



# IVEA

Innovative Vocational Education for Autism

## European Guide

Coordinator:



Partners:



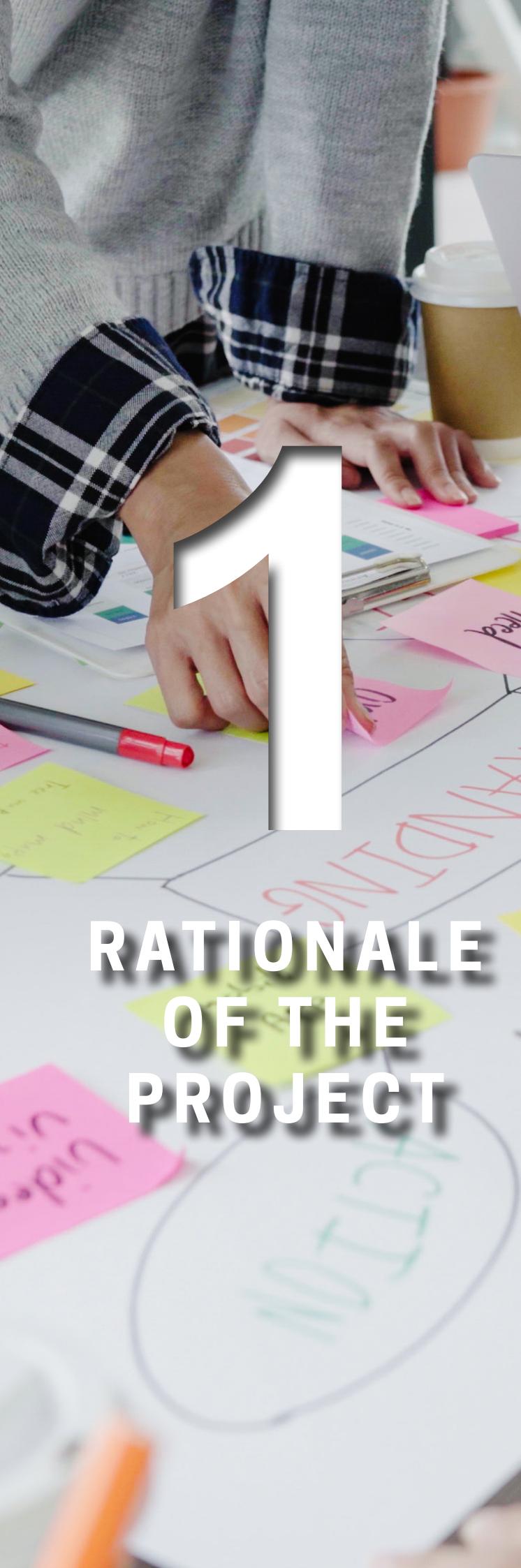
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# RATIONALE OF THE PROJECT

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people. Thus, it can be difficult for an autistic person to make sense of the world. Autism is a spectrum condition and each autistic person is different. While there is a range of characteristics associated with autism, there are two main areas of impairment:

- A. Persistent deficit in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts.
- B. Restrictive and repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities. (DSM-V, American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Symptoms cause clinically significant impairment in social, occupational and other important areas of current functioning. Autism is not classified as an intellectual disability, although intellectual disabilities frequently co-occur.

Recent research<sup>1</sup> indicates that 1 in 100 people in the world is on the autism spectrum. Some people are able to live relatively independently and others need significant support throughout their life. Autistic people often experience challenges that impact their ability to participate effectively in work.

Regarding social interaction, autistic people may not understand the unwritten social rules that others usually pick up without thinking. Thus, people on the spectrum can experience difficulties interacting with managers and colleagues which can in turn, hinder their inclusion in the workplace. Autistic people can additionally struggle with language. They can have difficulties understanding and interpreting instructions and unspoken expectations.

Nowadays it is difficult for all people to gain and maintain employment. Autistic people face many more barriers when accessing employment and are disproportionately affected by unemployment.

<sup>1</sup> Elsabbagh et al. 2012; Fombonne, 2011; ADDM 2012; Mattila et al. 2011; Saemundsen et al. 2013; Baird et al. 2011.



## MAIN AIM OF THE PROJECT

The main aim of the IVEA project is to promote social inclusion of autistic people through employment providing a new holistic European Guide and an innovative App for smartphones.

- To promote the employability of autistic people
- To increase the work opportunities of autistic people
- To foster the development of soft skills (communication and social interaction) in the real employment context
- To raise awareness on inclusive employment in autistic people, their families, professionals and the population by and large.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

## 4.1 What is the IVEA European Guide?

It is a holistic European Guide to promote the employment of autistic people in terms especially in the IVEA partners' countries and specific local and regional organizations involved.

The European Guide is the result of:

- The identification of the transversal competences important for the employment of people on the autism spectrum
- A training course for future autistic employees: "New bridges for professional inclusion of autistic people"
- A training course for employers: "New dynamics for professional inclusion of autistic people"
- Internships in the chosen organisations
- The result of the interweave of the courses and the internships of autistic people in the organisations.

IVEA intended to create an active synergy with the partner's organizations in different fields related to employment and in socioeconomic sectors. This guide is carrying a more modern, dynamic, committed and professional approach through the integration of innovative methods using self-evaluation by autistic people.



## **4.2 Why is the European Guide innovative?**

Usually autistic people don't have the opportunity to give their own opinion in the choices, including those concerning vocational training and employment. It is important that this population will have the same opportunities in employment as other people.

One of the innovative aspects of the Guide is that it was designed and implemented with the collaboration of people on the autism spectrum. It is based on the reports, experiences and testimonies of autistic people:

Transversal competences – The focus groups, the reports and the testimonies of the people on the autism spectrum involved in the project raised the issue of transversal competences they needed to learn in their vocational training. These competences are important to help autistic people to search for a job and to keep it.

The training course (pilot study) for autistic youngsters was implemented after the analysis of their needs and expectations. The 10 face-to-face sessions with the participation of autistic people involved in the project gave many ideas for the preparation of future employees.

The training course (pilot study) for employers was implemented with 3 face-to-face sessions in a B-learning format complemented with the intensive practical preparation of a very interested team of participants sometimes extended to other human resources of the company.

The internships for the youngsters where trainers and trainees had the occasion to interweave their knowledge.

One of the most innovative aspects of this Guide is how it shares and disseminates the final results of the Courses and the internships. This Guide and the application for smartphones are important tools available online so each country can adjust or adapt them to its own language and to multiple contexts and situations.

The application of the European Guide for smartphones can be downloaded on Google Play.

## **4.3 Who are the beneficiaries of the Guide?**

- Future autistic employees and their families
- Employers
- Human Resources in the organisations
- Co-workers
- People interested in working in the field of autism and employability
- People who want to employ people with disabilities

## **4.4 How is the guide useful for the youngsters and the employers?**

- To replicate the resources, methodologies, contents and strategies of the courses
- To use the experience and practice acquired during the internships
- To apply the acquired knowledge in the different contexts of each organisation
- To replicate in all European countries and internationally, through training and practical application in a real work context.

## **4.5 Recommendations for the European Guide**

The Guide can be adapted for different countries and different jobs.

The Courses must be flexible according to the needs of the learners.

The methodologies must take in consideration local and available resources.

A profile analysis must be carried out for each young people (strengths, interests and preferences) all during the courses and the internships.

Before choosing the companies and to ensure a better match between the young autistic person and the job there must be a criteria analysis.

A continuous assessment should be carried out to adjust the internship to the needs of the young autistic person and the needs of the company.

Both courses promoted the empowerment of autistic people. The first course resulted from the self-evaluation of the needs of autistic people and the second course resulted from the contributions of the families and stakeholders. These courses will integrate the transversal competences needed for the future success of autistic people in the job market.

The expected impact of these courses is to have more success in the employment with autistic people.



4º Situação

Lembre-se sempre, pelo menos, 2 pessoas



The characteristics that define autism do not only translate into difficulties, but are also associated with a series of skills such as:

## PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Autonomy.** We care about our autonomy in different aspects such as appearance and self-care, and attendance and punctuality.
- **Responsibility.** We have a great responsibility in matters that we consider important and we comply with our established obligations.
- **Persistence and self-efficacy.** When we want to do something or achieve a goal that we have set ourselves, we are very persistent and responsible.
- **Flexibility / Adaptability.** In some aspects we are flexible and we adapt to changes if they have been anticipated and we have understood them, such as, for example, good adaptation and monitoring of routines: Once the daily routines have been explained and the limits established, we easily comply with them.
- **Attention and Concentration.** We have a great capacity for meticulousness, we have good precision when completing tasks; and attention to detail, we attach great importance to details.

## SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Interpersonal relationship.** We accept different points of view and we try to understand the perspective of others. We accept rules and limits when somebody explains it.
- **Social consciousness and Ethical commitment.** Our way of seeing life and responsibility makes us have a great awareness of what is right and what is wrong.

- **Sincerity and Honesty.** The ideas that we think are the ones that we say.
- **The tendency to be very logical.** We are very good at rational thinking and our behaviour is governed by logic.
- **Ability to listen without prejudice.** Being logical and rational, we tend to listen without judging others.
- **Communication in the workplace.** We have the ability to question, argue and ask for help from supervisors and colleagues. We are so good at active listening and respect the hierarchy in the workplace
- **Specialized knowledge on topics of interest.** Our interests in very specific topics can spread across multiple employment sectors such as biology, architecture, art, etc.
- **Good skills in mechanical and repetitive tasks.** If the task is well explained, we understand it without problems. We are also very good at repetitive tasks and we have an enormous motivation to perform tasks.
- **Independence.** When we have a work routine, we are very independent since we have a clear idea of what is expected of us, in how long and how we have to do it.
- **Curious about a variety of topics.** Such as computer science, biology, chemistry, geography, etc.
- **Creativity.** Together with the motivation for the tasks that we are passionate about and the curiosity about different topics, we are people with great creativity in these fields.
- **Positive view of the future.** We are used to working to improve our lives so we have a very good vision for the future since with the necessary help we can achieve everything we set out to do.

“The expectations of the opportunity to meet this group were very good. Sometimes, the stereotypes around autistic people are very wide due to the visibility of the media, but it has also taught us that they are not entirely true. There are many ways of being autistic people and as many skills as workers.”

Ana García, boss of the HHRR department of Grupo Antolín Euro trim.

“During the project, my participation created some good changes in my life. I went back to having a routine, which, for me as for everybody else, is important. It also gave me a lot of confidence in attaining my main objective, which was the opportunity to get a real job. Made me feel useful and fulfilled... My responsibilities also grew as, for example, I never miss any schedule, respect the internal rules and pay attention to customers and I take care of my uniform appearance.”

Duarte Faria, trainee



## DEVELOPMENT OF “SOFT SKILLS”

It is essential for us to develop certain soft skills to help us build a positive perspective for the future regarding our inclusion in the labour market. We need to be independent and autonomous in different contexts of life in order to successfully carry out daily and professional activities, such as preparing our meals, going to work or performing different tasks in the workplace.

Self-determination is also essential to know how to make good decisions that will have a positive impact in our life, such as: to achieve our dreams; make our own choices; pursue our own path; find solutions for our problems.

## COMMUNICATION

The unique way we think may reflect on how we communicate. The way we experience, process and express information may, quite often, be misunderstood, giving co-workers and other staff the wrong perception that we are peculiar, detached or even rude.

Communication can be a challenge for us and a very hard task though we are willing to communicate, to be understood, make friends and develop relationships.

Understanding others can also be a challenge. It's often difficult to understand conversations, read facial expressions and decode body language.

We can give the impression that we've "mastered" communication. However, it is essential to realize that we need to learn and practice not only communication but also social competences.

Our capacity to understand and use oral language may vary, depending on the anxiety we may feel and the level of stress we can experience. We need our co-workers and employers to speak with us in a way that will help to better understand the message they convey.

## Some tips to help communication:

If we don't pay attention to what is being said:

- Always use our name in the beginning, so that we know you are addressing us;
  - Make sure that we are paying attention, before asking a question or giving an instruction.
- The signs that someone is paying attention vary from person to person;
- You must involve us in the conversation using our personal interests.

When we consider difficult what is being said:

- Speak clearly and use short sentences.
- Convey less information and gradually;
- Make pauses between words and sentences to give us time to process the information and think on the answer;
- Don't put multiple questions at the same time;
- Use visual supports (e.g.: chronograms);
- Be aware of the environment (noisy / crowded). Some sensory stimuli may interfere with our information processing.

When we have difficulties to answer open questions:

- Ask short questions;
- Ask only the necessary questions;
- Structure the questions you are going to ask (you may offer choices);
- Ask specific questions "Lunch was good?" instead of "How was your day?".

When we don't ask for help:

- Encourage us to ask for help, when necessary.

When we react badly to a "No":

- We may be confused about the reason why you said "No", therefore, you should justify and contextualize.

## **TEAMWORK**

Teamwork allows us to exchange and share knowledge. When relevant opportunities are provided for us to stand out in a group work setting, we can show that we are dedicated, loyal, productive and focused employees. We need to know how to work in a team and what skills are necessary.

We need to be flexible when working with other people and be able to manage and respond to unexpected changes in our surrounding environment. For example, if our lunch time is at 1 PM and our boss asks us to work for 30 minutes more, we should accept it quietly; if someone asks us to move from our usual work desk, computer or work space, and explains why, we should allow it peacefully.

We need to have confidence in ourselves when we make a decision, present ourselves to other people in a secure way, express our opinions easily, and face new challenges. That's the way our co-workers will trust our performance. We need to collaborate and be cooperative with our co-workers in order to share our knowledge and split tasks. Lastly, we need to respect hierarchy, taking into account the person's authority, position or function.

# SOCIAL INTERACTION

Typically, most people acquire social competences through social interaction. However, it is difficult for us, autistic people, to acquire social competences through social interaction in the workplace. We often need to learn and train these skills.

Sometimes we may find it hard to start an interaction or understand and answer others. It can be hard to read and interpret social signs or read facial expressions.

It's important to consider the impact that social situations have on us; relating to others can be a daily challenge. When situations aren't familiar (e.g.: public events) they can be scary and unpredictable.

## Some tips to help social interaction:

It's important to identify the intention of the behaviour and its effect on us:

- Our behaviour may not always be related with a medical condition, especially if the behaviour arises suddenly and then becomes more intense (e.g.: covering the ears or hitting with the head may be a way of dealing with pain or communicating some kind of discomfort).

We need to establish limits together:

- In all contexts (family, friends, organizations, services, community) there are specific and often different rules that we must accept, respect and carry out.
- We need to define together clear and consistent limits (e.g.: the time we should spend talking about a particular topic).

Make sure that the workplace is a safe place for us and for all the other workers.

- Identify the signs when we are being bullied:
- Sometimes our maladjusted behaviours are created by situations of bullying and harassment in the workplace;
- We need clear actions and plans to address bullying and harassment in the workplace:
  - o Select a trusted person to report a possible episode of bullying or harassment;
  - o Get support by a tutor.

# DEALING WITH TRANSITIONS

We may feel uncomfortable dealing with change, be it temporary, such as sitting at a different desk for a day, or a more permanent change like a house removal. Sometimes these changes may trigger crises, often mistaken with tantrums.

This crisis may be overwhelming for us, leading ultimately to an intense and disproportionate reaction.

Sometimes, even in a familiar workplace, there are new changes that need preparation in order for us to overcome the situation.

Sometimes, even in a familiar workplace, there are new changes that need preparation in order for us to overcome the situation.

## Some tips to deal with transitions:

Abstract concepts such as time are not easy to understand:

- It's important to prepare us in advance for all the process of change and everything that it may involve.
- Use visual schedule to help us to know and anticipate what is going to happen along the day (or in any transition).

Make small changes in the context for our better adjustment

- When you perceive that we feel uncomfortable regarding a particular context, try to identify the cause of our discomfort;
- Small changes may help us reduce discomfort, for example, if we are disturbed by noise, and if you preview a noisy situation, try to find a more isolated and quieter place on that day.

How can you help in a crisis situation?

- Whenever a crisis occurs, try to point out what happened before, during and after, to understand the pattern. You may realize that the crises happen in particular moments, in specific places or linked to a particular event/situation;
- Recognise the signs preceding a crisis (e.g.: walking around, asking questions repeatedly, swaying, being very quiet).
- Recognise the causes that could trigger a crisis, as sensory stimuli (e.g.: a lot of noise), changes in routine (e.g.: change in route to work), anxiety (e.g.: facing a new task) and communication difficulties (e.g.: not being able to express that we need help)
- After identifying the possible causes, try to minimize and prevent the crisis, for example, diverting attention to something we like.

What to do in a crisis situation?

First of all, do not judge a person having a crisis. You can use some of the following strategies:

- Give us space and try to create a safe and quiet place;
- Try to reduce as much as possible the overload of information and everything you can do in that sense;
- Give us some time, to recover from an information or sensory overload;
- Ask if we are well, how we feel and be patient.

## **TAKING OTHERS' PERSPECTIVE INTO ACCOUNT**

Accepting different points of view:

Everyone has different opinions, ideas and points of view. It's important to listen to others and try to understand why they think and behave differently. We need to have social consciousness and be aware of what is going on around us.

We have the capacity of being empathic, but we need to develop the ability to attribute and represent mental states in ourselves and in others. This will help us realise that other people have beliefs, desires and intentions that are different from ours.

By putting ourselves in the other's shoes, we will be able to better understand the behaviours and feelings of our co-workers which is essential for coexistence and cooperation in a working group.

# **REACTING APPROPRIATELY TO CRITICISM AND PRAISE**

Tolerance of criticism:

We must accept criticism from others because they care for us; they want to help us evolve and improve. Constructive criticism is a way to understand and overcome our failures. In addition to criticism, knowing how to react to praise is often difficult for us.

Accepting praise:

- It's essential for us to be able to see our positive points, since this is a way of improving our self-confidence;
- Praise may encourage a specific behaviour or a new strategy;
- Even when our success seems minor, it's always important to be praised and positively reinforced.

Giving and receiving feedback:

- Feedback happens in both directions and we need to consider the perspective of our co-workers and employer, taking into account the origin of the situation;
- If a problem arises, we have to know what went wrong and clarify the actions or attitudes we should take in order to solve the situation;
- It is essential to discuss our performance with the tutor or employer and receive or give feedback in a straightforward manner. We should not assume we know implicitly whether our performance is going well or not.

# **PROBLEM SOLVING IN THE WORKPLACE**

In the workplace, as in all the contexts of our life, we need to have the ability to solve problems, difficulties and obstacles. When we face situations, such as forgetting our lunch, not catching the bus at the usual time, a bus mechanic problem, a document erased from the computer, we need key skills to solve them including:

- Creativity to help us gain ability to resolve, create or invent new things;
- Motivation, willingness, desire, interest and a positive attitude to accomplish a task or solve problems in the workplace;
- Critical thinking to use when something goes wrong;
- The ability to select, organize, and filter information around us;
- Effective communication;
- The belief that we are capable of overcoming the challenges that come our way.

When we experience a stressful situation, such as an increased workload, being late or making a mistake, we should try to remain calm, have self-control and manage the situation in the best way we know how to.



## CURRICULUM

It is a document that collects data on the training, work experience, skills and abilities of a person. It is used to be part of a selection process when you are looking for a job. The CV has to serve to arouse the interest of the company and get them to call you for the next step of the selection process: the interview.

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

- Name and surname
- City where you live
- Phone number
- Email address
- Passport size photos (optional)

### ACADEMIC TRAINING

You must indicate the studies you have done, starting with the most current. In each of them you have to include at least this information:

- Acquired Title
- Start and ending date
- It may be interesting to indicate the number of hours
- Centre where you studied

### FURTHER TRAINING

#### Work experience:

Indicate the work, practices and volunteers you have done so far, starting with the most current. We recommend that you include the following information:

- Period in which you held the job, with the start and end date
- Company name
- Job you have held
- Tasks you have done

#### Computer Knowledge. Language Knowledge.

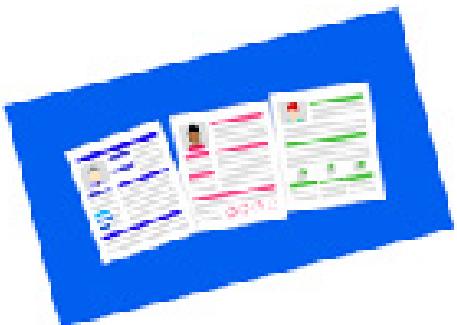
#### Other data of interest:

Languages: it is very important that you mention your knowledge. Detail the level you have, both written and spoken.



HOW TO  
GAIN  
EMPLOYMENT

## Parts of the Curriculum Vitae



C8CD205447177432



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Capacity  
of the European Union

Computer skills; Indicate the programs you know how to use and the level of domain you have (user level, advanced or expert level).

Other information of interest: add everything you think is important for the job you are presenting to, for example; driving license, availability to travel, disability certificate, etc.

## INTERVIEW

It is the most important test of a selection process. It is a meeting between the person who wants to get a job and the person who is looking for someone to fill it. It is useful for the company to know: your knowledge, your work experience and your attitude and motivation for the position.

## TYPES OF JOB INTERVIEWS

There are different types of interviews that can be conducted to select candidates for a job. The type chosen depends on whether the company is in another city, or the type of profile sought by the company.

Some of them are:

1. Telephone interview or videoconference
2. Individual Interview
3. Group Interview

## TELEPHONE INTERVIEW OR VIDEOCONFERENCE

Many companies prefer this method for some profiles. It is a short interview (between 5 and 15 minutes) in which the interviewer usually asks for the most important data for the job. Be kind, speak slowly and show interest in the job. Before the interview, think about the three most important facts that you want the interviewer to know. For example: A course that you have done related to the position, a work experience in which you performed some function similar to those of the position, and a knowledge or skill such as languages or computer science.

A video conference interview is also very common. In this type of interview, it is important, in addition to all the above, that you test the video and sound of your computer in advance to ensure that there will be no technical problem. Get ready as you would for a face-to-face interview and take care of the frame by choosing a suitable fund.

## INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

It is the most common interview in the selection process. Although here we describe the most common situations for conducting the job interview, in a quiet room where you and the interviewer are only, you have to prepare for different situations in the interview.

In some sectors, such as hospitality, it is usual to conduct the interview sitting in the chairs next to the bar or at a bar table while the business remains open. In other cases, the interview may be made by several people and they may take turns asking the questions, or the interview may be very short and standing.

### Important

- Look for information about the company before the interview.
- Research on the Internet and social networks about the company; You can even use/purchase the company services and / or products to be able to comment on them during the interview.

## GROUP INTERVIEW

The group interview is the one that is carried out to several candidates at the same time. Usually through some group dynamics. The interviewer poses a problem and asks the group to find a suitable solution.

What you should do in this situation is to show your skills without losing respect to your classmates. Do not try to be the centre of attention or interrupt others; What it is about is that you demonstrate how your individual capabilities will help improve the company. Nor should you be silent all the time, the interviewer wants to know your opinions. Try to find a balance without being the shy of the group or who wants to know everything.

## STRUCTURE OF THE JOB INTERVIEW

### Initial greetings:

In this part you have to pay special attention to:

- The way to greet: Usually the most correct thing is to shake hands in a determined and calm way.
- Your physical appearance: Take care of your way of dressing. You must go showered and with clean clothes and arranged according to the type of company. For example: To work in a bank you must go with a suit and to work as a waiter in a bar, just go with jeans.
- Your body language: Pay attention to your interviewer's gaze, and try to smile and sit properly.

## Job information

The person who interviews you will detail the job offer and its conditions.

## Interviewer questions

It is the central part of the interview.

Always carry a hard copy of your CV.

Answer sincerely but try to turn your weaknesses into strengths.

## Candidate questions

The interviewer usually asks you if you have any questions. It is the time to ask about your functions and tasks within the company.

You can also ask for the salary.

## Farewell

Regardless of how the interview has passed, it is important to say goodbye by shaking hands and smiling.





## HOW TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT



### NETWORKING: MANAGING PRIVACY IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Since autistic people usually struggle with managing their own social life (both online and offline) networking can be manageable once they have some exact rules they can follow. Employers can help their employees to articulate some rules to follow, which can be a great support not only for autistic people, but others who are not proficient using their own social media network. These rules can be written into the company's policy and should be accessible to every employee. To put it in an easy to read format would be a really meaningful support for autistic people and others who struggle with understanding written format. Regarding the policy there are a few main areas that shall be covered, such as:

- rights of the employee – it might be obvious for the most people, but not for everyone what and how to communicate certain topics on the social media networks about one's working place, such as photos, inner information (some are public information, some are strictly private – e.g.: public information can be an advertisement that can be shared on social media, but someone's payroll is strictly private information)
- tasks of an employee – for example if the company uses social media for advertising open positions, it is helpful for the current employees to know what and how they can share under comments (e.g.: if they don't like their boss is that a shareable information, or the company's working atmosphere, and so on)
- special events at the company – for example a Christmas party or a teambuilding event – what can we share (photos, stories) and where within the social media – closed groups, chats or open areas

- in the policy it is also helpful if the person knows way ahead what types of consequences are expected of what kind of usage of social media – e.g.: If I share an open position post and therefore somebody comes to be a staff member, do I get extra anything? But if I share my superior dancing on the top of a table at the Christmas party, what are the consequences of that?
- Please note: autistic people usually struggle with generalisation. That means that they might need some support in every case, because they can easily make some unintended mistake.

## BE AWARE AND BE PART OF THE ORGANIZATION'S CULTURE AND DYNAMICS

Getting to know an organization's culture and dynamics is hard not only to autistic people, but to everyone. The main reason is that there are usually a lot of unspoken rules and habits that nobody talks about, but everybody should obey. Plus, since no two autistic people are the same, it makes some extra challenges. However, there are a few ideas that organizations can think of to make their own everyday working life smoother:

The best-case scenario is if the autistic person has an **assigned mentor** at the workplace. That person can be either the client's immediate co-worker, superior or another person who works in the same area as they do. This way the mentor can be easily accessible if needed and can explain every social-related struggle to the person if needed. The mentor however should understand and accept the person's special needs and issues and not make fun of them or even confuse them in different situations. If it is not possible to assign a mentor at the workplace, sensitivity training to their co-workers (immediate co-workers, superiors, etc.) is helpful. This way the organization's employees will understand some of the weird actions or questions from the autistic person. By the way, this kind of sensitivity training can help those teams to be aware to other's problems in a more supportive way than without, which gains loyalty within the team. Once an autistic person is accepted into a workplace that is antedated by a long process managed by an autism specialist. If there is a big issue with the autistic person at the workplace, the follow-up session with the autism specialist is a great event to talk it through and seek for the solution. The worst-case scenario is that the organization is seeking for a solution from the family of the autistic person. Even if the family member offers to do so, it is really unfortunate because it mixes up different roles of the family member in the person's life.

## FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE TASKS / ENVIRONMENT

In the workplace it is important to fully understand the assigned tasks. If an autistic person is struggling to understand how to maintain a task, there are a few things they can do. (Keeping in mind that autistic people may struggle with interpreting verbal and non-verbal language like gestures or tone of voice. It is important therefore to outline the information that is important.

- Ask co-workers or most preferably the supervisor to show each task step by step.
- Make sure that the endpoint of each task is clear and obvious.
- Try to understand the meaning of the task.
- Ask the supervisor if the way to fulfil a task can be modified (some companies will allow you to do it your own way, but please bear in mind that most will only want the task completed their way as stated in their company policy).

- Write down each step or ask for them in written form.
- It is also important to learn the exact order of each step.
- Ask for and accept help if support is needed.
- Make sure that a task is finished before starting a new one.
- If a task is too complicated, try to break it down into well-defined steps.
- Before starting a new task, make sure you have the correct tools or person, to help you accomplish your task.
- If the person who helps you over complicates each task, ask them politely to make the point in a more simple way, or, you could tell them at which point you need them to indicate when you have got it right or need support.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE ENVIRONMENT**

Understanding the working environment is a lot easier, once there is a specific working area for the autistic person.

It can be either a personal laptop, or a personal desk. Every work place will be different but as long as the autistic person has a work space that is calm and consistent, this will ensure an understandable working environment.

In each workplace, there are special rules applied only to that specific environment. Some of these rules can be hard to understand, but that is ok.

If you are not sure why certain things are happening around you, try to find somebody who can help you understand. These people could be your co-worker, your superior, your boss, someone you feel you can trust. They might not know the answer, but probably can help you find the right person to ask. You can also write notes to yourself and read them out from time to time.

If you have an opportunity to choose your own working area, try to find a calm work space where you feel safe and motivated to work.

An autism professional can help with training sessions through human resources of the stakeholder, or may come up at the workplace occasionally to give you support when needed. He can provide hands-on examples and solutions of how to communicate, he or she will be there to give good solid advice in making your projects succeed.

If it is possible for you to have a daily supporter, such as a co-worker or supervisor, someone who knows all your tasks, this would make your first day smoother and more enjoyable. If your workplace does not have a person assigned to be your on-the-job-mentor please do not worry, reach out to your co-workers who can help if you are struggling. Please, keep in mind that nobody will know the solutions to all your problems, but they will be there to help you find the solutions.

Working is a fun thing to do, you will have the opportunity to interact with different people, you will earn a salary and this importantly will give you independence in your daily life. Good luck!



"The worst experience was that I once got on the wrong bus on the way to work. But by then, luckily, I already knew who to call if there was a problem. My job coach explained to me on the phone what to do, and she stayed on line until I found the right bus."

Trainee





# **WHERE AND WHAT CAN THE EMPLOYER LEARN ABOUT AUTISTIC PEOPLE**

The practices developed regarding the inclusion of autistic people in different entities/companies have revealed a growing interest from employers and co-workers in acquiring more information about autism.

This demonstrates great commitment and motivation from companies in achieving successful results regarding the inclusion of autistic people. To do this, employers need to be aware and acquire more knowledge on the subject. Employers can access information through different resources and organisations in order to learn more about autism.

Important resources are provided below.

## **RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES REGARDING THE DIFFERENT FEATURES OF THE WORKPLACE**

The specific adaptations in the workplace made for autistic people based on their needs are usually referred to as reasonable accommodation. The right to reasonable accommodation and support to enable people with disabilities to work effectively is enshrined in Article 27 of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

An environment should be created where autistic workers can feel safe and without the feeling of pressure to evaluate performance throughout the learning process.

Autistic people are more likely to have frank and sincere conversations with co-workers about areas they need to develop than with someone who has power over their career advancement.

In peer-to-peer learning, the dynamics of hierarchy are not present, they disappear. This learning methodology provides a structured opportunity for debate, reflection and discussion among all co-workers. All shared knowledge is multiplied power.

## **European level**

### Links:

Belgian Agence pour une Vie de Qualité (AVIQ) & Service Universitaire Spécialisé pour Personnes atteintes d'Autisme (Fondation SUSA). Fiche 15: L'Autisme et le Syndrome d'Asperger. (updated in 2020).

What and where employers can learn about employing autistic people by public regional authority and autism diagnosis / intervention center. Found under Fiches déficiences employ containing a series of files devoted to various conditions and disabilities. After brief definition, each file specifies implications, particularly in terms of employment, and offers recommendations to deal with implications.

### Tools (articles and books):

Autism-Europe. Autism and Work: Together We Can (2014)

Jansen H, Rombout B. (2013) AutiPower! Successful Living and Working with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Autism-Europe's interview on employability of autistic people with Carsten Lassen, CEO, Specialisterne Denmark

## **Portugal**

### Links:

FPDA-Federação Portuguesa de Autismo  
<https://www.fpda.pt/>

### Tools (articles and books):

FPDA – Federação Portuguesa de Autismo Sei Trabalhar - Guião para empregadores de pessoas com perturbação do espectro do autismo. (2016)  
[https://www.fpda.pt/sites/default/files/livro\\_sei\\_trabalhar\\_1.pdf](https://www.fpda.pt/sites/default/files/livro_sei_trabalhar_1.pdf)

Projeto Sei Trabalhar - Modelo de Boas Práticas (2016) Edição FPDA  
[https://www.fpda.pt/sites/default/files/modelo.boas.praticas\\_pages\\_0.pdf](https://www.fpda.pt/sites/default/files/modelo.boas.praticas_pages_0.pdf)

The Guide “Sei Trabalhar” intends to show the advantages of employing autistic people. The innovation of this publication is the fact that its authors are 13 young autistic people (twelve boys and a girl). Based on their prior experience they advise future employers. They explain how autistic people can be excellent workers if their employers understand their unique ways of working. The author of the drawings is one of the authors of the Guide.

Asperger no Feminino (Asperger's and Girls) Edit (2011) Coletanea Edição APSA (Associação Portuguesa do Síndrome de Asperger) and Babel

How is Asperger's Syndrome in women and young girls? A book with experiences and information from experts.

## Spain

### Links:

Autismo España (n.d.) Metodología Empleo con Apoyo. Programa ContrataTEA. Madrid, España. Recovered from <http://www.contratatea.es/como-te-ayudamos/>

Autismo España (2018). Cómo hacer una buena entrevista de trabajo. Madrid. España. Recovered from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdBFAj2C\\_4E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdBFAj2C_4E)  
Asociación Española de Empleo con Apoyo <http://www.empleoconapoyo.org/aese/>

UNED (n.d.) Charlando con personas con autismo “TEA y vida adulta”. Madrid. España  
Charlando con personas con autismo. TEA y vida adulta

UNED (n.d.) Charlando con personas con autismo “Apoyo a las personas con TEA sin discapacidad intelectual”. Madrid. España.

Charlando con personas con autismo. Apoyo a las personas con TEA sin discapacidad intelectual

### Tools (articles and books):

Autismo España (n.d.). Guía de Orientación Vocacional para personas con TEA. Madrid, España. Retrieved from [http://autismo.org.es/sites/default/files/orientacion\\_vocacional\\_a5\\_vdefinitiva\\_web.pdf](http://autismo.org.es/sites/default/files/orientacion_vocacional_a5_vdefinitiva_web.pdf)

Bernard, S. (coord.), Abajo, J.A., Álvarez, R., Bermejo, B., Cuesta, E., Cuesta, J.L., Jiménez, C., García, F., Rey, I., Illera, A., García, D., Muela, M.C., Pèlach, F., Riojano, M.A. (2004). Guía de empleo con apoyo para personas con autismo. Confederación Autismo España. Madrid, España. [http://sid.usal.es/idocs/F8/FDO7208/manual\\_empleo\\_apoyo.pdf](http://sid.usal.es/idocs/F8/FDO7208/manual_empleo_apoyo.pdf)

Confederación Autismo España (2016). Empleo y Trastorno del Espectro del Autismo: Un potencial por descubrir. Madrid (España) [https://sid.usal.es/idocs/F8/FDO27399/empleo\\_tea.pdf](https://sid.usal.es/idocs/F8/FDO27399/empleo_tea.pdf)

Confederación Autismo España (2014). Guía de empleo con apoyo para personas con autismo. Madrid, España. Recuperado de [https://sid.usal.es/idocs/F8/FDO7208/manual\\_empleo\\_apoyo.pdf](https://sid.usal.es/idocs/F8/FDO7208/manual_empleo_apoyo.pdf)

Federación Autismo Castilla y León (s.f.) Estudio sobre alternativas socio-laborales para personas con TEA en Castilla y León. Valladolid, España. Recovered from [http://autismocastillayleon.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/estudio\\_alternativas\\_socio\\_laborales\\_personas\\_con\\_tea.pdf](http://autismocastillayleon.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/estudio_alternativas_socio_laborales_personas_con_tea.pdf)

# Hungary

In Hungary there are quite a few organizations that are helping people in need, including to support autistic people to find and maintain a job. However, these organizations are usually NGOs therefore there is limited capacity and based on the actual financial situation there can be more or less opportunities for autistic people and companies to find one another. Some of the main organizations who work with autistic people to find a job are:

- Hungarian Autistic Society (aosz.hu)
- Mars Foundation (marsalapitvany.hu)
- Kockacsoki Nonprofit Ltd. (kockacsoki.hu)
- Salva Vita Foundation (salvavita.hu)
- Hand in Hand Foundation (kezenfogva.hu)
- Napra Forgó Rehabilitation Services Nonprofit Ltd (naf.hu)
- Aura Association (auraegyesulet.hu)
- Szimbiozis Foundation (szimbiozis.net)

There are a few organizations that are dedicated to offer a helping hand to people to find and maintain a job in the open labour-market, so do Mars Foundation, Salva Vita Foundation, Hand in Hand Foundation, Napra Forgó Rehabilitation Service Nonprofit Ltd., Aura Association or Szimbiozis Foundation. These NGOs usually use different methods, but the basic method is the autism-specialized supported employment method. It is based on the American-based Supported Employment method, that had been first modified to the Hungarian circumstances after it had been adapted to autism. (Because Supported Employment is addressed to people with intellectual disability. There are other programs that help autistic people enter the open labour-market in educating, or other ways preparing them and their families to transit from the world of education to the world of employment. The organizations are guiding their clients on how to behave in a working environment, or what kind of positions are out there. Also, they help the families to get ready for the transition, because this is a mandatory change not only to the clients, but also to their immediate environment.

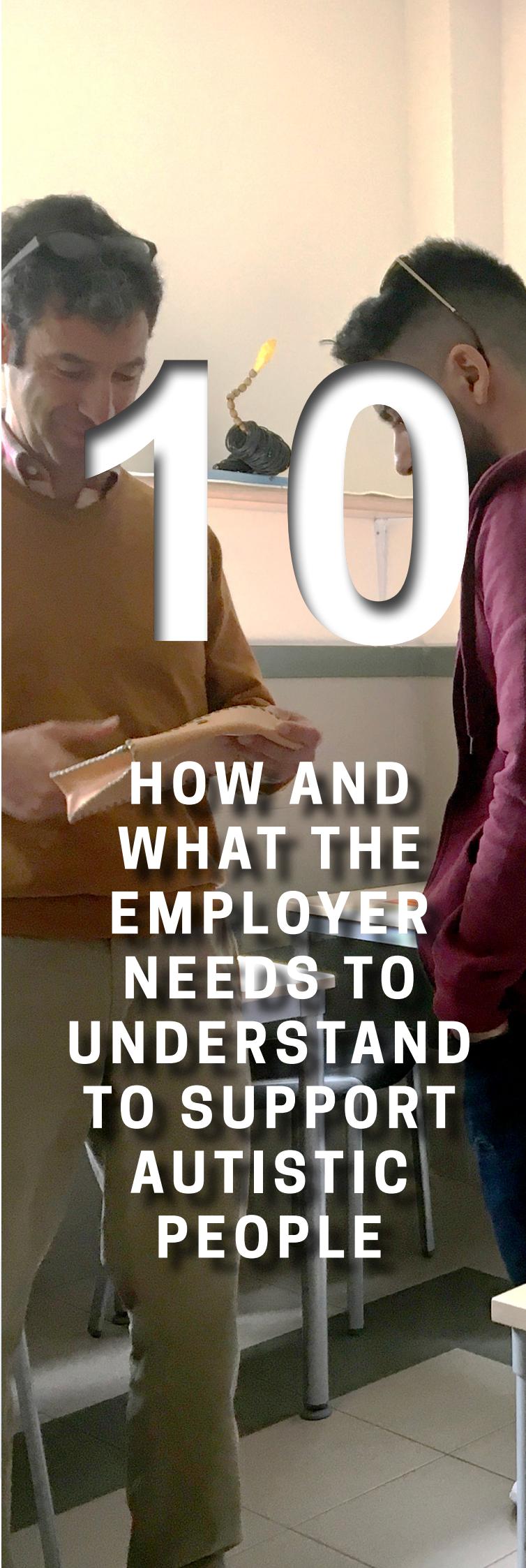
## Links:

Employment of people with disabilities – The “Nothing about you without you!” project was supported by the FOF2016 tender of the Ministry of Human Resources and the Equal Opportunities of People with Disabilities Non-profit Ltd. (FSZK). (2017) <https://www.feszt.eu/projektjeink/semmirolatok-nelkuletek/fogyatekos-emberek-foglalkoztatasa/>

Employment practice of people with disabilities and a reduced work capacity in the open labour market (2016) – Balázs-Földi, E., International Journal of Engineering and Management Sciences (IJEMS) Vol. 1. (2016). No. 1. [http://ijems.lib.unideb.hu/file/9/57a9c60a67e3e/szerzo/Balazs\\_Foldi.PDF](http://ijems.lib.unideb.hu/file/9/57a9c60a67e3e/szerzo/Balazs_Foldi.PDF)

Autism specific supported employment - methodology manual (2011) – Jasper, E., Kanizsai-Nagy, I., Budapest [http://fszk.hu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ATF\\_-K%C3%A9zik%C3%B6nyv.pdf](http://fszk.hu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ATF_-K%C3%A9zik%C3%B6nyv.pdf)

Autistic people in the Open Labor Market? Employment experiences and opportunities of autistic people in Hungary, Research Closing Study (2010) – Dénes Spitzer, E., Farkas, E., Kiss, J., Kiss, M., Móricz, R., Nagy, P., Pálos D., Szaffner E., Vályi R., Budapest <http://mek.oszk.hu/10600/10659/10659.pdf>



## THE BENEFITS OF EMPLOYING AUTISTIC PEOPLE

Some characteristics of autistic people bring benefits that can be of value to the entities/companies. In this table some of those most important qualities are presented.

When choosing the tasks for the employees, the employer must take in consideration their strengths, individual skills, attributes and characteristics as well as their interests.

“Every experience of autism is unique (...) this is the power of neurodiversity.”

## RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES FOR THE EMPLOYER AND CO-WORKERS

Employers and co-workers should be aware that every autistic person has their own and unique personality and may display different characteristics associated with being on the autism spectrum. Both parties can play an active part in making their autistic colleagues feel comfortable and supported. A tutor can be introduced to help autistic employees transition into the workplace.

### The role of the co-worker and how can they help autistic people

- Offer attentive and sensitive guidance, with a sense of concern and availability;
- Provide support and positive reinforcement alongside a constructive modelling strategy;
- Maintain a positive atmosphere so that the autistic person can learn, experience and feel confident and safe to ask questions and share their thoughts;
- Give honest feedback

# 10 HOW AND WHAT THE EMPLOYER NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND TO SUPPORT AUTISTIC PEOPLE

## Promotion of peer-to-peer learning between co-workers to create a more inclusive workplace

- Peer-to-peer learning is a powerful tool that can help break barriers related to skill development.
- This type of learning saves time and resources, and contributes to deepening the existing knowledge in the company.
- Peer-to-peer learning is a strategy that is tailored to the way people learn. Co-workers can gain new skills more effectively in situations that respect the four stages of the learning cycle:
  - gain knowledge;
  - practice and apply this knowledge;
  - receive feedback;
  - reflect on what has been learned.

## Awareness training benefits all co-workers

- Increases their knowledge about autism;
- Makes people feel more secure and confident work;
- Helps ensure understanding and acceptance;
- Fosters sensitivity and respect;
- Provides insight into different ways of communicating. The atypical actions of autistic workers can sometimes come off as rude but in fact they are a reflection of the different brain functioning that characterizes the condition;
- Improves their understanding of the gap in terms of autistic people's expression of their feelings.
- Is important to remember that the experiences shared between co-workers in the workplace, in terms of support and guidance, are a catalyst for building relationships and mutual learning.

## The role of the tutor and how they can help autistic employees

- Establish a relationship of trust with all employees;
- Foster teamwork and relationships between co-workers;
- Provide training in the workplace;
- Make necessary adaptations so that autistic people can perform their role in the best possible way;
- Promote the development and acquisition of autistic employee's skills;
- Mediation;
- Prepare the work setting so that it is predictable and the functions of the workplace are clear;
- Give constructive feedback and assist autistic employees with reflection;
- Hold weekly or biweekly meetings so that questions or doubts can be addressed.

## The tutor must have:

- Knowledge about autism and autistic people's particular specificities and needs;
- The ability to prevent/intervene in the face of inappropriate behaviour;
- Communication skills, empathy, assertiveness and flexibility;
- Knowledge of resources and strategies in the scope of professional inclusion.

## Tutor support stages within the company (adapt. from Bellver, 1999)

Type of Support	Features	Tutor's Activities
<b>Direct Support</b>	<p>Intensive presence;</p> <p>Technical instructions;</p> <p>Presence and follow-up are indispensable from the beginning of the inclusion process;</p> <p>The autistic worker has the right to receive individual support to learn and develop their tasks properly</p>	<p>Task analysis;</p> <p>Work setting analysis;</p> <p>Analysis of the needs of the worker regarding the work setting;</p> <p>Study of the rules, particularities and culture of the company;</p> <p>Search and identification of the possible existence of a natural support within the company;</p> <p>Have the trust (collaboration) of all colleagues and supervisors;</p> <p>Plan and develop a training plan so that the worker can learn to perform the tasks requested correctly;</p> <p>Have a more personal role with the worker.</p>
<b>Indirect Support</b>	<p>Facilitates strategies;</p> <p>The tutor begins to be less present, allowing the worker to integrate into the setting, establishing contacts with the team;</p> <p>The presence of the tutor in the work setting decreases progressively.</p>	<p>Always be aware of and respect the wishes and choices of the worker;</p> <p>Determines the existing natural resources within the company itself and assesses their degree of effectiveness;</p> <p>Establishes strategies to develop the company's own natural support potential;</p> <p>Keeps all team members informed about the areas of intervention;</p> <p>Acts as a mediator in problem solving or other contingencies;</p> <p>It promotes the development of social relations between the worker and his colleagues.</p>
<b>Natural Support</b>	<p>There is a long term follow-up;</p> <p>The tutor is integrated as a company's "more natural" resource;</p> <p>The tutor's presence is less and less frequent within the company, as the autistic worker is fully integrated into the setting, receiving only natural support according to specific needs;</p> <p>The ideal situation occurs when the co-workers themselves, along with the autistic person can solve the problems themselves without resorting to the tutor.</p>	<p>There is a long term follow up;</p> <p>The tutor is integrated as a company's "more natural" resource;</p> <p>The tutor's presence is less and less frequent within the company, as the autistic worker is fully integrated into the setting, receiving only natural support according to specific needs;</p> <p>The ideal situation occurs when the co-workers themselves, along with the autistic person can solve the problems themselves without resorting to the tutor.</p>



"The company was on the one hand very flexible, but they also taught the trainees that they had to have responsibility; that they are independent young adults."

Family's testimony

"It was important to know ahead that I was going to do my internship in a company whose staff had been trained in the features and models of intervention with autistic people. Knowing they would be aware of my potential weaknesses and strengths was really important as I could be myself."

Adrián Arránz. 21 years old. Trainee.



**1**

## EXAMPLE OF A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE COURSES AND THE INTERNSHIP



This example is proposed after the experience of the courses and internships that took place in Portugal (FPDA), Spain (Autismo Burgos) and Hungary (Mars Foundation).

This proposal can be adapted to the different:

**European countries**, regarding their needs, their local and available resources and their traditions.

**People on the autism spectrum**, regarding their profile, needs and interests. A profile analysis must be carried out on young people (strengths, interests and preferences) all during the courses and the internship.

**The companies**, regarding their recruitment needs, available resources, organization characteristics and their company policies.

Before choosing the companies and to ensure a better match between the young autistic person and the job there must be a criteria analysis.

# COURSE 1: NEW BRIDGES FOR PROFESSIONAL INCLUSION OF AUTISTIC PEOPLE

The IVEA project pointed out the need to enable and empower young autistic adults with soft skills in order to promote a successful inclusion in the job market. Autistic people can have great competence in many types of skills (informatics, technologies, mathematics and science, etc...), however the experience showed that they may have difficulties not only in finding an employment but also facing the demands of a new job situation. Dealing with colleagues and with employers can sometimes trigger challenges that might jeopardize the success of their inclusion at work.

In order to develop the skills that can be complementary and innovative to the vocational education of the youngsters in Europe, this course intends to provide them with the additional knowledge and experiences they need to find and keep a job with success.

People on the autism spectrum and with other communication's disabilities deserve the same opportunities every other person can have.

## **Objectives of the course**

- Enable and empower autistic people to be included in the job market
- Hear their voices and understand their choices
- Foster inclusion of autistic people in the job market through the employment
- Foster the development of soft skills through its inclusion in the course and in the internship
- Raise awareness in autistic people regarding the transition to active life

## **Course contents**

- The selection of content of the course must be made according to the profile and needs of young autistic people.
- The contents (soft skills and other competences) are organized and distributed in 5 modules

# **Module 1 - Personal Development**

## Autonomy

- Appearance / Self care
- Personal hygiene
- Use of hygiene facilities
- Healthy diet
- Attendance and Punctuality

## Self-advocacy / Decision-making

- Make their own choices
- Embrace respectful communication

## Responsibility

- Understand and complete the duties
- Act professionally

## Assertiveness

- Ask for what they need
- Communicate their thoughts

## Persistence

- Being able to continue working on tasks even if they are difficult to complete

## Resilience

- Being able to manage from demanding workloads to relationships with colleagues

## Flexibility / Adaptability

- Being able to deal with changes in the environment / Dealing with unexpected situations

## Self-efficacy

- Believe in their ability to complete tasks efficiently

## Self-confidence

- Being able to understand their competencies and use them with confidence
- Being confident to interact with everyone needed

# **Module 2 - Social Development**

## Interpersonal relationship

- Accepting different points of view (understand the perspective and thoughts of others)
- Respecting the hierarchy in the workplace
- Accepting rules and limits

## Social consciousness

- Try to build awareness of being a part of the working environment

### Empathy

- Try to understand a situation from another person's perspective

### Cooperation

- Team work
- Sharing tasks
- Endurance of the physical closeness of others

### Concept of private and public

- Differentiate public place behaviours from private space behaviours

## **Module 3 - Emotional Development**

### Emotional literacy

- Knowledge and identification of feelings and emotions in themselves and in others
- Stress tolerance
- Frustration management
- Self-control
- Self-regulation
- Tolerance to critics
- Problem solving (to be able to find solutions or alternatives)
- Critical thinking

## **Module 4 - Transition to active life**

### Communication in the workplace

- Ability to question, argue and ask for help from the supervisor and colleagues
- Active listening
- Ability to interpret and execute verbal and written instructions
- Establish and maintain a conversation

### How to join the job market

- How to elaborate a motivation letter, a CV and a spontaneous application for a job
- How to apply for a job offer
- How to behave in a job interview (clothing, presentation, conversation, how to respond to frequently asked questions)

### Independency

- Being able to work at their own pace
- Following "To-do" lists to complete tasks independently

### Ethical commitment

- Build trust in the working environment

### Organizational capacity in the workplace (plan, organize and execute tasks)

- Organise the working space, desk
- Follow a written list system; the list of tasks can be renewed each day/week

## Orientation

- Space orientation
- Orientation in time (timetables and schedules)
- How to use a public transport system (train, bus, tram, etc...)

## Availability

- For training

## Creativity

- Task solving
- Expression of ideas
- Distinctive imagination

## Motivation to perform tasks

- Initiative to perform tasks and to propose new ideas

# **Module 5 – Legislation**

## UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities

## European Legislation on people with disability

- Written declaration: The Charter of Rights of Autistic People
- The European Parliament Written Declaration on Autism: <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/resource-centre/content/european-parliament-written-declaration-autism-2015>

## National legislation on employment of autistic people and people with disability in general

## Rights and responsibilities

- Type of contracts
- Trade unions

## **Methodology**

- A total of 30 to 50 hours that include:
  - | Online sessions\* (when the trainees have training together with the trainer in real-time)
  - Individual and autonomous work (when the trainees don't work directly with the trainer).
  - The sessions may be face-to-face depending on the current pandemic situation.

## **Resources**

Multimedia (e.g. videos, contact email) basic concepts (power points); group dynamics (e.g. role-playing); books

## **Evaluation**

There will be a continuous and qualitative evaluation during the course.

At the end of each session the trainer and the trainees will fill questionnaires to evaluate strengths and points for improvement and discuss what they learned in the session.

# COURSE 2: NEW DYNAMICS FOR PROFESSIONAL INCLUSION OF AUTISTIC PEOPLE

The main aim of the course for employers is to promote and implement good practices on employment of autistic people across Europe. It can be a small contribution to increase the employment rate of autistic people in the European countries of the partnership.

This course intends, based on the good practices shown in the literature review, to foster employers' awareness of the different kinds of contributions autistic people can give in the workplace.

If the job will match the skills and interests of the employee, autistic people can be a good asset to the company.

It is important that all people that will be in the workplace with the autistic person understand the way they think, act, communicate and learn.

The co-workers, tutor and human resources can be a valuable help and are essential to the success of the autistic employee in the company.

## **Objectives of the course**

- Understanding people on the autism spectrum
- Raise awareness about Autism
- Share the advantages of employing autistic people among stakeholders
- Provide resources and strategies for a better inclusion of autistic people to different types of stakeholders
- Increase the number of “inclusive stakeholders”

## **Course contents**

- The contents are organized and distributed in 3 modules

## **Module 1 – Legislative framework and public incentives for the employment of disabled people**

- Awareness regarding the modalities of employment of people with disabilities in their country (e.g. tax reduction, etc)
- Measures and modalities of supported employment
- Public benefits

## **Module 2 – Autism**

- What is Autism?
- Main characteristics of Autism
- Physical, social and cultural barriers
- Positive features of Autism
- Resources and strategies for a positive inclusion

## **Module 3 - Good practices on employment of autistic people**

- Person-centred planning
- The role of the tutor in the workplace
- Co-worker teaching
- Autism specific accommodations in the workplace
- Create work groups considering the characteristics of each person
- Study visits to the stakeholders

### **Methodology**

B-Learning: Is the combination of face-to-face sessions (with a trainer in a classroom) and on-line training (online courses or other digital formats). It is a teaching modality that uses tools for both face-to-face and distance learning. The course will have a total of 30 to 50 hours.

#### **Face-to-face sessions**

- Face-to-face sessions with a total of 10 hours
- Frequency – Distributed over the total duration of the course. The first face-to-face session is always at the beginning of the course.

#### **Online training**

3 Modules online with 3 activities (e.g. searches, reflections)

#### **Resources**

Multimedia (e.g. videos, contact email) basic concepts (power points); group dynamics; scientific articles

## **Evaluation**

There will be a continuous and qualitative evaluation during the course. At the end of each session the trainer and the trainees will fill questionnaires to evaluate strengths and points for improvement and discuss what they learned in the session. Questionnaires and reflection on the 3 activities chosen by the trainees.

## **The internships**

As a final result of the two courses developed in the IVEA Project - “New bridges for professional inclusion of autistic people” and “New dynamics for professional inclusion of autistic people” the internships for autistic people may take place in the organizations of the stakeholders involved.

During this internship there will be an active interweaving among participants in the two courses and they will have the opportunity to exchange their different experiences and knowledge.

The expected results of the internship together with the results of the two previous courses will determine the future of the courses in a different country or context.

### **Objectives of the internship**

- To improve the quality of life of autistic people through meaningful employment experiences
- To improve good practices on employment of autistic people across Europe
- To promote a full participation by autistic people in the society
- To break myths regarding the abilities of autistic people
- To foster the autonomy and independence of autistic people
- To develop the self-worth/self-esteem in the autistic people making them feel useful and capable
- To foster innovative changes in the dynamics of the organizations
- To promote opportunities of interaction among the participants of both courses
- To allow stakeholders and youngsters to apply the acquired skills in a real context

### **Methodology**

The internship will be flexible according to the match of the different characteristics of the context, the autistic person and the employer.

In most of the cases the tutor in the company will be the same person that attended the course. However, in the multinational or big enterprises, there can be a team in charge of the internship.

If it is a different organization or stakeholder, the responsible for the internship must propose to train and help the staff.

Note: A written cooperation protocol will be signed by all interested parties: the autistic person, the employer and the responsible by the organization.

## **Evaluation**

The evaluation must be continuous and qualitative. The internship must be evaluated mainly by the autistic person together with the tutor or the team. The tutor must be supported by a person that can advise him/ discuss the situations and propose alternative solutions.



# 12

## EVIDENCES / STATEMENTS IN THE 3 COUNTRIES: PORTUGAL, SPAIN AND HUNGARY

### 12.1. From the Impact evaluation

The impact evaluation of the IVEA project as well as the evaluation methodology was coordinated by the Universidade Católica Portuguesa that carried out:

- The global assessment,
- Assessment of the group of young autistic people,
- Assessment of the group of families with young autistic people,
- Assessment of employers who created internship opportunities for young autistic people.

The main evaluation: methods used were questionnaires targeted to trainees, families and employers in three different moments.

#### **Trainees/young autistic people survey:**

The impact assessment carried out through the response to questionnaires by the trainees, included three moments:

- a. Before the training action in order to know the competences of autistic people who were involved in the course (First survey).
- b. At the end of the training action and before the beginning of the internship to verify if any change occurred in the competences of young people (Second survey).
- c. At the end of the internship in order to assess if there were any improvement of the competences of young people to be integrated in the labour market and their use of the acquired skills (Third survey).

## **Families with young autistic people survey:**

The impact assessment carried out through the response to questionnaires by the families, included three moments:

- a. Before the beginning of the training action in order to know the opinions of the families about the competences of autistic people who will be involved in in the course (First survey).
- b. At the end of the training action and before the beginning of the internship to verify the change of the opinions of the families about the competences of their sons/ daughters (Second survey).
- c. At the end of the internship in order to know the opinion of the families about the course and if the course has improved the competences of young people to be integrated in the labour market and their use of acquired skills (Third survey).

## **Employers giving support to young autistic people survey:**

The impact assessment carried out through the response to questionnaires by the employer organizations, included three moments:

- a. Before the training action in order to know the opinions of the employers about the expectations about their participation in the project (First survey).
- b. At the end of the training action and before the beginning of the internship to verify the opinions of the employers about the benefits of the course on their organizations in terms of integrating autistic people (Second survey).
- c. At the end of the internship in order to know the opinion of the employers about the influence of the course on the integration of autistic people (Third survey). In the case of Hungary, the questionnaires were only answered by 4 young people, their families and companies according to a note presented by the Hungarian partners<sup>1</sup>.

## **Discussion of results**

Based on the responses to the third questionnaire (Third survey), the different domains and respective competencies were analysed in order to know whether the young people and families considered that there was a change in the assessment they made for the participants after the internship and the last pilot of the IVEA project, as well as what was the opinion of employers on the level of improvement of the skills of young people to access the labour market. As it concerns the Global assessment, comparing the results of the questionnaires after internships, the youngsters, evaluated in the same scale\* were scored higher by the employers (mean 87%) next by themselves (81%) and by their families (75%). The results pointed out that both families and young people considered that after the internship the situation was better than before and is valued as Good\*. Regarding employers, they considered that the most important skills related to autistic people in terms of transition to their professional life have significantly improved after the internship.

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<sup>1</sup> Considering a scale of 1 to 3 corresponding to the responses (where 1 is Insufficient, 2 is Good and 3 is Very Good)

The final assessment by the total of 24 young people from Portugal, Spain and Hungary showed the skills they valued the most after the end of the courses and the internship.

Among the four categories established and proposed for analysis of the skills: Personal development (PD); Social Development (SD); Skills for Professional Life (SPL) and Emotional Literacy (EL) young people showed their preferences for the skills included in the first 3 domains and did not express preference for any skill included in Emotional Literacy.

It happens that the families didn't also manifest preference by Emotional Literacy Skills. No one in the project expressed any preference for any skill of Emotional Literacy.

Personal development is the category autistic people stated that as being more important in the training course and in the internship (mean-88,5%):

Among the skills of **Personal Development**: 90% of the trainees preferred Autonomy, 85% Self-confidence, 92 % Responsibility and 87% Decision-making.

**Social Development** competences came next in the preferences of the trainees (mean-87%) To accept rules and limits (94%) and Respect for the hierarchy (90%) are the skills that come first in that domain.

Sharing tasks (88%) is also detached. Team work (86%); Cooperation (85%) and Accepting different points of view (84%) and finally Social consciousness (82%).

The families, like their children, also scored higher the skills: Respect the hierarchy in the work place (96%) and to accept rules and limits (94%).

Perhaps we can infer that the families consider those skills essential to maintain the employment or because their children had already past experiences in this special matter.

## **Skills for Professional Life**

It is very interesting to analyse the self-evaluation of Skills for professional life by the autistic youngsters and compare the evaluation with the opinion of their parents and the employers on the same category.

From the 10 skills evaluated as more important during the internship and for their professional life, the youngsters choose 8 skills as being the most important (mean 84%).

In the same category the employers evaluated 7 of the same skills in the youngsters higher (mean 91%) than in their self-evaluation.

On the contrary, the families rated lower their children' skills in this category.

The family scored higher only one skill: Availability (85%). The evaluation of this skill may be due to the fact that the parents feel that their children valued this opportunity. They are enjoying the experience and they feel useful and important, therefore they are much more available to the organisation.

## 12.2 The experiences of IVEA (Portugal, Spain and Hungary) - Statements

### PORUGAL - FPDA

#### Duarte Faria - Male - 33 years of age

In terms of curricular training Duarte attended the Professional Technical Course on Transport at the “Instituto Profissional dos Transportes”. He had the opportunity to develop skills in the field of technology and transport management, marketing and logistics.

Duarte carried out a professional internship in a company of Road Freight Transport where he performed as a checker (picking, packing articles, filling out delivery slip). He had other professional experiences namely in a food supply multinational organization and a small audio-visual studio where he developed several tasks related with charge and discharge of articles, packing, storage and organization of equipment.

Before Duarte began to work in the IVEA project, he had been unemployed for a long time and often confined to his home in a sedentary lifestyle. He was eager to find a job so he could have autonomy, financial independence and contribute to help his parents on household expenses. When he went to the IVEA project, Duarte mentioned he was prepared to gain a job and start to work, acquire new learning and make life changes as for example to wake up earlier every morning. During his early participation in the IVEA project, Duarte was not very communicative and sociable, showing feelings of loneliness, expressions of anger and incomprehension in relation to other people. He presented himself as a sensitive person and he showed a certain fear to accomplish his dream of gain and maintain a job.

Participation in the course “New bridges for professional inclusion of autistic people” and the IKEA internship, allowed Duarte to develop and improve his personal, social and emotional skills and his transition to active life. These skills promoted positive relationships with his co-workers, and his growth and evolution in the performance of the tasks and functions assigned at IKEA.

IKEA could be considered the best company regarding Duarte’s profile. His technical and soft skills and his wishes and dreams justified the choice of this internship. On the other hand, IKEA values, principles, philosophy and inclusive ethos, were crucial to meet Duarte’s needs.

Duarte's parents were involved throughout the development of the IVEA project, always being aware of all situations. Their attitude has always been of great willingness to all the process and different events. Since the beginning, Duarte's relatives were quite hopeful that he could get a job, despite of all the fear and concerns felt. Previous negative experiences in workplace, as well as his peculiar characteristics, justified these feelings. Duarte's final achievements, thanks to the dedication of the IKEA tutors and FPDA support, were reflected in the improvement of Duarte's life quality, as well as his family. At the end of the internship and after overcoming many obstacles, IKEA invited Duarte to sign a contract and incorporating “IKEA Family”.

Thanks to the people who always believed in Duarte, he is now a happy young man who experiences personal and professional fulfilment.

## **Trainee's testimonial**

"IVEA's project, which I had the opportunity to attend, helped me to reach the objectives and needs that I was looking forward long time ago. Being able to get a job, where I could feel well integrated and with a nice dynamic, gave me great stability and allowed me to believe in my skills.

The experience during the internship was very useful and way better than I expected. It contributed to my integration in the workplace.

All the team was always ready to help me: tutors, human resources, peers ... all were very careful in perceiving if I had clearly understood the tasks that were given to me. I will never forget that the team remembered my birthday!

During the internship, I felt motivated and accomplished by being able to help my fellow workers, with my English knowledge.

All the support from my tutors was very important. They always gave me the best orientations and supported me in any question I would ask. My colleagues always helped me when I needed it.

I never felt alone, they were always present during my tasks. My family always supported me along this project and believed I would make it through the "IVEA Project" challenge. During the project, my participation created some good changes in my life. I went back to having a routine, which, for me as for everybody else, is important. It also gave me a lot of confidence in attaining my main objective, which was the opportunity to get a real job. Made me feel useful and fulfilled.

My long-term objectives are to have my financial independence and to have a successful career. It's also to keep helping my parents with the expenses.

I also developed my autonomy skills during this project.

My responsibilities also grew as, for example, I never miss any schedule, respect the internal rules and pay attention to customers and I take care of my uniform appearance.

I would like to evolve in the future, acquire more knowledge and perform different tasks in the company. I hope to keep doing a good job, helping to generate a good work environment.

I will always be available to help my company peers, whenever they need me and when I think I can be helpful."

Duarte Faria

## **Family's testimonial**

"We are all capable. However, the most vulnerable among us need and deserve to have access to opportunities like the one Duarte had! First of all, I need to say that Duarte have had some similar experiences in the past, without success. He didn't feel fulfilled and his self-esteem was at a very low level. Those past experiences made him feel sceptical about this new project.

I always believed that he was an able person because, actually, the Aspies are much more able than we might think. Giving up isn't part of my vocabulary and, for this very reason, when I heard about IVEA's project, I encouraged my son to participate in it. In the preparation course phase, which had a two-week interval between sessions, Duarte didn't believe in the importance this project could have in his life. The Routine, so important to all of us in our daily life was difficult to install but, as time passed and the different types of participation that Duarte had in the sessions, he started to build in confidence and I felt that, in this project and this time, my son was in the right place.

Throughout this project Duarte's expectations in obtaining a good level of growth, reached his peak when he started his internship and felt more secure. I have to say that the work of all the IVEA's team was very well outlined and every detail was cared for. The task of looking for and choosing the right place, which is not easy, was crucial.

In order to reach the proposed objective, the preparation that the IVEA's team delivered to the tutors who would take care of Duarte from the beginning, was of extreme importance. The tutors were ready to receive him. They gave Duarte the guidelines to follow and put him at ease to ask any question about any doubt that might appear. Step by step, they went on integrating Duarte and evaluating him, not only his skills, but also the part of the company he would prefer to work in. Without differentiating him from other peers, they were always very attentive and caring towards him. One day, Duarte was surprised, at being called to a room where the tutors and peers celebrated his birthday. Having always had issues on social integration, little by little Duarte felt more happy and secure. He developed new skills in the company and performed new tasks that contributed to his personal growth. During the course of the project, including preparation, the family support was clearly important! Beyond showing him how happy we were about his achievements, we reinforced his self-esteem, by praising his progress. I also tried, among other aspects, to orientate him through his new responsibilities. Some strategies were used; for instance, supporting him, at the beginning of each working day, a written sketch of his several tasks (before leaving home in the morning) so that he wouldn't be late: setting the alarm clock, next day's clothes, the transportation pass in his wallet, cell phone charged and house keys in his pocket. We also gave him the responsibility of paying for his transportation, his extras and his spending, which contributed to reinforcing his independence.

About the goals in the future, they will have to be thought of one day at a time. The main thing I see is believing in Duarte is confidence towards bigger challenges, interaction with any regular person, but of course, his family backing him up... but, isn't this what we all do for our children?! If IVEA's gave a path to Duarte's life, I am sure it will help many others!"

Margarida Oliveira  
Duarte's Mother

## **Employer's Testimonial**

"Hej,

Wearing the IKEA colours clearly reveals a set of responsibilities not only in favour of the business, but also in the responsibility for the inclusion of all who are willing to contribute, improve and do more and better every day to create a better day to day independent living for all people. Embracing social inclusion projects is undoubtedly a concern at IKEA and it was a privilege and pride to embrace this project where we were able to receive the trainee Duarte Faria within our family.

The entire process was framed within the scope of the project of the Portuguese Federation of Autism, which aims at integrating young people on the autism spectrum, into the labour market. The integral role of Educational Psychologist Teresa Morgado in the preparation, training and integration of Duarte Faria in our team was undoubtedly a huge help. The success of this project was only possible due to the continuous monitoring and incredible teamwork.

It was a huge challenge, but Duarte's enormous desire to learn, to question, and strive towards a safe, happy working environment were factors of success and so, very important to highlight. His technical competence and level of learning has not only given us a clear indication of his added value to our structure in the future and for this reason we were able to hire Duarte as a Permanent in the IKEA Family where he will learn new routines and work areas that are necessary for the business, but also for added value in his personal and family life.

We cannot forget that the role of all colleagues was very important for an integration in harmony, where the spirit of mutual help, unity, leading by example, delegating and assuming responsibilities marked the success of this project in a fantastic way.

We will be available to continue to embrace more projects like Duarte's that enrich us every day because we believe in an inclusive society for a more sustainable and solidified future in integration values."

TACK

Tiago Marques and Daniel Carvalho

Duarte's Tutors

IKEA

## SPAIN - AUTISMO BURGOS

### Adrián A. - 21 years old

Adrián is a 21-year-old young man with a degree in Mechatronics Vocational Training and a 1st-year robotics student, receiving intervention in social skills every week at Autismo Burgos since he was little. He has very good skills and attitudes in many levels in his life.

Adrián decided to participate in the IVEA project encouraged by his parents and by the therapist who's worked with him since he was in the last year of his Vocational Training studies, and had to do three months of internships to finish his studies (with the Covid-19 pandemic, I cannot do them).

His greatest desire was to be able to develop and enhance job skills to be successful in internships and open a path to job placement. As well as having good experience in companies related to your interests.

Adrián's family has supported him throughout the learning process. For them, the needs were clear; to develop work skills to minimize the difficulties that could be encountered in a company, and, enhancing the good educational level of the results obtained in professional training courses.

They wished this experience was as satisfactory as possible since real practices could be rehearsed in a natural and controlled context, with people trained in the potentialities and difficulties autism carries, especially those Adrián experiences.

To Adrián, the most important thing is to practice social relationships and advanced social skills in the workplace, such as asking permission to go to the toilet, saying that the task has been completed and what to do next or being sure he understood the tasks he has to perform and be able to ask for clarity.

The company that welcomed Adrián in his internship was Grupo Antolín, a Spanish multinational company with headquarters and several factories in the city of Burgos. This company designs and produces components and modules for the interior of vehicles.

Although he couldn't carry out tasks more related to the course he had taken, Adrián was able to see first-hand what a large company is like, how these technologies are used and how the robots in charge of carrying out the work are handled. Tasks that Adrián is passionate about!

## **Trainee's Testimonial: Adrián Arránz. 21 years old. Student.**

"My expectations with the IVEA project were very high as I really wanted to learn and to face a real-life job. The activity I liked the most, apart from the internships, were the training courses about communication in the workplace and how to join the world of work.

The part of the project I liked the least were the "opinion groups" as I struggle to speak in public and to express my ideas. Anyway, I believe I'm clear about what I want to say.

Even with these difficulties, I participated in the National Seminar, where I could share my experience. First, I wasn't that convinced with the project, as I thought I wouldn't be able to speak in public and overcome my shyness. It is true that it caused me stress and even discomfort but I decided to do it and, in the end, it was a success.

During the days before starting the practice I was very nervous and had many questions in my mind: How would the place be like? Who was going to be my tutor? How would my classmates be?. All these doubts became valuable life experiences.

My role consisted in helping the HR department with administrative tasks. I also helped with tasks requested by the board assistant.

The experience was very positive. I felt always very comfortable; I learned a lot and I will always remember that my first contact with the world of work was very satisfactory.

It was important to know ahead that I was going to do my internship in a company whose staff had been trained in the features and models of intervention with autistic people. Knowing they would be aware of my potential weaknesses and strengths was really important as I could be myself.

From the first moment I got on very well with Ana, my tutor in the company. Knowing she was my go-to-person in the company, I got to ask her many things.

I worked with several people throughout the internship. I remember that they all wanted to help me and my time there was the best possible. Not so much as I was an autistic person but because I was one of them.

My family was a very important support throughout my learning process and with their participation in the project. I am aware that my family is one of my pillars in life and always does everything for me so that I can improve more and more.

I would have liked to start working soon after doing my first cycle of Vocational Training but, given the situation, we decided to continue training and specializing in robotics.

I see my future closer and closer and I really want to start developing all my potential.

It's true that, given the current crisis, I have doubts about the opportunities for young people to join the world of work and even more so if they are people with disabilities. I think there is still a lot of ignorance and even fear of different people."

## **Family's Testimonial: Carmen I., Adrián mother.**

"We are very grateful with the opportunity that has been given to Adrián. We can see a good evolution regarding his labour skills. In addition, I think it is a very good idea to combine dual training, both for autistic people and for entrepreneurs. Also, internships in a real, controlled context and with previously trained managers.

We consider as essential the group visibility and the awareness from the society in general and also from the companies, which are aware of all the potential this young people have and, sometimes, due to ignorance, stereotypes or fears, they are not given the opportunity to develop personally, socially and professionally.

From the beginning, we knew that the participation in the project was a unique opportunity, not only for Adrián but also for the regional employers, in collaboration with European entities, who would disseminate the research results and make autism more and more visible.

The greatest of our fears came in the internship period, many doubts about the outcome of this very important experience for Adrián's future; doubts about his adaptation to the environment, to the tasks, the relationship with his tutor and co-workers, etc...

We can't hide that first days were a bit hard. Although Adrián was very comfortable in the company, we noticed him a bit nervous. Little by little, those nerves were disappearing and he became to be delighted with the idea of going to work.

We are very happy and grateful for everything Ana and Grupo Antolín have done for our son during the time he was in the internships. They ended up learning with Adrián, welcoming and adapting to him. They made this experience as satisfactory as possible, namely for autistic people, particularly, for Adrián.

We were also very happy with the co-workers, as we believe Adrián's inclusion was really effective. Sometimes they offered him a coffee and every now and again they joined Adrián's work team. This made him feel included and accompanied since from the first days.

It's important that Adrián can see on us the support he needs, as we really believe that, by working together and trusting each other, it will make things easier for his improvement.

We are all aware (including Adrián) that we are immersed in an unprecedented social and economic crisis and that minorities like the autistic community are the ones who suffer first and the most. Even so, we trust in the qualities and potential of Adrián; we encourage him to continue training in all aspects of his life since with effort and tenacity anything can be achieved.

We are sure that Adrián will have a full life with good social and labour inclusion, and, he will be able to achieve all the goals he sets for himself."

## **Employer's Testimonial: Ana García, boss of the HHRR department of Grupo Antolín Eurotrim.**

The expectations of the opportunity to meet this group were very good. Sometimes, the stereotypes around autistic people are very wide due to the visibility of the media, but it has also taught us that they are not entirely true. There are many ways of being autistic people and as many skills as workers.

We want to emphasize the importance of collaborating with different associations to achieve a real and complete labour inclusion of people with disabilities who, according to my experience, are always eager to learn but also eager to teach us what they know.

I have participated in the process from the beginning, with the first focus groups, later in the training course for employers, the internships in her company and even in the National Seminar as a participant telling my experience.

Days before starting the internships, I was very uncertain. Little by little those doubts turned into successes and wonderful experiences.

One of the qualities that surprised me was Adrián's willingness to help, to ask for more work; he showed himself to be a very proactive person in all the tasks that he performed, it didn't matter if it took a little initiative to do it ... I also noticed a great change in Adrián's character. The first few days he was very serious, hardly speaking with anyone but as the days went by I saw him speak more, he felt more comfortable and even joked with a partner. Where he was most afraid was in the more informal moments, for example during breaks, he was unsure of the relaxed social environment but once again it was a success and the relationship was very smooth.

I performed my functions as a tutor in the best possible way, always with a great willingness to help when necessary. I also developed a role as an apprentice, putting into practice all the knowledge acquired and asking for advice when I did not know how to solve a situation.

With co-workers, the relationship was very good, they were able to share work and personal moments. The experience for them was unforgettable, they mutually learned values such as integration, respect and solidarity.

For me, the training course was very interesting, getting to know Autism in an enlightening way and with so many intervention materials/tools. I discovered a world I previously knew nothing more than what I heard from perhaps someone second hand or from listening to someone talk about it on the T.V. I had never had first-hand experience with anyone with autism at work.

Once the experience was lived, it was encouraged that all companies participate in initiatives such as the IVEA project.

Of course, we would be delighted to have autistic people on our staff. It would not be an inconvenience, on the contrary, now that we already know its potentialities and how to solve possible needs, we have a team trained to welcome and adapt the work environment."

## **Mihály Danku - Male - 22 years old**

Mihály is a young adult (22 years old) with a high school degree in IT and some work experience. He could be very focused on small details. He was not very talkative but open to communicate. He did love food and sweets (it was a very important motivation).

He loved computers, and had quite good user skills, but initially, he loved to play on the computer, rather than use it as a tool for a job. He had some experience working in a distribution centre, but he was working there without any autism specific help. He sorted goods into specific packs, but - from his interview - he said he was usually bored, and couldn't make any real connection with his co-workers (as there was no specific help available). His wishes were not only to try and find a new job that is hopefully was not as boring as the one before but to be talk to/interact with his co-workers and maybe to find friends too.

The family was very supportive. They were on the same page with their son; the earlier work experience was not a good fit for him. They did not want to push the youngster, but they wanted him to have some goals, and ultimately a job. They wanted to make the autistic young adult as independent as possible. Besides they also wanted to find some friends for the him too. They trusted in the program and the autism specific experts, who were working in the company. They were always open to discuss the next step, the support they should or shouldn't give, (for instance to help the young autistic adult to use public transportation instead of driving him to the job place).

Mihály needed a clear schedule, very detailed explanation of every procedure. Starting with how to arrive at the company, whom to call or text in case of any problem, what to wear in the job place, and the exact task he was required to carry out. He also needed some encouragement to talk to others, to ask for help, and to say if something is wrong.

Mihály started his program in a small chocolate manufacturer that already had experience in working with autistic people. During the traineeship he did try many kinds of tasks from the easiest to the most difficult; cleaning the place to preparing real chocolate, preparing the packages, to count and register the amount they produce during one day. He was able to use his attention to details, he could use his IT skills, and also learned new skills, for example, measuring ingredients. As the company had an autism specific counsellor, he always had an opportunity to reach out for support, to have lunch with and share their experience at the end of the day. Though the job was not an exact fit to his profession (education), it did fit well to his personality, which is such a positive outcome. And of course, the autism specific support was essential in making the traineeship successful.

### **Trainee's Testimonial:**

"I enjoyed that it was varied. I tried very different tasks. I loved cleaning, because it was easy. I was shown one time how to make chocolate and I was happy that I understood it quickly.

What I liked the most was that we could taste the chocolate and that we saw it put out on the cafe shelf (which belongs to the manufactory) and it was bought by the customers. I was proud that I can produce something that is worth selling, and other people enjoy it.

The worst experience was that I once got on the wrong bus on the way to work. But by then, luckily, I already knew who to call if there was a problem. My job coach explained to me on the phone what to do, and she stayed on line until I found the right bus.

You could talk to others and it was very good. Everyone brought a sandwich for lunch and we sat down together to eat it. We could ask for cocoa as well. It was good that Eszter (the job coach) was there; you could always ask her for help.

My family was very happy and my mom was excited that I could find the job place alone. But I knew I could do it. In the afternoon I was always asked what my day was like. It was good that I came home from work too, and I also had stories to tell my family.

I realized I liked to cook (true, we made chocolate here, but it's almost like cooking). It's a lot more interesting than working on a computer. Now I know I want a job related to cooking.

Now because of COVID it's hard enough here and I don't even like to leave home, but when it is over, I want a real job where I have a salary and where I can cook. I am happy that I was a trainee in the chocolate manufacturer. It gave me the possibility to try new things, and the people there were always nice to me."

### **Family's Testimonial: Carmen I., Adrián mother.**

"We are happy that our son has enrolled in the IVEA training and traineeship program. He has been staying at home for a year now, and although we like him, and he is not a difficult young adult, it is not good for him to just stay at home. Also, he had a high school degree in IT, but honestly, he was not that interested to find a job in that area. He did some volunteering during high school in the IT field and a short working experience which was not bad, but that company couldn't keep him as there was no one who understood autism. So, we had quite high expectations regarding the IVEA traineeship. First and foremost, we hoped that our son would collect new and good experience, and the program will help him to figure out what to do in the future.

We found the possibility on the internet, as we are in connection with the Mars Foundation. First our son was not very enthusiastic, but he was ready to go to the first meeting, and for the training. From the first moment we had a very good experience, as the trainers were well prepared with autism knowledge. They supported our son like we used to support him for tens of years. For instance they sent a map and a very detailed description of how to go to the place, where they would meet, who is going to wait for him (with a photo of the person) and what is going to happen. They also sent the same information to us (in a separate email). It made us feel calm. We could see our son was in good hands.

At the company, we also continuously communicated with the tutor. We knew what was happened during the day; the main points. It gave us the possibility to talk about his experiences at home, as we could ask specific questions regarding his days. The company was on the one hand very flexible, but they also taught the trainees that they had to have responsibility; that they are independent young adults.

I think our role was to encourage our son and also to step back a little bit, to see what he is capable of achieving. The tutor was always telling us not to be too protective of him.

We experienced that our son is talking more, ready to share his experiences. We also realized that he is doing more housework at home. For instance, he cleaned his room, and washed his clothes. It made him and us proud. Also, it made our home a calmer place. We are very thankful for the project, because it not only influenced our child, but also our family life to be better.

We see that our son likes to cook. He likes to do something more tangible, instead of something theoretical. We are going to support him to find a job, where he can do something manually. He is talking about cooking and we support him. Unfortunately, the COVID hit our country very badly, so there are many unemployed people, but after it's gone, we are going to encourage our son to find a job in a kitchen. We are still in contact with the tutor, and she promised to help our son in this matter."

## **Employer's Testimonial**

"Our company (Kockacsoki) already had autistic employees so there's already a tutor there. During IVEA project the tutor learned a lot from the training tools, as well as from the other participants and this helped her to better support our employees. This is why we believe we are ready to welcome new trainees on the autism spectrum (and probably even more employees in the long run.)

It was very good to see that the tutor improved her self-esteem and the young adults who were already working in the company started to support the newcomers.

To be honest, sometimes autistic adults can destabilize each other. For example, if someone went too close to another person; they perhaps didn't understand the social distance rules, our tutor was always there to help in those situations.

We had to slightly adjust our work procedures. For instance, we had to take into account that a trainee is not as quick in the tasks as a fully trained employee. As we are a small company, we have to distribute the everyday tasks well. For this reason, firstly we gave only a small part of the task (for instance cleaning the place, or preparing paper boxes) and only in the middle of the internship did we involve the trainee into the actual chocolate making procedure. The tutor's task was always to be present and recognise any problem or tension. Also, to start and wrap up every day. The co-workers were also prepared before the internship started, so they knew what to expect.

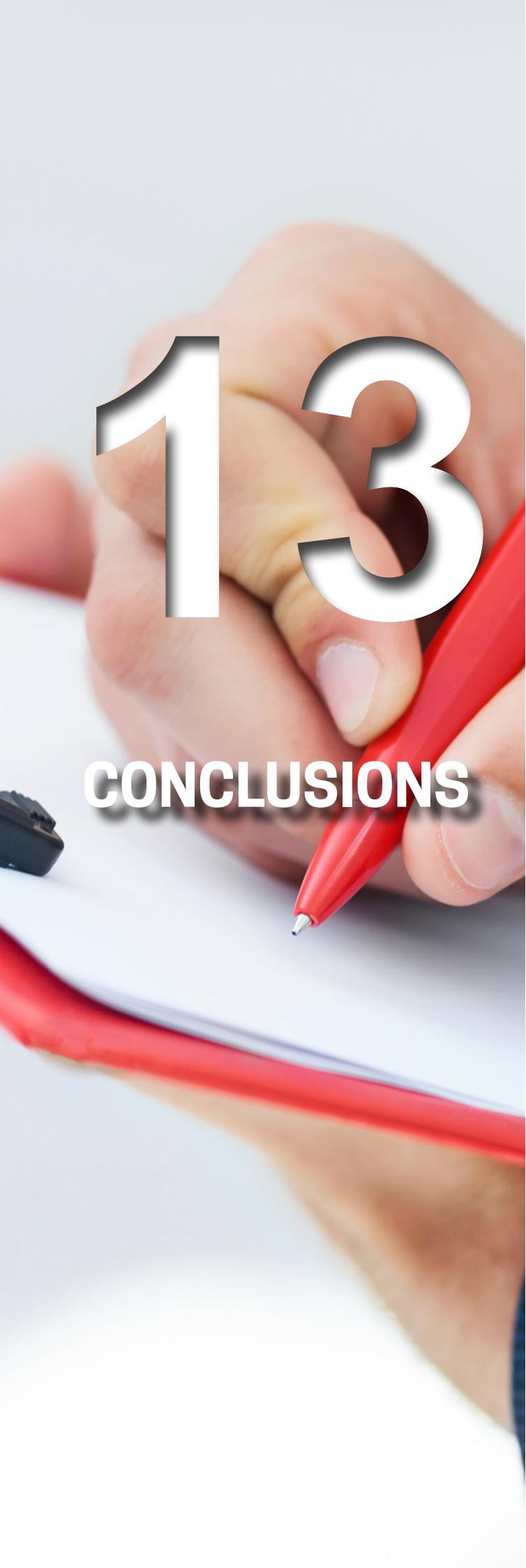
In some cases, we had to change the tasks. First, the trainee said that he didn't like hot and smelly stuff (like raw chocolate cream), but after a while it turned out that he is amazing in chocolate making and has a very specific taste. We had to remain flexible.

Because we have tried and saw the success, we know now, that we are very keen to hire two more autistic adults. We are also very thankful to IVEA project that allowed our tutor to gain the knowledge, tools and skills to support autistic adults on site. We decided to extend our program and maybe to make our manufacture a little bigger."



# 13

## CONCLUSIONS



People on the autism spectrum may have many positive qualities to be included in the domain of sciences, informatics, technologies or other. However autistic people struggle to gain and maintain the employment for reasons mainly related to their difficulties with the communication and social interaction skills which affect their abilities to understand and communicate effectively with managers, tutors and colleagues. After the statements and evidences from the evaluation, the conclusions of the IVEA project- Innovative Vocational Education for Autism (2018/2021) helped to contribute to the main aim of the IVEA project:

- to enhance the social inclusion of autistic people through employment.

For that the partnership of IVEA, Autismo Burgos (Spain), Mars autistákért Alapítvány (Hungary), Autisme Europe, Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Portugal) and Intermedia KT (Greece) coordinated by FPDA- Federação Portuguesa de Autismo (Portugal) created the European Guide for the effective vocational training of the autistic people as it was previewed in this project. Along with the European Guide a smartphone application has also been created including a separate accessible version for autistic people.

After the data collected through a wide review of literature on the employment of autistic people, the partners and people on the spectrum identified the main training needs and selected the appropriated practice and tools which would be beneficial for this population.

In order to understand what is lacking in the training after their experiences in the past, 3 focus groups took place in Spain, Portugal and Hungary with people on the autism spectrum, their families and stake holders interested in participate on IVEA project. The results of the focus groups together with all collected information identified the skills and transversal competences to include in the curriculum of the 2 training courses tested in 2 pilot tests: one for the people in the spectrum of autism and the other for effective employers of the organizations involved on the IVEA project.

All through the 60 hours of the course for autistic youngsters (pilot study) the participants discussed and learned the importance of the transversal competences that must be included in the training of autistic people. The different ways of communication were pointed out and discussed on the face-to-face sessions. Also, the relationship with employers, tutors, co-workers and peers were discussed to help the participants to establish and maintain an effective and healthy relationship with their peers and co-workers in the internships and in the future employments.

Regarding the employers' tutors Course (b-learning format), two face-to-face sessions took place in March as previously set up by the project partnership. The courses were followed by an internship adequate to each employee where both trainers and trainees applied and discussed the acquired knowledge.

The project has been developed all along thirty-five months that included eighteen months facing the great challenge that represented the Covid 19. The pandemic brought severe implications for the normal development of IVEA project. From March 2020, due to lockdown declared by the Portuguese and Spanish government (among others) and the difficult situation faced throughout the world, the partners proceeded to work remotely and maintained active contact with each other and trainees via phone, e-mail and digital platforms namely Zoom, Teams or Skype. Some of the Transnational Project Meetings and Multiplier events like International and National Seminars and Conferences had to be replaced by Zoom events.

From April on, everyone involved in the IVEA project, from trainees to stakeholders' human resources, families and trainers used their skills, their creativity and the adaptations of the available materials to fight one invisible enemy – the Corona virus pandemic. Fortunately, face-to-face training courses for autistic people, ended in February and beginning of March like it was previously determined.

Covid19 hit Hungary very badly and IVEA training had to follow a different model in that country. As it was impossible for youngsters to have face-to-face sessions due to the ongoing lockdown, they decided to take an individual training in a handmade chocolate factory where there was already a group of 6 autistic youngsters working with a tutor. They had to adjust to IVEA project's methodology and contents and the tutor had to follow the new format.

On the other hand, all internships in any of the 3 countries didn't take place simultaneously and had different extensions. This depended on the needs and characteristics of the stakeholders and the opportunity for the work to start or to go on. From March until July, based on the priorities of the organizations certain internships had already started and didn't stop, as was the case of Portugal, while others were suspended for a short time. However, at last all participants found internship according to their preferences and most of them found even more adequate jobs after the confinement.

Some of the challenges turned out to be beneficial. That was the case of the internship in Spain. When Autismo Burgos staff resumed contact with the entities a few months later, they found a very different reality and several of the entities could not welcome the trainees for various reasons. Finally, it was possible to carry out the internship in ten entities although with different time and conditions from the initial approach. This inconvenience was an opportunity for the youngsters to learn other social skills and work aspects that would not be possible in the first proposal..

Nowadays, it is clear that there is increased interest and awareness from stakeholders to employ and include people with disabilities in their organizations. Employers are also eager to learn more about diverse population groups and how they can contribute towards building a more inclusive work environment.

According to relevant statements, which were based on the evaluation, the course for employers benefited all participants in the internships. The diverse and stimulating experiences, presented in the course, interweaved with the knowledge of autistic people, co-workers and tutors contributing this way to the success of the project.

The constant support during the internship and the personal assistance of stake holders as well as the information from an external technician was valued by all the participants. Employers and stake holders were motivated to work with the professional and the employees choosing the most suitable position for the autistic person in the company or shop or factory. A major success indicator of the project was the invitation to contracts of employment the youngsters got at the end of the internships.

From multinational organizations like IKEA, or El Corte Inglês in Portugal, to the Spanish important stakeholders like The Catedral de Burgos and El Grupo Antolín and the small Chocolate factory in Hungary were enthusiastic in their reports about offering employment opportunities to autistic people in the future.

Based on the statements and evidences related to the IVEA European Guide the main objectives of the project IVEA-Innovative Vocational Education for Autism were widely reached in what concerns to foster the employment of autistic people and to raise awareness on the importance of their inclusion in society through employment.

Even if the results of this small sample are not representative of the millions of autistic people in Europe, the overall outcome of the project is highlighting that autistic people can thrive as employers when they are receiving the right support for them and their working environment.

# 14

## ANNEXES

### LEGISLATION

#### DISABILITY RIGHTS(UN CONVENTION):

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD):

Article 19 on independent living: “community support services” “to prevent isolation or segregation from the community”

Article 24 on education inclusive setting with “alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills” when accessing “general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.”

Article 27 on work and employment with “access to general technical and vocational guidance programs, placement services and vocational and continuing training”

#### NATIONAL LEGISLATION OF COUNTRIES OF PROJECT PARTNERS (on education and training, on employment, on inclusion)

##### European legislation

...Useful resource: ANED 2017-18 Disability assessment synthesis in the European States

##### PORUGAL

use e.g. of ANED Country report on the European Pillar of Social Rights

In Portugal, the unemployment rate of people with disabilities is huge. Moreover, autistic people are one of the most vulnerable groups.

Since 1976, the Constitution of Portuguese Republic in the Labour Legislation states that in the Labour Code (Código do Trabalho), Lei nº 7/2009 – safeguard the non-discrimination principle regarding the employment of people with disabilities (same rights and duties).

In 2009 Portugal signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as the Optional Protocol. From that date on, Portugal had to modify its legislation according to the Convention and presented a report on the application of its principles. Presently there are several laws supporting the employment of people with disabilities and that includes tax relief.

The government also promotes and supports the employment of people with disabilities, establishing a quota scheme for the companies just for the recruitment of people with disabilities with 60% or more of incapacity (Law 4/2019) either in the public and private sector.

Constitution of Portuguese Republic

<https://dre.pt/legislacao-consolidada/-/lc/34520775/view>

Law nº7/2009

<https://dre.pt/pesquisa/-/search/602073/details/maximized>

Summary in plan portuguese (without legal value)

[https://dre.pt/web/guest/pesquisa/-/search/602073/details/normal?\\_search\\_WAR\\_drefrontofficeportlet\\_res=pt](https://dre.pt/web/guest/pesquisa/-/search/602073/details/normal?_search_WAR_drefrontofficeportlet_res=pt)

Summary in plan english (without legal value)

[https://dre.pt/web/guest/pesquisa/-/search/602073/details/normal?\\_search\\_WAR\\_drefrontofficeportlet\\_res=en](https://dre.pt/web/guest/pesquisa/-/search/602073/details/normal?_search_WAR_drefrontofficeportlet_res=en)

Law nº4/2019

<https://dre.pt/home/-/dre/117663335/details/maximized>

## SPAIN

ANED Country report on the European Pillar of Social Rights

### INTEGRATION OF WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES INTO THE ORDINARY WORK SYSTEM

- Article 42 of Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013, of November 29, which approves the Consolidated Text of the General Law on the rights of people with disabilities and their social inclusion.
- Royal Legislative Decree 5/2015, of October 30, approving the revised text of the Law of the Basic Statute of Public Employees.
- Law 30/1984, of August 2, on measures for the reform of the Public Function.
- Royal Decree 364/2005, of April 8, which regulates the alternative compliance with exceptional character of the reserve quota in favor of workers with disabilities.

### CONTRACTING BY OUTSIDE ACCOUNT

- Royal Decree 1451/1983, of May 11, which, in compliance with the provisions of Law 13/1982, of April 7, regulates selective employment and measures to promote the employment of disabled workers
- Royal Decree 170/2004, of January 30, which modifies Royal Decree 1451/1983, of May 11, which, in compliance with the provisions of Law 13/1982, of April 7, regulates selective employment and measures to promote the employment of disabled workers.
- Law 43/2006, of December 29, for the improvement of growth and employment.

- Royal Decree 870/2007, of July 2, which regulates the supported employment program as a measure to promote the employment of people with disabilities in the ordinary labor market.
- Article 30 of Law 14/2013, of September 27, to support entrepreneurs and their internationalization.

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

- Royal Decree 870/2007, of July 2, which regulates the supported employment program as a measure to promote the employment of people with disabilities in the ordinary labor market.

## SPECIAL EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

- Order TMS / 805/2019, of July 23, which increases, with extraordinary character, the subsidies destined to the maintenance of jobs of people with disabilities in the Special Employment Centers, established in the Order of October 16 of 1998, which establishes the regulatory bases for the granting of public aid and subsidies aimed at promoting the labor integration of people with disabilities in special employment and self-employment centers.
- Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013, of November 29, approving the Consolidated Text of the General Law on the rights of people with disabilities and their social inclusion.
- Royal Decree 1368/1985, of July 17, which regulates the special employment relationship of the disabled who work in the Special Employment Centers.
- Royal Decree 2273/85, of December 4, which approves the Regulation of Special Employment Centers defined in article 42 of Law 13/82, of April 7, on the social integration of people with disabilities.
- Order of October 16, 1998, which establishes the regulatory bases for the granting of public aid and subsidies aimed at promoting the labor integration of the disabled in Special Employment Centers and self-employment.
- Royal Decree 469/2006, of April 21, which regulates the support units for professional activity within the framework of the personal and social adjustment services of the Special Employment Centers.
- Royal Decree 28/2020, of September 22, on remote work.

## INTERLOCKS

- Royal Decree 290/2004, of February 20, which regulates labor enclaves as a measure to promote the employment of people with disabilities.

## HUNGARY

ANED Country report on the European Pillar of Social Rights

### WHICH EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING INSTITUTES AND WHAT SUPPORT MEASURES EXIST IN THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES.

European institutes and initiatives

EU agency: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)

NGO platform: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

## Academic Network of European Disability Experts (ANED) funds for support measures: future European Social Funds Plus scheme

### Portugal

IEFP – Portuguese Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, fosters job creation, job quality and unemployment reduction, through employment and training policies.

IEFP - Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional

<https://iefponline.iefp.pt/>

### Spain

Asociación Española de Empleo con apoyo. Its mission is to promote the development of Supported Employment in Spain and Latin America so that more and more people with disabilities or at risk of social exclusion can successfully access the integrated world of work, and, with this, can be recognized in practice as citizens with all their rights.

<http://www.empleoconapoyo.org/aese/>

### Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal (SEPE)

It is an autonomous body attached to the Ministry of Labor and Social Economy. The SEPE, together with the Public Employment Services of the Autonomous Communities, form the National Employment System. From this state structure, measures and actions for employment are promoted, designed and developed, whose execution is decentralized, adjusted to the different territorial realities

<https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/que-es-el-sepe/comunicacion-institucional/publicaciones/publicaciones-oficiales/listado-pub-empleo/bonificaciones-reducciones-discapacitados.html>

### Hungary

Complex Certification (Komplex Minősítés) - <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1200007>. nem

Rehabilitation Contribution (Reabilitációs Hozzájárulás) - <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1100191.tv> - 7. A rehabilitációs hozzájárulás és a megváltozott munkaképesség személyek foglalkoztatásának támogatása

Social Contribution (Szociális Hozzájárulás) - [https://www.nav.gov.hu/nav/ado/szocialis\\_hozzajarulasi\\_ado/Tajekoztato\\_a\\_megvalt20181227.html](https://www.nav.gov.hu/nav/ado/szocialis_hozzajarulasi_ado/Tajekoztato_a_megvalt20181227.html)

Subsidies and Salary - <http://emmiugyfelszolglat.gov.hu/szocialis/megvaltozott>

To get benefits for employing somebody on the autism spectrum , HR departments have to make sure that autistic person has a valid Complex Certificate. Based on the Complex Certificate, the person might be eligible to receive some subsidies from the State Department. Some of the subsidies have an earning barrier that might change the salary of the person. Everybody who has a valid Complex Certificate is entitled to have extra 5 days off yearly by law.

Rehabilitation contribution: According to the Hungarian law, every company that employs more than 25 people, 5% of staff has to own Complex Certification. If that does not happen, they have to pay 9 times the minimum wage as a fine that was 1 449 000 Ft per person (who is not employed) per annum in 2020.

Social contribution: When a company employs somebody with Complex Certificate they do not have to pay the fee of social contribution for that employer (17,5 of tax)

## PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Belgium

Belgian consultancy passwerk: <https://www.passwerk.be/>

Portugal

APPDA-Setúbal - Associação Portuguesa para as perturbações do desenvolvimento e Autismo

Employability project “Vida Ativa”

<https://www.appda-setubal.com/Menu/Associacao/11>

APSA - Associação Portuguesa de Síndrome de Asperger

Employability Program

<https://www.apsa.org.pt/en/community/companies/employability-program>

Inovar Autismo

Employability project “Geração com Valor”

<https://www.inovarautismo.pt/projetos/geracao-com-valor>

Valor T

Employability agency at the service of people with disabilities

<https://valort.scml.pt/ValorT/Home>

RedEmprega Program

The RedEmprega Program aims to increase the employability of the population with disabilities

<https://www.redempregalisboa.pt/>

Spain

Autismo España.

A state-wide confederation that groups and represents 141 entities that provide specialized support and services to autistic people spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families.

<http://www.autismo.org.es>

Asociación Española de Empleo con apoyo.

Its mission is to promote the development of Supported Employment in Spain and Latin America so that more and more people with disabilities or at risk of social exclusion can successfully access the integrated world of work, and, with this, can be recognized in practice as citizens with all their rights.

<http://www.empleoconapoyo.org/aese/>



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