

Individual Transition Plans

Supporting the Move from School to Employment



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European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education



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INTRODUCTION


Transition from school to employment is an important issue for all young people and even more so for those with special educational needs.

The **first part** of this document is a summary of the analysis on Transition from School to Employment produced by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (the Agency) in 2002. The aim of the publication was to reflect upon the difficulties as well as the ways of facilitating access to employment for young people with special needs. The full report can be found on the Agency's website: <http://www.european-agency.org/transit/>. The transition report listed a number of barriers and facilitating factors. One of the most important facilitating factors highlighted was the development of an Individual Transition Plan (ITP). The first part of this current document provides a framework of ideas aimed at supporting a better understanding of what an ITP is, as well as identifying its role in facilitating the transition from school to employment.

A rationale and practical guidelines for the development of an ITP is the focus of the **second part** of this document. Experts from 19 countries considered the results of the previous analysis. The objective was to discuss and agree upon why and how to develop an ITP - or a similar working document - in order to support the transition from school to employment of young people with special educational needs. The term 'employment' is used in this document in its broadest sense, meaning either open employment¹, or any type of supported² employment.

¹ Open employment is considered to be when a job is open to any potential employee (with or without special needs) who has the required skills, knowledge and qualifications as specified by the employer and employment is in accordance with usual working requirements, conditions and obligations.

² 'The aim of Supported Employment programmes is to provide support so that people with a disability who face substantial barriers to employment as a result of their disability can work in their chosen career and, wherever possible, progress into open employment as the requirement for support reduces' (UK Association for Supported Employment, 1999).



The experts involved in this work focussed specifically upon the materials used by professionals in their co-operative work with young people and their families.

Four **work meetings** were organised. The first three meetings aimed to clarify and agree upon the concepts and set up a 'practical' guidance tool to be mainly used by professionals. Discussions focussed upon:

- Definitions: an ITP versus an Individual Educational Programme (IEP);
- Objectives: the main objective of the development of an ITP;
- Content: what an ITP should include and how it should be implemented.

Professionals from the education and employment sectors as well as families were invited to the last meeting to give their opinion and make critical comments about the findings. They highlighted the potential benefit of complementing the summary report with an accompanying guidance tool addressed to 'non-initiated' professionals, young people and families. The aim of the tool eventually developed during the project is to show the need for, the interest in and the benefit of an ITP to the end-users in a very practical and simple way. The interactive CD - enclosed with this report - is the result of close co-operation between professionals and young people with the nominated experts.

Section 2.1 presents the rationale behind the development of an ITP: what this working document is about, why it has to be produced and who produces it. The difference with another important educational document - the individual educational programme - is also highlighted.

Section 2.2 covers the content of an ITP: the elements to be included and the necessary steps required to ensure its effective implementation and follow-up.

This document is mainly addressed to professionals working in this field. The final results would never be possible without the expertise, competence and commitment of all the people involved. The most sincere gratitude is expressed to them for their contributions.



For those interested in specific information about country situations and/or particular topics relating to the transition process, details can be found in the online Transition database on the Agency's website: <http://www.european-agency.org/transit/>

PART 1: TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO EMPLOYMENT

SUMMARY


At the end of 1999, the Agency carried out a review and analysis of the existing data and information at the European and international levels on the subject of training and employment issues for young people with special educational needs. This review was the basis and the framework for analysis of national information, collected by professionals in the field of transition from the 16 countries involved in the project. The national information collected covered existing policies, transition process implementation, problems and results. Specifically this included:

- Access to educational opportunities for young people with special educational needs following compulsory education;
- The existence of transition programmes;
- The employment/unemployment situation for people with special educational needs;
- The existence of legislation and policy measures regarding transition or actions in favour of employment;
- ‘Sensitive’ aspects and positive elements evident in the national situations.

The main aim of the analysis was to review apparently effective strategies and processes, to conduct a general analysis of relevant characteristics as well as frequently mentioned barriers and, finally, to identify significant factors in the transition process. In order to improve the process of transition, recommendations addressed to policy makers and practitioners were also formulated.

The **concept of transition** from school to employment or working life is referred to by several international documents, each with slightly different definitions.

The Salamanca Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994) states that:
...young people with special educational needs should be helped to make an effective transition from school to adult working life. Schools should assist them to become economically active and provide with the skills needed in everyday life, offering training in skills, which respond to the social and communication demands and expectations of adult life ... (page 34).



Transition is described in other documents, for example, in HELIOS II (1996b), as:

... an on-going process of adaptation, involving many different variables or factors. It is a process that takes place permanently in one person's life with some critical moments such as entry to kindergarten, end of compulsory education or leaving the education stage ... (page 4).


The International Labour Office (1998) defines transition as:

... a process of social orientation that implies status and role change (e.g. from student to trainee, from trainee to worker and from dependence to independence), and is central to integration into society... Transition requires a change in relationships, routines and self-image. In order to guarantee a smoother transition from school to the workplace, young people with disabilities need to develop goals and identify the role they want to play in society ... (pages 5 and 6).

The OECD (2000) suggests that transition to working life is just one of the transitions that young people must go through on their way to adulthood. In a lifelong learning context, the transition from initial education, whether upper secondary education or tertiary education, is seen as simply the first of many transitions between work and learning that young people will experience throughout their lives.

The Labour Force Survey (EC, 2000) argues that transition from school to work is not linear; leaving education is not necessarily directly followed by beginning work. It is gradual and young people experience interspersed periods of studying and working.

Within the framework of the work developed by the Agency on this topic, it appears that transition to employment is part of a long and complex process, covering all phases in a person's life, which needs to be managed in the most appropriate way. "A good life for all", as well as "a good job for all" are the ultimate goals of a successful overall transition process. The types of provision or the organisation of schools or other education locations should not interfere with or impede the achievement of such a process. Transition from school to employment should include the on-going participation of the young person, involvement of their family, co-ordination between all the services involved and close co-operation with the employment sector



(European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2002).

The **main issues** and difficulties identified whilst reviewing the transition-related literature, were grouped around the following eight themes.

Data


Data in this field is very limited, so any comparison between countries is difficult. Despite the different ways used by countries to identify young people with disabilities or special needs, the average population presenting special educational needs can be identified as between 3 to 20% of young people under 20 years of age (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 1999; Eurybase, 1999).

Completion rates

In 1995, the percentage of young people from 20 to 29 years old without a final upper secondary school leaving qualification was around 30% (Eurostat, 1998). This percentage is even higher for young people with special educational needs. It is difficult to estimate the number of young people, who will leave education immediately after the compulsory phase, but it is possible to state that many will never go beyond compulsory education. Data, even if not precise enough, reveals that a relatively high number of students with special educational needs start post-compulsory education, but a large proportion will never finish secondary education (OECD, 1997). In some countries, almost 80% of adults with disabilities have either not progressed further than primary education or can be considered functionally illiterate (HELIOS II, 1996a).

Access to education and training

In theory, young people with special educational needs are presented with the same educational choices as other young people, but in practice it is only programmes oriented towards social welfare or low paid work that are mainly offered to them (OECD, 1997). They are not necessarily interested in the choices proposed; education and training programmes are not always suited to their interests and needs. This places them in a disadvantageous position on the open labour market (ILO, 1998). Making educational programmes more relevant and adapted to students could be one solution for a number



of different problems including those encountered in the transition phase (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 1999).

Vocational preparation

Vocational training is often not related to real employment practice; it often takes place in segregated provision and it is not usually oriented towards complex professions. People with disabilities do not receive the appropriate qualifications required for employment; training initiatives need to be more tailored to the current demands of the labour market (ILO, 1998).

Unemployment rates

The unemployment rate amongst people with disabilities is two to three times higher than amongst the non-disabled (ILO, 1998). National data from countries only includes registered unemployed people, but a high percentage of people with special needs are not registered - they do not have a chance to obtain a first job (HELIOS II, 1996a). Unemployment maintenance for people with disabilities has become the third highest item of social protection expenditure, after old age pensions and health expenditure (EC, 1998). Employment growth requires an offensive strategy, an active policy that promotes an increase in demand, rather than a defensive strategy – or passive policy. This requires investments in physical productive capacity, human resources, knowledge and skills. In this sense, young people with disabilities should have a proactive role in planning their own future (EC, 1998).

Expectations and attitudes

All documents agree on this issue: teachers, parents, employers as well as the public in general underestimate the abilities of people with disabilities. Co-operation is very important to develop a realistic view of a young people's skills in all sectors of education (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 1999), including during transition to work.

Work place accessibility

There are still problems related to physical accessibility to work places, as well as access to personal and technical support. Information and support available to employers is also a key issue referred to in many documents.

Implementation of existing legislation


Legal frameworks regarding transition to employment in some countries are absent, or they may lead to an inflexible system. Setting employment quotas as a support measure in favour of employment of people with disabilities seems to present degrees of failure regarding application and enforcement. Most countries have a combination of measures in place that are perceived to be effective to differing degrees. There are no examples where quota systems achieve their targets. However, supporters of this system point out that resources gathered via levies or fines allows other employment measures to be developed. Anti-discrimination legislation also presents problems. At times there is the impression that such legislation is more about communicating messages to people with disabilities and to employers than about providing effective remedies for individuals (ECOTEC, 2000).

The Agency analysis published in 2002 highlights three areas that can be summarised as follows:

1. The **main problems** faced by young people with special needs, their families and professionals regarding transition from school to employment. This issue was approached through an examination of existing documentation at the European and international levels. Problems, highlighted by representatives of the education and employment sectors are quite consistent and inter-related. The main questions identified by both sectors focus upon:

- How to reduce or prevent high numbers of education dropouts and unemployed young people;
- How access to quality education and training can be increased;
- How to provide the right qualifications, which would correspond to the young person's abilities and allow them to adequately face adult and working life;
- How to stimulate improved contact and mutual understanding between the education and employment sectors.

2. The **key aspects** that need to be considered in the field of transition, taking into account existing problem areas and outstanding questions. This aspect was investigated through discussion and analysis of the documentation provided by professionals from the 16




countries involved in the project. Six key characteristics emerged with regards to the concept of transition:

- Transition is a process that must be supported by the existence and implementation of legislation and policy measures;
- Transition needs to ensure the young person's participation and to respect the personal choices of the young person. The young person, her/his family and professionals must work together to formulate an individual plan;
- The development of an individual educational plan focussed on the young person's progress and on any change to be made in the school situation should be part of the transition process;
- Transition must be based upon the direct involvement and co-operation of all parties concerned;
- Transition requires close co-operation between schools and the labour market, in order for young people to experience real working conditions;
- Transition is part of a long and complex process of preparing and facilitating young people to enter into economic and adult life.

3. The **main factors** that seem to either facilitate or prevent the implementation of a successful transition process at the practical level. These factors were identified from local practice selected by different transition professionals. Exemplar transition situations highlighted a range of factors that facilitated a more detailed description of the six aspects outlined above. These factors seem to act either as barriers to, or as facilitators of a successful process of transition. The description of the factors shows that very few of them correspond to factual and simple situations, which can be seen as *simple* factors, when only one factor by itself acts as a barrier or a facilitator. The majority correspond to complex and inter-related situations, or *complex* factors, where several factors are either facilitating or acting as a barrier to transition.

The analysis of the three areas listed above resulted in **recommendations** for the future of transition. The recommendations listed below are addressed to policy makers and practitioners and



aim to provide guidance on how to improve the development and implementation of the transition process.


Transition is a process that must be supported by the existence and implementation of legislation and policy measures

At the policy level, policy makers should:

- Promote and/or improve effectively co-ordinated policies between different services, avoiding the creation of new legislation that is in contradiction to or overlapping with existing legislation;
- Ensure concrete measures for the effective implementation of adopted legislation, in order to avoid differences and/or discrimination as a result of unequal human or technical resources;
- Systematically consult, taking into consideration and respecting the opinions expressed by voluntary organisations working with and for people with disabilities;
- Search for and promote active policies in order to reinforce employment and personal autonomy;
- Ensure more focussed control and evaluation of any “facilitating” measures in favour of people with disabilities, such as quota systems, tax facilities, etc. and ensure effective functioning of services at national, regional and local levels;
- Ensure the availability of extensive information concerning any legal or policy measures addressed to employers;
- Ensure the creation of local networks, involving all the partners, in order to implement national policy.

At the practical level, practitioners should:

- Obtain all the necessary information, strategies and skills in order to implement existing legislation and ensure there is an adequate methodology for applying it;
- Regularly evaluate local innovative projects and disseminate their results in order to achieve a *facilitator* effect;
- Set up a local network in which all partners (employment, social, educational services and families) are represented, in order to discuss, plan and implement the national policy;
- Have convenient methods for communicating their needs to administrators whenever new measures are being implemented.



Transition needs to ensure a young person's participation and to respect his/her personal choice

At the policy level, policy makers should:

- Plan for the necessary resources (time and budget) for schools in order for them to implement work with the young person and their family;
- Ensure that resources have been used effectively in order to guarantee this collaborative task is achieved.


At the practical level, practitioners should:

- Have and spend the necessary time with the young person and their family in order to better understand their wishes and needs;
- Develop a written transition plan as early as possible, open to the young person, their family and the professionals involved in further stages of transition inside and outside the school;
- Modify and adapt the transition plan whenever needed together with the young person;
- Encourage the young person as much as possible to discover her/his own skills and competences;
- Provide young people and their families with as much information as they might need, or direct them to the relevant services;
- Ensure that both individual education plans and individual transition plans are in an accessible format for young people with, for example, limited reading abilities.

Development of an individual educational plan focussed on the young people's progress and on any change to be made in the school situation should be part of the transition process

At the policy level, policy makers should:

- Provide schools with the necessary resources to ensure that individual educational programmes are developed. In particular, teachers should have sufficient time and receive the necessary guidance for their tasks;
- Ensure that a transition programme is included in the individual educational programme;
- Provide quality standards concerning individual educational programmes;

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- Ensure that qualifications achieved by young people are reflected in the certificates they obtain and that discriminatory situations are avoided.


At the practical level, practitioners should:

- Ensure that the young person is at the centre of the process of developing an individual education plan and an individual transition plan;
- Receive the necessary help in order to develop an individual educational programme as a team based task;
- Ensure that the individual educational programme is regularly evaluated in a written form by the young person, their family as well as by the practitioners involved within and outside the school;
- From the outset, develop a “portfolio” or an equivalent tool, which will contain both an individual educational programme and all records of all changes introduced;
- The portfolio should include an assessment of attitudes, knowledge, experience and the core (main) skills of the young person (e.g. academic, practical, daily living, leisure, self-determination and communication).

Transition must be based upon the direct involvement and co-operation of all parties concerned

At the policy level, policy makers should:

- Ensure practical measures for co-operation between services, as well as ensure follow-up of this co-operation;
- Allocate clear responsibilities to and between services, in order to ensure effective co-ordination;
- Ensure that co-ordination and the distribution of responsibilities are evaluated, thus allowing for any required changes to be made;
- Ensure that all services fulfil their obligations and participate in the co-ordination task;
- Motivate employers and trade unions through specific measures to be directly involved;
- Encourage co-operation and co-ordination between all departments involved at the national level.



At the practical level, practitioners should:

- Have an efficient support network to which other practitioners can address their demands for support and information;
- Have official recognition (in terms of budget, or at least in terms of time) of the co-ordination tasks, required by other services;
- Receive further training, in order to better define tasks within the framework of co-ordination and to learn how to share responsibilities.


Transition requires close co-operation between the school and the labour market

At the policy level, policy makers should:

- Ensure that all young people experience real working conditions;
- Guarantee access to some type of practical training for all young people, respecting their different needs;
- Organise flexible training measures, for example, setting up preparatory periods before getting trained on the job;
- Promote formal and informal incentives for companies (e.g. tax reductions, social recognition, etc.) to encourage them to provide working-learning places for young people;
- Emphasise and demonstrate the mutual benefits arising from the evaluation of good transition examples;
- Involve employers in these types of initiatives, in co-operation with employment services, by means of information campaigns, networks of employers and trade unions;
- Recognise the need for formal co-operation between education and employment services;
- Provide resources available for the on-going professional development of teachers.

At the practical level, practitioners should:

- Be open to and better informed about labour market possibilities;
- Have time to visit enterprises, to organise meetings with them and other services from the employment sector, provide the means for in-company training periods for teachers in order to keep them in touch with daily practice;

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- Acquire the competences available in the school, for making contacts and arrangements with companies;
 - Invite professionals from the employment sector to educational settings in order to meet young people as well as educational staff members;
 - Ensure follow-up of young people after leaving school.

Transition to employment is part of a long and complex process

At the policy level, policy makers should:

- Put into place all the necessary measures for ensuring successful transition, identifying and overcoming barriers or difficulties in this process;
- Avoid rigid educational procedures (e.g. regarding assessment);
- Facilitate co-operation between and within services and recognise the time spent by practitioners on co-operation and co-ordination tasks;
- Ensure that transition plans are developed early enough in a young person's school career, not just at the end of compulsory education;
- Recognise the need for one specific professional, acting as an *advocate* or a reference person and supporting the young person in the transition process.

At the practical level, practitioners should:

- Use an efficient means for facilitating this process (e.g. adequate guidance, flexible support, good co-ordination etc). The time spent on these duties needs to be officially formalised and recognised.

The professionals, policy makers and representatives of employers and trade unions involved in this project came to the conclusion that the implementation of the suggested recommendations would undoubtedly improve the process of transition and minimise problems that young people currently face when they leave school and are confronted with issues related to securing employment.



PART 2: INDIVIDUAL TRANSITION PLANNING FROM SCHOOL TO EMPLOYMENT

Section 1. Individual Transition Plan (ITP) - Rationale

This part of the document is a continuation of the previous analysis summarised in the previous section. The experts involved in the project were not expected to provide country information, but to focus upon the need for and benefit of the development of an ITP. All partners' needs, wishes and expectations were fully taken into consideration and are included in the results and proposals reported in the document. Young people and professionals were asked to give their feedback and reflect upon the meaning of this tool in drawings. Some of these drawings are used in this document, but most of them are in the enclosed interactive CD.

1.1. Young People's, Families' and Employers' Voices

Young People. In November 2003, a Hearing was held in the European Parliament, Brussels, with around 80 young people with different types of special educational needs from 22 countries, whose ages ranged from 14 to over 20 years. They expressed - openly, but firmly - their concerns, wishes and hopes regarding education, training and employment. They expressed in the best possible way what has been achieved and what still needs to be done. These are some of their comments, using their own words:

'Everybody wants to have a good profession and wishes to find work very satisfying.'

'We want to have a profession, to get a job, to have a family, a house, to be active members of society and to be happy like anybody else.'

'We need to be able to choose our education from our own interests and motivations, just like anybody else. We want to participate in society like anybody else and not to be discriminated [against] by employers because of a handicap.'

'Some of us dream of a job in private economy [sector]. But for many of us this target seems to be unreachable because of our handicap'

and the conditions in society. Frequently, an occupation is only possible in a sheltered place. In addition, the certificates of special institutions are often less accepted in private economy [sector].'

'In the specific [special] training we follow, we observe that the level is too low to prepare us for further education. We regret a lack of choice for the optional courses we want to follow.'

'We have the impression that the employment market is not yet open to persons with disabilities, let's hope this will change in the future.'

'A very important thing for disabled people all over the world is to be and live like most 'normal' people live. To make this possible, we have to work on people's attitudes and maybe do something so that the people who are not disabled get the chance to know disabled people more.'

Parents. In September 2004, within the framework of the ITP project conducted by the Agency, a final work meeting was organised involving the experts participating in this analysis together with other professionals, families and employers. The opinions expressed by a mother are presented below:

'To my mind, in schools, attention has to be paid not only to teaching academic subjects, but also social skills and, of course, vocational skills.

During the students' school years, the school staff, together with families, have to explain to them that in the future they will be supposed to work at various working places, complete tasks and hold duties that (should) correspond to their abilities.

Teachers and families have to strengthen students' self-esteem in order to improve their quality of life through being employed and working, instead of looking for "charity".

I do believe that [an] ITP is very much needed and has to be designed two to three years before a pupil's graduation from a special school or any other school.

I am glad that finally attention has been paid to the need for preparation of such a tool for specialists. However, if we want this tool to be used, a special requirement should be approved within the policy documents of all countries involved. Otherwise I doubt that [an] ITP will be widely used.

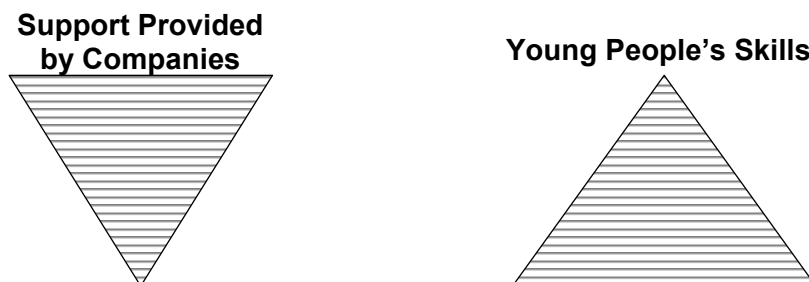
In particular, teachers of mainstream schools dealing with SEN students (in collaboration with families, of course) have to promote students' understanding of their real abilities and future possibilities. To my mind, the team responsible for creating [an] ITP should involve not only specialists (a special needs teacher, a teacher, a psychologist), but also representatives of health care, social care, education field, employment field, etc.'

Employers. A view from the employment sector was expressed by an entrepreneur with a long tradition of hiring people with special needs. He raised several critical issues:

- (a) The state has to support companies in order to motivate them to employ young people with special needs through formal or informal incentives, such as: financial support, tax reduction, positive labelling, identification of the company, etc.
- (b) Young people need to be well prepared not just at a professional level. Social skills are more important for the companies than academic ones. The companies are best placed to train them professionally 'in situ'. One important step for all young people would be to have compulsory practice or experience in real companies, not in artificial environments.
- (c) Sometimes a coach, or a different type of support person, is required depending on the young person's needs and skills, in order to assist their integration into a work place. At the same time, it is important to avoid over-protecting them, which is often the case in the education system.
- (d) The young people's skills are inversely related to the required support that needs to be provided by employers, as shown in the figure below. Companies might prefer to start with young people who are in need of limited support. With time, the acquisition of positive experience and achievement of good

results will encourage companies to hire youngsters in need of different types of support, consequently facilitating an upward movement in the left-hand triangle:

Figure 1. Level of support provided by employers according to the level of skills of the young people




- (e) It is important to look for companies in need of employees and, perhaps, of some kind of financial support. Forcing companies to hire people with special needs can lead to disaster. Small and medium size enterprises seem to be better at and more open to employing people with special needs than the big ones.

These are some examples of opinions, wishes and advice provided by young people, families and employers. Such views all need to be considered and could be used to form the basis of an ITP.

1.2. Definition of an ITP

Not all European countries use the term ITP - a diverse range of terms exists. ITP is used in a few countries, while in others Individual Educational Programme is used, or Individual Integration Project, Education Plan, Personalised Intervention Plan, Individual Career Plan, etc. Different terminology highlights slight differences in concepts. In spite of these differences, a clear consensus emerges within the countries with respect to the need for and the benefit of creating this working tool, perceived as an *individual portrait*, in which the wishes and the education and training progress of young people are recorded.

An Individual Transition Plan is an instrument, a tool, in a form of a document in which the past, the present and the desired future of



young people is documented. It should include information concerning the young person's life space: family circumstances, medical history, leisure time, values and cultural background, as well as information on their education and training. It will contribute to the achievement of the following results:

- To increase the young person's chances to get a sustainable job;
- To match the interests, wishes, motivations, competences, skills, attitudes and abilities of the young person with the requirements of the profession, job, working environment and companies;
- To increase a young person's autonomy, motivation, self-perception and self-confidence;
- To create a win-win situation for the young person and employers.

A transition plan is closely related to an educational plan and should be prepared as early as possible before the end of compulsory education. It aims to close the gap between school and employment. An ITP provides a framework that aims to ensure an improved entry into employment. It reflects a dynamic process, involving:

- The characteristics of young people (skills, abilities, competences and expectations)
- The demands and requirements from the employment sector *and*
- Permanent revision of an action plan.

1.3. Individual Transition Plan versus Individual Educational Programme

A distinction needs to be made between an individual education programme (IEP) and an individual transition plan (ITP) or its equivalent. It needs to be stated that, as with the case of the ITP, countries use different terms to define the development of an individual education document that broadly corresponds to the following definition: *'An IEP builds on the curriculum that a child with learning difficulties or disabilities is following and is designed to set out the strategies being used to meet each child's identified needs... IEP should record only that which is additional to or different from the*

differentiated curriculum plan, which is part of provision for all children' (UK Department for Education and Employment, 1995).

An **individual educational programme** can be summarised as:


- A broad document, covering all aspects related to a pupil's education (strategies, provisions, outcomes), with the specific focus on education. Personal and social aspects do not always seem to play a significant role, but they need to be taken into account;
- The teacher is the key professional in charge of creating an IEP, in close co-operation with the pupil, her/his family and all other professionals involved.

An **individual transition plan** is a different tool and can be summarised as follows:

- An ITP is closely related to an IEP;
- It needs to be prepared two to three years before the end of compulsory education;
- It can be considered as a kind of 'individual portrait' of a young person's situation, motivation, wishes and abilities;
- It has to be included in a portfolio (like the IEP), with first the pupil, later on the student, being the owner of such an individual document, thus guaranteeing the confidentiality of the included information;
- It is focused on transition matters related to employment and adult life. It needs to take into consideration environmental labour conditions. It needs to provide a clear analysis of the young person's possibilities and a consequent career plan, preparing her/him for a real job situation;
- Teachers from lower and upper secondary education, together with the young person, the family and other external professionals (not necessarily school-related), are involved in its development;
- It needs to include tools and methods to ensure an individual process of transition and to facilitate the young person's empowerment;
- It needs to ensure equal opportunities with respect to differences in gender, culture or geographical location;
- It needs to guarantee a follow-up process, through a professional appointed for this purpose.

Both tools present some common features:

- They both place the pupil/student at the centre of the process;

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- They could be addressed to *all* pupils/students, or *only* to those with special needs;
 - They need to be permanently reviewed according to the young person's achievement and progress;
 - They need to use terminology that is clear and accessible to all parties involved, with special attention being paid to parents and the young people themselves;
 - Both IEP and ITP documents should be exhaustive (comprehensive) in the sense that they should include all areas to be worked on or discussed with the pupils/students, parents and professionals.

The use of both terms might be perceived as artificial, as a pupil and student's progress is dynamic and continuous and cannot be strictly compartmentalised. However, even if countries do not use the exact term 'ITP' then at a certain moment of the educational curriculum professionals need to insert transition-related goals that focus on post-secondary education and independent living into an education plan.

It needs to be mentioned that the purpose of an ITP, as well as an IEP, is not to duplicate documents, or to increase the number of administrative tasks to be completed by professionals. On the contrary, both documents should be used to **record** and to **keep**:

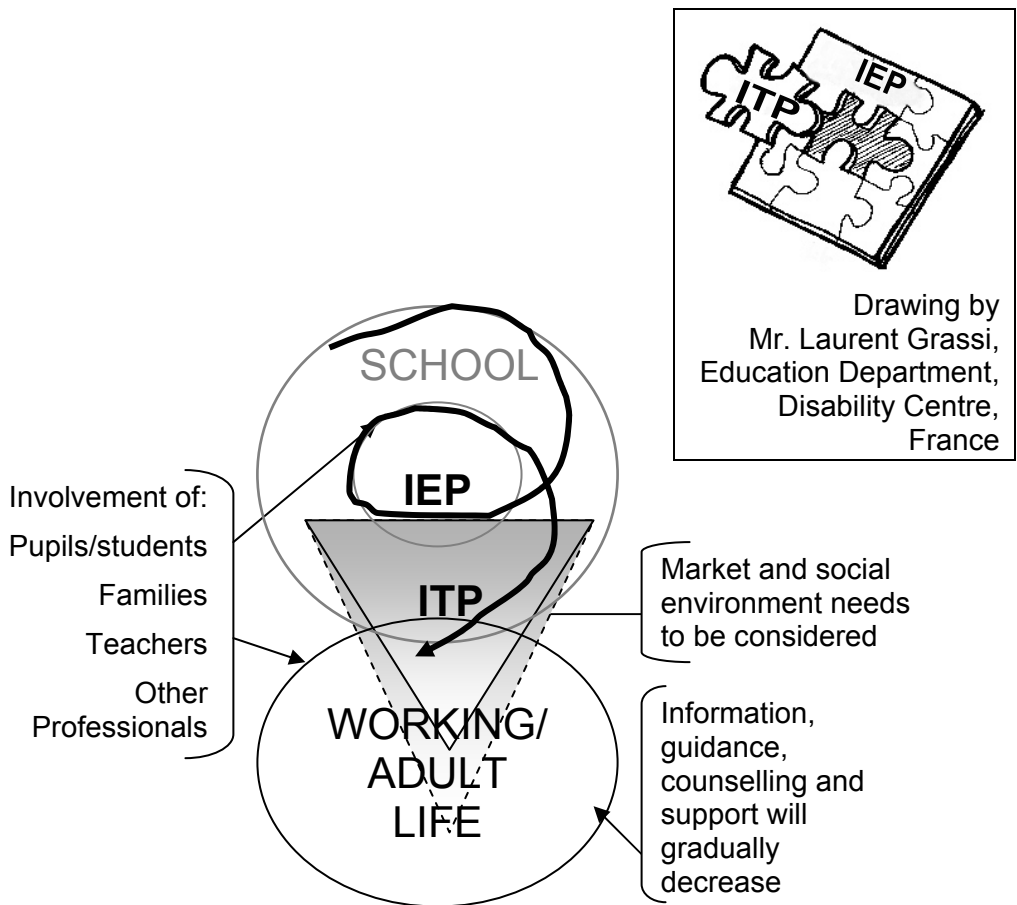
- Reflections about the pupil/student's situation;
- Agreements made concerning the objectives to be achieved;
- Fixed educational/vocational strategies;
- An overview of a pupil/student's progress at any point in time, even when changes either educational (e.g. moving to another school) or geographical (e.g. family moving to another location) take place.

The following figure, based on the ITP project experts' discussions, illustrates the relationship between these two working tools. The main characteristics of an ITP are described and illustrated in more detail in the following sections of this document.

The figure and the spiral in particular, highlights the fact that transition is a dynamic and 'time' building process in which young

people will be supported by the development of both documents, IEP and ITP.


Figure 2. Relationship between an IEP and an ITP



Section 2. Practical Guidance

2.1. Basic Guiding Principles

Effective transition planning follows the principles that are in agreement with the goals of transition, respecting the differences related to the characteristics and values of families. Transition is a



process that can take more or less time depending on the needs and possibilities of the individual. The basic guiding principles of an ITP planning process are:

- The person with special needs must actively participate in the planning of her/his ITP;
- Families should be involved;
- Planning should involve inter-agency co-operation and collaboration;
- Planning should be flexible, responding to changes of values and experiences.

Young people with special needs should have all the necessary opportunities and support in order to play a key role in their own ITP planning, as they are the ones most concerned about their own life. An ITP has to guarantee that the optimum process is achieved in order for young people to get the counselling and support they require before, during and after the transition period. Families also need to actively participate as they will become both advocates and support partners. In order to do so, the family situation (cultural values as well as resources) needs to be taken into account by professionals.

The following table summarises a number of actions to be incorporated into the ITP process and fulfilled by the parties involved. These actions can be divided into three phases:

Phase 1: Information, Observation and Orientation

A preparatory phase, taking place while the ITP is being prepared. The goal is to help the young person to make an individual choice of job and to find a suitable training place.

Phase 2: Training and Qualifications

This phase is mainly focussed upon actions to be undertaken during the training process. The goal is for the young person to obtain qualifications, competences and corresponding certification.

Phase 3: Empowerment, Employment and Follow-up

This phase is focussed upon the required results. The goal is for the young person to succeed in getting and keeping a job, to benefit from

an increased quality of life and to ensure and maintain employment integration.

Table 1. Roles and tasks to be fulfilled by all parties involved during various stages of ITP development

	1. Information, Observation and Orientation	2. Training and Qualifications	3. Empowerment Employment and Follow-up
Young person	<p>Receive information</p> <p>Identify strengths, weaknesses, and express wishes</p> <p>Acquire work experience in order to make the final choice</p> <p>Participate in preparing and signing a contract</p>	<p>Go through the learning and training process in a comprehensive way, and with flexible duration</p> <p>Evaluate her/his progress at school and at a work place in the form of providing feedback</p>	<p>Secure a working contract and a salary</p> <p>Succeed during the adaptation to work period</p> <p>Feel accepted and belonging/being part of a group work colleagues</p> <p>Succeed with inclusion</p>
[Continued on next page.]	<p>Be fully involved</p> <p>Express expectations</p>	<p>Be actively involved and contribute to a supportive environment</p>	<p>Support their daughter/ son, whilst respecting her/his autonomy</p>

	1. Information, Observation and Orientation	2. Training and Qualifications	3. Empowerment Employment and Follow-up
School Professionals³	<p>Co-ordinate the process</p> <p>Know and evaluate the young person's possibilities</p> <p>Motivate, assist, guide and prepare the family and the young person</p> <p>Prepare a training plan</p> <p>Nominate a contact person</p> <p>Participate in preparing and signing a contract</p>	<p>Co-ordinate the process</p> <p>Create a training programme Support and undertake all necessary actions in relation to the labour market, such as creation of contacts/relations with labour market</p> <p>Nominate (and replace if necessary) a contact person</p> <p>Evaluate this phase</p>	<p>Co-ordinate the process</p> <p>Ensure induction into the workplace and sustain commitment from the employer</p> <p>Ensure career guidance (employment, social services, etc.)</p> <p>Nominate (and replace if necessary) a contact person</p>
Community services professionals⁴	<p>Inform others about the demands of the labour market (job possibilities)</p>	<p>Assist the young person and school in finding training opportunities</p>	<p>Find jobs (i.e. mediation role)</p>
Employers⁵	<p>Receive and provide information</p> <p>Allow and support short practice periods</p> <p>Participate in preparing and signing a contract</p>	<p>Offer training opportunities</p> <p>Participate in validation of competences</p>	<p>Offer a job</p> <p>Co-operate in further follow-up</p>

³ Teachers, psychologists, pedagogues, vocational and educational advisors, development tutors/trainers, administrators.

⁴ Social workers, doctors and socio-medical professionals, labour market representatives and specialists from different agencies. Social services play an important role and should be fully involved.

⁵ Employers and job specialists from employment services and other services helping to find jobs



2.2. Characteristics of an Individual Transition Plan: Content and Validation

In line with Table 1, the following aspects need to be considered:

Competences to be acquired – implies making a clear analysis of the young person's possibilities, assessing her/his present abilities, identifying and discussing her/his wishes and planning and preparing a consequent career plan with her/him and their family. Young people and families need to be aware of the content of vocational training programmes.

Qualifications to be obtained – there is a need to reflect young people's achievements and should have real status, even in the case of 'non-formal' certificates delivered by educational centres or employers.

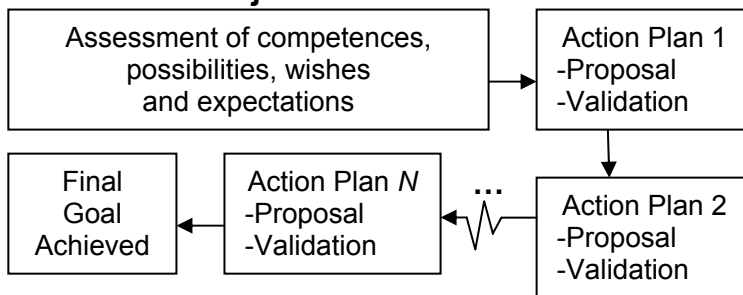
Involvement of different professionals – the ITP process requires the involvement of everyone concerned: professionals, families and young people (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2002). Responsibilities and roles need to be clarified, established and accepted by all parties concerned. One professional (such as a vocational counsellor, teacher, etc) needs to act as a contact person during the process of development, implementation and assessment of the ITP. However, it is important to identify her/his qualifications and responsibilities.

Work possibilities and experiences - implies preparing a young person for a real job situation and follow-up at the work place, at least for a period of time. The young person, her/his family and the contact person need to be well aware of the demands and requirements of the labour market.

Validation of the process - all parties involved (professionals, young people, families) need to participate in continuous evaluation of the young person's progress and development, which will secure and will help monitor the quality of the process. Evaluation needs to be conducted on a regular basis as part of a 'contract' between the young person and the nominated contact person. Three different levels of validation can be considered; they are part of the three phases described above:

- Initial assessment - mainly related to the young person's abilities and expectations. According to Lerner (1998), assessment means *'the gathering of information to make a critical decision about a child [young person]'* in order to identify the necessary special services to plan instruction and to measure progress.
- Validation of objectives and actions - all proposals for action need to be validated until the moment the final goal is achieved, that is finding and keeping a satisfactory job, as depicted in the figure below.

Figure 3. Validation of Objectives and Actions




- Evaluation of the results achieved - is to be undertaken by all parties involved during the entire process. Two elements need to be taken into account:

- 1) There should be enough time for the young person to get information and to acquire experience from different working places and educational possibilities in order to make right decisions;
- 2) Support for transition planning should last at least until first employment is secured; just finding a job is too limited a parameter to be able to ensure proper follow-up of results. Follow-up implies that somebody (usually, the contact person) should be responsible for supporting the young person as long as required after transition to work.

The practical implementation of the aspects and characteristics described above is the focus of the following recommendations.

2.3. Practical Recommendations

The following recommendations need to be considered for what they are: that is a 'guidance tool' or a focus for reference and reflection for



all those involved in order for them to develop an ITP, according to different education and social contexts. The recommendations can be used as a model for implementation of the ITP process.

Recommendations are presented corresponding to a series of questions presented in a sequential way. For the purposes of these recommendations, it is assumed that an IEP (or a similar document) has been prepared by a school in order to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs during compulsory education.

When to Start

It is impossible to fix a precise moment for all young people in all countries. Differences in the individual needs of young people and the educational systems must be respected. However, experts agree that two or three years before transition to working life might be the best time to prepare such a document. This can help young people avoid impossible situations, e.g. deciding in the last year of schooling what to do next, or being refused entry into the training area she/he might be interested in, or missing the information required to make a correct choice. A situation that must be avoided is where young people simply follow what adults think is best for them.

Proposal

Flexibility: Find the right time to start in a flexible manner, with the agreement and participation of all parties concerned, in order to be able to later on decide who (people and services) is responsible for what, how resources are to be funded and how overall co-ordination can be guaranteed.



Drawing by: Ms. Greta Gudbjorg Zimsen, 20 years, Fjobrautaskolinn in Gardabaer, Iceland

How to Proceed

During compulsory/general education and before the last year, the teacher, the young person and her/his family, the advisor and other professionals need to sit together, reflect upon and plan the young person's future. This joint clarification of the situation needs to be prepared very carefully, taking into account different key steps.

Proposals

Organisation of a 'round table' meeting: including all parties involved in the planning and development of the young person's ITP and aimed at the creation of a guidance team.

Setting-up a guidance team: the team should meet at least once or twice a year, according to the age of the young person, the impact of her/his needs, the problems they face, or any other circumstances.

Composition of the guidance team: the young person and/or the family are the permanent members of this team, together with the young person's tutor and, among other professionals, the nominated contact person. The guidance team members should allocate clear

roles and responsibilities (e.g. who is responsible for what, during which period of time, in accordance with existing legislation and/or school rules, etc).

Nomination of a contact person: the nominated person should, preferably, remain the same through the entire process, in order to be well informed and adequately follow the process. Nomination of a contact person should take into account her/his personal and professional profiles. At a personal level, he or she should have good contact and relationships with all parties. At a professional level, the contact person will be expected to:

- Have good knowledge of both the education and training fields;
- Work on building networks between employers, families, social workers, etc;
- Search for jobs or co-operate with the person in the team responsible for searching for work placements;
- Motivate the young person during the transition phase.

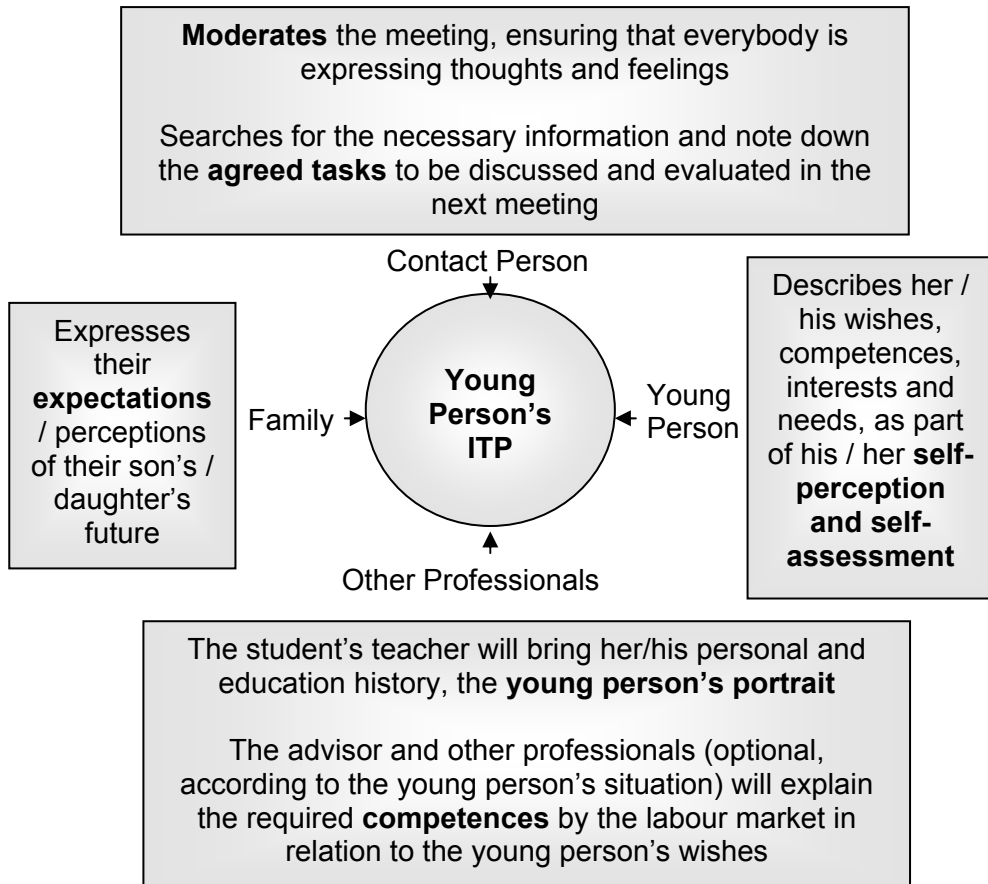
Role of the contact person: her/his role is to act as a reference person for the team, getting in touch and involving external professionals whenever necessary and acting as a moderator during the team meetings. She/he will also be in contact with the person responsible from the employing organisation before and during the young person's placement and ensure follow-up in the workplace.

Securing the resources and funding procedures required: it is essential to clarify and agree upon the estimation of costs and the funding responsibilities (how much it will cost and who will pay).

How to Organise the First Meeting

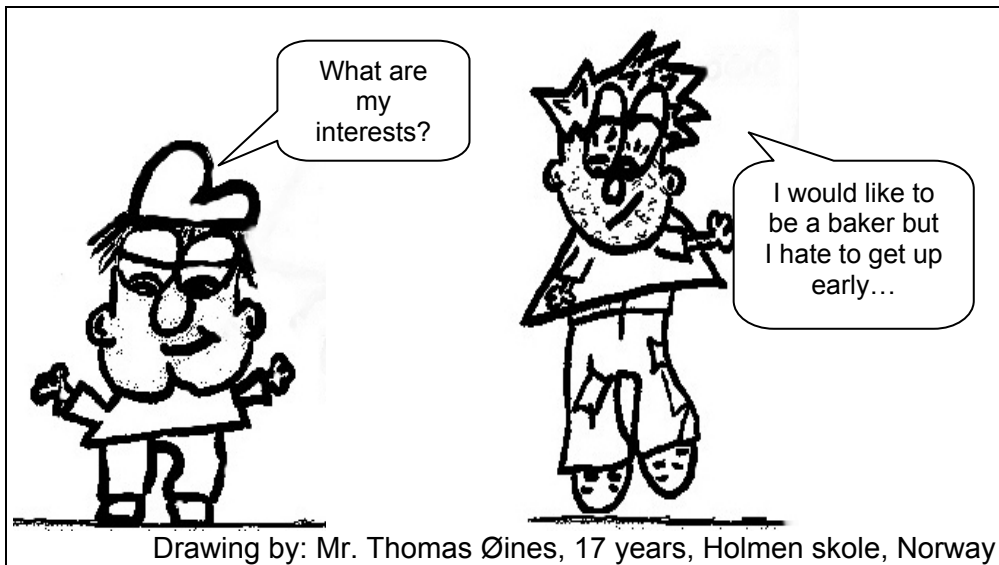
A differentiation needs to be made between the first meeting and the following ones. The following figure is a description of what is to be provided by each of the parties involved in the first 'round table' meeting.

Figure 4: Inputs from the parties involved in the first 'Round Table' meeting



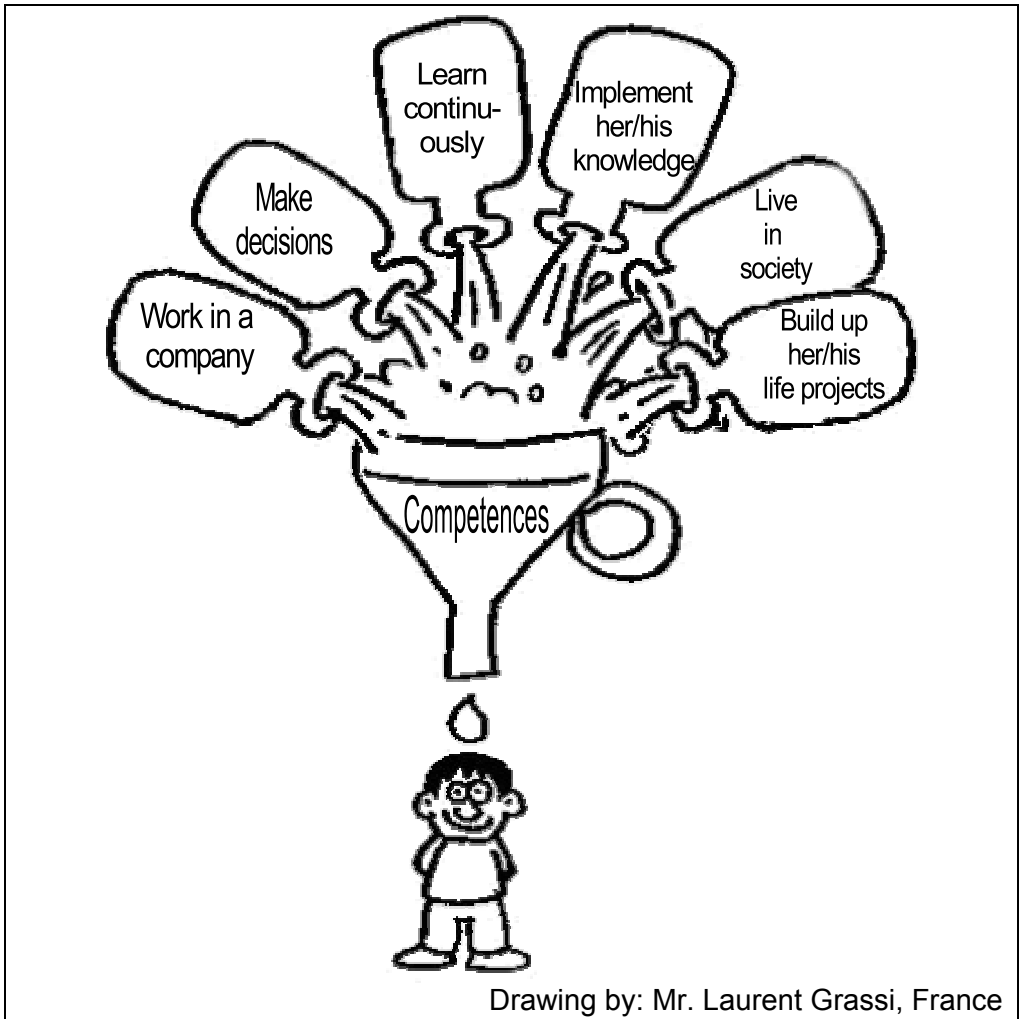
Proposals

The young person's portrait: provides detailed information on the past situation and the present abilities of the young person. This portrait, prepared by professionals, needs to be discussed and compared with the young person's self-perception (and self-assessment) as well as with their family's expectations. Total convergence of everybody's viewpoints is unrealistic, however, large discrepancies will be a source of conflict.



Competences: three main areas of equal importance need to be detailed:

- Academic competences: the curriculum he/she follows at school;
- Vocational competences: acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary to perform a vocational task. These can be very different, depending on the chosen employment, and are directly related to the work experience;
- Personal competences: the individual achievements of the young person at both personal and social levels. These competences are very important, as they support the autonomy and empowerment of the person. They include social and emotional skills (to be independent, to follow rules, to respect timetables, etc); personal abilities (to know how to interact with others, to introduce her/himself, to be able to anticipate and plan, etc); physical skills (related to motor or psychomotor skills).



Agreements: if an agreement is reached, the objective of the first meeting is achieved and an action plan with a list of tasks to be discussed and evaluated in a second meeting will be planned. In the case of disagreement, more information, reflection and discussion are needed. The contact person should be in charge of organising a second meeting, providing the required information or contacts in order to prepare the corresponding action plan.

Following Meetings

The organisation of further meetings needs to be carefully prepared, in the same way as for the first meeting. The objective has to be clearly understood by all parties. Timing is also to be considered: there should not be more meetings than necessary and they should not last longer than needed.

Proposals

Agreed tasks (an action plan): should be recorded by the contact person. They should all be included in the ITP and should be completed, modified and constantly assessed during the entire process. Young people need to use a simple form in order to register and self-evaluate their progress. Table 2 presents the main areas of focus and the corresponding recommendations to be planned and assessed:

Table 2. Areas of an ITP and corresponding recommendations

Areas	Recommendations
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Necessary or missing information from the young person's history needs to be collected- Information concerning content and availability of vocational training programmes- Information concerning labour market possibilities and requirements should be provided to the young person and the family- Information about other alternative solutions, if needed (e.g. further training), will also be provided
Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Takes place on a regular basis according to a 'contract' between the young person and the contact person- Expectations raised by the young person and the family need to be discussed in order to define further actions (in co-operation with the professionals involved)- Comes to an end when the young person finds a satisfactory job and is able to handle it in the most autonomous way

Areas	Recommendations
Competen- ces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professionals involved need to support the young person to acquire and develop the needed competences providing her/him with the required support and teaching materials - They are part of a career plan including three main competence areas: academic, vocational and personal
Work Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Makes practice in the open labour market possible - The contact person should visit different institutions and firms in order to agree upon the most suitable place with the young person - A responsible person from the firm needs to get involved before the young person starts the work experience - Placements need to be evaluated by professionals together with the young person in order to proceed to further planning - The contact person needs to find out about the funding arrangements when she/he is in contact with different firms - The contact person should make contacts later on in order to find potential job vacancies
Accredita- tion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Needs to provide a description of the level of education followed and achieved by the young person as well as an official certification with a description of the working competences acquired. The certification results from the co-operation between school and employer
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is embedded in all areas. It is an integral part of the entire process as on-going reflection. Each step needs to be evaluated before proceeding to the next one - The young person's self-assessment is an important part of evaluation. This can be achieved by providing her/him with different tools such as dialogue, observation, reflection on practice, checking skills materials, etc. - Follow-up at the end of the process is the only way to find out whether the final objective has been achieved

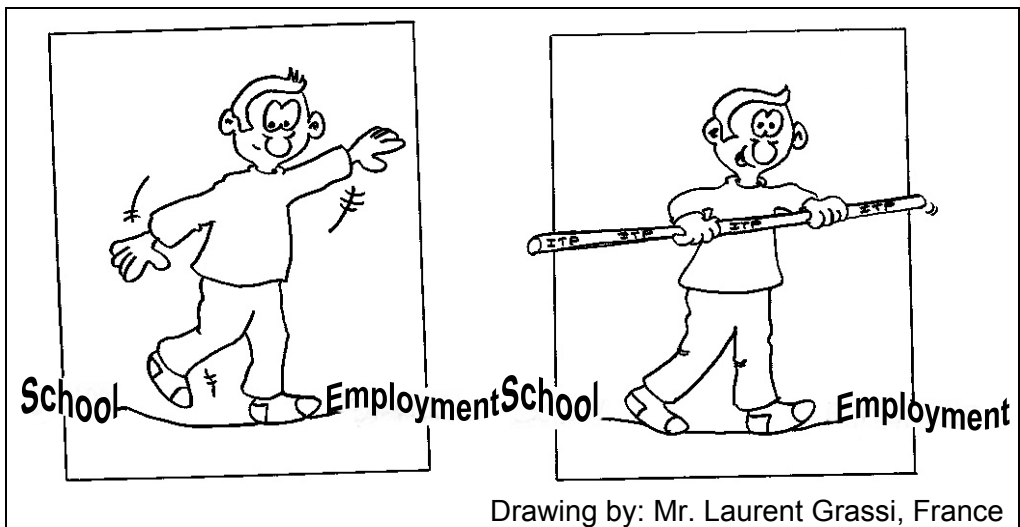
All of the recommendations listed are to be used as guidance for the practical implementation of and reflection upon professionals' own practice. These recommendations cannot respond to all possible practical questions, therefore, professionals need to use them in a flexible way, adapting them to their working situations.

2.4. Final Recommendations

In order to ensure the efficient implementation of such guidance, the following two recommendations are addressed to policy makers. They are based upon and complete the recommendations already listed in the first part of this document regarding the key aspect of *close relationships between the school and the labour market*.

Policy makers need to be aware of and develop a legal framework that will:

- Ensure that co-operation between education and employment services is organised through an agreed document, i.e. an ITP or its equivalent;
- Contribute to establishing clear responsibilities and financial resources to be allocated across the different services involved in the development of an ITP.





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Individual Transition Plans - Supporting the Move from School to Employment is a continuation of an earlier study on Transition from School to Employment for Young People with Special Educational Needs, published by the Agency in 2002.

This current report and the accompanying interactive CD is the result of extensive collaborative work amongst experts on transition from 19 European countries, representatives from the employment sector as well as young people with special educational needs and their families.

The focus of the report is on the rationale behind the development of an ITP (individual transition plan), the elements to be included in an ITP and the steps required to ensure its effective implementation and follow-up within the process of transition from school to employment.

The report is mainly addressed to professionals working in this field. The interactive CD is a tool designed for young people with special educational needs who are planning to find a job, but will also be of interest to 'un-initiated' professionals working with these young people.

