

Inclusion Europe

The European Association of Societies of Persons with Intellectual Disability and their Parents
L'Association européenne des Organisations des Personnes Handicapées Mentales et leurs Familles



POSITION PAPER ON INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT

"Inclusive Employment is competitive employment in regular businesses for people with disabilities under the same terms and conditions of employment as their non-disabled peers."

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1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusion Europe is committed to achieving equal rights and full inclusion for all citizens with intellectual disability in Europe. We recognise that one key element in ensuring this for adults with intellectual disability is the issue of employment. All adults, irrespective of their level of intellectual disability, have gifts and capacities and should be afforded the opportunity to participate in real employment in the open labour market. We adopt this position in the belief that, given the right job for the right person with the right supports tailored to that individual's needs, all people with intellectual disability can avail of some level of real employment in a regular setting. Inclusive employment is a particularly effective strategy for achieving full social inclusion and full participation for people with intellectual disability; this, in our view, is the ultimate goal. We have several examples within Europe from our own member organisations where individuals who have been labelled profoundly intellectually disabled have succeeded in entering part-time employment in regular settings using the model of «Supported Employment».

People with intellectual disability by the very nature of their disability, have different needs to many other disability groups. While they experience the same kind of general discrimination, marginalisation and lack of opportunity

that other disabled people experience, they have nonetheless very specific needs from an employment perspective. It is for this reason that the model of supported employment has been applied most successfully across the world to individuals with intellectual disability. This is not to say that all people with intellectual disability need this particular approach. There are of course some individuals who can obtain jobs in open employment without any additional supports. However, the supported employment approach has allowed even those individuals with the most significant intellectual disability to avail of labour market integration.

Inclusion Europe also recognises that there are likely to be some individuals with intellectual disability who, similar to those individuals without disabilities, will choose not to work for their own reasons or if they want to be involved in work related activities, they may choose to do so in a non-inclusive setting. We respect the fact that a significant number of people with intellectual disability have for many years worked exclusively in non-inclusive settings and may choose to remain in these settings. We believe however, that this is a matter of personal choice and that that choice needs to be informed. It should be noted that most people with intellectual disability are not in inclusive employment but are served in special centres e.g. sheltered workshops, and

that these provide essential services for the individual. Most EU Member States have comprehensive provisions of this nature.

2. THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Inclusion Europe is concerned that even within the disability movement, there are often stereotype views in relation to people with intellectual disability. Assumptions are made that people with intellectual disability, in particular those with more significant disability, are not appropriate candidates when considering the allocation of funding with regard to inclusive employment. In our view a vicious circle operates here: many individuals with intellectual disability have not been given the opportunity to participate in or experience real work. Or alternatively, the model used to allow them this opportunity has been more traditional and not tailor-made to their specific needs and, therefore, has not resulted in positive outcomes. The nature of intellectual disability is such that generic approaches or generic models of training and employment often fail because they do not take on board specific needs. A number of issues with regard to the employment of people with intellectual disability are critical.

2.1 Assessment

In our view the overall approach to assessment should be to ensure that the disabled person's strengths and capacities are identified. The assessment procedure needs to look at what people can do, the abilities they have, their personal interests, things that have worked for them in the past and previous experiences they have had from an employment perspective. This is not to say that the intellectual disability is ignored, rather that the emphasis is on the positive aspects rather than on what people cannot do or the particular limitations they have. Of course, in order to identify the suitable area of employment for an individual, the person's difficulties and limitations will need to be taken on board.

It is essential, whatever form of assessment is used, that the individual participates fully in the assessment process and is the key decision-maker. Many individuals with intellectual disability may not have the intellectual capacity to represent themselves and make decisions and, therefore, it is appropriate that their parents or advocate participate fully in the assessment with the individual. The overall goal of the assessment is to identify the area of work where the person is most likely to succeed and the type of job that should be sought for the individual.

It is important to note that no one area of employment or any specific type of work is particularly suited to individuals with intellectual disability. The population of individuals with intellectual disability covers a very broad spectrum. Each individual is different and unique and the type of interest and capacities they have will dictate the type of work and the area of employment most suitable for them. Inclusion Europe believes that while standardised vocational assessments have a role to play and may contribute to the overall assessment, they should not in themselves be the deciding factor as to whether any individual can avail of employment or not. We believe that individuals with intellectual disability should not be expected to fit into pre-conceived ideas or models which are typically applied to people with disability but that the needs of the particular individual guide the type of training and the type of employment they receive.

2.2 Working with employers

Based on our experience throughout our member organisation, Inclusion Europe is of the view that people with intellectual disability make competent, diligent and dedicated employees. We advocate a pro-active approach by working in co-operation with employers, to assist them in understanding the capacities and abilities of people with learning disability and counteracting

some of the negative stereo-typing that has possibly influenced their opinions over many years.

As the level of unemployment among people with intellectual disability is particularly high, it is likely that the majority of employers have had no real hands-on experience of employing an individual with a intellectual disability. One strategy which has succeeded in helping employers to improve their understanding of the needs of this population is the use of work experience and in-company training. In-company training for individuals with intellectual disability and in particular for those individuals with more significant intellectual disability, has proved to be an extremely appropriate method, as by definition, concrete things are learnt in context. This overcomes the issues around generalisation of learning. When a person with an intellectual disability enters the labour market or changes jobs to a new company, they will almost certainly require some form of training, tailor made to their specific needs and the needs of that particular job.

2.2.1 Reasonable Accommodation

It has already been well established for other disability groups that accommodations at the work place can often be the critical factor in convincing the employer to take on the person with intellectual disability, and ensuring that the person can do the job. Ramps,

bathroom adaptations for wheelchair users, computerised technology for people with visual impairments, are some examples of **reasonable accommodation**. This same principle, when applied to individuals with intellectual disability, usually means that they need someone, sometimes called a Job Coach, to give on-site assistance with regard to training for the job, social interaction at the work-place, understanding rules, health and safety etc. This Job Coach can also play an important role in assisting other workers to support their colleague with an intellectual disability. Once again, we have strong evidence to show that people with intellectual disability, if matched to the right job and given the right supports, are not only capable of doing the job but can be a valuable asset to the company.

Employers who have had this experience recognise that the initial investment of additional support or giving the person a longer than usual period to learn the job, pays long-term dividends for the business. Experience in the United States, where the concept of reasonable accommodation is widely applied, demonstrates that the average financial cost to the employer is minimal. It is also important to note that while the individual may be successfully employed for some time, new problems may arise in the future i.e., new machinery is introduced and the nature

of the job changes or the person has become unchallenged by the position and needs to move on. Some type of on-going support may be required both for the company and the individual should any difficulties arise in the longer-term. This is particularly true for individuals with more significant intellectual disability, as their needs will change over time and the individual or the company may well need some specialist input.

3. WORK VERSUS CARE

This paper focuses on the issue of inclusive employment for people with learning disability. However, most individuals will require other services as well as employment support. Inclusion Europe believes that each individual should be provided with a comprehensive range of services that are designed to meet their particular needs. Not all individuals will want to or indeed, be capable of working a typical 40-hour week.

We are aware that currently the reality in most EU Member States is that the majority of individuals with intellectual disability are not employed in inclusive settings. They are more likely to work in sheltered workshops of special enterprises which have been set up especially for them. We believe that many of these individuals are capable of

progressing to inclusive employment if they are given the opportunity. In order for this to happen, these workshops/enterprises will need to develop a strategy that places an emphasis on progression to inclusive employment. This strategy is likely to involve a new vision for the retraining of staff, educating families to new possibilities and new relationships with the employer community. It is important to note that while this strategy is being implemented both the old and the new system will need to operate and therefore costs will increase in the short term in order to achieve long-term gains and improved quality of life.

For those who choose not to or, due to the nature of their disability are simply not capable of working in a traditional full-time position, then part-time employment should be the acceptable option. For these individuals, other services such as appropriate day care provision needs to be available as part of their service plan.

Inclusion Europe does not see care services such as day activity centres, as being in conflict with employment services. Rather, one should complement the other. Individuals, who can and wish to work full-time and not avail of day care, should be free to do so. Others, who require day care provision, should have this possibility. However, this should not deprive them

of the opportunity to be involved in real employment. In some instances the employment service may be provided by one agency and the day care services provided by another. In other cases the same organisation may provide employment services and day care services. It is also possible that the funding for these activities comes from different sources. What is most important here is that a co-ordinated, comprehensive service plan **is designed for the individual** and that this remains the focus, rather than the funding source or a particular model that an individual provider is committed to.

4. PARENTS

Inclusion Europe is fully committed to the concept of self-advocacy for people with intellectual disability. We are well aware that many individuals with intellectual disability are more than capable of speaking for themselves and making their own decisions about the kind of life-style they want and the life they wish to lead. There are, however, a significant number of people with intellectual disability who do not fit this description. Often, it is the parents or the advocates who speak on behalf or assist these individuals to make informed decisions in their best interest.

When addressing the issue of inclusive employment in the context of parents of

people with intellectual disability, it is important to remember that many parents have been told in the past that their son/daughter was incapable of going to work and that inclusive employment would not be an option for their son/daughter.

Fortunately, as our knowledge has increased and new, more appropriate approaches have been developed to meet the needs of people with intellectual disability, this situation has changed. However, many parents have not been given the opportunity to experience these options. Parents, of course, act in what they see as the best interest of their son/daughter. They may often need to be reassured that their son/daughter will not be exploited or taken advantage of and that there are safety mechanisms in place to ensure that the individual is adequately supported to take the step away from more traditional or dependent services towards inclusive employment.

5. EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

Inclusion Europe is anxious to ensure that European Social Fund expenditure at Member State level in the area of inclusive employment for people with disability, is allocated in an equitable manner. In this context appropriate levels of resourcing must be allocated

specifically to meeting the needs of individuals with intellectual disability.

We are aware that people with disabilities within the European Union are two to three times more likely to be unemployed than their non-disabled peers. It is our belief that the figure specifically for people with intellectual disability is much higher and that in the past this group has been severely disadvantaged from an employment perspective. It is essential, therefore, that authorities at Member State level ensure that new approaches, best practice and current thinking in the field of intellectual disability are taken on board and promoted at national level to ensure that the unemployment of people with intellectual disability is addressed as a priority.

Inclusion Europe believes that all monitoring committees at Member State level with regard to Social Fund Allocations addressing the area of employment and disability should have a specific representative from the intellectual disability sector. These monitoring committees should recognise that people with intellectual disability are the group most discriminated against from an employment perspective. It is, therefore, imperative that all measures (e.g. National Action Plans) addressed at improving employment opportunities for European citizens make specific

provisions for the employment needs of people with intellectual disability.

6. RELATED ISSUES

Inclusion Europe is aware that the situation at Member State level differs with regard to specifics such as legislation, insurance, health and safety and benefit systems. All of these issues potentially will have an impact with regard to the employment of people with intellectual disability.

6.1 Health and safety

With regard to health and safety, there is no evidence to show that people with intellectual disability are more likely either to be involved with or the cause of accidents at the work place. The critical issue here is appropriate supports and appropriate job matching to ensure that people with intellectual disability are given jobs that are appropriate to their needs and to the needs of their employer.

6.2 Insurance

We are aware that some insurance companies have in the past looked for medical evaluations to establish whether a person was suitable for employment or not. Inclusion Europe would stress that intellectual disability and its relationship with employment is not a medical issue. It is imperative that insurance companies do not

discriminate against people with intellectual disability and that any issues with regard to insurance, must relate to the core requirement for the job and whether or not the individual with the intellectual disability has those abilities. In general, we would make the point that many of our member organisations are involved in the provision of inclusive employment opportunities within large and small corporations and insurance has not been a prohibiting factor.

6.3 Benefit system

The benefit system would appear to cause difficulties across all Member States and our view is that, in the context of the National Action Plans and the related measures, Member States need to take cognisance of how the benefit system affects people with learning disability from an employment perspective.

Individuals with intellectual disability should be encouraged to enter the labour market and this step should be financially rewarding. We need to ensure that benefit systems are flexible enough to recognise the additional costs that may be associated with having an intellectual disability and to provide people with those benefits to meet the costs. Measures must ensure there is not a disincentive for the individual to go to work if doing that would put other benefits in jeopardy.

6.4 Education

Inclusive employment cannot be looked at in isolation. People with intellectual disability need to have adequate preparation in order to become fully contributing members of society. Good communication skills, personal development, social skills and activities of daily living are best taught from an early age in inclusive educational settings. Experience elsewhere has shown that people with intellectual disability who have participated in inclusive education are more likely to progress to inclusive employment than those who have been in segregated schooling. However, experience has also shown that individuals whose life experience has been primarily segregated from an education and employment perspective have successfully entered the open labour market when provided with appropriate support. The concept of life long learning is particularly relevant for people with intellectual disability as their needs will change over time, particularly from the point of view of career development. Inclusion Europe is committed to promoting careers for people with intellectual disability. It is typical for the non-disabled person to think about a career and either change jobs or develop within their job. This concept of career development and on-going learning is also important for people with intellectual disability.

7. CONCLUSION

Inclusion Europe believes that adults with intellectual disability have much to contribute to the economies of their country. It is our strongly held view that due to inappropriate or lack of education and training, limited opportunities, negative attitudes and stereo-typing, people with intellectual disability have not been given the opportunity to demonstrate their potential with regard to real employment. We believe that mainstreaming can be a positive step forward for people with learning disability, provided the necessary safeguards and supports that reflect their particular needs are taken on board at European and national level.

In order to move forward on this issue a two pronged approach is required. On the one hand we need to ensure that young people grow up in inclusive settings and transition from the education system into inclusive employment. At the same time we need to provide positive incentives and supports to providers of more traditional segregated measures to encourage a shift in emphasis towards inclusive employment. It is essential that we keep a clear focus on social inclusion and full participation for all citizens with intellectual disability.

Inclusion Europe

The European Association of Societies of Persons with Intellectual Disability and their Families
L'Association européenne des Organisations des Personnes Handicapées mentales et leurs Familles

Rights, not favours!

Inclusion Europe asbl. is a non-profit organisation defending the rights and interests of people with intellectual disability, their families and their organisations in the European Union and other European countries.

People with intellectual disability or mental handicap have gifts and abilities, as well as special needs. They are citizens of their country, demanding equal rights and inclusion in the life of society. They need a choice of co-ordinated services to support their special needs as well as the needs of their parents, families and carers.

The principal policy directions of Inclusion Europe are:

- **Human Rights for People with Intellectual Disability**

Inclusion Europe is committed to fight for the human rights of people with intellectual disability as defined in the UN Charter of Human Rights and the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for People with Disabilities. It is especially concerned with the human rights situation in the countries of Central and East Europe.

- **Equal Participation and Inclusion in Society**

People with intellectual disability have the right to equal participation in all aspects of society and in all decisions that concern their lives. Inclusion Europe therefore strongly supports the movement of people with intellectual disability who speak for themselves (self-advocates). As an organisation it aims to be accessible to people with intellectual disability and works for the accessibility of modern society. This applies not only to inclusion in education, employment and social life, but also to participation in the political process.

- **Non-discrimination**

People with intellectual disability often suffer from discrimination, harassment and violence. Inclusion Europe therefore strongly supports non-discrimination legislation, both at European and national level.

Based on these principles, Inclusion Europe co-ordinates a wide range of activities in many European countries, including conferences, working groups and other exchanges on relevant topics. It provides responses to political initiatives at European level as well as expertise in areas of relevance to people with intellectual disability. Inclusion Europe advises the European Commission and members of the European Parliament on disability issues and works closely with a wide range of other European organisations.

Inclusion Europe believes that people with intellectual disability are entitled to full and active citizenship of the European Union. They have the right, whatever the severity of their disability, to equality of respect and participation in their communities. Inclusion Europe fights for rights, not favours.