



## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

VET is one of the priorities recognised at the Council of Ministers level that acknowledges that every citizen must be equipped with the skills needed to live and work in the new information society, and that special attention must be given to disabled people (Lisbon European Council, 2000). On the basis of this priority, several official documents<sup>1</sup> have highlighted the issue of VET in the context of learners with special educational needs (SEN).

The main messages can be summarised as follows:

- VET should be equitable and efficient.
- The development of high quality vocational education and training is a crucial and integral part of the Lisbon strategy, notably in terms of promoting social inclusion.
- VET should address all sections of the population, offering attractive and challenging pathways for those with high potential, while at the same time addressing those at risk of educational disadvantage and labour market exclusion – for example, those with special needs.
- Official data shows that disabled people continue to be disproportionately excluded from the labour market. Moreover, people with learning or intellectual disabilities are even less likely to be in work than those with physical disabilities.

Article 27 of the United Nations Convention<sup>2</sup> provides that:

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation.

Within the framework of the analysis currently being conducted by the European Agency, VET is considered an effective way of learning: learning by doing and experimenting, but also by conceptualising experience to reach (individually) high levels of knowledge and competences. VET stimulates lifelong learning and is inclusive. It is not a kind of 'second-class' education and is therefore a tool for autonomy, which is particularly relevant for learners with SEN.

The analysis seeks to identify and investigate the relevant key aspects of initial vocational education and training programmes for learners with SEN, with a clear link to employment opportunities and, in particular, to investigate what works in VET for learners with SEN and why. The objectives of the analysis are to:

- Identify the relevant key aspects that facilitate VET for learners with SEN and the relationship to the labour market;

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<sup>1</sup> Lisbon European Council, March 2000; Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, November 2002; Draft Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, October 2004; 'Communiqué' of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, December 2006; Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, November 2007 and December 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006)



- Identify the main problems highlighted in the area of VET and the relationship to the labour market (such as limited access to VET, limited qualifications, limited link between VET and work practice, drop-out situation, insufficient co-ordination of services, limited implementation of measures, etc.).

### **Vocational Education and Training – European Parliament Roundtable – 11.15-11.45**

Introduction: Key parameters to be taken into account for successful practices: what works and how it works.

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Floor open to questions