



We want to be ready for today's ever-changing life –  
developing skills of persons with disabilities for the 21st century

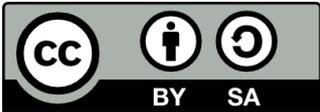
## **BEST PRACTICES**

**2022-2-TR01-KA210-ADU-000094237**

**REFORM**

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# 1. Strengthening Vocational Education in Special Education Project

## (No Barriers to Employment)

The project is titled "Strengthening Vocational Education in Special Education" and is conducted under the theme "No Barriers to Employment." The coordinator of this project is the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services. The main objective of the project is to enhance the institutional capacity of special education schools providing vocational education at the secondary education level, thereby improving the quality of special education services. The project duration is set for 18 months, starting from March 27, 2023, and ending on August 31, 2024. An important partner and source for the project is UNICEF.

The project aimed to produce significant outputs by identifying and addressing the needs in the field of special education. Initially, a comprehensive consolidated report was prepared based on the results of a needs analysis. In line with this report, two new vocational fields were developed, and 18 existing programs were updated. Two vocational qualification frameworks and implementation videos were created, along with guidebooks and achievement videos suitable for the new programs. Additionally, the project included the book "Vocational Education Practices and Employment in Special Education," the "Products Catalogue of Special Hands," and the "Live Map of Vocational Education in Special Education in Turkey."

Eighteen workshop standards in vocational education institutions were revised, and two new workshop standards were established. To contribute to the circular economy, a prototype of an aquaponics system was developed to promote waste material recycling and water conservation, which was then implemented in a school. Furthermore, training was provided to 725 vocational area teachers, and a "Centre of Excellence Model" was prepared and implemented in two schools. In collaboration with İŞKUR, an "Effective Internship Model Based on School-Sector Cooperation" was developed to facilitate students' integration into the labour market. A regulatory framework has also been planned to address potential legal requirements arising from the project outcomes.

## 2. Strengthening Special Education Project

The "Strengthening Special Education Project," implemented by the Ministry of National Education and financed by the European Union, has been coordinated by our General Directorate. The project, with a total budget of 7 million euros, was completed between 2011 and 2014. Its main goal is to improve special education services in Turkey and to contribute to the integration of all individuals in need of special education into society. The project's purpose is to enhance opportunities and improve learning environments for individuals in need of special education and those with special talents, using psychological measurement tools, with the active participation and support of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local public institutions, municipalities, and private sector organizations. The completed activities within the project are as follows:

**Legislation and Awareness:** Information meetings about the "Barrier-Free Schools" Model were held in 10 pilot provinces, reaching approximately 3,000 people. As a result of legislative workshops, a "Legislative Proposal Document" and strategic action plans were prepared.

**Barrier-Free School Model:** In collaboration with public and civil society participation, an "Integration Guide" and "Barrier-Free School Standards" documents were created. Two study visits were conducted abroad, and 500 administrators, 1,000 teachers, and 33 trainers were trained in the pilot provinces.

**Adaptation of New Psychological Measurement Tools:** Adaptation studies for new measurement tools were conducted, and 100 teachers were trained as trainers.

**Vocational Education for Individuals with Disabilities:** Two visits were made abroad for the "Barrier-Free Schools" Model, and 30 teachers were trained as school trainers. A guidebook on "Integration Practices in Vocational Education" was prepared and distributed throughout Turkey.

### 3. Strengthening Inclusive Education Project (BEGEP)

The Strengthening Inclusive Education Project (BEGEP) is a project coordinated by the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services and financed by the European Union. The project aims to contribute to the development of an innovative, sustainable, and inclusive education system by supporting the development of teachers, school administrators, and other stakeholders involved in inclusive education practices. The project duration is 36 months, starting from August 1, 2019, and ending on July 31, 2022. The total budget for the project is set at €6,542,896.25, with pilot provinces including Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Konya, Samsun, Trabzon, Kahramanmaraş, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Balıkesir, Bursa, and Adana. The project is supported by the Directorate of European Union Financial Assistance of the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services and implemented by the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services of the Ministry of National Education. Additionally, the project partners include the General Directorates of Primary Education, Secondary Education, Teacher Training and Development, Measurement, Evaluation and Examination Services, and Vocational Technical Education. The project's main objective includes four main intervention areas and 16 sub-interventions to support inclusive education (For more information, please visit [www.begep.org](http://www.begep.org).)

Intervention Area I: Capacity Building aims to enhance capacity in special education and guidance services. This will involve the development of 10 in-service training programs, training 5,000 teachers in 12 pilot provinces, and providing STEM education to 700 teachers in special education centres. Additionally, a model for inclusion will be created based on the "Response to Intervention (RtI)" model, and an assessment tool will be developed to identify the needs of disadvantaged students.

Intervention Area II: Awareness Raising activities aim to reach 3,700 people by organizing campaigns on special education and inclusion topics. Events will include an opening ceremony, awareness-raising activities for families and NGOs, and the "Special Education Summit."

Intervention Area III: Scientific and Technical Studies will involve conducting an impact analysis to increase the effectiveness of diagnosis and placement services carried out in Guidance and Research Centres (RAM). Intervention

Area IV: Coordination and Cooperation aims to strengthen collaboration with representatives of relevant NGOs.

## 4. Vocational Training Project for Hearing-Impaired Individuals

This project is carried out by various municipalities, professional chambers, and associations with the aim of increasing the participation of hearing-impaired individuals in the workforce and equipping them with relevant vocational skills. Within the scope of the project, vocational training courses are offered by instructors fluent in sign language. The courses aim to help hearing-impaired individuals develop skills that can be used in the workplace. For example, training is provided in areas such as computer use, sewing and embroidery, handicrafts, basic accounting, and customer service. Additionally, these trainings' aim to help hearing-impaired individuals expand their social networks and build stronger connections with society.

## 5. Accessible Universities Project

Initiated by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), this project aims to ensure accessibility for students with disabilities in universities. As part of the project, physical accessibility (e.g., ramps, elevators) and digital accessibility (e.g., audio libraries, subtitled educational videos) are provided in universities. Additionally, specialized counseling services and technological support are offered to students with disabilities. YÖK presents a "Barrier-Free University Flag" award to encourage universities to meet these standards. This award aims to promote universities with the highest level of accessibility and to raise awareness about accessibility.

## 6. Turkey Accessible Informatics Platform

Established to enable individuals with disabilities to participate more actively in the digital world and enhance their digital skills, the Turkey Accessible Informatics Platform is a collaborative effort of various non-governmental organizations. The platform aims to make digital content accessible for individuals with visual, auditory, and physical disabilities, as well as to offer digital training programs. For example, solutions are developed such as screen reader software for visually impaired individuals, sign language-supported or subtitled videos for

hearing impaired individuals, and ergonomic computer equipment for those with physical disabilities.

The platform also organizes awareness-raising events to educate the public about digital accessibility.

These projects contribute to helping individuals with disabilities adapt to the demands of 21st-century work and social life.

## 7. Our Strength is Experience - innovative training program for Experts by Experience

The main objectives of the project EXPERIENCE (ERASMUS+) were to develop and strengthen an international network of organisations focusing on the reintegration of people with disabilities, professionalisation of organisations, improving the knowledge and developing competences of mentors, vocational advisors, as well as people with disabilities through their involvement in an innovative training program for experts by experience and, support the (re)integration of people with disabilities.

The specific objectives focused on activities and creation of particular outputs: organising a workshops, compiling an electronic collection of best practices, developing an Innovative Training Programme for experts by experience, training of trainers and additional PWDs as potential experts by experience, creating information materials (flyer, brochure) and designing a website (<https://experience-erasmusplus.eu/>).

The partnership consisted of four organisations from four countries – Slovak Republic, Hungary, Romania and Türkiye - which provide counselling and/or social services, including career guidance for various disadvantaged groups and PWDs, or function as accredited employers operating sheltered workshops and workplaces.

**An expert by experience**, in the context of the project, is a PWD, who has, in the course of his/her life, been able to overcome and resolve his/her situation and, due to further development of his/her skills and competences acquired in the framework of an innovative training program, can offer his/her own life experience to help others in a similar situation.

The main output of the project is **blended-learning training programme for experts by experience** available in five different languages, which is freely available on the Internet. It contains the theoretical learning material divided into 14 chapters and available also in the form of e-learning, tests associated with each main theme and 43 interactive practical exercises. It aims to expand the knowledge and develop practical skills needed to provide consulting to PWDs. The programme was developed by a team of experts with a wealth of experience based upon the outputs of workshops organised in partner countries with the participation of 79 relevant labour market actors and, the electronic collection containing 11 best practices applied to the training of experts in partner countries. The innovative aspect of the programme is its possibility to adjust the learning of the theoretical material to the individual pace of learners due to using ICT in adult education on the basis of:

- an e-learning platform including the training materials and tests to verify the level of theoretical knowledge, and
- a shared platform to exchange experiences allowing the learners to consult the trainers during the course of the study (<https://moodle.experience-erasmusplus.eu/>).

The greatest benefit of the combined training programme is that it allows to strengthen the current skills of PWDs through the theoretical material, e-learning, practical training and e-platform in order to become proficient in providing consultancy services for other PWDs in a similar situation. The project activities expanded the spectrum of opportunities and forms of lifelong learning for people with disabilities and, therefore they can significantly contribute to their reintegration to the labour market.

Source: <https://experience-erasmusplus.eu/>

## 8. Competency Assessment for Career Development

The Competency Assessment Methodology was developed in France. In 2005, the European Federation of Competency Assessment Centres was established at the European level, which developed a quality charter setting common rules regarding methodological and ethical issues.

Since its inception, competency assessment has been considered an important tool of active labour market policy, aiming to support individual career paths, entry or return to employment, and career development. It is an educational process aimed not only at finding the best solution for the client's current situation but also at preparing them to leverage these opportunities and manage their own career. Competency assessment uses psycho-diagnostic methods, coaching, 360° assessment, competency portfolios, labour market research, and both group and individual methods. The counsellor adapts the process, duration, and tools according to each client's individual needs while respecting the fundamental principles of the competency assessment methodology. The method is applicable to a wide range of clients—those aged 45-50 and older, young people, graduates, employees, and clients seeking new employment opportunities on the labour market, including people with disabilities. Counsellors may also offer competency assessment to clients with low self-esteem or limited career management skills.

The European Federation of Competency Assessment and Career Counselling Centres has defined the basic material and system requirements that institutions must meet. Counsellors using the competency assessment methodology must meet qualification requirements related to general competencies, professional knowledge, and skills. They must participate in training in accordance with FECBOP recommendations.

The training program for Competency Assessment Counsellors is intended for experienced professionals in career counselling or related activities. Additionally, the principle of multidisciplinary applies, meaning it is not limited to participants with one type of qualification. Entry into the training program is contingent upon meeting specified qualification and professional requirements.

The goal of the training program for Competency Assessment Counsellors is for participants (professional counsellors meeting qualification and professional criteria) to acquire the necessary general competencies, professional knowledge, and skills, enabling them to conduct competency assessments with clients in line with defined quality standards, using tools from the field of career counselling.

The duration of the modular training is 48 hours in-person, divided into three blocks, and includes the following content:

1. Module: Introduction to Competency Assessment

2. Module: Information Gathering Phase in Competency Assessment
3. Module: Final Phase of Competency Assessment
4. Module: Supervision (Independent implementation of competency assessment with five clients)

Source: <https://bilanciakompetencii.sk/>

## 9. Association for Help to People with Intellectual Disabilities in the Slovak Republic

**Association for Help to People with Intellectual Disabilities in the Slovak Republic (ZPMP v SR)** is one of the largest civic associations in Slovakia. Its history dates back to 1980, and it currently has over 10,000 members organized in local chapters across all regions.

The main goal of the association is to integrate people with intellectual disabilities into society. It is essential that the fulfilment of their human rights becomes a given. The association strives for their acceptance as they are, ensuring they have opportunities to work, receive education, relax, enjoy family life, and build friendships.

### **Activities of the Association:**

- **Advocating for Rights and Interests** – ZPMP v SR fights against discrimination toward people with intellectual disabilities. It is a member of significant Slovak and international organizations.
- **Breaking Down Prejudices** – Each year, they organize national cultural events, such as the Art Salon and the Day of Crooked Mirrors, a day dedicated to people with intellectual disabilities. They run campaigns to raise awareness about issues affecting people with intellectual disabilities.
- **Self-Advocacy** – They hold regular meetings for adults with intellectual disabilities, where they discuss their rights and responsibilities, while learning independence and decision-making.

- **Education** – They organize training courses, conferences, and seminars for people with intellectual disabilities, professionals, parents, and volunteers. They also publish informational leaflets, brochures, professional manuals, and books.
- **Providing Free Social Counselling** – They offer professional advice on matters of housing, education, employment, and social services. This counselling is available to people with intellectual disabilities, their parents, guardians, and others.
- **Organizing Stays** – Each year, they organize rehabilitative and integrative stays for people with intellectual disabilities and their assistants.
- **Publishing Magazines** – ZPMP v SR publishes the magazines INFORMÁCIE and TO SME MY, which are available in the BIVIO restaurant.
- **International Collaboration and Innovative Projects** – They collaborate with foreign organizations and implement innovative projects.

## **BIVIO**

Young adults with intellectual disabilities, graduates of practical schools, often face difficulties in finding employment in Slovakia. Several reasons contribute to this, one of which is insufficient preparation for specific professions that would allow them to succeed in the job market. If they fail to find employment, they often rely on social services in facilities or remain isolated at home. However, work is the key to a full and independent life, so the association decided to focus on this area and find an effective solution.

Preparing people with intellectual disabilities for employment is a challenging task, but it is not impossible. Thanks to the support of the Danish Velux Foundations, they managed to establish the BIVIO Centre – a unique social enterprise that offers new opportunities for dozens of people. The centre provides job training and employment for people with intellectual disabilities while also offering quality public services for anyone interested.

At BIVIO, some people work, while others are trained in hotel, restaurant, and laundry operations for roles such as kitchen assistants, assistant waiters, laundry workers, and housekeeping staff.

As BIVIO is a social enterprise, the profits from its business activities go back into the social sphere, specifically to support the activities of the BIVIO rehabilitation and training center, where people with intellectual disabilities are prepared for work each year. This

increases their chances of integrating into the workforce and society, allowing them to lead a more independent life through BIVIO.

Source: <https://bivio.sk/sk/o-nas/>