

REPORT ON THE COMPARISON OF THE AVAILABLE STRATEGIES FOR PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION AND REINTEGRATION OF PERSONS WITH CHRONIC DISEASES AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

BASED ON FIVE CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL WELFARE MODELS IN EUROPE

Slovenia: country report

Main legislative frameworks on chronic diseases, mental health and employment

People with chronic diseases are not singled out as a specific group, they are covered by the policies and measures aimed at all the people with disabilities.

Main legislative frameworks on disability and employment

- Implementation of the Principle of Equal Treatment Act;
- Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act;
- Employment Relationship Act;
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act;
- Pension and Disability Insurance Act;

Policy provisions on mainstream and specialist employment programmes

The Employment Service of Slovenia is the main body providing employment services to the general population, including job-seekers with disabilities, who can receive rehabilitation counselling, information, needs assessment and other services. A rehabilitation counsellor helps create a rehabilitation plan.

The main specialist programmes for people with disabilities are:

- Vocational rehabilitation under the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act;
- Vocational Rehabilitation under the Pension and Disability Insurance Act.

Policy provisions on access to employment support

Inclusion in vocational rehabilitation is possible:

- under the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act: after a person is assessed by a vocational rehabilitation provider, the person can obtain the status of person with disabilities, what is based on decision taken by rehabilitation commission (on the basis of the assessment) or
- under the Pension and Disability Insurance Act after person is assessed by a *disability commission*.

The assessment of rights under the Pension and Disability Insurance Act, performed by a special commission from the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia (Zavod za pokojninsko in invalidsko zavarovanje Slovenije, ZPIZ), is based on a medical model focusing on disability. According to their remaining work capacity insured persons are classified in one of the three disability categories by the Board of Examiners as follows: **Category I**: when an insured person is not able to perform organized gainful activity or when an insured person is not able to carry out their job, and has no remaining work capacity; **Category II**: when an insured person's work capacity to perform their job has been reduced by 50% or more; **Category III**: when insured persons are not able to perform their job on a full-time basis, yet can work part-time for at least four hours a day, or when their capacity to work in their occupation has been reduced by less than 50%, or when they can still work in their occupation full-time yet are not able to perform their current job.

Persons categorized with the following disabilities are entitled to a disability pension:

- category I;
- category II, if without vocational rehabilitation another suitable job with full working hours would not be possible, however, this is not guaranteed where the person is above 55 years of age;
- category III, if without vocational rehabilitation another suitable job with part-time working hours would not be possible (minimum 4 hours a day), however, this is not guaranteed when the person is above 50 years of age;
- category II or category III if suitable work has not been assured when the person has reached 65 years of age.

The Pension and Disability Insurance Act also provides vocational rehabilitation services, such as: integration in the process of formal or non-formal education, on-the-job-training, adaptations to the workplace, the work environment and the equipment.

The assessment of rights under the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act is based on the bio-psycho-social model focusing on ability (see : Rules on Criteria and Method for Acquiring the Status of Person with Disability; Right of Employment Rehabilitation, Assessment of Employment Possibilities of Persons with Disabilities and Rehabilitation Committees, 2005). This results in the following classification:

Level 0: No disability (0-4%), nor the right of employment rehabilitation services;

Level 1: Mild disability (5-25%), no right of employment rehabilitation services;

Level 2: Moderate disability (25-49%) → status of person with disability → right to employment rehabilitation services;

Level 3: Severe disability (50-95%) → status of person with disability → right to employment rehabilitation services;

Level 4: Complete disability (96-100%) → status of person with disability, but no right of employment rehabilitation services.

During the (interdisciplinary) assessment for the employment rehabilitation services the most appropriate services are offered given the disability, the personal characteristics and the environment.

Policy provisions promoting stakeholder cooperation and integration of services

The Action Programme for Persons with Disabilities (2014-2021) states in the introduction that to achieve greater social integration of persons with disabilities and better regulation of the issues relating to disability, closer cooperation between individual ministries, governmental institutions, disabled people's organizations and other organizations addressing issues relating to disability must be enhanced.

Under point 3 Action Programme Objectives / Chapter 5. Objectives Work and Employment – Measures 5.5 it calls for : “Ensuring a network of professional support for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services: (...), ensuring a network of vocational rehabilitation service providers; (...) encouraging the development of employers' network for providing training (...); the inclusion of non-

governmental and/or disabled people's organizations in the system of support services within the framework of supported employment.”

Policy provisions promoting persons-centred approach and individualised service provision

Vocational rehabilitation is a public service and it covers all of the Slovenian territory at the level of the regional units of the Employment Service. The services are delivered by teams of several members, one of them is a medical doctor, others are occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers etc. Vocational rehabilitation is provided through different services, which include: motivating activities, employment assessment, psychosocial rehabilitation, vocational guidance, social skills development, job finding, work place analysis and accommodation, training, counselling in training and education, follow up professional support and supported employment. Vocational rehabilitation is based on a rights oriented and active approach, with person centred planning (individual rehabilitation plan) and working towards constant improvement.

Policy provisions on localised and accessible employment service provision

The vocational rehabilitation services are organized at the same regional level as the units of the Employment Service of Slovenia.

Vocational rehabilitation in Slovenia is carried out as a public service within the network of public and private providers of vocational rehabilitation. All providers must conduct services according to a national recognized and verified program.

Job seekers with disabilities can receive support from the Employment Service of Slovenia, other national agencies, private and public organizations which provide vocational training and various NGO's depending on the type of disability.

Employment support in the open labour market

From 2004, it is possible to get services for persons with disabilities in the form of supported employment. Approval by the Employment Service of Slovenia is required. On the basis of the Employment and Rehabilitation of persons with disabilities Act, the Public Guarantee, Maintenance and Disability Fund of the Republic of Slovenia has an obligation to pay supported employment services to persons with disabilities who have obtained decision on employability in supported employment and are employed in the open labour market. Supported employment services can be offered for a maximum of 30 hours per month. Another possibility is to get supported employment

services from the network of the vocational rehabilitation providers. Support could include expert and technical support, awareness raising activities/information activities, counselling, training, personal assistance, follow-up support at the workplace and assessment. A wage subsidy is also possible. The person has to be trained, motivated and must have an individual support plan.

Candidates are referred by the Employment Service of Slovenia, the key Slovenian labour market institution, to vocational rehabilitation programmes and can stay in the programmes up to 2 years. They can also be referred by employers, by the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia or in some cases by a third party. The legal ground for vocational rehabilitation in Slovenia is the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities Act (2004) with its implementing regulations. Vocational rehabilitation is defined as the right of the persons with disabilities to certain vocational rehabilitation services specified in a rehabilitation plan. All persons with disabilities assessed as level 2 or 3 (see above) can receive vocational rehabilitation and training. In order to empower and prepare candidates for work they receive various types of training and work experience in different organizations, depending on what is most suitable for them.

In Slovenia there are some people with disabilities in self-employment but the estimated percentage in the population is rather low. Like any other job seekers, job seekers with disabilities can benefit from a national grand scheme for encouraging self-employment. If the criteria are met they are entitled to different types of support for people with disabilities (for themselves or for the people with disabilities they employ): wage subsidies up to 70%, compensation for adapting jobs including adaptation of premises, purchasing equipment and providing a specific training; exemption from payment of contributions for pension and disability insurance of employees with disabilities; bonuses for exceeding the quota and annual awards to employers for good practices.

Protections and privileges:

- Employees with disabilities are protected against dismissal (on the basis of the disability) as part of the anti-discrimination legislation.
- Adaptation of the working hours can be part of the individual rehabilitation plan. There is possibility of financial compensation for adapting jobs including adaptation of the premises and purchasing equipment, wage subsidy, supported employment services, award for exceeding the quota, and exemptions from tax and social security contributions (for employers).

Employment support through Social enterprises or social cooperatives

There are social cooperatives in Slovenia but (apart from the employment centres, see next point) it is not clear how many people with disabilities are among the workforce.

Employment support through sheltered work

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities Act defines sheltered work as the employment of persons with disabilities in a flexible working environment adapted to the needs and working capacities of employees who are not able to be employed in a regular job. The sheltered work sector is a network of specific centres across the country (just over 463 employees with disabilities in 43 Employment Centres in 2015). Workers have a labour contract which includes among general provisions also support, training and counselling according to the needs of the disabled employee. Employment centres are very much dependent on the quota system, because businesses, which do not employ enough persons with a disability, can buy out of that obligation by providing work to employment centres.

Incentives for persons with NCDs to participate in activation programmes

Partial disability pensions are possible for working people.

Financial incentives for employers to recruit/retain persons with NCDs

There are:

- wage subsidies for employers who hire people with disabilities (5% to 30% of the minimum wage in the open labour market, 30% to 70% in the sheltered employment; depending on the level of disability);
- payment of the workplace adaptation;
- payment of supported employment services;
- exceptions of tax and social contributions;
- award for exceeding the quota;
- annual award employers for good practices.

Non-financial incentives for employers to recruit/retain persons with NCDs

All non-financial incentives are aimed at all people with disabilities, for example supported employment services provided by the vocational rehabilitation providers, different training programmes, education etc.

Duties of persons with NCDs

Duties of persons with NCDs are the same as the duties of all persons with disabilities. There are no obligations to undergo vocational rehabilitation or any others employment activation programmes before being eligible for disability benefits.

For obtaining the status of person with disabilities under the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability Act, persons with disability can be required to actively participate in vocational rehabilitation programme.

Duties of employers

According to the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities Act, private and public companies and organizations with a work force of more than 20 employees must hire between 2% and 6 % of employees with disabilities, depending on the business branch. Employers who fail to meet the quota criteria are obliged to a monthly payment of 70% of the minimum wage for each person with disabilities that should be employed by the company. That money goes into a special Fund which in turn provides financial support and awards to employers, who exceed the quota.

General and specialised employment services for persons with NCDs

The government has not adopted any specific policy and strategy or programme, regulation or act to promote employment only/specifically for persons with chronic diseases/disorders.

Employment rights of people with disabilities in Slovenia are not granted in one act that would serve as umbrella legislation for employment of persons with disabilities. The government has adopted several documents to promote employment persons with disability, regardless of the type of disability, thus also covering employment of people with chronic diseases/disorders.

Besides programmes for promoting employment of people with disabilities, there are other psychosocial programmes aimed at promoting inclusion and development on other life areas, but these programmes are not directly aimed at promoting employment of people with disabilities. The

significance of those programmes lies in raising self-esteem and quality of life in general, which can in turn influence employment possibilities.

The target group is all people with disability (people with mental health, physical, intellectual and/or sensory impairments), regardless of the disability type.

The strategies, legislation and programmes listed below are long-term oriented.

There are some (voluntary) programmes in companies, such as a special programme for return to work of blue-collar workers people with chronic illness in a company for freeway maintenance and toll collection (DARS).