

# Getting INTO WORK

Experiences from the  
SDV-NetJob Project 2001-2003

THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES



The European Social Fund

ARTICLE 6 INNOVATIVE MEASURES

The Danish Center for Technical Aids for Rehabilitation and Education

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## **Getting INTO WORK**

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This publication has been produced within the framework of the E.C. Project "SDV-NetJob: Promoting Accessible Social Dialogue and Innovative Training Practices. Towards an Information Society for All", Grant no. VS/2001/0402 from the European Social Funds Innovative Measures Programme 2001 – 2003, Article 6 Innovative Measures, "Adaptation to the New Economy within the Framework of Social Dialogue".

Further information: <http://www.socialdialogue.net>

## **Project Partners**

NetJob, Danish Centre for Technical Aids for Rehabilitation and Education  
The Danish Council of Organisations of Disabled People  
"IRIDANOS" - Inter-municipal Vocational Training Centre  
EWORX S.A.  
Work Research Centre  
The Chania Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
Rehab Group  
INTERFACE Business & Information Training S.A.  
RevaCenter Aarhus Nord  
Social Work Foundation, Greece (IKE)  
Institute of Labour - Communication - Confederation of Greek Workers (INE/GSEE)  
Trade Union of Greek Telecommunication Workers (OME-OTE)

## **Best practice creates new agendas**

It is essential that we learn from our experiences. Good or bad experiences, no matter what, they give us important knowledge about our behaviour and practice.

The project described in this brochure is like a fruit stall of experiences. There are fruits of many shapes, colours and flavours. And the learning, which stems from this project, will hopefully be useful for future projects to build upon. Some results are very concrete. A group of disabled people has been transformed from unemployed citizens into active and productive IT-workers, who are able to support themselves. Educational material has been produced in order to educate company CEO's and Human Resource managers to become more inclusive at the workplace.

Other outcomes of the project have been less tangible but no less important. The project team has learned how to cooperate between North European and South European NGO's, companies and Social Partner organisations. The project results can give outsiders an insight into some of the challenges faced and the solutions, which were developed. Culture plays a big role, and will play an even bigger role in the very near future when ten new states join the European Union. This experience and many more besides are important to remember and to share. Because it is experience that creates learning.

We hope that you will enjoy sharing the fruits of our experience.

Erland Winterberg  
*Director, Danish Centre*

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## Reaching out to the Social Partners

In the European Union it is the Social Partners - Employers Organisations and Trades Unions representatives - who set the agendas and negotiate the agreements, which regulate the employment field. Politicians and the legislatures are also part of this process, calling for and implementing direct legislation, where necessary. It is of great importance that new ideas are created with respect for both sides - Employers Organisations and Trades Unions.

The European Commission supports innovative actions to assist the development of future policy and programmes by exploring new approaches to the content and/or organisation of employment, including vocational training, and industrial adaptation. Known as Article 6 Innovative Measures, the types of projects supported under this funding instrument include pilot projects, studies and exchanges of experience and information activities. 35 projects, in the field of social dialogue, were co-funded by The European Social Fund (ESF) from 2001 to 2003.

In Europe there are 38 million people with different kinds of disabilities. This is a population larger than most EU Member States. This fact and the fact that 2003 was designated the European Year of the Persons with Disabilities made it especially appropriate to pay special attention to disability issues and the labour market.

Being one of the ESF-funded projects, the SDV-NetJob Project tried a number of new ways to improve access to the job market for people with disabilities. One of the broader objectives of the project was to improve communications between the Social Partners in the employment field, enabling more effective and productive dialogue and collaboration. This objective is indicated in the project subtitle: *“Promoting accessible social dialogue and innovative training practices: towards an information society for all”*.

### What is the name, SDV-NetJob?

Combining the names of the two main elements of the project creates the project name - SDV-NetJob. A new website called *Social Dialogue Vortal (SDV)* and the vocational training scheme *NetJob*. The new website is a vortal (a *vertical* portal) to deliver accessible information on European employment matters and disability-related issues. The project has also transferred and implemented the Danish NetJob training scheme for disabled people, in Athens, Greece.

As the Article 6 Innovative Measures projects draw to a close, a Seminar for Project Promoters was held in Brussels on 10 October 2003 to discuss some of the emerging conclusions. Presentations and discussions at the seminar focused especially on the Policy Messages, which can be derived from the experiences of the 35 projects. A clear message from the projects was that IT can help the social dialogue process but only if there is equal access for all. Currently there are accessibility barriers to technologies, which particularly affects disabled people and other disadvantaged users. The Social Partners should be encouraged to update their technologies, so as to create fully accessible information systems for the use of their members and for the wider community.

The political will, as well as employers' abilities to accommodate disabled people, is already being put to the test. A European Directive, passed in 2000 provides a legal and political basis for positive actions for improving the work situation of disabled people. The governments of the EU Member States should implement this Non-Discrimination Directive in national legislation as from December 2003, (although an extension may be sought if a Member State considers itself not ready). Clearly this watershed legislation should be implemented effectively and quickly by as many states as possible. There is also no doubt that the Social Partners and organisations of disabled people need to assist in this process.

SDV-NetJob sought to prepare all sides for this process by offering dialogue mechanisms and collecting information that can be of help in forming agreements, recording best practices and benchmarking progress in the Directive's implementation.

**Fact:**

At the Lisbon summit in 2000, the EU Member States committed themselves to making Europe *"... the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010"*.

Shortly afterwards the member states passed *"Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 Establishing a General Framework for Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation"*.

The purpose of this Directive was and is to lay down a general framework for combating discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation as regards employment and occupation, with a view to putting into effect in the Member States the principle of equal treatment.

## **The NetJob Vocational Training Model in Hellas**

The IT sector is one of the most attractive job sectors for disabled people. Vocational training for disabled people can be successfully directed to the IT sector, where disabled people may become competitive employees. The SDV-NetJob Project has shown, that disabled people can attain high-level IT skills and take up employment in this sector, where there is often a gap between demand and supply of labour.

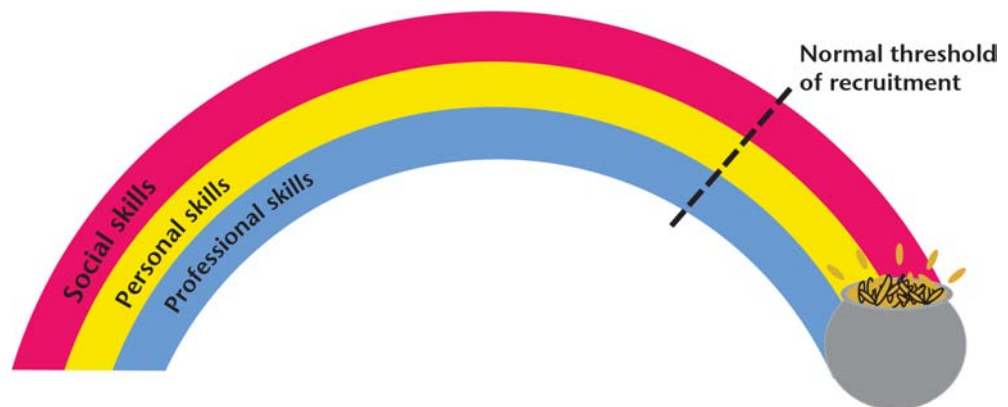
NetJob initially began in 1995 as a joint pilot project with The Danish Centre for Technical Aids for Rehabilitation and Education, Århus County and the Århus Bureau for Employment. Special emphasis was given to the increased needs of the companies for qualified professionals in the area of IT services and in the improvement of the labour market in relation to the employment of the people with disabilities.

NetJob created a vocational training model, teaching people with disabilities new technologies and finding them a job as IT professionals. The results revealed that physically disabled individuals with computer skills were subsequently armed to compete on a level playing field with others in the job arena: 90% of the project participants obtained employment.

The SDV-NetJob Project aimed to conceive and transfer the NetJob philosophy and the related values and methods to a Greek context. The overall target of the NetJob Hellas Project was to transfer some principles of the educational system for people with disabilities promoted by the Danish Netjob organisation. The programme was implemented in Greece for the first time. The NetJob Hellas team started up in 2002 and the implemented its course with 11 disabled trainees over a 13,5 month period. In the first phase of the programme the trainees acquired some theoretical as well as practical knowledge. In the second phase the trainees were specialized in more complex functions of IT. After the specialization the trainees were placed in IT companies for on-the-job-training.

Every trainee on the vocational training course attempted to improve a range of professional skills through the lessons in IT. The satisfactory level of professional skills was a prerequisite but it was not the only skill the trainee should improve. The development of personal and social skills was also demanding because the reason many people are unemployed may not only be their lack of knowledge and working experience but also their poor self-esteem or the lack of self-discipline or cooperative skills.

Therefore, the NetJob Education course aimed at developing all three skills groups in each student.



The results from NetJob Hellas Project revealed that more than half of the participants have achieved job positions in companies. Thus, while the success rate is smaller than the Danish experiences, this is a very satisfying result, also considering that the Greek participants generally started from a lower educational level than their Danish co-students.

And it seems that the majority of the participants gained more self-confidence to participate on equal terms in their struggle to get into work.

It is also noteworthy that elements of the NetJob Hellas model are now being applied in new Vocational Training Programmes in Greece, partly through the EU's EQUAL initiative.

**The partners involved in 'NetJob Hellas' were the following:**

NETJOB

*Department of Danish Centre for Technical Aids for Rehabilitation and Education*

INTERFACE Business and Information Training S.A.

*Vocational Training Centre –Specialized in the area of Information and Communication Technology*

SOCIAL WORK FOUNDATION (IKE)

*Vocational Training Centre for people with disabilities.*

'IRIDANOS'

*Inter-municipal Vocational Training Centre in the Municipality of Zografou (Athens)*

## Enhancing social dialogue - [www.socialdialogue.net](http://www.socialdialogue.net)

A title-role element of the SDV-NetJob Project was the design and implementation of the *Social Dialogue Vortal* (SDV). One of the broader objectives of the vortal was to improve communications between the various parties in the employment field, enabling more effective and productive dialogue and collaboration. The vortal should become an innovative Internet-based forum to support national and trans-national social dialogue between employers and employees in the SDV-NetJob Project Member States; Denmark, Greece and Ireland.

The name of the domain of the vortal was chosen to be [www.socialdialogue.net](http://www.socialdialogue.net), and the website was introduced on 1st July 2002. The site should offer users highlights and news stories on the front page, as well as easy access to all other sections of the vortal. The aim of the vortal was to highlight the most topical, exciting and newsworthy information.

The thematic areas associated with the site are represented in all three language sites. Each language site operates with a country editor. The thematic areas are identical for the Greek and English parts of the site. For the Danish site it was decided to tailor the themes to the particular needs of the Danish constituency given that there was already a number of sites, which already covered disability and ESF themes. It was obvious that the vortal should be accessible for all. And delivering service in a way that was accessible to people with disabilities was a key factor in providing equal access to public information for all citizens.

One aspect of the vortal was to actively disseminate information pertaining to labour market developments especially for people with disabilities. This objective was particularly important given that 2003, was the European Year of the Persons with Disabilities and a period where disability issues were at the forefront.

In a social dialogue setting where social issues change rapidly, the need for a dynamic vortal where information can be added daily by a number of publishers brings forth the need for a system that will cater to a variety of actors providing content.

### Did you know...

...that project information on all 35 ESF Innovative Measures projects and over 70 "key documents" in the domains of the Innovative Measures Programme is available free of charge on [www.socialdialogue.net](http://www.socialdialogue.net).

...public deliverables and publications from the SDV-NetJob Project are available for downloading from [www.socialdialogue.net](http://www.socialdialogue.net).

...that [www.socialdialogue.net](http://www.socialdialogue.net) is visited by 300 new visitors per month.

## **IT skills - market forces**

The IT sector has proved itself to be a highly suitable niche for disabled people to be employed in. The sector is generally open-minded when it comes to inclusion of all in the labour market. The NetJob Hellas training course in Athens and the previous experiences from Denmark has demonstrated that disabled people can attain high-level IT skills and take up employment and become competitive employees in this sector.

The SDV-NetJob Project made a survey to investigate and identify IT skills profiles for the Greek job market, focusing on the Greek IT sector and other industrial and commercial sectors using IT. Two specialised questionnaires were prepared and distributed to both employers and employees via the Internet at [www.socialdialogue.net](http://www.socialdialogue.net).

One general conclusion that arises from the survey is that all players in the Greek labour market agree that a general upgrade of skills on general office applications is needed, (e.g. Microsoft Office). Even in the specialized IT sector, employers consider the present level of these skills to be insufficient.

Another observation is the difference between the educational needs for specialized IT skills (e.g. Programming languages). In general CEO's consider it less important to educate in specialized IT skills and employees consider the same skills of high educational priority. This difference is also found in other surveys, and may be attributed to the lack of knowledge among CEO's about IT development at a practical level. This could also be the reason why CEO's consider it important, for example, to prioritise education in the use of the Internet.

The survey shows that gaining specialized IT skills is more attractive among the employees in the IT Sector. On the other hand general IT skills (e.g. office applications and the use of internet) are more popular among the unemployed.

A result of the Greek IT Skills Survey has been the identification of baseline data for the development of strategies for inclusive recruitment and selection procedures. This information is now available to the Social Partners and training organisations and may be used to define appropriate IT-training programmes that may provide continuous competence development for all.

The IT Skills Survey was led by INTERFACE S.A. Distribution of the questionnaires has been effected by EWORX S.A. and Chania Chamber of Commerce.

## **eLearning: Making disability understandable for business**

In the coming years the number of people with disabilities seeking employment in a mainstream setting is likely to increase significantly. Also, employees who acquire a disability through accident or serious illness may require special measures to enable them to keep their job or to return to another position in the workforce. Either way, employers should be prepared to make the most of these opportunities by having effective procedures in place for recruiting and employing people in a non-discriminatory, inclusive way.

All companies, large and small, have an obligation to remove the barrier of discrimination, which affects certain groups of people. Information on the working abilities of disabled people and the relatively small adaptations they need at the workplace should be gathered and widely disseminated.

The SDV-NetJob Project has produced an eLearning course, intended as an introduction for employers, about practical approaches to *disability management*. This “Disability for Managers” course is an on-line training course for Human Resources Managers, Business Managers working in the area of recruitment and People Management and Chief Executives in private companies and in other organisations. The course presents frameworks, tools and methods for combating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities for workers of all backgrounds. Another objective is to deliver information about diversity at the workplace and disability management issues in particular, in an educational and easy-to-digest way. It also deals with equality policy development, disability awareness and equitable hiring and employment policy.

Accordingly, CEO’s and HR staff who have been through the course will be better equipped to adapt their company’s recruiting and employment policies and practices to a wider range of workers. The course will hopefully initiate a process that empowers companies to develop disability management policies, as a part of their overall employment policy.

### **How to get the course**

The eLearning course has been tested with companies, which have collaborated with the SDV-NetJob Project. Participation in the course is free of charge. Marketing of the course is conducted in collaboration with CCI and the Hellenic Network on Corporate Social Responsibility. It is offered to all members of the European CSR-Network. Read more at: [www.socialdialogue.net](http://www.socialdialogue.net).

## **INTO WORK Conference 2003**

On 15-16 May 2003, in support of the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003, the European "INTO WORK Conference 2003" took place during the Greek EU Presidency in Athens on the theme of "Promoting Employment of People with Motor Disabilities". The conference was organised in co-operation between the SDV-NetJob Project and the PROTEAS Project, which was funded by the Greek EQUAL programme. Over 230 participants from 9 European countries took part, including representatives of the European Parliament, European Commission, the Greek Ombudsman's Office, Social Partner organisations, NGOs of disabled people, vocational training organisations and disabled trainees.

Mrs Rodi Kratsa, a Greek MEP, made a presentation at the conference, highlighting the importance of promoting the key issues from the SDV-NetJob and PROTEAS projects, at European level.

INTO WORK Conference 2003 information, speeches and photo-gallery:  
[http://www.socialdialogue.net/en/intowork2003/en\\_intowork2003.htm](http://www.socialdialogue.net/en/intowork2003/en_intowork2003.htm)

## **Partnership: A key to Success**

The terms "Social Partners," i.e. employer and employee representatives, and "Social Partnership," i.e. the co-operative relationship between them, are frequently encountered in the industrial relations literature and policy discussions. In contrast to laissez-faire liberalism, the philosophy of "Social Partnership" advocates recognition of workers' rights.

The SDV-NetJob Project strives to promote voluntary partnerships between business, government and civil society in order to provide opportunities for disabled people to be self-supporting, active and productive citizens. The SDV-NetJob Project promotes those government policies and practices that seek to develop a new conceptual framework to make public-private partnerships emerge, develop and work.

Stakeholders and actors in the employment field must operate at different political and technical levels simultaneously in order to bring about significant and lasting improvements to the employment situation of disabled people. Taking a holistic view, a person's ability to work depends to a large extent on the readiness and ability of partners in the employment field to organise their systems. Joining forces for social sustainability is better and more cost-effective than just shifting burdens between public and private responsibility. Across Europe the conditions today for vocational training and employment of disabled people are highly varied, and nowhere can it be said that the situation is ideal. Sharing the experiences gained from innovative projects across Europe remains a key method for encouraging positive and sustained change.

“We are over 200 representatives of social partner organisations, companies, non governmental and public sector organisations in Europe, who have come together at the “INTO WORK Conference 2003” in Athens on 15 - 16 May, to address the theme of “Promoting the Employment of People with Motor Disabilities. We, the conference participants, have agreed on this Declaration, which is addressed to European governments, regions and municipalities, social partners, private and public organisations and non-governmental organisations, all of which are encouraged to act in their own sphere, and in collaboration, to improve the situation of disabled people in vocational training, in employment and at the workplace...”

**Extract from The INTO WORK Conference 2003 Declaration**  
**The declaration is available on [www.socialdialogue.net](http://www.socialdialogue.net)**