



Austria 2004

Clearing

Assistance for young persons with special needs in their transition from school to working life

Minutes,
Peer Review Meeting,
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1. Welcome and opening

The Peer Review Manager, *Flip Maas* of the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, welcomed participants.

Heinz Trompisch of the Cabinet of Herbert Haupt, the Austrian Federal Minister for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection (BMSG) repeated the welcome on behalf of the Minister. Mr Trompisch introduced himself as an expert in disability affairs and gave an overview of Austrian disability policy over the last 40 years. The old idea was that disabled people had no will of their own and needed to be protected – or even overprotected, by being grouped together, usually outside cities where the fresh air would do them good. More recently we have learned to listen to the opinion of handicapped people themselves. We now consider them as citizens with equal rights and duties, and work through an open dialogue.

Employment for people with disabilities, similarly, has moved from sheltered workshops to the mainstream labour market – but at first with quite strict protective regulations. Nowadays political and public opinion both see work, for people with disabilities as for everyone else, as something that gives life meaning and social security.

The year 2000 was a good year for people with disabilities because the EU Equal Treatment Directive was adopted. It is to be transposed into Austrian law in the form of the *Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz*, discussion on which should be completed in the next few months. In 2000-2001 Austria made a special effort towards the employment of people with disabilities by voting the *Behindertenmilliarde* – “Disability Billion” (a billion *schillings*, which is equivalent to € 72.5 million). The main aim was to create a new approach to employment for handicapped people as well as safeguarding existing possibilities. It is still in existence and has been successful in creating and maintaining jobs for people with disabilities. One of the things it finances is clearing projects all over the country.

Mr Trompisch thinks it is very important that young people with disabilities have the chance to find a job that suits them and to receive special training for their working life. He is convinced that this is the right way to guide people to fulfilment in the world of work. The Ministry is happy that such a high-grade meeting on clearing is taking place in Vienna and wishes the formal and informal exchange well.



Walter Wolf of the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs thanked the ministry for hosting this, the third peer review in a series of nine that started in April in Stockholm, and will carry on until next January in Italy.

The open method of co-ordination in fighting poverty and social exclusion is based on the National Action Plans for Inclusion. The old Member States are now implementing their second NAPs, and the new Member States should submit their first NAPs by July. For all 25 Member States, the process should be streamlined and harmonised through the European Employment Strategy by 2006.

The peer review process is part of the Community Action Programme for Combating Social Inclusion, which also includes studies and improving data, mutual learning at project level, and the financing of networks such as the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) and FEANTSA.¹

Our peer review on young people with special needs meets one of the key concerns of both the European Employment Strategy and the European Social Inclusion Strategy. All Member States, albeit to very different extents, face problems of youth unemployment and school dropouts. In the Joint Inclusion Report for 2004 the Commission and Member States have agreed the basis for analysing the second round of NAPs. This will be done according to six key priorities for the years 2003-2005. One is this "implementing a concerted effort to prevent early school leaving and to promote a smooth transition from school to work". This relates directly to our discussions here.

Moreover there are encouraging signs that the Member States are becoming more determined to co-ordinate their efforts on the social integration of young people. The Council recently urged Member States to:

- promote measures to enhance support for young people, particularly from a disadvantaged background, to make the transition from school to work;
- support programmes and activities that facilitate access to employment and improvement of employability of young people, especially through counselling and vocational training actions, that include the development of social skills and personal guidance;

1 *Fédération Européenne d'Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri* – European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless



- pursue efforts to combat discrimination against young people on the grounds of socio-economic status, sex, social or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

It called upon the Commission and Member States to give a high priority to young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the further implementation of the open method of co-ordination on poverty and social inclusion, and in developing initiatives under the Community Action Programme on Social Exclusion, and to consult young peoples' organisations on the development of the open method of co-ordination and on the development, implementation and monitoring of the NAPs on social inclusion.

Having studied the papers prepared for this peer review, Mr Wolf put forward four challenges that seem crucial:

1. The title of the peer review is rather vague. The papers show a large variety of underlying problems and target groups, so we need to be very precise regarding concepts and definitions;
2. It is also crucial to understand the existing institutional arrangements, including their shortcomings, and innovative ways to improving co-operation and partnership;
3. It is rather disappointing to see little reference to the monitoring and evaluation of new measures. We need to discuss not just good intentions, but a basis for assessing social exclusion policies;
4. In the Joint Inclusion Report, the Commission and Member States agreed to develop targets that are "increasingly specific, quantified and ambitious". It is to be hoped that this peer review responds to this challenge.

Flip Maas gave a brief overview of the documentation provided, noting that it pulls out strong and weak points and issues of relevance and transferability, and is deliberately kept quite brief so as to allow time for lots of discussion. Participants briefly introduced themselves and stated their chief expectations.



2. Introduction to the Austrian institutional structure related to assistance to people with disabilities

Alfred Weber, Austrian Ministry for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection (BMSG)

Mr Weber gave a short overview of the policy for people with disabilities in Austria. The theme is a cross-cutting topic, and different responsibilities are shared across ministries. The underlying basis is Article 7 of the federal constitution, which lays down the principle of equal treatment – that no one may be disadvantaged by his or her disability. The federal government's disability concept is based on the principles of:

- prevention (disability should be avoided through preventive measures);
- integration (finding the best possible participation in social life); and
- normalisation (that the life of disabled people should hardly differ from that of non-disabled people).

The Disabled Person's Employment Act lays down that enterprises employing over 25 employees have to employ at least one disabled person, or pay a fine. Disabled persons also have protection from dismissal.

The "Disability Billion" devotes € 72.5 million per year to special measures for disabled people. For young people this includes clearing, job coaching, qualification projects, supported employment and other measures. Older people with disabilities and disabled people with special difficulties in their jobs are also targeted.

The national labour market policy programme for people with disabilities involves a number of players between whom there is a clear division of work. The ministry (BMSG) determines federal policy, while the Federal Social Welfare Office (Bundessozialamt, BSB) co-ordinates policy at regional level. This brings in the public employment service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS), the federal Länder, the social partners, the social insurance institutions, school authorities, representatives of disabled people, implementing organisations and individual entrepreneurs.

Discussion

Work with employers: enterprises are consulted institutionally within the social partnership, but also individually as potential employers of people with disabili-



ties. A special service helps entrepreneurs to work out ways of employing more disabled people.

Division of tasks: The AMS works with those people with disabilities who can be integrated in the short term and without major problems, the BSB takes over where special measures are needed, and the Länder are responsible when people with disabilities cannot be integrated into the first labour market. This may be relevant to the situation in France, where decentralisation is under debate.

3. Introduction to “Clearing”

Eva Heckl, Austrian Institute for SME Research

Ms Heckl presented the results of an evaluation of measures for adolescents with special needs, carried out for the ministry in 2003.

The study aimed to analyse existing support measures and user requirements, identify possible mismatches, and make proposals for an extension of measures for young people with disabilities. In the absence of comprehensive networking among the actors involved, an important function was to harmonise the level of knowledge.

The method involved 43 interviews with the main actors and eight with experts, a literature search, four focus groups with young people and parents, and finally a workshop with all main actors to discuss conclusions.

In 2002/03, 28,000 school pupils had special education support needs, meaning they could not follow classes without special support. This includes children with physical and mental impairments, weak learners and those with social deficits or behaviour problems. These categories – especially the last – are increasing. Furthermore, the market is getting more demanding.

Children with special needs can go to special schools or stay in the main school system, which is an increasingly popular option. Pupils with special educational support needs – the potential clients for clearing – comprise 1.7% of primary and 3.0% of secondary pupils.

As for the labour market situation, 13% of unemployed people have disabilities, and 18% of them (2% of all unemployed people) have special status,



meaning that they are more than 50% disabled and qualify for benefit and protection against dismissal. People with disabilities have a 15% risk of poverty (as against 12% of the whole population).

Active labour market policy for people with disabilities is implemented chiefly through the Disability Bill, which defines young people as a target group, and on the other hand by the labour market policy programme, which redefines the roles of the actors and the structure of the support policy.

The main instruments are:

- job assistance: help with job search and mediation between job seeker and firms
- job coaching: individualised job assistance, which helps people with disabilities on a day to day basis to fulfil their duties at work
- social maturation projects: help with skills such as accuracy, timekeeping and teamwork
- qualification projects for specific professions or parts of professions
- integration subsidies for enterprises that employ young people with disabilities
- clearing: help in making the transition from school to working life

Three factors are decisive in young people's integration into the labour market:

- education: young people often have difficulties with reading, writing, arithmetic or general knowledge which are not primarily caused by their disability, but there is no provision for remedial teaching following compulsory school;
- personality development: youngsters often lack the maturity to make a choice of careers;
- qualification: qualification projects are not widely available, and youngsters with severe physical deficits are often not accepted. A creaming effect can be observed.

To develop the skills they need to succeed in the labour market, young people need above all orientation as to the options available and time to develop the necessary maturity and skills and qualifications. The concept for a continuous and effective promotion system is based on the following cornerstones:

- promotion of target groups – especially girls and migrants
- fields of promotion – integration into non-compulsory schooling, vocational training, university, and the general labour market



- instruments – measures should be extended and individualised, and quality standards should be developed
- permeability – the interface between the first and the second labour markets and occupational therapy should be easier, as some young people need a longer period to integrate into the first labour market, so need to be allowed a second chance
- institutional responsibilities – need to be made even clearer
- networking – should be improved both horizontally and vertically
- sustainability – continuous support policy should ensure there are no gaps in the system
- sensitisation – the public, and especially businesses, need to be made more aware of the needs of people with special needs.

To summarise the Austrian system, integration schools are available all over the country and are normally easily accessible, the existing support is good but is not available everywhere, and special support for special target groups should be further developed. The decentralised support structures which exist in Austria require one-stop shops to orient young people between school and working life. Clearing fills this gap and ensures continuous support after school.

As well as giving young people a future perspective on the labour market, clearing gives the authorities perspectives on the development of support measures. It could therefore be an instrument for monitoring and perhaps evaluating support measures for young people with special needs.

4. An individual approach to assist young people with special needs in the transition from school to working life: “Clearing” in the context of the European Social Inclusion Strategy

Henrik von Bothmer, thematic expert

In Austria policy to support and integrate people with a disability is of a high standard but suffers from two difficulties:

- there is no common definition of disability and handicap
- the variety of support measures is confusing

Therefore there is often a mismatch between needs and provision.



Clearing was invented to address this problem. The idea is not to take problems away from young people or their parents, but to help them to help themselves. This relies on the active inclusion of the young people, their parents and their teachers. Clearing also plays the role of co-ordinating different sources of support. Clearing has been cited as a good practice in Austria's National Action Plan for Inclusion 2003-2005 as it helps all handicapped young people to make the transition from school to working life.

It is thus designed to clear the jungle of different measures offered by different authorities to different target groups under different conditions. An important part of this is strengthening co-operation between these different bodies and so making the system more transparent.

Clearing consists of defining, together with the users, the package of measures which is most suitable for their vocational integration. It also shows up gaps in the existing support system and encourages the authorities to create measures to fill them. It acts as a signpost for further steps, not as a case manager.

Clearing is targeted all young persons between 13 and 23 who are handicapped or with special needs, including people with behavioural problems. There is no detailed definition of handicap.

Clearing comprises consultancy, support, accompaniment and diagnosis, which in detail means drawing up a profile of aspirations and abilities, analysing strengths and weaknesses, checking whether post-educational training is needed, evaluating vocational prospects, and drawing up a career and development schedule.

This schedule shows whether integration in working life is possible, which weaknesses can be remedied and which not, what training is therefore to be undertaken, and whether financial support is available. This agreement is signed off by the parties concerned. The requirements are matched with what is available regionally.

Clearing also includes exploring what training and employment is available, networking with suppliers, arranging taster jobs and work placements in the first and second labour markets, and carrying out aptitude tests.



The following questions arise:

- What criteria are used to select NGOs to run clearing centres, given that quality is seen as more important than cost?
- Does funding cover all costs or not?
- Is there a curriculum for staff training?
- The target number of career plans each adviser is expected to produce was reduced from 50 at the start to 30-35 today. How was this figure arrived at?
- In the absence of qualifications, how can it be guaranteed that advisers have sufficient knowledge of varied needs and of options available to give adequate advice? Is there any quality control?
- Considerable latitude for regional variation is allowed, though the completion of a "clearing file" is mandatory. Why was there no pilot phase leading to guidelines?
- Why was this procedure selected? What are the results of this decision?
- Is any review of the procedures planned?
- Why are fewer young women using clearing than would be expected from the statistics? Is there competition from the AMS advice centres, given that co-operation is one of the goals of clearing?
- Similarly, why are there fewer migrant users? Are they, especially girls, kept at home?
- Might not the combination of diagnosis and counselling, which are two different sets of expertise, mean professionalism is lost?
- Has the support system improved since clearing was introduced, and if so how?
- What is the relevance of the Dutch model, which gives the parents of a disabled child a budget to spend on the educational support tools they think best. Or of the British model of the multi-agency "transition review"?

Discussion

Employer sanctions: *Miroslav Nedeljkovic* (European Disability Forum) asked whether companies that did not comply with the requirement to employ disabled people could be banned from public procurement contracts? *Eva Heckl* noted that in Austria employers of over 25 people have a duty to employ one disabled person or pay compensation. But there is no provision in public procurement law.

Benefit trap: *Miroslav Nedeljkovic* also noted that loss of benefit is a disincentive to disabled people to take a job. Would it not be possible to freeze benefit,



so that if the job does not work out it can be restarted, as is done in Finland and the UK? *Heinz Trompisch* commented that the disincentive effect of benefit is broader. A disabled person over 19 years old in Vienna might receive a family subsidy, including an allowance for handicap, of about € 390 per month, plus social benefits of € 690. If he or she is an orphan, there would be another € 450-500. Altogether this could amount to about € 1,300 net. If he or she starts working, all these benefits are gone – and it is hard to find a job that would pay the equivalent, € 1,800-1,900 per month gross. However it is possible to freeze and restart benefits for a few months in some circumstances. *Miroslav Nedeljkovic* said that people taking a job should retain the benefit that is paid to compensate for higher living costs, as these are higher whether one is working or not.

Age limit: *Miroslav Nedeljkovic* also commented that there are many disabled people over 23 who are inactive and have never worked. They would benefit from clearing too. *Alfred Weber* replied that given the experience of clearing that has been gained since 2000, it is indeed to be expanded to other groups, notably older people. However it needs to be adapted, and this is being tried under the EQUAL initiative. *Henrik von Bothmer* noted that the specific characteristic of clearing is that it takes place at the interface between compulsory school and the next step. However *Eva Heckl* felt that a clearing process would be desirable at other steps in the life cycle, such as after university. For instance in the UK every student goes through a clearing process.

Natalija Zimina asked whether clearing is still useful in a context where there are fewer options, and so less probability of confusion. *Henrik von Bothmer* thought it was, because leaving school is a difficult transition for everyone, so it is helpful to have one institution that knows what all the options are.

Definitions: *Romas Lazutka* asked how disability is defined: is there a list of indicators that is used in practice? *Eva Heckl* answered that the target group of clearing is every young person leaving school who has special support needs, and who has difficulty in finding a job without support – i.e. a very broad definition. *Walter Wolf* added that there is no European definition of disadvantage.

Walter Wolf then commented firstly that he was puzzled to see mention of “migration” (i.e. mobility within Austria) rather than “immigration”, and secondly that the work with girls seems to treat gender as a handicap, rather than taking a mainstreaming approach. It seems that the clearing system is dealing



with large number of people who are not physically or mentally handicapped, but socially handicapped by virtue of being from an immigrant background.

Thibault Lambert agreed that in France “disability” is defined more narrowly, in that it must be a medically observed deficit. It is distinguished from social handicap or maladjustment. *Eva Heckl* clarified that the main definition used in Austria is “special support needs” (*Sonderpädagogischer Förderbedarf – SPF*) which was defined ten years ago in the context of schooling. However a different definition applies for labour market matters. *Henrik von Bothmer* commented that a similar definitional problem occurs in many countries, as most laws were enacted following wars, and so were based on medical proof of a past event which created a handicap. By contrast more recent approaches are based on whether someone shows that they need help in the present. This is a real advance.

Zoniou Sideri objected that there are different ways of defining disability, structural and functional. The question is which groups does clearing apply to? She asked if children of immigrant families are included within the definition of behaviourally disabled children. Secondly, she asked whether, if immigrants keep their disabled children at home, is this a problem with the family or a problem with the school? There also seems to be insufficient co-operation between school, social ministry, labour ministry and the private sector – they all seem to use their own definitions of disability.

Eva Heckl replied that migrants are not a target group unless they have a disability. But many migrants have special support needs, because of language difficulties. *Henrik von Bothmer* asked in return: what are definitions for? The objective is not to decide which department should pay for which measure, but to give help to all people who have problems – it does not matter what the concrete disability is.

Target groups: *Walter Wolf* pointed out that as clearing is targeted at young people coming from special educational institutions, what happens is that for institutional reasons many young migrants are lumped together with physically and mentally handicapped people in special schools. In Austria (unlike in France) immigrants are a visible minority, because they do not have Austrian passports, so they appear in the statistics. The figures show that the population covered by the definition *Eva Heckl* has given is biased towards people with an immigration background. Table 3 in *Henrik von Bothmer’s* paper shows that roughly two-thirds of people in clearing have no physical or mental disability.



Moreover, comparable provinces such as Upper and Lower Austria have totally different coverage rates for clearing. The figures for Lower Austria are twice those of Upper Austria. Does this mean that Lower Austria is twice as effective as Upper Austria, or that Lower Austria starts with a better situation because it has more effective voluntary organisations working in the field? The figures he cannot find are: how many people are in need? How many of these are covered by other means? And so what is the added value of clearing?

Andrea Schmon clarified that the target groups for clearing are:

- physical, mental and psychically handicapped people
- pupils with learning difficulties (in all or some subjects)
- young people 13-23 with emotional or social handicap

However the vocational training law of 2003 added two more categories:

- pupils without a secondary school leaving certificate
- pupils who try all means, but still cannot hold down a job

In Vienna, the target groups include a high number of immigrants.

Thibaut Lambert felt that the point is not to have a common definition of who is in need, but to find the right partners to provide the best solution for different sets of special needs. We know that perhaps 10% of children leave school unqualified, and we have a policy to help them – and we also have a policy to compensate the handicaps of people with disabilities.

5. Clearing in practice – site visit to *Faktor i*

Participants visited the Vienna offices of *Faktor i*, part of the WUK association. They divided into three groups to follow the histories of beneficiaries from three different target groups. Cases were presented of physical, mental and social behaviour problems.

General presentation

Ingrid Hofer, head of the clearing site, of which there are four in Vienna and others in the provinces, welcomed participants. She recalled that in Austria, and especially in Vienna, people with a disability face such a large number of possibilities that even advisers become confused. So the centre was set up to signpost these to pupils, parents, teachers, counsellors and others. It also:



- maintains an internet-accessible database of all the services for people with disabilities in Vienna
- feeds teachers and social workers – and even the BSB – with information
- runs roadshows for teachers and parents
- publishes easy-to-read leaflets explaining the jargon
- organises meetings of staff to build up networks
- offers counselling by e-mail, telephone or face-to-face

Participants were provided with case studies and needs assessment materials, many translated into English.

The case of Stanko, aged 15

Stanko is a 15-year-old Serb who started to refuse school at the time of his parents' divorce. He transferred to a special school where the situation improved slightly, and he is described as a pleasant pupil, but irascible. He has some literacy problems.

Following a contact made at one of the WUK-Domino school visits, in October he asked for a clearing interview. He wanted to find a job as a car mechanic, as his mother was anxious, and he felt he should find a job as he was now head of the family. He needs a permit to work in Austria.

He undertook some training, and in December he started a job placement, but left after two days, because mechanics was too difficult. In January he started looking for a job as a painter, and in February did a second week of training, was offered a job and left school. But he was fired after a month, for lateness and arguing with workmates. At his weekly meetings, he seemed depressed.

In May he had his third week of practical training – this time in plumbing. This only lasted three days before he was sacked for arguing.

In July he left school again, to take up an apprenticeship as a painter with WUK-Jugendprojekt, which has a social worker on the staff and is experienced in dealing with difficult people. The Austrian dual system means he works four days per week and has one day of training. He can stay two years, after which WUK-Jugendprojekt will search for a job for him.



The case of Sabine, aged 17

Sabine is a 17-year-old girl with a mental handicap and autism. WUK came across her during a school visit (the government supplies them with the locations of severely handicap pupils).

They used the technique of the “circle of support”, which involves collecting the opinions of different people who know the client. Using whatever means they can – for instance they use pictures if the client cannot talk – they try to find out the person’s dreams and desires, to discover what gives them energy. For instance many girls say they want to be a nurse, because this is a profession they have experience of – it is the only thing they know; so the clearer tries to find out what they think of when they think of nursing. Job coaches go to employers to find out what sort of job could be found or created.

Sabine comes from an alpine valley dependent on tourism, and liked the way cooks dress, so wanted to be a cook. But a hotel kitchen is too stressful a place. WUK therefore found a school that provides lunches (because the pupils’ parents are at work) which offers a less stressful job with regular hours. Sabine has been there two years working 20 hours per week. She also does the laundry, as she likes to count, and to keep things clean.

The case of Daniel, aged 15

Daniel is visually impaired, with dark spots in his eyes, but is not registered disabled – i.e. he has more than 50% working capacity.

He never misses a session but he is not very self-confident. His mother wanted him to become a masseur, but he did not want to. Faktor i took him through the “job lexicon”, which showed his preferences to be light technical jobs or office work and administration. In order to get a clearer picture the clearers conducted an intelligence test, which brought out his aptitude for office work. The next step was practical training to give him an insight into different jobs. He did four days at a broadcaster and three days in the offices of a small business. It was hard to find an apprenticeship, so he was passed to the *Arbeitsassistentz* service to be found a job. Vocational training was proposed, and he agreed he might think about it later.



Discussion

Case selection: Disability measures apply only to those who are more than 50% disabled; labour market measures take over for the others. Faktor i does not ask the level of a client's handicap, but takes the person as they find them and works from there. However it has to refuse psychiatric patients.

Segregation: WUK works with special schools, which cater for 2% of children. Half the pupils are from immigrant backgrounds, because of language and social problems. Seventy per cent of pupils are boys. In practice the system results in a high level of segregation. There is a parallel integrated system which pupils can opt for.

Caseloads: The five staff in WUK's Vienna office each has a caseload of 100 clients in each year, half of whom complete the six-month clearing process during the year. Counselling takes around one hour per week over four to six months.

Parental involvement of clients under 18 depends on the nature of handicap, and the atmosphere at the first meeting. The client decides, and usually after the first meeting they dispense with the parents' presence.

Circles of support normally meet four times in the final year of compulsory schooling. Meetings go on for two to four hours. It is the client who invites the members – parents, siblings, usually the mother's best friend, teachers, other professionals and a counsellor from WUK. The process is usually that the first meeting collects ideas, from which a trajectory is formulated. The second then reflects on options. It is the circles that provide most of the leads to possible employers. The circle then usually continues, meeting maybe once a year, to cope with crises. Members are not paid. Circles always met in the client's home, which makes clear where the responsibility lies. Circles of support probably work best in rural areas where communities are homogeneous and well networked, though they also work in mixed urban communities in the USA and in Hamburg. They are also used to settle young people coming out of prison.

Support roles: The role of the **counsellor** is to provide positive energy, counter doubters and act as an advocate for the client. This is a distinct role from that of **mentor**, who takes the client under his or her wing inside the employing business. Every client has a mentor. Mentors are recompensed by the government at their normal rate of pay for an agreed number of hours' mentoring each



week. The clients are paid a normal salary by the firm. Of the 100 clients, almost all work half-time: only two work full-time.

Staff training: Clearing training lasts around 20 days, and WUK has an annual two-day staff meeting. The multiple professions are a strength.

Finding placements: The policy is to approach the firm with a concrete proposal to place a defined individual – not a general discussion of principle. As for the work done, the jobs generally have to be created: the counsellor visits the firm to see what tasks there are that the client can perform. An example might be watering the plants. Clients do what they can – some may do one day per week in five different firms. In rural areas most firms have less than 25 employees so are not obliged to employ a quota of disabled people.

Follow-up: The end of each case is signalled by a final report – but there is currently no follow-up. They are developing a system to track ex-clients through the social security system.

Evaluation: There are quantitative targets: Faktor i has to complete clearing for 50 clients per year and conduct 800 counselling interviews. It also has to maintain the database and website. Payment is not performance-related, in the sense that the fee does not rise if more clients are cleared. A clearing folder is completed for each case.

6. Key aspect 1: Targeting the beneficiaries: personal development and career planning

Chair: Helmut Lang, BMSG

Video première: Clearing – Mein Weg in die Zukunft

Participants watched the first ever showing of the information film *Clearing – Mein Weg in die Zukunft* (Clearing – my way into the future) produced for the Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection by Tinfish Media Lab.

Roman Kores, the director, explained that the idea was to address the disorientation of 13-15 year-olds and push them to the next step of finding a job and motivating them to ask for help in deciding what to do with their life.



The film has two levels. The first level, for the teenagers, is divided into four easily-digestible modules, each a couple of minutes in length, featuring young people speaking about their hopes and fears about finding a job while skateboarding:

- *Alles klar* – All right?
- *Clearing hilft* – Clearing helps
- *Was ist Clearing?* – What is Clearing?
- *Du schaffst es* – You can do it

The short doses aim to motivate the audience.

The second level, for professionals and schools, comprises an information film and a slide show, and can be run as a continuous loop.

The clearing model – a co-operation between school and clearing institution: Franz Spiesberger, Director of Lenau School, Upper Austria and head of special educational centre.

Mr Spiesberger explained that for the last 12 years he has been the headmaster of a school integrating pupils with special needs in Upper Austria, and, as the head of the special educational centre in Gmunden, is responsible for pupils with special educational needs. The special educational centre deals with entrance into school, time at school, and the transition to working life. In Upper Austria, the Federal Ministry of Social Security delegated the job of carrying out clearing to the Upper Austrian *Volkshilfe*.

The aim of clearing is to help less privileged pupils find their way on the working world after school, with more or less support. The concept is that we need to make an early start in helping young people find a job; we need to analyse the strong and weak points early enough, so that personal and professional skills can be supported in good time. The school has found the clearing office very useful, as it knows about the jobs available for less privileged young people in the region, and informs the relevant authorities of vacant positions. One important move was to convene a meeting to introduce the system to all the schools.

However the most important thing is co-operation with businesses and the labour market service. Thirdly, if the clearing assistant is also the job coach, more people are needed to do the job.



Over the four years the clearing institution has been working in upper Austria, it has gained good access to all schools, and has registered all the children with special needs. The system was restructured after a trial phase. There is now better co-operation with the economy and with the labour market service, and surveys show a high number of successful outcomes.

The clearing institution asked to work directly with the children on their own, and to spend more time on each case. This points to the needs to reduce the caseload. The clearing institution in Gmunden covers 90,000 inhabitants. Last year, more than two-thirds of a total of 30 clients wanted to continue school after the ninth year (the last compulsory year). Meanwhile the workload has increased as clearing has been extended to the seventh and eighth years.

So as not to break data protection laws, it is important that the young people sign a contract to release information for exchange between school and clearer.

Clearing has worked well in Upper Austria, but there are more difficult areas, such as co-operation with the business community.

How to organise the duties of the clearing institution:

- Work in a team
- Consider the social environment; do not try to take a snapshot, but ask the people who know the children
- Know the schools
- Contact businesses – find out about vacancies and tell the young people about them
- Find experts to draw up skills profiles
- Co-operate with labour market service – two-thirds of AMS advisers were ignorant of the clearing service
- Cover the whole country

The integration which starts at school should be continued during the transition from school to work. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has not yet offered any finance to carry out integration in the vocational school for apprentices, but Upper Austria has employed four employment assistants for this role. They should work with the clearing institutions, as they have gained a lot of knowledge, they co-operate with the schools, they have formed an interdisciplinary team, and they have the competence to be acknowledged by businesses and by institutions working with disadvantaged young people.



Alfred Weber confirmed that clearing covers the whole country, but nevertheless needs to be extended over the next 1-2 years.

*Targeting the beneficiaries: personal development and career planning:
Andrea Schmon, Federal Social Welfare Office (Bundessozialamt – BSB)*

In 1999 the office carried out a survey in Vienna to find gaps in measures for people with handicaps. They found that transitions were difficult, especially the transition from school to work, so had the idea of building bridges over the gaps. They therefore introduced clearing in 2001. They did not want to be too restrictive in defining the target groups, so came up with the following formulation: pupils aged 13-23 inclusive with physical, mental and psychic handicap (including blindness and deafness); learning difficulties – in all or some subjects; or social or emotional handicaps.

In 2003 the law for vocational training was changed so that young people could take one or two years longer to learn a profession, or learn just part of one or more professions over a period of up to three years. This applies to young people in the above target groups and also those with no finishing certificate from secondary school or who are not able to learn a profession in the normal way.

Clearing is seen to be an effective way to ensure that people find the right measures, which is important not just for the disabled person, but for the public authorities, as people who are too weak usually go on to sheltered workshops provided by the Land of Vienna, whereas people who are able to undertake normal vocational training are dealt with by the Labour Market Service.

Another finding of the survey was that there is a preponderance of young men in labour market measures. One reason is that even at school fewer girls have learning difficulties or social or emotional problems, but this does not explain the size of the difference. The assumption is therefore that some girls with a disability are kept at home when they leave school.

They therefore ensure that clearing reaches young people while they are still at school. Two principles of mainstreaming are therefore followed: of handicapped people generally, and gender mainstreaming. They also have to manage diversity because Vienna is home to many immigrants.



Two other balances need to be maintained: firstly quality standards need to be maintained while each case is treated individually; and secondly the quantity of individual help and support which can be given while overprotection is avoided.

It is important to help young people to find their own way, to develop the self-confidence to live their own lives, and to ensure empowerment, one of the most elementary parts of a smooth and quality-oriented transition from school to working life. This is difficult and complex, but also exciting and meaningful, because it leads to the integration and inclusion of individuals like you and me.

Discussion

Diversity: *Walter Wolf* asked how many people from an immigrant background work in the clearing centres. *Andrea Schmon* answered that there are some in the partner non-profit organisations such as WUK but she did not give specific numbers.

Consultation: Secondly, how are the clients involved in design of measures? *Alfred Weber* said that the programme was developed quickly, and the ministry recognises that it is important to co-operate with partners such as youth organisations, as well as other ministries. It hopes that this will be a way of improving the quality of the advice supplied. *Miroslav Nedeljkovic* asked how disability organisations are involved, as employment should be one of their key concerns. *Andrea Schmon* replied that they were consulted in the design of the catalogue of measures.

Zoniou Sideri asked what steps have been taken to work with employers and employees' organisations – after all sometimes it is the employees who object to working with disabled people. *Alfred Weber* answered that clearing is just part of a package of measures, and that we cannot look at it in isolation. The authorities collaborate intensely with the social partners – a good example would be their active role in creating the “integrative training” measure last year. Social partners are actively involved in creating new products. It is important to involve employers, as they provide jobs for people with disabilities, and information campaigns are run with the Chamber of Commerce (*Wirtschaftskammer*). The important thing is not that employees' and employers' representatives are consulted on each individual measure, but that they are involved in promoting and developing the whole system. *Franz Spiesberger* said that it is the clearing institution that contacts businesses, not the schools. As the first objective is to



get pupils into work, not into projects, better co-operation with businesses is needed.

Networking: *Alfred Weber* confirmed that networking between the measures is important – the measures alone are senseless. Clearing has the central task of identifying the right next step. *Ingrid Hofer* clarified that practically it happens like this: during the clearing process, the clearers think a person is job ready, serious, comes in on time etc., so they talk to the person and their parents. If everyone agrees for instance that job assistance is the right option, they call a meeting between job assistance, the parents, and the young person. So it is Faktor i that makes the first contact, as it is more difficult for the young person to contact someone unknown.

Eva Heckl added that the study showed that there is a desire to extend networking both horizontally and vertically, but that there is not enough time, money or staff.

Coverage: *Thibault Lambert* asked if all schools are covered systematically, if it is obligatory for children to go to clearing, and if there are other systems. Does clearing go out to the young people, or do the young people have to come to clearing? *Andrea Schmon* replied that clearing is on offer in all schools, but is entirely optional. *Ingrid Hofer* added that the clearing staff try to go to all the schools, but would not have the capacity to cover every all young people if every one took up the offer. *Alfred Weber* confirmed that more than 2,500 young people completed clearing in 2003, and that the number has risen a lot in 2004. *Andrea Schmon* estimated that in Vienna they are now reaching 60% of target population and are working to raise this to 100%.

Target groups: *Régis Bac* asked if there is any system like clearing for those over 23 years old, to which *Ingrid Hofer* replied no. *Andrea Schmon* clarified that in 2004 the BSB will try to find out how many AMS clients are in fact not job ready, but are coming for clearing. They will then discuss with the ministry what to do about it.

Margot Rosental asked how clearing reaches disabled people who are at home, and how the various service providers are networked. *Franz Spiesberger* said that all pupils in special schools are registered, and *Ingrid Hofer* added that the schools give Faktor i the names of pupils who might benefit from clearing, and then Faktor i writes to the parents, so that the parents can contact them if they so wish.



Completion: *Miroslav Nedeljkovic* asked whether “finishing clearing” means getting a job, to which *Ingrid Hofer* replied no, the outcome is that the young person knows what they want to do next, which could be further education or vocational training.

Zoniou Sideri asked whether six months is not too short a time for clearing. *Andrea Schmon* answered that the process can lead on to other measures such as “Integration support” (*Integrationsbegleitung*) which might extend for 18 months. But six months is enough for clearing itself – the taking of a decision on which measure to use. *Sigrid Ströher* clarified that six months is laid down the guidelines, but if they feel that an individual needs longer support, they can give it.

Thibault Lambert asked how long the offer of clearing was held open if the subject has difficulty making a choice – when does the system give up? *Sigrid Ströher* said that orientation should last up to six months, but can be repeated.

Resource allocation: *Miroslav Nedeljkovic* asked whether negotiation was necessary to get the support that is needed. *Ingrid Hofer* said that if the measure already exists, it is easy to get the teenagers on to it. But if a new measure is needed, the clearer has no power to insist – it informs the BSB of the need and waits for them to provide it. *Andrea Schmon* confirmed that the BSB works to a budget; while it welcomes suggestions from clearing officers, it sometimes has to postpone new measures till the following year. *Eva Heckl* commented that this is another function of clearing – if it shows up a clear enough gap in provision, the ministry will do something about it. *Alfred Weber* said that though it is not always possible to meet all needs immediately, the national summary of the regional clearing reports is an important planning tool.

Régis Bac asked how individual cases are followed up, and where records are stored. In France a central committee decides what measure is needed, and the financing ministry just has to pay up. Does Austria have such a central authority? *Andrea Schmon* said that there is no such committee; the decision is made by the Land government in the case of sheltered workshops, and by the AMS or Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection (BMSG) in the case of measures on the first labour market. Case records are held in the “clearing folder” which details the subject’s strengths and weaknesses.



Thibault Lambert asked what “registration of the disabled” means. *Franz Spiesberger* answered that it is the teachers who propose which pupils should be deemed to have special needs (*Sonderpädagogischer Förderbedarf – SPF*). Resources are limited so teachers have to be very selective in allocating special needs measures. The decision is taken by a local committee, which the parents attend and before which they can call expert medical or other professional witnesses. So it is a very fair decision. The decision can be reversed later if pupils develop in a different direction.

7. Key aspect 2: Institutional arrangements – co-operation in practice

Flip Maas introduced the session, noting that the intended speaker, Mr Federspiel from the Land of Tirol, had been obliged to cancel his participation. He asked different stakeholders for comments on strengths and weaknesses in co-operation.

Presentations

Franz Spiesberger noted that clearing constitutes the first, and very welcome, example of close interministerial co-operation at federal level: the ministries responsible for social affairs (BMSG) and education (BMBWK) meet at least twice a year along with representatives of the Länder.

Each Land has its own working group. In Upper Austria, this involves the BSB, the Land government, the school authorities and special educational centre, under the leadership of the Volkshilfe. The co-operation worked very well to develop the idea, and then the BSB and school authorities stepped back. This was discussed at federal level and a year ago the BSB and school authority reached a formal agreement on the management of clearing. Problems are discussed and remedied at federal and Land level. The schools would like to see increased resources so as to be able to employ more clearers and lengthen the clearing period. And stronger links need to be built with the business community.

Sigrid Ströher feels that co-operation works well in general. However contact with the AMS at federal level could be improved, and, despite repeated efforts, it has proved very difficult to interest the Chamber of Commerce.



Andrea Schmon said that the BSB is also trying to involve employers. In Vienna the clearing projects meet quarterly with the youth department of the AMS, the BSB, the chamber of commerce and the chamber of employees to discuss the problems and benefits of the new vocational training measures. The social partners are motivated to discuss the new vocational training law because they created it, but they are less interested in other issues it is harder. It is particularly hard to interest employers themselves, as distinct from the chamber of commerce. The BSB exhibits at trade fairs such as *Personnel Austria*, but employers often do not attend meetings.

Flip Maas asked whether there are weaknesses in the system of exerting influence to co-operate. *Alfred Weber* does not think pressure would be appropriate. Co-operation works very well on some issues with both social partners, but the question is whether a given measure is in their strategic interest. There is an underlying willingness to co-operate, but the level of interest is not the same for all measures.

Major changes have taken place in the AMS over the last ten years. As more autonomy has been devolved to the Länder – for instance they make the decisions on integrative vocational training (*Integrative Berufsbildung*) – it has become hard to make meaningful national agreements, and if they do exist they are rather theoretical. At the moment the Chamber of Commerce (*Wirtschaftskammer*) agrees in theory that clearing is important, but has no real interest in its success – unlike that of integrative vocational training. As clearing is now offered as an obligatory precursor to integrative vocational training, this should increase the interest and get the chambers involved in design of measures.

Miroslav Nedeljkovic said that the European Disability Forum monitors EU institutions to make sure they do not forget about disabled people. He has been pleasantly surprised to find that the EDF's suggestions are often taken up at European level – unlike the situation in Slovenia. The Directive on Equal Treatment is all very well, but the problem with it is that it is more of a recommendation than a directive.

As regards co-operation with employers, one good practice is the local networks that exist in Ireland. The people to target are those who determine the culture of the company – the bosses and the human resource managers. One should therefore seek to influence the educational system for human resource managers. It is a question of cultivating personal relationships.



Eva Heckl pointed to the usefulness of promoting role models such as McDonald's that employ people with disabilities.

Andrea Schmon added that the BSB has a service giving information on disability employment to firms, and that forthcoming legislation on equal treatment might persuade companies of the seriousness of the issue.

Alfred Weber commented that you have to work directly with companies and trade sectors, not just with the chambers of commerce – the chamber is not the whole economy, and convincing the chamber is only part of the job. A concrete example of direct co-operation is the webpage *www.arbeitund-behinderung.at*, which was created jointly with the chamber of commerce and the chamber of labour, and shows examples of how it is possible to employ people with disabilities. Another example is the "Job Oscars", awards given to companies with exemplary employment practices. Such initiatives help to persuade companies that employing people with disabilities is good for their public image.

Discussion

Thibault Lambert explained that in France the quota system was instituted after the First World War, but the latest law created AGEFIPH,² a fund bringing together the employers, trade unions, disabled organisations and professionals. French law foresees "accords" whereby businesses or whole trade sectors commit themselves to a three-year programme of recruitment, retention and training for disabled people. Companies are particularly interested in job retention, as they like to find solutions for employees who become disabled, for instance through accidents. These *accords* cover about 10% of enterprises, employing perhaps 8% of the whole French workforce. *Miroslav Nedeljkovic* added that some multinational companies such as Volkswagen and Hewlett Packard have signed similar agreements.

Emanuela Procoli said that a recent Italian law on the right to work for disabled people sets a mandatory quota and introduces a new instrument – an agreement between the public employment service and enterprises. To increase its use, a national fund of € 30 million to increase the employment of disabled people. It is a flexible employment agreement, which can be preceded by apprenticeship or accompanied by in-firm training.

2 *Association Nationale de Gestion du Fonds pour l'Insertion Professionnelle des Personnes Handicapées* – National Association for the Management of the Fund for the Integration of Handicapped People



Firms are resistant to employing disabled people, but last year 6,000 agreements were signed, and about 23,000 disabled people were recruited. The public employment service has a technical committee which works in a similar way to the clearing team, being made up of social and medical experts who evaluate specific cases and draw up individual plans.

Flip Maas asked whether the clearing process is necessary to equip young people to enter the workplace.

Ingrid Hofer said that on the one hand clearing can look at what know-how and skills a young person already possesses, and what can be made up through training. On the other hand it can work on improving social skills such as time-keeping, remembering appointments, or reporting sick rather than just taking the day off. Clearers discuss social skills with parents, and this helps young people to hold a job down, and to cope with criticism from their boss.

Henrik von Bothmer said that our modern economies require highly qualified people, but most people with a disability lack the necessary knowledge and skills. So an extra step between school and work is needed. Clearing enables people to become as qualified as possible to meet their own needs.

In 2002, the Netherlands introduced the system of personal budgets, whereby the state finances the person, not the system. A budget is given to the person with disabilities and their parents, and they decide which measure to buy.

Hege Sørensen asked whether cases are followed up. *Sigrid Ströher* answered that now that they have a couple of years' experience they will try to assess the outcomes at the end of 2004.

Anthi Kritikou commented that the clearers should have special skills such as giving advice and working in a multicultural context. How are they trained? *Sigrid Ströher* answered that one further education institution offers a course for integration workers, and the clearing institutions have developed a special training module for clearers. But multi-disciplinary teams are to be recommended, as they generate synergy.

Miroslav Nedeljkovic felt personally that clearing should be a last resort, because if you do everything for people, people will stop doing it for themselves. *Walter Wolf* noted that if you have no needs then you are not in the target



group, but the statistics show that many people are outside the system. *Henrik von Bothmer* agreed that there is a theoretical danger of smothering, but that clearing empowers people make their own decisions.

Quality control and evaluation: *Liina Järviste* asked how quality control is carried out. *Andrea Schmon* answered that BSB carries out a biannual monitoring visit and receives a biannual report. Quality systems are to be introduced. *Sigrid Ströher* said that Upper Austria uses a user feedback questionnaire.

Henrik von Bothmer commented that quality control in social work is very difficult – he knows of no system in use in Europe. User feedback is a useful tool, but even the Dutch system does not guarantee that the users buy the best services! The first step is to install a monitoring system, but this is only one part of the job.

Walter Wolf questioned whether quality control and evaluation are different. Wherever public money is spent, it must be accounted for. So one must invest in evaluation, and the Commission believes that output evaluation is more valuable than input evaluation or the evaluation of opinions – for instance it is very unlikely that clients would know immediately if they have received sustainable advice. We therefore need an evaluation culture.

Clearing was introduced because extra funding was made available, so the question is how to bring it into the mainstream system. You therefore have to prove that it has an added value. Why are you financing it, not other ministries or the provincial governments?

Evaluation can only be based on underlying policy objectives – and one of the shortcomings of this discussion is that we talk little about these.

Cost-effectiveness: *Liina Järviste* asked how happy policy-makers are with the cost-effectiveness of clearing. Could the same goals be achieved more cheaply?

Miroslav Nedeljkovic doubted that clearing would show up as cost-effective in the short term, but over a 20-year period it could eradicate the problem – it could change society.

Alfred Weber responded that the ministry had not found a better system, that serves people's needs more cheaply; they would adopt it if they did! Even if the



integration of people with disabilities is not a matter of the utmost concern to Austrian society, issues of principle and philosophy are involved. It is also a matter of demography: the age pyramid is becoming unbalanced and someone has to pay for our pensions. Can we afford not to integrate people?

Liina Järviste asked why clearing is delivered through NGOs, rather than in-house. *Alfred Weber* replied that Austria, like other countries, is faced with budgetary limits which make it impossible for the state to provide all services directly. But why is clearing managed by the BSB rather than the AMS, the schools or the Länder? In fact, the BSB stepped in and filled the gap left when the AMS withdrew from this area.

Henrik von Bothmer contributed a comparison with Germany, where the Federal labour market service alone spends € 4 billion per year on disabled and disadvantaged young people, besides which the Länder and youth ministry have budgets. Yet the 1985 evaluation showed that 14% of 27-year-olds still had no professional qualification or apprenticeship. A system like clearing would make the system more efficient, and efficiency is direly needed!

8. Relevance and transferability of the Clearing Approach to the Peer Countries

Estonia

Liina Järviste was impressed with the quality of the individualised help given by Faktor i and the way it smoothes the transfer from school to work. Estonia is very different. Austria has quotas, subsidies, and many sheltered workshops, whereas Estonia has no quotas, fewer subsidies and is not as good at providing support and sheltered work – but it is improving.

Vocational training in Austria is very practical, being based on apprenticeships and on-the-job training. Estonia is currently going through a very extensive vocational training reform, and increasing the number of places – at present 70% of students attend grammar school and only 30% vocational training, which is disproportionate. They are also trying to integrate disabled people into mainstream vocational training. To get more disabled young people into employment, they need to start by getting them into vocational training.



Another difference is in vocational guidance. Currently the education and the employment systems both offer vocational guidance services; a merger is under way, so that school leavers will use the same system as unemployed people.

The most transferable aspect of the Austrian system is the strong focus on the needs of the individual. However in Estonia it would seem best that relationships with employers are built up not by NGOs but by the public employment services, who can establish an initial relationship by referring non-handicapped workers, and progress from there.

Margit Rosental confirmed that the Estonian approach is to deliver special services to disabled job seekers in an integrated way – through the “ordinary” system. Some severely disabled people are not used to thinking that they can work. The inclusive approach of the clearing system, which accepts anyone who feels they need support to achieve their labour market goals, overcomes this self-doubt.

Another strong point is the way needs are assessed, and it is to be hoped that such methods can be introduced in Estonia. It might also be possible to pilot a counselling service along the lines of clearing, perhaps involving NGOs.

France

For *Régis Bac* one major question has been: what public are we targeting? Is it useful to group handicapped people, migrants and people with social difficulties together? In France the process of clearing exists, but it is delivered by different operators for different target groups. This could become an issue if operators were to say that being an immigrant is a kind of handicap.

Previous European programmes have shown that an individualised approach is clearly superior to an administrative one. France is now trying to overcome this problem by saying that although there might be different operators and financial channels for different target groups, overall it is the administration’s responsibility to make clear to users what the best channel is. *Maisons départementales des personnes handicapées* are being set up to map users’ needs and skills, and signpost the appropriate services.

It would not be a good idea to transfer the programme as such, because structures, approaches and financing are different. On the other hand some tools



are very interesting, especially the idea of circles of support: evaluating the options together with parents, friends and the community. France still has a very professional, medical and administrative approach. It would probably be a good idea to address the community to find the best tailored approach, although this is easier in small towns than big cities.

Twenty years of experience have shown that systems based on changing employers' cost structures, by obliging them to employ their quota of disabled people or pay compensation, do not work. The new EU anti-discrimination regulation offers a much better basis for overcoming the barriers that disabled people face in finding employment. We have to show to the employers, social partners and institutions that this is the next step to take.

Italy

Marta Consolini explained that Law 68/99 introduced a new approach to the right to work for disabled people. In particular it introduced active labour market measures such as **targeted placement**. There is also a quota system, whereby employers of over 50 people have to employ 7% of disabled people.

Targeted placement comprises analysing aspirations and abilities, vocational guidance and counselling, drawing up a personal profile, providing opportunities for qualification and employment, and support and monitoring.

Under decentralisation, the provinces are responsible for the public employment services, and different providers are used in different places, to deliver such services as vocational guidance and targeted placement. There are very strong north/south differences. The ministry is offering system support by producing guidelines and conducting pilot projects.

One such pilot project, run by Italia Lavoro, is developing a common language, collecting data on disability, and carrying out training. It uses the ICF³ definition, according to which "any person at any moment in life can have a health condition that in a negative environment becomes a disability". The definitions we use affect the services we provide.

As regards transferability, it is important to help people to help themselves, and here the Austrian holistic approach, and in particular the vocational guidance

3 The World Health Organisation's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health



and the drawing up of an individual career plan, is useful for Italy. It could be a good basis for a system of individualised support, not only for disabled young people but for the active inclusion of everyone. Co-operation between schools and local employers is a vital factor of success.

To facilitate the transfer, methodological guidelines and documentation would be useful, as would more detail on management and staffing requirements, and on evaluation criteria. To make a better connection between policy and practice:

- closer co-operation is needed between official, professional and non-profit bodies, at national, regional and local levels
- additional measures should be taken for certain target groups, such as girls and migrants
- the target group includes young people who have already left school, so we should connect informal ways of learning – that is anything outside school – with work experience
- awareness-raising measures on disability for the general public, for employers and for parents are important
- new ways of involving businesses are needed

Walter Wolf commented that in many countries, informal work forms an important part of making the transition from school to work. It is therefore important to take informal learning into account, especially in countries with no formal vocational training system, such as Germany and Austria.

Norway

Hege Sørensen: Norway has a core curriculum for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools, agreed by both political parties, which says: “education shall impart on the learner a zest for life, the courage to tackle it and the desire to use and extend what they learn” and “education shall meet children, adolescents and adults on their own terms and lead them to the borderline where they can encounter the new by opening their minds and testing their skills.” This is the basis. In Norway the same laws and counselling apply for people with disabilities and without.

In Norway is a long country, with a sparse population in the north, divided into 19 counties which administer the school-work transition. Most school pupils



attend upper secondary school, either grammar or vocational. After ten years of compulsory school, you can get permission to work as a trainee and attend school one day per week, but most do not. It is possible to attend upper secondary school for two years or three years then go on to vocational training, and also to drop out of school and drop back in again later.

Guidance on transition varies for each child. There is additional psychological and pedagogical advice for those with disability. Taking the Hordaland model is based on a first large meeting is held in the tenth grade, the last year of primary school. It involves the student, parents, disability organisation, rehabilitation specialists, head teachers from primary and secondary schools, pedagogical and psychological advisers, employment office and social insurance office.

This meeting maps the student's strengths and weaknesses and draws up a plan. The plan is reviewed at a meeting after the first year at upper secondary school, then again a year later, and again on the transition to work.

There is not the same model all over the country but several similar models.

Policy on disability is based on democracy, on the equal right to participate in society: "Equal status reflects the basic norm of equality, but equality does not mean we are all treated the same. Formal equality is not sufficient to ensure equal status. The goal must be real enjoyment of life and participation. Full participation must include the opportunity to participate on your own terms in a society where there is room for different ways of functioning."

Only half a percent of Norwegian children go to special schools, so there is inclusion all over. It would be a step backwards to give advice to disabled people only. We should give better advice to all children. Clearing is a good concept, but Norway will always want to preserve local variety.

Walter Wolf asked if Norway provides targeted counselling for immigrants, including counsellors from migrant backgrounds? *Hege Sørensen* replied that migrants in school are entitled to three years of special support, and will get more if needed. Subject teaching and careers advice, at least in the bigger cities, is given in their own language by experts (not just through interpreters) in major languages such as Urdu, Punjabi, Arabic and Somali.



Lithuania

Romas Lazutka noted the consensus that the public employment service is not sufficient for young people with special needs. In Lithuania too, the public employment service is not attractive for people with special needs, because they do not expect to work. If they apply, it is to get benefit, not a job.

It would be possible to transfer the experience of giving extra support to this target group, but the question is how long it would take and how much it would cost. It is a good tool for setting priorities for young disabled people, and better results cannot be achieved without such a tool. Therefore the NAP/Inclusion, which is currently being written, should contain the goal of starting a service like clearing. The first couple of years should be devoted to research, data collection, and discussion of the idea in society. It would be necessary to work out how much would be saved by investing in getting disabled young people into a job and away from a lifelong dependency on benefits.

Natalija Zimina added that Lithuania's occupational advice system includes medical services and so is used by disabled people as well as non-disabled ones. Because resources are so scarce, a study should identify the demand for a clearing service. Its value added is not clear, not is whether it should be integrated within the existing service or separate from it. It would also take two or three years to build links with schools and employers, and get known.

Greece

A new comprehensive law on disability was passed in 1998 – the problem is monitoring of the employers. Greece has special vocational schools for people with disabilities, but they can also attend mainstream vocational schools. The majority of people with disabilities are therefore well trained, but the problem is that even so they cannot find a job. They might find a job subsidised by the labour ministry for two or three years, after which they are again unemployed.

Aspects of clearing such as vocational guidance are transferable, on condition that the government is ready to provide funding, and that the ministries of education, labour, social affairs and health, along with the social partners, will work together.



It would however be difficult to transfer the system. The existing counselling systems of this type survive only by virtue of European Social Fund subsidy, so are likely to fade out when this ceases.

Discussion

Benefit trap: *Romas Lazutka* asked if there are problems in the way clearing is combined with financial support. Are there disincentives such as loss of benefit? *Alfred Weber* replied that some people do lose benefit if they get a job, but most clearing clients do not fall into this category, as they are at school. So there is no disincentive, except for those who are orphans or receiving higher funding. The problem is the number of different funding authorities: the ministry of social security, generations and consumer protection, the ministry of finance, the Länder and the social security institutions. In Vienna the various authorities have come to an agreement that people shall be allowed a year to integrate, and allowed to fall back into the welfare safety net if the job does not continue. In the end achieving independence implies a degree of insecurity.

Local dimension: *Flip Maas* asked whether clearing can be developed locally, as is preferred in Norway. For *Andrea Schmon* it depends on the size of the region: for Vienna it is both possible and necessary, but not for Burgenland, where the largest town has a population of 12,000. It is perfectly possible to pilot such a system in one region. *Régis Bac* and *Thibault Lambert* explained that half of French disabled job seekers go through one of the 100 or so regional *Cap Emploi* schemes, which offer individualised counselling, training and placement. The other half are dealt with by the Agence National pour la Création d'Emploi (ANCE).

Delivery through NGOs or direct? *Flip Maas* asked whether it mattered whether clearing services were delivered direct by the public employment service, or through NGOs.

Miroslav Nedeljkovic suggested that both delivery methods can be used: NGOs should be paid proportionally to the number of staff involved compared with the public employment service. However in ex-Communist countries NGOs do not yet have the strength to negotiate with employers. *Walter Wolf* said all actors are needed, and these differ across countries and regions, so we should not expect one answer.



Margit Rosental felt that each country has to find its own solution, and some are well used to delivery through NGOs. NGOs are sometimes more competent as their lead comes from the needs of target groups, and many are carrying out excellent work. Only they can motivate disabled people through a process of peer review. The most important thing to have a very clear specification of the services to be provided before allowing it to be delivered in different ways.

Régis Bac noted that the French senate debated whether there is a conflict of interest if NGOs act simultaneously as user representatives and service providers, and decided it is manageable.

Liina Järviste said that a day-to-day relationship with employers is needed – such as the public employment service has – at least in principle.

Walter Wolf quoted the example of Germany, where the public employment service, even with a staff of 80,000, does not deal with disabled people. In general, the way to win over employers is to ask them what subsidy and assistance would be needed. *Henrik von Bothmer* clarified that not all the German Federal Employment Agency's staff of 80,000 are counsellors: there is one adviser per 250 unemployed people. So they do not have the time to take an individualised approach. There is no one answer to the question: "where is best connection to the labour market". Many German NGOs have close relationships with employers and understand them better than the public employment service – but others do not.

Thibault Lambert said that at the start some of the *Cap Emploi* schemes were managed by the public sector, but are now nearly all privately run. They are divided into those that try to find a solution for every job seeker, however severely disabled, and those who are more oriented towards meeting the needs of companies.

Monitoring and evaluation: *Flip Maas* asked why we are slow to develop monitoring and evaluation criteria: are we afraid of bad results? Do we lack the time and resources?

Miroslav Nedeljkovic posited that no one wants to take money away from disabled people, but *Flip Maas* countered that if you fail to evaluate, you risk continuing with a service that is bad for disabled people.



Andrea Schmon said that you have first to pilot a service, then implement it fully, then evaluate it. Clearing has taken three years to get going, and it is only now that we can evaluate what has happened. *Henrik von Bothmer* said that on the contrary evaluation systems should be set up before you start an activity, as this helps you to build the best system.

Flip Maas explained that one can only get a budget if one can prove the need. A project has a goal, and is designed to produce a number of results that contribute to that goal. Monitoring is the process of checking periodically whether we are achieving those results.

In *Walter Wolf's* view, evaluation is an extremely political exercise, so that defining the terms of reference of an evaluation often pre-empts many of the results. The Social Inclusion Action Programme lays down that stakeholders should be involved in evaluating the National Action Plans for Inclusion and the individual measures. Of course in practice evaluation can be used to cut budgets – but it can also be used to increase them. Evaluation is not just the job of one institution, and work needs to be done to increase transparency in this way.

Thibault Lambert pointed out three problems with evaluation. Firstly, the fundamental problem is that you have to compare reality with a non-existent state. Secondly, there is the problem of the hidden agenda: is everyone working towards the same goal? The third issue is a problem for evaluators – it is hard to evaluate the system itself, because people do not like to be evaluated.

Flip Maas invited peer country experts to revise their papers, invited Miroslav Nedeljkovic to submit comments if he wished, and encouraged participants to return the evaluation questionnaire to INBAS.

9. Résumé and closure

Walter Wolf of the European Commission's Employment and Social Affairs DG summed up the peer review.

There is a common impression that the idea underlying clearing is a good one. However he has mixed feelings as regards the peer review itself. The expert papers are slightly disappointing in that they did not contain much analysis of



the strengths and weaknesses of clearing, but contented themselves with description. A second caution is that we have conducted a peer review on a programme of which no proper evaluation has been carried out. The papers should have mentioned progress and intentions as regards evaluation, but this was not mentioned. Therefore many basic issues, such as partnership, target groups and objectives had to be clarified in discussion, wasting time.

On the other hand, to be more positive, the active participation of the visitors and the openness of our Austrian hosts enabled us to clarify at least some of the burning questions. The confrontation of the various national situations was very useful. There was a whole range of reactions: Norway does more; Greece has totally different problems and does not know how to bring their own system into the mainstream; and the Baltic countries are just building their system.

In future the expert papers should be confronted with the papers from the national delegations in an interactive process.

Participants return from this peer review with new ideas and new questions. It normally happens that you go back from such events with more questions than answers, and this is a good thing. After thanking the Austrian ministry and the interpreters, Mr Wolf wished participants a safe journey home.

Alfred Weber responded on behalf of the hosts, and said that the Austrian participants used the opportunity to learn. You may have more questions than answers, but defining the right question is achieving a lot. He thanked participants for contributing a critical view of clearing from the outside world, which is always useful. He expressed the hope that the event had given participants useful ideas to take home and that elements of the approach might be transferable. He wished everybody successful follow-up and guaranteed to respond to requests for further information.