

Indicators to be taken into consideration when designing and evaluating inclusive VET policies covering the needs of people with special education needs (SEN):

European examples

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There have been moves towards more inclusive educational approaches across Europe and the current educational policy framework - incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (2006) - focuses on inclusive education and VET systems that aim to meet the rights of all learners to an inclusive education and training.

The Convention highlights the principles of normalisation, equal opportunities in accessing the VET system – non-discrimination and the importance of ensuring that all learners are educated in an inclusive environment.

Despite the various policy developments in the last decade, most countries have some form of special VET settings and there is still a significant number of learners attending special VET schools across Europe. Thus more work is needed towards improving frameworks and structures of provision and capacity building within mainstream VET provision.

Between 2010 and 2012, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education analysed VET policies and practices in 26 countries from the perspective of learners with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The analysis focused on ‘what works’ in VET for learners with SEN and/or disabilities, ‘why it works’ and ‘how it works’.

The project identified numerous success factors – ‘what works’ – in VET for learners with SEN and/or disabilities. The analysis revealed a large degree of coherence across countries, with the same success factors often appearing together in successful examples of practice. The identified combinations explain ‘why it works’, while analysis of the mutual impact of success factors helps to explain ‘how it works’.

Four ‘patterns of successful practice’ were identified among these combinations of success factors. These patterns are inter-linked and mutually supportive. Therefore, any attempt to improve a VET system’s performance must place equal emphasis on all four patterns at the same time. They are likely to improve VET system

effectiveness and the transition to employment of learners with SEN and/or disabilities.

These patterns focus on the perspectives and roles of key stakeholders within VET:

- Management pattern: this includes relevant factors related to head teachers and/or managers of VET organisations.
- Vocational education and training pattern: this includes relevant factors related to teachers, trainers and support staff.
- Learners' pattern: this includes relevant factors related to learners.
- Labour market pattern: this includes relevant factors related to current and future employers/labour market representatives.

Management

- Set up a legal framework and agreement among all the services involved: education, employment and local authorities. This will allow VET schools to develop partnerships and networking structures with local companies for practical training and/or employment after graduation;
- Promote effective school leadership, develop strong leaders to build the capacity of mainstream VET schools, to develop inclusive policy where differences among learners are considered a 'normal' part of the educational culture;
- Enable schools to implement a teamwork approach, including establishing multi-disciplinary teams with clear roles.

Vocational education and training

- Ensure learner-centred approaches, use individual plans for education, learning, training and transition;
- Promote dropout reduction strategy;
- Match labour market skills requirements and the learners' skills.

Learners

- Focus on learners' capabilities;
- Match work opportunities and learners' individual wishes and expectations;
- Establish co-operation structures with local companies for practical training and/or employment after graduation.

Labour market pattern

- Safeguard connections with local employers/companies;
- Support learners and employers during the transition phase into the open labour market;
- Provide follow-up activities to maintain learners' employment in companies.