

Conference Presentations

Workshop no 4 "New Approaches for the Inclusion of Disabled People in the Labour Market"

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The first speaker was J. Ball, the second speaker was Mrs. Theodosiou, the third Ms. Helle Foldager-Jensen, the fourth speaker Mrs. Margariti, and the fifth speaker was Mr. Henri Nooyen.

Jayne Ball spoke of her organization, Portland College. Portland College offers new approaches for the integration of people with special needs, integration into the work market. They have a wide range of projects, the main two are: work preparation for people who need to return to work following an accident or are long term unemployed. The second project is training adults, residential training for disabled adults. They are trained in the information technology or in a long Microsoft certification or statistical certifications. The projects are designed and tailored for specific needs. And Portland College has approximately 200 trainees, 300 personnel. 3- 5 trainees find a job.

The second speaker Mrs. Theodosiou from the Greek Society for Disabled Children Rehabilitation Department spoke about job coaching, a new occupation that is absent from Greece. She asked a number of questions. How much support does a disabled person need to find employment? What are the needs for intensive training, with respect to a specific job, what are the needs for the job training? She also said that a number of employers do not have any experience of people with special needs and when they host such people they do not know how to help them. However they do have a responsibility. Now in this light, a job coach may intervene, may have a role to play.

Now, she stressed that the job coach must have faith in the capabilities of the trainee. The job coach is a stable point of reference. Both for the trainee and for the employers. It is a kind of mediator, he or she, the job coach mediates between the two. He must be an exemplar, an example of attitude. He must have an example of behavior and attitude.

Mrs. Margariti, and Mrs. Jensen spoke about the aims of NetJob which is to enhance the special skills of the trainees. The provision of comprehensive knowledge in the IT field for the benefit of the trainees. They spoke about the design of the particular program, which follows the demands of the market. And this program, actually it was the Danish program which was transferred to Greece. And the program is designed on the basis of market requirement.

The four thematic fields are: Information Technology. Desk Top Publishing and Data Base Design and Programming. Network Corporation for job placement in Greece has been set up, and they try to place trainees in targeted posts. So, in NetJob Hellas, the expectation of this company is to create equal opportunities in the open market.

And the last speaker Mr Henri Nooyen, a very fervent and very eloquent speaker: he spoke about entrepreneurship and information technology. He started relating his personal experience, I think he originates from Rotterdam, without having any experience at all. He started something completely different. He joined NetJob in Denmark. He went through the training period and found a job in a large company as a consultant and then later he became manager of a large company, and increased the turnover of that company by 80 percent. By the end of the 1990's he was dismissed and started his own company. Mr. Nooyen also spoke about the obstacles and solutions that each disabled person has to face, and has to resolve by himself, he also spoke about the power of a dream that each disabled person should have. The disabled people need the power to dream. He also spoke about the expectations that each one of them should have. He spoke about the things that he dreams about and the things that he should do to achieve and realize his dreams.

He said that it is wrong to think about the things that we can not do. A disabled person has no right to be pessimistic about the things that he can or can not do. He spoke about the freedom of failure. We should let people fail because through failure people learn. This is a kind of a dialectic relationship. That is necessary for us to learn, families should not be overprotective. We should not discourage children or other people from trying and failing. He also repeated that it is tremendous thing for the employers to have people who do things in a different way with respect to others. Physically able people, employers should be open-minded. This diversity may turn out to be beneficial for the companies and the employers themselves.

Then the speaker talked about the information technology, which is changing very fast. NetJob is following the latest technology for developments, they are devising new software, they are designing software packages that meet the individual expectations, and meet the individual needs.

And wrapping up, the trainee needs support as well as companies. In the words of Henri Nooyen: "The risk is worth taking and we must explore the issues, and think, and be flexible".

Thank you.