



VICTORUPESI

Unity in diversity

Vocational Innovation using Creative new Technologies
resulting in Upskilling Pathways for Social Integration

National Report

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1. Desk Research

OZARA d.o.o. has used different resources and literature to explore the topic of project' target group (People with disabilities) and their social inclusion, including the needs of social media to aid inclusivity.

OZARA d.o.o. developed connections with relevant stakeholders which enabled two other methods of research to be conducted for this study.



Introduction

While presenting the social inclusion of vulnerable target group (PWD's) connected to the rationale of VICTORUPESI project, a short introduction is presenting some specifics to be taken into consideration for further reading of the below presented elements of the desktop research and activities connected to focus groups and interviewees selection. ICF classification, produced by WHO, is defining "Disability" as "an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives."¹

The term disability may refer to physical or mental attributes that are/can be perceived as something needing to be fixed (the medical model and understanding the term); it can also refer to "limitations imposed on people by the constraints of an ableist society (the social model); or the term may serve to refer to the identity of disabled people."¹ In addition to that, ICF again lists 9 broad domains of functioning which can be affected¹:

- Learning and applying knowledge.
- General tasks and demands.
- Communication.
- Basic physical mobility, Domestic life, and Self-care (for example, activities of daily living).
- Interpersonal interactions and relationships.
- Community, social and civic life, including employment.
- Other major life areas.

Additional explanation can be found also in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities saying: "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."² Additionally EHIS and EU – SILC again are focusing on other entities such as (time line of limitations in activities for past 6 months).

For further insights on national information from the desk research and data currently available publicly, therefore national environment specifics are taken into consideration when presenting the outline of the state of the art in terms of inclusion/vocational training and disabilities as elements of social inclusion/exclusion relation.

1. National legislation / policies / funding / initiatives supporting your target group social inclusion.

Within the scope of inclusion, we have focused mainly on vocational training and other supported forms/publicly recognized and operated programmes for PWD's (no matter the sector, private/public).

Legislation, covering the scope:

- *Zakon o usmerjanju otrok s posebnimi potrebami*³

The Law on the guidance of children with special needs is regulating special guidance for children with special needs who, in order to successfully participate in the education process, need appropriate education programs and provide various ways and forms of assistance.

- *Zakon o pokojninskem in invalidskem zavarovanju*⁴

Pension and Disability Insurance Act whereby the pension and disability insurance in the Republic of Slovenia is compulsory and uniform for all who meet the statutory conditions for insurance.

- *Zakon o zaposlitveni rehabilitaciji in zaposlovanju invalidov*⁵

Law on Employment Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled People which regulates the right to employment rehabilitation and certain employment issues of persons with disabilities and sets out other forms, measures and incentives for their employment and the way in which they are financed.

- *Zakon o uporabi slovenskega znakovnega jezika*⁶

Law on the use of the Slovene Sign Language that regulates the right of deaf persons to use the Slovene sign language and the right of deaf persons to be informed in the techniques adapted to them, equal inclusion of deaf persons in the living and working environment, etc.

- *Zakon o izenačevanju možnosti invalidov*⁷

Law on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities with the main aim of preventing and eliminating discrimination based on disability and to create equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in all areas of life.

- *Zakon o socialnem vključevanju invalidov*⁸

The Social Inclusion of Disabled Persons Act that regulates the rights and procedure for obtaining the status of disabled persons with permanent congenital or acquired disabilities who cannot

socially integrate into the community without provided social inclusion services and cannot act and function independently in performing in most or all of life activities.

The list is not exhaustive and there are also some differences when obtaining a disability status in terms of further possibilities of obtaining appropriate education and employment later on and services, offered publicly, connected to specifics of personal status. The Social Inclusion of Disabled Persons Act i.e. (1) defines the acquisition of the disability status among population with moderate, severe or severe intellectual disabilities, autistic disorders of severe nature that prevent persons possibility of independent living, most severely handicapped people etc.

Policies – approaches and scope of work

In Slovenia, disabled persons can exercise their right to employment or vocational rehabilitation. The difference between the two institutes is in the person exercising that right.^{15,16,17}

Vocational rehabilitation is a comprehensive process in which the insured person (working disabled) is professionally, physically, and psychosocially trained:

- for another profession or job so that he or she can be properly employed and reintegrated into the work environment
- to perform the same profession or work by adapting the post to it with appropriate technical aids.

You can acquire the right:

- if you have II. category of disability and you have not yet reached the age of 55 on the day of your disability, but you can, depending on your remaining working capacity, qualify for other full-time work,
- if you have II. category of disability and you have not yet reached the age of 50 on the day of disability, but you can, depending on your remaining working capacity, qualify for other work that you will perform part-time, at least four hours a day.¹⁷

Employment rehabilitation is the right of a disabled person to individual services to the extent, in the manner and for the duration defined in the rehabilitation plan. Employment rehabilitation includes services that are provided with the aim of preparing a disabled person for a suitable job, getting a job, keeping a job and advancing or changing his / her professional career. The types of employment rehabilitation services are in particular⁵:

- counselling, encouraging and motivating people with disabilities to take an active role,
- preparation of an opinion on the level of working ability, knowledge, work habits and professional interests,
- assistance in accepting one's own disability and informing about the possibilities of inclusion in training and work,
- assistance in selecting appropriate professional goals,

- developing social skills,
- assistance in finding a suitable job or employment,
- analysis of the specific workplace and work environment of the disabled person,
- preparation of a plan for the adaptation of the workplace and the working environment of the disabled person,
- drawing up a plan of the necessary equipment and means for work,
- training at a specific job or in a chosen profession,
- monitoring and professional assistance in training and education,
- monitoring the disabled person at the workplace after employment,
- ongoing evaluation of the success of the rehabilitation process,
- assessing the performance of people with disabilities, and
- provision of other employment rehabilitation services.

Funding / initiatives

Employment rehabilitation programmes are financed by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities within an open call to professional organisations gaining/regaining the national concession for running programmes of employment rehabilitation and social inclusion programme.

According to Law on Employment Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled People the criteria for recognizing the right to employment rehabilitation are⁵:

- the impact of the consequences of a physical or mental impairment or illness on the individual,
- the need for employment rehabilitation services as part of comprehensive rehabilitation for the individual,
- the possibility of employability by adapting or using modern technologies, assessment of the social and work environment (social role of the individual),
- other criteria, which are formed according to the rules of the profession.

After the completion of employment rehabilitation, the National Employment office prepares an assessment of the disabled person's employment opportunities on the basis of monthly reports and the final evaluation of the employment rehabilitation provider. The assessment must show whether the disabled person is employable in a normal work environment, in supportive or protective employment, for which work he is qualified and what support services or adjustments he needs in the workplace. Wherever, despite rehabilitation, adjustments to the workplace and the work environment, a disabled person is unable to achieve work results of at least one third of an employee in a normal workplace, the assessment of employment opportunities shall assess that he or she is not

employable due to disability. This person then gains the possibility to be included into “Social inclusion programme” - A disabled person's company/organisation, employment centre, social inclusion program provider or disabled person may at any time propose a reassessment of the disabled person's performance if he or she considers that his or her performance has changed significantly or when the disabled person and the employer enter into another employment contract.⁵

The question of vocational education is also set through the Law on the guidance of children with special needs also includes children, minors and young adults with special needs and, exceptionally, adults over 21 up to and including 26 years of age who are continuing education in tailored vocational and professional programs with the same educational standard and professional education with an equivalent educational standard and special rehabilitation programme, as well persons in the same age as mentioned, who can be enrolled in the program of education and training for adults, that is part of a special program for children with moderate, severe and heavy intellectual disability (these are children with intellectual disabilities, blind and partially sighted children, or children with impaired visual function, deaf and hard of hearing children, children with speech and language disorders, physical handicapped, long - term sick, with learning disabilities, autism, emotional and behavioural disorders requiring personalized exercise education programs with additional professional assistance or tailored education programs and education or special education programs).³

2. Existing strategies in the country dealing with the problem of your target group social inclusion. Identification of **organizations in your country to be contacted in later stages for conducting a focus group (list organizations).**

The social inclusion program (concession from the Ministry) is intended for disabled people who have reduced ability to work to such an extent that they have not been able to qualify for work in terms of employment and are not employable due to disability. The purpose of the program is to offer the included individuals a suitable form of employment, where working hours and the pace of work are adjusted to their health and mental condition and allows them to maintain or increase adaptive capacity.⁵ However, as mentioned previously, reassessment is always possible.

As it comes down to inclusion in education in general, the national strategy is aiming to an all-inclusive approach^{10,12,14} in all levels of inclusion for PWD's that include a vast amount of inclusion elements that can be described as “ensuring equal opportunities for enrolment in all educational programs and promotion of greater inclusion of people with disabilities in regular forms of education and training (ibidem).

However, in the adulthood and especially after 26 years of age, the inclusion in vocational trainings is lower – one the most important pilot projects in the country is therefore “Prehod mladih” (Transinition of Youth), that aims at developing a supportive environment that operates as a connecting link between schools (primary, secondary) and labour market thus to motivate the employers for employing young persons with special needs (children, already with officially offered guidance and support for inclusion in special educational programmes, children with special needs including children with intellectual disabilities, children with eyesight deficiencies, deaf and hearing impaired children, children with physical disparities, children with autistic disorders, children with children with emotional and behavioural disorders). Within the scope of the project, the primary school children are offered support in vocational guidance, choosing a future profession – here a strong impetus lies on person centered approach and finding common solutions when exploring personal wishes and real-life possibilities.¹⁸ The project is an important contribution to the national realm, diminishing exclusion from the labour market and vocational education, however, retraining opportunities within people of the social inclusion programmes are still a challenge, minding the fact

that generally, these individuals fall under category of adults with other specified needs (for training/retraining and other supportive elements).^{14,18}

3. Statistics regarding:

a. *the profile of the target groups in the participating countries (major nationalities, age, unemployment, level of education, knowledge of languages)*

Within a special reporting, done each year on governmental level, explanatory notes to national funding and public financing are explained in more detail (efficiency and effectiveness of public spending – employment boosting activities, active employment policies and training, etc.). Within this report, one can follow data on employment market and working conditions. Within the latter there is also a preliminary explicitly defined goal - ensuring equal opportunities for PWD's in the labour market. The results show that from 2012 till 2018 the planned measures were achieved. However, the explanatory note includes some important further explanations. The success of (vocational) training, employment, retainment of employment and career development or career change are lower within groups that suffered physical or mental defect or illness in general. By the end of 2018, only 3,84% among 100% of all employed population was represented by employed PWD's. Disability companies as means of social economy, employment centres and supportive employment institute remain the position of main employee's organisation/employment situations for the target groups.⁹

By the end of 2019, 145 disability companies were employing 5.927 of PWD's. At the end of 2019, there were 35,036 persons in employment among the disabled in Slovenia, which is 15.5% more than at the end of 2013. Among all persons in employment, 3.9% were disabled, of which only 16.9% were (5,927) employees in companies for the disabled. About 50% of all employees in companies for the disabled are permanently disabled. According to the Employment Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act (ZZRZL, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, nos. 16/07, 87/11 and 98/14), companies that have the status of a disabled company must employ, train and train among all persons they employ. At least 40% of disabled people in the whole business year.¹⁰ Other employment statuses are achieved in different organisation other than disability companies as there is also the obligatory quota system --- The quota system is set out in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Act, laying down an obligation on employers who have at least 20 employees to employ a certain percentage of people with disabilities. The percentage of the mandatory proportion of disabled employees is determined by the Decree on designation employment quotas for the disabled and ranges from 2% to 6% depending on the type of major activity for which the company is registered.¹²

The national data on working disabled persons in public and private sector according to gender and level of education reveal the following data for 2019:¹¹

		2019	
		Public sector - CUMULATIVE	Private sector - CUMULATIVE
Male	Education – all together	4.284	12.899
	Primary school or less	644	2.479

	Vocational/Grammar school (high school)	2.885	9.241
	Higher Education	755	1.179
Female	Education – all together	6.891	10.962
	Primary school or less	1.126	2.744
	Vocational/Grammar school (high school)	3.576	6.738
	Higher Education	2.189	1.480

Working disabled persons based on vocational groups– yearly data for 2019^{11,13}

	2019
	Gender - CUMMULATIVE
1 LEGISLATORS, SENIOR OFFICERS, MANAGERS	896
2 EXPERTS	3.421
3 TECHNICIANS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS	4.368
4 OFFICIALS	3.736
5 VOCATIONS FOR SERVICES, SELLERS	5.153
6 FARMERS, FORESTERS, FISHERMEN, HUNTERS	226
7 OCCUPATIONS FOR NON - INDUSTRIAL WORK	4.989

	2019
	Gender CUMMULATIVE -
8 MACHINE AND DEVICE OPERATORS, INDUSTRIAL MANUFACTURERS AND ASSEMBLERS	3.947
9 OCCUPATIONS FOR SIMPLE WORK	8.136

b. the use of vocational trainings (looking at the use in the country in focus and if such data exist, look at the use by your target group in the country; major vocational centre providers platforms and tools; geographical concentration (mapping)).

As specifics of enrolment and equal opportunities for education have been described, a more detailed picture of inclusive educational approach used in public schooling system¹ can be shown through data of pupils enrolled into high school educational programmes with adjusted programmes and additional professional help (reference point is always the Law on the guidance of children with special needs). The data below, even when entirely in Slovene, showcases that within the years of monitoring, the share of pupils with deficits in certain areas of learning as well as pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and pupils with more than one dysfunction problem(s) is rising. This information leads us to an assumption, that questioning the inclusion in vocational training/retraining in early adulthood can be seen as a problem area that needs to be addresses also with the help of this project and the learning materials that will be developed.

The so-called safety network and rounded overview showcases that slightly older population above all is at risk in gaining new skills and having the status of disability based upon different laws and situation calls for an approach for empowerment in the later stages of life, where such safety network and all-inclusive approach does not apply in the same manner as within population up to 26 years old.

¹ : The vocational training centres and its dispersion across the country is to be understood as following – entry requirements are the same, we are addressing the possibility of enrolling into vocational education in a later stage of life and pre – training activities as planned in the VICTORUPESI IO2 are almost non-existing and in the course of the project such trainings as IO2 could serve as entry levels for easing up the process of attesting previously gained knowledge.

b) Število dijakov (in delež znotraj dijakov s PP) glede na vrsto primanjkljaja, ovire oziroma motnje

	2010/2011		2011/2012		2012/2013		2013/2014		2014/2015		2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020		2020/2021	
dijaki z lažjo motnjo v duševnem razvoju	186	6,7%	157	5,0%	156	4,4%	144	3,8%	120	3,1%	132	3,1%	113	2,7%	138	2,9%	141	2,8%	122	2,3%	139	2,5%
gluhi in naglušni	92	3,3%	98	3,1%	105	3,0%	93	2,4%	83	2,2%	87	2,1%	58	1,4%	68	1,4%	74	1,5%	74	1,4%	89	1,6%
dijaki z govorno jezikovnimi motnjami	80	2,9%	117	3,7%	172	4,9%	230	6,0%	130	3,4%	135	3,2%	88	2,1%	101	2,1%	110	2,2%	115	2,2%	114	2,0%
slepi in slabovidni ter dijaki z okvaro vidne funkcije**	32	1,2%	34	1,1%	24	0,7%	31	0,8%	31	0,8%	38	0,9%	23	0,6%	22	0,5%	23	0,5%	21	0,4%	28	0,5%
gibalno ovirani	98	3,5%	131	4,1%	144	4,1%	157	4,1%	124	3,3%	113	2,7%	62	1,5%	61	1,3%	57	1,1%	57	1,1%	49	0,9%
dijaki s čustvenimi in vedenjskimi motnjami	22	0,8%	44	1,4%	45	1,3%	54	1,4%	62	1,6%	95	2,3%	69	1,7%	97	2,0%	115	2,3%	133	2,5%	157	2,8%
dolgotrajno bolni	434	15,6%	549	17,4%	665	18,9%	722	18,9%	606	15,9%	680	16,1%	597	14,3%	647	13,6%	650	12,9%	651	12,2%	692	12,2%
dijaki s primanjkljaji na posameznih področjih učenja *	1.604	57,7%	1.822	57,7%	2.076	59,0%	2.336	61,2%	2.130	55,8%	2.373	56,2%	2.273	54,6%	2.495	52,3%	2.532	50,1%	2.676	50,2%	2.772	48,9%
dijaki z avističnimi motnjami*									19	0,5%	41	1,0%	49	1,2%	72	1,5%	69	1,4%	83	1,6%	89	1,6%
dijaki z več motnjami**	232	8,3%	207	6,6%	133	3,8%	50	1,3%	510	13,4%	527	12,5%	833	20,0%	1.067	22,4%	1.280	25,3%	1.399	26,2%	1.544	27,2%
SKUPAJ	2.780	100%	3.159	100%	3.520	100,0%	3.817	100,0%	3.815	100,0%	4.221	100,0%	4.165	100,0%	4.768	100,0%	5.051	100,0%	5.331	100,0%	5.673	100,0%

* nova skupina otrok s posebnimi potrebami v skladu z Zakonom o usmerjanju otrok s posebnimi potrebami (ZUOPP-1)

** ni samostojna skupina otrok s posebnimi potrebami v skladu z ZUOPP-1, vendar ima dijak lahko opredeljenih več motenj

Source: https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/Izobrazevanje-otrok-s-posebnimi-potrebami/Statistike-in-analize/Tabela_dijaki_s_posebnimi_potrebami.pdf

4. Opportunities for your target group (social inclusion; economic and non-economic contribution, access to internet and to technology, job market).

The ever changing and rapidly growing use of ICT, could leave behind the most vulnerable societal groups if this kind of knowledge is not accessible – no matter the status of organisations offering social support to PWD's, this kind of knowledge is essential for all parties included in social (disability) care sector. We cannot expect to offer support services if all parties are not equally involved in understanding and thus developing trainings that enhance the knowledge of societal groups to benefit from it at it most. Access to internet, moreover the know-how on internet/social media/connected technology use is vital. The societal changes and especially changed nature of work during the recent pandemic situation have deepened the need to reorientation in terms of providing adapted services and the need of staying connected, even if there is no personal contact possible.

5. Main challenges for your target group (cultural constraints; lack of information; legal restraints, lack of access).

A critical and targeted use of social media, together with ICT literacy is very important. This is the kind of knowledge the target group would benefit alongside with carefully planned activities from the side of their everyday environment and service providers. The changed nature of education (distance learning) has brought up challenges even within the target group or regular students, challenging them to adopt new ICT knowledge and skills. The latter is even a greater challenge for students with special needs and adult PWD's.

On the other hand, discrimination when it comes down to employment in the open labour market, is still present from the side of employers. Gaining self-esteem, a sense of personal resilience and feeling empowered for a self-confident representation of oneself (also communications skills) are an important element of inclusion. The remaining and in many cases persisting view on PWD's as less capable or less productive is still a challenge. Therefore, inclusion in (vocational) education and/or finalizing already started educational programmes or retraining opportunities alongside with set of transversal/ICT/resilience skills is an important factor to overcome the prejudice and improvement of employment status.

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2. Focus Groups



The second part of this research consisted of focus groups. The aim of these discussions was to understand the training needs of your target group. The same set of questions, adapted to each organization realities, were asked by all partners to allow the partnership to compare results and prepare materials to suit the needs of all countries involved.

In total, **13 persons** took part in these discussions and the in-depth interviews feedback is detailed below.

In Slovenia, 2 Focus Groups took place. One was conducted among professionals also potential stakeholders of the project. The other one was conducted among persons included in social inclusion program and rehabilitation services. Both focus groups were prepared and conducted with respect to previous information sharing between all included parties (desk research results, questions prepared and first-hand feedback for most pertinent issues, that participants wanted to address).

The 1st Focus group in Slovenia took place on 22nd of January, 2021. We have invited different organisations, deriving from social inclusion/rehabilitation sector, Secondary Schools and Employment centres, as well as professionals working in the project “Prehod mladih” - Transition of youth. The final constellation of attendees to this 1st FG, included:

- 1 Pedagogue professional from a Secondary School
- 2 Professionals from Employment rehabilitation institutions
- 1 Professional working on the project “Prehod mladih”
- 2 Professionals from International projects office OZARA d.o.o., among them one person with long term experience in advocacy for employers’ rights.

All participants have been accordingly and beforehand acquainted with description, main objectives and aims of the VICTORUPESI Project; they received an invitation and proposed set of questions beforehand to clarify any potential uncertainties about the subject of our common communication and to address the most important aspects, not covered in the preliminary desk research. The final decision on the set of questions to be discussed in the focus group was adopted based on the professional knowledge and long-term experience of these participants within their sector.

Participants have briefly discussed the situation of inclusion in general for the population they are working with (young people/students with special needs, deaf or heard of hearing individuals, people with mental health problems/mental disabilities, adults in rehabilitation process). The group concluded, based on their experience, that for general opinion orientation, the current environment, regulating different aspects and needs of PWD’s, is good overall and many improvements have been done within timespan of their professional work to broad the spectrum of support services, accompanying the needs of PWD’s to a full and independent living to the highest possible level.

However, the recent situation and uncertainty, brought up by pandemic, has clearly and unfortunately also painfully revealed many gaps or has raised questions for a full inclusion of all in educational or rehabilitation processes. Education and rehabilitation/counselling services, as one of

the most important elements beside employment have faced changes, been moved on-line or over other communication channels. All of it revealed that there are still areas where there is a lack of knowledge/know how or even approaches for a non- restricted continuation of counselling, educational processing, rehabilitation and other support services – bringing together in communication both parties namely educators/rehabilitation specialists and end users/students/PWD':

- Living in rural area with poorly covered Internet infrastructure causes many problems,
- Change of educational process to on-line version for an uncertain (much too long) period of time revealing the problem of functional ICT literacy (usage for formal practicalities in life i.e. education, communication, etc.)

The 2nd focus group took place on 21st of February 2021 and included 7 persons beside the moderators, both covering the field of social inclusion and rehabilitation. Persons participating here, were enrolled in rehabilitation processes, exercising this right due to different (mental and/or physical) health conditions, disabilities, facing a broad spectrum of conditions to be addressed within rehabilitation for a successful return to the labour market or to search for other solutions for a full inclusion. Participants covered the age group between 35 to 45 years of age, with one 54 years of age and 2 persons 21 year of age.

This focus group revealed many interesting insights about the knowledge of social media and networks, also connected to decision making process about enrolment into any kind of training course for digital up skilling. However, the majority has very scarce knowledge in this area, and still, the main entrance point expressed by the participants, for digital upskilling and information search for this field, can be described through two primary entities:

- National employment offices in their region, offering such trainings.
- Family members and friends.

Within the answers received, we have noticed, that participants do use social networks or other on-line resources but mainly social media, enabling them communication such as Facebook, Messenger, Viber, Instagram, TikTok also Google and You tube for communication and/or information/instructions search. However, a gap has been detected also here between awareness of what these tools might offer additionally and real-life use, where the participants still face gaps to understand the full potential of these tools and media. They did not identify the necessity or connection between the need for additional ICT knowledge and employment sector; however, this is connected also to the (in many cases) low level of previously gained formal education and workplace specific training whereby in the ICT knowledge is not at stake as a primary knowledge pool/need for a better inclusion and employment (also connected to specifics of primary sectors where PWD' usually find a working position. The participants however detected and clearly communicated the need for refreshing the knowledge on ICT for everyday work and this is the point where the important question of functional ICT literacy comes at stake. Communication process included in the contemporary use of social media and ICT in general has within recent months revealed the above mentioned – critical use is a competence and a skill to be worked on, for counselling and rehabilitation services to run smoothly.

Both focus groups included a broad spectrum of professional profiles and PWD's regarding the target groups of the VICTORUPESI Project.

3. In-depth Interviews

The recruitment process for these in-depth interviews included different stages of work (informing about the project, acquainting with the projects objectives and main aims, invitation to participate).

A diverse range of people belonging to vulnerable groups, vocational centres and companies were interviewed, with all ages involved in the process. This allowed the partnership to collect detailed data which included all ages, countries and situations.

In-depth Interviews have made it possible to provide additional information beside the focus groups. In Slovenia, all together 8 interviews were conducted including:

- People at risk of social exclusion (PWDs and persons in social inclusion programme) – 6 persons.
- Employment centre (as one of the legal entities, enabling employment under special conditions) – 2 persons.

Within the in-depth interviews, the target group within the element of social exclusion risk, was slightly different (lower educational standard, different physical and mental health status, generally persons with a greater risk of exclusion were the primary target for research here) in comparison to 2nd focus group participants (a well thought and balanced inclusion of all TG within the project has been provided).

FINDINGS

The main findings from this research are as follows:

- The training should take into consideration:
 - Versatile contents including communication skills, conflict and stress management, feeling of empowerment, computer literacy and ICT interconnected skills, additional computer skills, the use of computer as such/device management, leadership skills, ICT/social media use for communication and foreign language acquisition, healthy lifestyle in work and in private life.
 - Mentor(s) support within the training and group training, preferably with human contact or at least a combination of both.

With respect to the answers provided and general feedback from the interview conducting phase, we have noticed that the general orientation for the use of social media does exist, but there is the need for the full understanding of it, some have expressed more concrete needs for general computer literacy and use of computer as they have little or very limited knowledge on this matter.

- Partners should provide participants with **clear instructions** on time scope of training, enabling enough information beforehand concrete activities and open space for exchange of personal views, knowledge already gained and thus giving the option for peer support elements.
- **Flexible training is essential** the target group (connected to the scope of research in Slovenia) has different needs and also the level of preliminary knowledge in the expressed field(s) of interest is not defined exactly. Therefore, the flexibility within future training is an important element, and the contents prepared need to reflect some level of differentiation or level of knowledge, learning outcomes to be addressed in a flexible manner (so that they have the freedom of doing different facets of the future training; contents are to be prepared flexible and adaptable to previous knowledge level).

- From the focus groups and interviews, it can be noted that the participants are keen on:
 - Versatile contents.
 - Deepening the knowledge - some level of previous knowledge about ICT/social media/computer use already exists, but needs to be deepened, refreshed.
 - Combination of learning/teaching approaches as an intersection between on-line and off-line mode.
 - Learning to be implemented as a combination of individual and group work.
- Partners should be aware that **training needs are different for each participant** and training should be planned accordingly.
- Other relevant findings

Within the preparation phase of the research (desktop research, focus groups and interviews) we have addressed the changed way of communication brought up by recent pandemic situation and connected this topic to digital competence in general. The fact noticed by professionals is the level of functional literacy in general and changed nature of communication, having its limitations for both sides – people at risk of exclusion and professionals. Digital literacy for effective communication processes is therefore very important.

How are we going to use these findings?

When developing the training materials, the partners will ensure that the content is **clear and easy to understand**, consisted of all the relevant information needed to use **different social media platforms**, and also included information on **safety and security** when using the platforms. With regards to language barriers, all partners **translated the materials into English, Swedish, Italian, Serbian, Slovenian, Romanian and Spanish** to aid the training in the different countries.

When training starts, each partner organization should consider ensuring **that flexible training options are given** to suit those involved, and the **online learning platform** will also be used to supplement the training, in case any information needed reiterating.

Other ways of using the findings.

The findings of this research will also be used as a reference point for the organization, beneficiaries of the project and stakeholders in the process of social integration and thus contributing to a rounded view on inclusion possibilities in the national setting and realms of the target group. It will also be displayed on the organization website so it can serve not only locally but internationally as well.

The importance of diversity management!

VICTORUPESI consortium consist out of very divers partners serving very diverse beneficiaries. This represents a micro mirror of the societies each of our beneficiaries are living in and is really important to build the ground for holistic approaches.

Reasons for having holistic approaches in your country:

- Differentiation elements within the TG of PWD's (individually tailored approach respecting specific barriers/needs of the person to be included in the training)
- Person centered approach (including individuality, independence, privacy, partnership, choice, dignity, respect and rights)
- Working with participants also on the basis of co-creative learning process (finding solutions together, including the participant as the co-creator of his/her solutions and needs)

The importance of digital skills!

The world is changing significantly, hence the need to keep up to date with technology. With technology advancing at an incredible speed, it is important that we are not lagging behind these changes.

The below explained reasons for having good digital skills for the project's target group are showcasing the summary of gathered results from gathered information, gained through desktop research, focus groups and interviews.

Most important reasons detected on the side of professionals:

- Changed nature of communication through social media and elements of such communication procedures (different media, different communication, different aims)
- The recent pandemic situation detected gaps in different levels of skills within ICT knowledge and communication elements in order to adapt to new situation where physical contact was not possible.
- The above-mentioned gap should include intersection between effective ICT soft skills in connection to use of different media for effective communication (so called functional ICT literacy).
- Within ICT skills and social media use, the following emphasis should be in forefront (flexibility, self-initiative, cooperation, thoughts to words – effective use of ICT communication media).

Most important reasons detected on the side of PWD's:

- The formal education institutions already offer trainings connected to ICT. Also unemployed persons can attend such training offered through employment offices; however, a strong impetus should therefore be in having the option of obtaining such training for a future job position (meaning also through rehabilitation services) and future employment position needs.
- Differences within generations and their specific use of ICT (older populations within the TG needs more support).
- The use of ICT with future/potential employers (again differences within generations).

The overviews of the political context in each of the partners countries

The Republic of Slovenia has a modern policy of disability protection which is also comparable to other developed European countries. The state implements the principles of social justice and equal opportunities for all. On 2nd of April 2008, the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Act on Ratification of

the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. With this, the Republic of Slovenia became one of the first countries to ratify the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

The desk research is showcasing different laws, that speak in favour of the already mentioned political environment and consensus on that matter in society in general. Also, the findings from focus groups reveal a general positive opinion about the legislative areas, supporting the rights and opportunities for PWD's.

However, the element of discrimination, in many cases in its profound and well covered stand, remains a problem to a full inclusion on the labour market. In connection to data about primary sectors where PWD's are employed national wise, there is still room to consider the changed nature of different working environments and digital upskilling is an important element whenever the working position is not solemnly connected to manual work.

The overviews of the funding of vocational education in each of the partners countries

Pupils with special needs are educated in secondary schools in educational programs with adapted implementation and additional professional assistance provided by regular secondary schools or in adapted educational programs provided by institutions for the education of children and adolescents with special needs.

The system of schooling (primary schools, vocational schools) is provided through a public network and is publicly financed.

At the proposal of the parents, a special commission may propose the referral of a child with special needs to a primary education program organized at home or to an educational program with adapted implementation and additional professional assistance in a private educational institution if there are well-founded reasons and appropriate conditions are provided at home or in a private educational institution.³

The overviews of the local companies and industries available to hire our beneficiaries in each of the partners countries.

Disability companies as means of social economy, remain the position of main employee's organisation/employment situations for the target groups. These companies operate in different sectors and at the end of 2019, 145 of such existing enterprises were employing a sixth of all active/working disabled persons.

Compared to the activity in which they were engaged, the highest number of these enterprises belongs to manufacturing (75); half of them were classified in other different business activities, 6 enterprises were classified in professional, scientific and technical activities and 5 enterprises were classified in health and social care and in the trade, maintenance and repair of motor vehicles. As many as 6 out of 19 activities did not include or cover any disability enterprise scope; these activities include: mining, electricity, gas and steam supply, water supply, sewage and waste management, environmental remediation, information and communication activities, financial and insurance activities and public administration and defence activities, compulsory social security activities.¹⁹

The other relevant element of employment is the already mentioned and described quota system.