foundation has realized educational programmes particularly in the areas of new information technology, and has created perhaps the first assistive technology laboratory where research takes place and innovative actions are realized to find technological solutions for the support of people with moderate disabilities.

PROTEAS developmental partnership honoured us with its trust and allowed us to organize the programme.

I will now present the partners; Lambrakis Research Institute, equipped with experience in tele-education and training. Disability Now is another partner, Mr. Voulgaropoulos is with us today. It is a dynamic member of the disability movement in Greece. The Pan-Hellenic Union of Paraplegic and Physically Challenged. This union has long experience with people with disabilities. And it is very active in education as well. The Hellenic Network for Corporate Social Responsibility. Today this network helped in our organization of this conference. Another is the "Ideasis" ltd, involved with robotics that works with a task to provide actions in assistive technology. Interamerican insurance company, this insurance company will be the link between us and employers. It will also help in tele-working, in issuing insurances for people with disability. Another organization is the Hellenic Society for Disabled Children with long experience in that area. Another company is the KLARDEK S.A. an employer involved in gold smithery and they employ motor disabled people in their operations, highly specialized operations in the gold smithery. Another partner it is the National Kapodistrian University of Athens. They use there the Information Technology department to shape a technology and environment that will help PROTEAS. The Hellenic radio and television representative is here today with us, "ERT" as we call it. This company provides us with the means to disseminate our efforts to a wider public, which is a great help for us. And there is also the Hellenic society of physical medicine and rehabilitation. We need the medical expertise from these people, although our focus is not purely medical. However we need to sensitize people, educate people about medical issues involved with the motor disabled people and we can all be motor disabled and no one can escape, we do not know what the future holds.

So, a person who accidentally becomes moderately disabled will experience new situations and conditions of living. Another company and partner is "Detector S.A", this is our liaison for new employers for the disabled. Then there is another public organization for the development of the Municipality of Egaleo. And this is our channel to society. The link with society. And lastly the VPRC, the opinion polling company, that Mr. Stavrianopoulos mentioned earlier.

The structure of the work of PROTEAS now. PROTEAS raised the stakes highly in terms of quality, in terms of quantity as well. PROTEAS aims at the inclusion and maintenance of 300 people in job placement. It aims to secure 150 new job placements. To understand the size of this aim, I should say that 2001-02 as Mrs. Kratsa mentioned, we had support and with programs providing support to employers where motor disabled individuals were placed. The number of disabled placed in those new jobs was 500.

On a national level, the people who took advantage of this programme were 500, so we hope within 2 years, to create roots to employment, tailored individual needs for 300 people. Perhaps not all of them will succeed in attaining these job placements, perhaps they will have to go through a specific training. They will have to be properly prepared but anyway the final goal is to achieve employment for these people. Naturally we need to train the unemployed; we need to take up actions that will provide them with the necessary qualifications and skill. We need however to network our actions and operations.

In total, 27 different individual and national sub-projects and actions and 10 intrastate programs are the highest goals that PROTEAS is trying to achieve. We are designing educational programs, we are trying to create job placements and sensitize the society through mass media and through this conference.

Through studies and tools we emphasize assistive technologies and agronomy, we emphasize research and recording our demographic data as well as other information which give us more knowledge of disabilities in Greece.

In the past, the motor disabled people were marginalized, at the sides and borders of society. Currently we see progress in accessibility, progress in acceptance by society. Progress in shaping an environment that is friendly to disabled people. Mr. Stravrianopoulos spoke about multiple staircases. In Greece we just have many staircases. However technology and ergonomics could slowly provide us the opportunity to combat the obstacles, to find proper solutions and these solutions are the goal of PROTEAS.

PROTEAS has innovative projects, we are involved with long distance, vocational rehabilitation, we are trying to devise standards and accreditation methods so that our trainees will have the opportunities for accreditation of their skills.

We have 4 thematic units that we work with; journalism, insurances, here also tele-working is involved, information technology, and gold smithery. Also, we train job coaches, and you will have the opportunity to listen to more information about these. I believe that information technology should be at the service of disabled people.

In Europe, as well as in America, technology has progressed very far. And it can provide the opportunity for access to the disabled people. Actions concerning employment, it is important in this area to talk about tele-working, as well as about adaptation and ergonomics. These are two pillars of innovative actions that we have established. We

believe that moderate disability is a condition and not disability per se. And this can be exemplified by many motor disabled people in work with employers.

We have consultation services as well. One of them addresses the employers and is established at the Hellenic Network for Corporate Social Responsibility. Other information services are established elsewhere and we give an emphasis to women and accessibility of disabled people to work places. We create intra and extra work in PROTEAS. A very demanding management network for equality. We place an emphasis on transparency issues. Quality of products and the absorbance of the financial resources available. We give emphasis to standardization methods.

I think that the third Community Support Framework has given us a new perspective of management of such projects. PROTEAS is an innovative organization, who looks forward, who places an emphasis on women with disabilities. On new technologies, on novel proposals for the adoption of novel policies.

I would like to talk about the transnationality of PROTEAS, and I would like to extend my welcome to our foreign partners from Italy whose programme concerns the development of employment. It is the program “step Latina” in Italy, another programme is another partner is “Portland Partnership” an organization with long experience in training and assistive technology for people with moderate disabilities and from Germany we have the programme and partners Future 2005 targeting widely SME’s linking the motor disabled with small and medium sized enterprises. We exchange good practices, we place an emphasis on joint development and comparison of methodologies for the training and assistive technology. We co-organize a conference, transnational conference and transnational webpage and we develop common joint tools.

Before I finish, I would like to touch briefly, (although Mr. Stravrianopoulos mentioned it), the VPRC polling results. On behalf of PROTEAS these data were published, at the end of March 2003, I would like to underline a couple of points of that research. Age of disability: over 55% of the motor disabled are in that condition for more than two years. Their training: the VPRC says that lower education is 46.8 %, however statistics vary. What is the percentage of disability for the moderately disabled? The percentage of disability is 67%. And this information can be divided into whether the disability is acquired or congenital. Acquired 65.9%, congenital 32.1%. That’s what the poll shows. And in Greece we have a high rate of motor accidents. We are at the top of the list. A high rate of those who have accidents, become disabled. What happens to the individual when he or she suffers the motor disabilities, where does this person stay?

They stay with the family. Truly the Greek family is the entity who shelters the moderately disabled person. But, what about the state? The state is a distant player.

Now, as I mentioned earlier, we have the traffic accidents that are implicated in moderate disabilities. What do we have here? People with disabilities and their families: have received a consultation from private public sector only 11%. Systematic consultation: 14% individual consultation. 4.6% not regular but sporadic. Never or no consultation:

50.8%, so what does this data show? The younger the person is, the more likely the person is to have received consultation. So this says that we are creating new services that shape a new attitude towards these people.

In spite of that we are far behind the creation of an effective and essential network, for consultation for people with special needs. 60% of the disabled do not use a wheelchair. Why? We must answer this question. It has to do with accessibility. For example we all have the experience of blocks of flats. There was a particular case when the residents objected to the shaping of the entrance hall with a ramp. Because there was a moderately disabled tenant in that block of flats, who needed to have better access to his flat but the other tenants objected.

56% do not use transportation means. 75% of the moderately disabled respondents have not looked for a job. And PROTEAS must answer this question, why such a large portion of the disabled people do not seek to find a job. Are they not qualified? Is it because they do not have access? 80% of people in society believe that disabled people do not have the qualifications or because they do not have training.

We have to answer such questions. So in PROTEAS we believe, we must strengthen and support the motor disabled and the employers in order that they become aware of what an active citizen means. We must create prospects for co-operation, and self-sustenance. We talked about democracy and the concept, what does it involve? Equal opportunities in employment, this is very basic. It is a basic human right employment.

Thank you very much.