

Curriculum

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Foreword

Dear reader,

You are holding the curriculum of the Include³ project in your hands.

This curriculum has been developed to train VET professionals and counselors in sheltered workshops, especially in the field of inclusive counseling. It is based on the experiences and findings of the Include³ project, which is co-funded by the European Union and will run from September 2022 to August 2025 in collaboration with partners from Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Lithuania and Slovenia.

The Erasmus+ project "Include³" aims to identify and disseminate best practices for the transition of people with cognitive disabilities from sheltered employment to the general labor market.

This curriculum was developed in work package 4 of the Include³ project. It is designed to help you learn and apply the Include³ method in order to provide the best possible support for this target group on their path to regular employment. The Include³ method is an inclusive and participative guidance method. Counselors and vocational training specialists in or for sheltered workshops advise people with intellectual disabilities, employers and vocational training experts. They work out the interests, strengths and wishes of people with intellectual disabilities in a participatory manner and combine these with the needs of the labor market. Preparation for the job market is achieved through individually tailored training content. Research findings and the knowledge and feedback of experts from Belgium, Cyprus, Germany and Slovenia were incorporated into the development of the Include³ method

Find out more about the Include³ project and visit our [webpage](#).

Why is there a need for the new Include³ method?

"One of the aims of sheltered workshops is to prepare people with disabilities and support their transition to (supported) employment in the primary labor market. Nevertheless, many people remain in a sheltered workshop for a large part of their working life or even for the entire duration. This is especially true for people with cognitive disabilities. This means that the inclusion goals formulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD, Art. 27) and reaffirmed in a directive recently adopted by the European Parliament are being missed." (Keller, Körtek & Schulz, 2024, p. 1).

In order to enable this sustainable transition, the individual needs of people with disabilities and the requirements of the labor market must be better coordinated through counseling. This is precisely where the Include³ method comes in. Through close cooperation between the stakeholders involved in inclusion, it creates individual and tailor-made pathways into the general labor market. By individualizing vocational training and targeting specific labour market opportunities, the Include³ method offers materials to achieve inclusion goals more effectively.

In addition to the important problem that this curriculum aims to help solve, the special feature is that the learners are also teachers. As advisors, you will acquire knowledge and skills on the one hand and put them into practice when advising people with disabilities and employers on the other, thus also helping them to learn.

We wish you every success in studying the curriculum and learning and implementing the Include³ method.

Target group

The curriculum is aimed at

- Counselors and vocational training specialists who work in or for sheltered workshops and would like to learn about and implement the Include³ method, and
- Career starters who have completed a degree in counseling, social work, special education or comparable training and would now like to deepen their practical skills in inclusive counseling.

Parts of the curriculum can also be adapted by counselors and vocational training specialists who advise people with disabilities outside the workshop context who would like to work in the general labor market.

In addition to the direct target group of those who learn and work directly with the curriculum, there are also indirect target groups. They are influenced by the fact that the vocational education and training counsellor or specialist works with them in the practical part of the curriculum and thus becomes a teacher themselves.

This indirect, extended target group includes:

- People with intellectual disabilities who want to make the transition to the general labor market,
- Employers who are interested in hiring a person with a disability,
- Vocational training experts to be involved in the practical part of the curriculum,
- other stakeholders/network partners involved in the transition to the general labor market, if applicable.

Overarching competence targets of the curriculum

The competence targets of the curriculum are described below. The term "learners" refers to the direct target group of the Include³ curriculum.

Ability to carry out the Include³ method:

The curriculum aims to provide participants with the necessary knowledge and skills to apply the Include³ method in practice. They will be able to implement this method independently and thus support people with cognitive disabilities on their way into the general labor market.

The following learning objectives are pursued:

- Learners understand the most important theoretical principles of the Include³ method.
- Learners understand the institutional context of sheltered workshops and the primary labor market in which they operate.
- Learners are enabled to apply the Include³ method, taking into account the basic principles of participation and empowerment.
- Learners can recognize the individual needs, strengths, interests and wishes of people with disabilities and incorporate them into their work.
- They can analyze the needs of the labor market with the involvement and guidance of employers.
- Learners are enabled to evaluate the learning and teaching materials from the provided Include³ materials based on their analyses and to select the appropriate materials for inclusive and co-productive guidance.

Personal development:

In addition to methodological skills, the curriculum also promotes the personal development of participants. By dealing with inclusive counseling and the special challenges of the target groups, awareness of diversity, empathy and one's own professional attitude is strengthened.

The following learning objectives are pursued:

- Learners understand the basic principles of empowerment and participation.
- Learners understand the requirements necessary for good communication skills with people with disabilities.
- Learners analyze their actions with regard to the principles of empowerment and participation as well as their communication behavior.
- Learners develop an empowering and participatory attitude.
- Learners develop an empathetic and diversity-affirming attitude.

Implementation conditions

Types of units

The curriculum consists of a total of nine units, which are divided into two categories: theory and practical units.

- **Theory units:** In these units, participants learn basic knowledge and skills about the framework conditions of their work. This includes an understanding of the sheltered workshop system and communication with people with disabilities. The theory units are completed without the direct involvement of the indirect target group.
- **Practice units:** Practice units differ from theory units in that they involve the indirect target group (people with disabilities, employers, vocational training experts). Practice units also contain a theoretical basis, but are primarily practice-oriented and provide tasks in which the participants apply the knowledge they have previously learned in practice. They work with materials aimed at working with or for the indirect target groups and operationalize their skills in real-life advisory work. In this way, the learners themselves become teachers.

Time approach and forms of learning

The curriculum has a modular structure so that the units can be flexibly integrated into the participants' everyday working lives (in this case: the direct target group of guidance practitioners and vocational training specialists). The curriculum is designed to be so comprehensive that experienced guidance practitioners can study it completely independently without a teacher. However, it is still possible to be taught by a teacher. For example, they can offer an introduction and reflection workshops to accompany the self-study. A mixture of self-directed learning, practical exercises and reflective units is offered to ensure holistic further training. The amount of time varies depending on the unit, with the focus being on a balanced combination of theory and practice.

Overview of the curriculum

Unit number	Name of the unit	Type of unit	Responsible partners
1	Include ³ counselling method	Theory unit	HdBA
2	Sheltered workshops	Theory unit	VHS Bildungsinstitut VoG
3	Communication skills	Theory unit	Synthesis
4	Transfer into local/national context	Theory unit	Synthesis
5	Elaborating strength and aspirations of people with disabilities	Practice unit	Ozara d.o.o.
6	Analysing labour market needs	Practice unit	HdBA
7	Connecting labour market needs and individual needs	Practice unit	Ozara d.o.o.
8	Collaboration in networks	Practice unit	VHS Bildungsinstitut VoG
9	Reflection of the integration process and stress coping	Practice unit	HdBA, VHS Bildungsinstitut VoV

By dividing up the content, we have been able to present the material that is important for the Incude³ method in a particularly multi-layered way. This allows the individual organisations to contribute their expertise in the field of inclusion in the best possible way.

Descriptions of the individual units

Unit 1: Include³ counselling method

Responsible organisation(s):

Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit (HdBA)

Location within the Include³ method:

The knowledge from Unit 1 is particularly important for understanding the Include³ method phases 1-4, as it represents and explains these phases

Topic:

Include³ project and Include³ method

Learning objectives:

On completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- Know the phases of the Include³ method

Introduction:

To create the Include³ method, data was collected from focus group interviews in Belgium, Cyprus, Germany and Slovenia on counselling, education, transition and networking in sheltered workshops. We then used the focus group interviews to derive guidelines for the development of the Include³ method. The guidelines contain implications for the phases and principles of counselling and the role of the counsellor. They also include implications for vocational training in sheltered workshops. Recommendations are made for the educational content and accompanying material. Finally, implications for networking are also given.

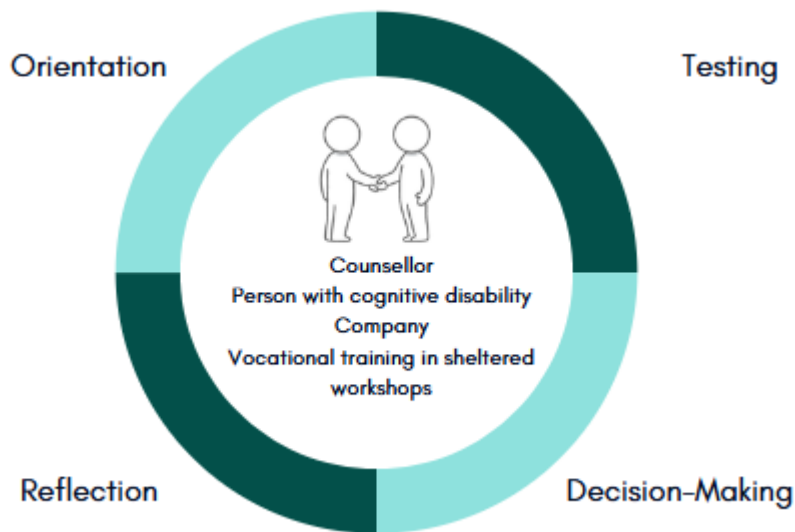
The guidelines for the Include³ method form the basis for the following method description. The development and selection of didactic materials in the further units of this curriculum are also based on the guidelines.

Phases of the Include³ method

The Include³ method is a cooperative, participative and inclusive counselling method.

It consists of a total of four phases:

1. Orientation
2. Testing
3. Decision-making
4. Reflection



The phases can, but do not necessarily have to be completed in this order. They can also be completed in a different order if necessary. It is also possible to return to a previous phase or repeat several phases. This may be the case, for example, if it is discovered during an internship that the decision was not the right one after all.

The individual phases are described below:

1. **Orientation:** The orientation phase also includes the start of counseling and the clarification of concerns. The person seeking advice (the person with a disability) visits the counsellor at the start of the counselling or is registered for counselling. The aim of the start of counseling is to get to know each other and lay the foundations for a trusting counseling relationship. During the clarification of concerns, the counselor gives the person seeking advice the opportunity to present their concerns. If the person seeking advice is not yet clear about their concerns, the counsellor can use prompts and open questions to help them work through their concerns. It is also possible that hidden concerns exist or that concerns are not voiced because the person seeking advice is afraid. The task of the counselor is to bring out even hidden concerns, for example by asking in-depth questions or paraphrasing contradictory statements made by the person seeking advice. It is important to speak openly about the concerns and not to anticipate the person seeking advice or to assume concerns that have not been expressed. The concern does not always have to be an immediate transition to the general labor market. For example, the person seeking advice could also express an interest in an external job or an internship in a company or a desire for other content in vocational training. These concerns could then possibly develop into a desire for a transition to the primary labor market. If the counselor is of the opinion that they can support the person seeking advice with their concerns, they communicate this and a verbal (or written) agreement is reached to continue the counseling process together. During the orientation phase, the counselor gets to know the person seeking advice better and also helps them to get to know themselves better. For example, the counselor and the person seeking advice can discuss the following topics:
 - Interests
 - Strengths
 - Dislikes
 - Internships
 - Family situation

- Mobility
- Health and disability-specific aspects that are relevant for activities (e.g. light triggers in the case of a predisposition to epilepsy that exclude certain activities with flickering lighting; medication that affects the operation of machines)

Various aptitude assessment tools can also be used to work out interests and strengths. You can find more detailed information in Unit 6.

It is also possible to involve relatives, contact persons in the sheltered workshop, friends or other parties at this stage in order to obtain further information. It is important that the person seeking advice agrees to this beforehand.

2. **Testing:** In the testing phase, the counsellor guides the person seeking advice to find out possible occupational fields or activities that could be considered for an internship, for example. The fields of activity or occupations are always measured against the interests, strengths and wishes of the person seeking advice. An indication of possible occupational fields can be taken from the aptitude assessment in the first phase, for example. It is important that the counsellor neither works through all possible occupational and professional fields in a "checklist-like" manner, nor commits himself/herself solely to the results of the aptitude assessment. Opening up too many possibilities can overwhelm the person seeking advice in narrowing down to one or more alternatives. Restricting them to the fields of activity or occupations from the aptitude test can lead to the person seeking advice being pushed in a direction in which their strengths lie, but which does not match their interests. During the exploration, it can also happen that the person seeking advice names specific companies or places where they would like to work. It is helpful for the consultant to work out the criteria for all the information with the person seeking advice. For example, a company may be mentioned because the person seeking advice already knows it or because a friend works there. The clarification of criteria helps on the one hand in the search for further alternatives during the exploration and on the other hand in the reflection of decision rules.

Possible criteria could be

- Interests and dislikes
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Proximity and mobility
- Opinion and support from the community
- Prestige
- Experience
- Recognitions

For example, companies can also be included in the exploration phase if they contribute to providing information for the labor market.

3. **Decision-making:** In the decision-making phase, the consultant supports the client in selecting solution options. These do not consist of a series of possibilities, but of the options that have already been worked out in the exploration phase. It is then a matter of evaluating the options and deciding on one. The counsellor can use specific questions to encourage the client to reflect on their decision criteria and their feasibility. For example, they can also ask about the client's expectations of the solution option.

It should be noted that other factors can also have an influence on the decision, for example advice from relatives or offers from companies that may have already been included in the exploration phase. The counselor must take this into account and work out together with the client which factors, including those that are initially hidden, may have an influence on the decision and to what extent they can or must also be included as criteria.

The results of the decision can be of various kinds. For example, the client may decide on a career direction, an employer, an internship or measures towards a job on the primary labor market.

The decision is then implemented.

4. Reflection: During reflection, the counselor works out with the client which expectations have been fulfilled. Which expectations have deviated and what emotions the client has when realizing the decision. If necessary, the client may have to make a new decision in the event of disappointment or strongly differing expectations. This may be the start of a previous phase.

Explanation of the phase + description of the units in which the phases are taken up again (reference to the unit).

Basic principles of the Include³ method: Empowerment and Participation¹

According to Article 6 (empowerment) and Article 29 (participation) of the UN CRPD, the person with a disability is at the centre of all decisions and actions in counselling, vocational training and transition support.

‘Empowerment here stands for the unconditional trust in the strengths of people who find themselves on the margins of society and for the conviction that they can recognise their own resources and abilities and translate them into social action to gain more life sovereignty’ (Theunissen, 2022. p.28, translated into English). According to Lenz, the empowerment concept involves a consistent focus on people's strengths and competences and moving away from the deficit view and their need for help. This means that people with disabilities are empowered to recognise their own strengths and interests. On this basis, they can make their own decisions.

‘The active and informed participation of people with disabilities in all decisions affecting them is a fundamental prerequisite for their equal participation’ (Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, n.d., translated into English).

In order to enable inclusion and participation, work with people with disabilities is changing. Newer approaches make use of the person-centred approach. Based on the ‘affected person’ (empowerment), this approach builds on concepts and methodological instruments of community work, lifeworld orientation and social space orientation in social work.

Implementing empowerment and participation in counselling

A counsellor who promotes the empowerment and participation of people with disabilities is, in particular, a supportive and coordinating companion. Below you will find actions for all phases of counselling that place the client

¹
This paragraph was taken from the guidelines (Keller, Körtek & Schulz, 2024b, p. 3).

at the centre. This enables the client to orientate themselves professionally in a self-determined and capable manner and to implement and reflect on the decisions made.

1 Orientation Phase

- Strengthen self-determination from the outset: Start the counselling by giving the client space and time to express their own strengths, desires and concerns. Avoid making assumptions about their strengths or even weaknesses and impairments in advance. Instead, encourage an open conversation with questions such as ‘Why are you here today?’ or ‘What interests and strengths do you want to use?’
- Ask resource-oriented questions: Help the client to discover their strengths and abilities themselves. Use questions such as ‘What did you enjoy about your work/internship so far?’ or ‘What have you already achieved that you are proud of?’ to raise awareness of their own potential.
- Initiate supportive networking: Suggest involving the social environment, such as family or friends, in an external assessment of strengths and abilities if the client wishes. This way, they can benefit from their perspectives without losing their independence. Agree with them to what extent the network can take on a supportive role.

2 Testingphase

- Support clients in defining their own criteria: Help clients to develop criteria for possible career fields. Let them determine what is important to them, such as work location, type of tasks or support needed. Formulate questions such as ‘What conditions do you need to feel comfortable?’ or ‘Which requirements are important to you?’ to encourage conscious selection.
- Compare criteria actively and with reflection: Instead of going through occupational fields in the sense of a ‘checklist’, focus on the relevant fields for the client that match his strengths and interests. Guide him to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of various possibilities. This way, the exploration becomes a targeted process in which the client consciously organises and critically questions his preferences.
- Supportive coordination of the network: Coordinate contact with potential companies and other support organisations so that they serve as a source of information and a bridge for the client, but do not restrict the client's decision-making. In this way, companies can provide important insights without dictating a decision.

3. Decision-Making Phase

- Support in weighing up options: Here, the client takes on the role of the ‘decision-maker’, while you support them in weighing up the options in a structured way. Ask them targeted questions such as ‘Which option best suits your goals and your life situation?’ and ‘How will you know that this decision is right for you?’
- Strengthen self-confidence in decision-making: Give the client the freedom to make their own decisions and encourage them to do so by asking questions to clarify their beliefs and preferences. Emphasise that it is

okay to reconsider alternatives when new insights arise. In this way, the client experiences the counselling as a framework for their decision-making ability.

- Respectfully addressing hidden factors: Helping clients in this phase also means drawing their attention to external influences and considering how these could affect their decision. Questions such as ‘Is there someone whose opinion is important to you in this decision?’ or ‘How would your environment be affected by the decision?’ help them to define their own values more clearly.

4. Period of Reflection

- Reflecting and strengthening expectations: After the start of implementation, the client can reflect on how well the expectations have been met. Guide them to analyse the steps themselves and recognise the value of their decision. Questions like ‘How has your decision changed your daily life?’ promote a sense of responsibility and self-efficacy.
- Planning future steps together: If the decision does not bring the desired success, encourage the client to engage in critical self-reflection without prescribing solutions. Support them in making a well-founded decision again. This strengthens their confidence in their own decision-making ability and promotes lasting independence.

Basic tips for an empowerment- and participation-oriented approach:

- The client as an expert on themselves: The counsellor takes on a reserved role and ensures that the client is strengthened in their independence. Every question and piece of advice serves to encourage the client to make their own decisions and independently expand their abilities.
- Promoting self-organisation and order: Actively support the client in developing their own order for their goals and possibilities. Methods such as a ‘pro-and-con list’ or setting priorities can help them to develop a clear structure that is based on their criteria.
- Clarify the role of the counsellor: Make it clear to the client that your role is primarily a supportive one. This can encourage the client to take responsibility and to see you as a resource for coordination that provides an overview without controlling.
- This action-oriented approach allows the client to experience how empowerment and participation specifically lead to more self-determination and freedom of action. Empowerment thus becomes the active promotion of independence, while participation ensures that the client not only participates, but also determines the direction.

The following units will help you to implement the (still) abstract concepts of empowerment and participation in your counselling work.

Activities, teaching and learning materials

- Exercise 1
Familiarize yourself with the objectives and target groups of the include3 project!
Use the webpage include3.eu
- Exercise 2

Read the comments on chapter 1 of the national report of your respective country and summarize the information relevant to you in bullet points! Read chapter 2 of the national report for your country and summarize the content of the chapter on up to one page.
- Exercise 3

Read the policy guidelines for decision-makers and identify those aspects that you consider relevant to your work!
- Exercise 4

Take a look at the implications for the include3 method on p. 33

Please make a note of the aspects that are important to you in the individual subject areas "Phases of the counselling process", "Principles of counselling", "Role of counsellors", "Contents of vocational training", "Material to support counselling and vocational training", "Networking skills"! You can also refer to the transnational report on community engagement events.

Focus Group Report Include3 Project
- Exercise 5

The guidelines refer to the important basic principles of participation, empowerment and individualization. These are simply summarized in an explanatory video and explained using an example.

Watch the video explaining the guidelines!

<https://youtu.be/V4nklqdSJ9s?feature=shared>

We recommend that you read Unit 1 of the Include³ self-study module as additional reading. In Unit 1 of the self-study module, you will get to know the Include³ project and all the results that serve as the basis for the curriculum in more detail. Unit 1 of the self-study module also reviews the phases of the Include³ method and the principles of empowerment and participation.

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You can find the online self-study unit at the following link:

Unit 2: Sheltered workshops

Responsible organisation(s):

VHS Bildungsinstitution VoG

Positioning within the Include³ method:

The knowledge from Unit 2 is particularly important for understanding the Include³ method phases 1-4, as it conveys the basics and shows the framework conditions in which the guidance work takes place

Topic:

Structure and work of sheltered workshops in Belgium, Cyprus, Germany and Slovenia

Learning objectives:

On completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- To understand the differences and similarities between the workshops for people with disabilities in the four partner countries.
- To know the financing mechanism and the organizational structures of the workshops.
- Be able to explain the role of vocational guidance and the concepts of vocational training in the workshops.
- Identify the support concepts for the transition of people with disabilities into the general labor market in the partner countries.

Introduction:

In the following we describe the structure and work of the sheltered workshops in the Include³ partner countries, i.e. Belgium, Cyprus, Germany and Slovenia.

All countries have a functioning system of sheltered workshops dating back to the 1960s or 80s. All sheltered workshops offer sheltered employment in various areas for people with disabilities and people with other barriers to integration.

The financial basis varies in the partner countries and is usually provided by the government, but sometimes also by NGOs.

In most partner countries, counseling and vocational training are partly provided by state institutions and sheltered workshops. In Belgium, counseling is provided by the Service of Self Determined Living, in Cyprus by the CVRPD. In Germany, it is carried out by the sheltered workshop, as well as in Slovenia. The counseling process includes the following steps: orientation: assessment of abilities and skills, testing: internship and questionnaire, decision-making: in discussion with the person with a disability, reflection: discussion of the decision at a time interval and follow-up: psycho- and sociotherapeutic measures

Vocational training is carried out in sheltered workshops in all partner countries. The training has a variety of programs, such as personal needs, motivation, hygiene, social skills, communication skills, behavioral patterns, independence, work requirements, punctuality, manual skills.

All sheltered workshops offer special internships for the transition to the primary labor market. There is also some support for employers, such as mentoring programs, incentive systems or integration assistance in the workplace.

Activities, teaching and learning materials:

Quiz: Sheltered Workshops

Sources:

- Keller, S., Körtek, Y. & Schulz, J. (2024a). *Inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities into the labour market – Legal framework, sheltered workshop system and good practice in Germany*. [Include³-project national report Germany \(include3.eu\)](#)
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You can find the online self-study unit at the following link:

Unit 3: Communication skills

Responsible organisation(s):

Synthesis

Positioning within the Include³ method:

The knowledge from Unit 3 is particularly important for understanding the Include³ method phases 1-4, as it teaches communicative skills and attitudes that form the basis for counseling

Topic:

Strategies for communicating with people with disabilities

Learning Objectives:

On completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- Develop communication skills that promote inclusion
- Use available networks and social networks
- to improve the effectiveness of communication in all areas

Introduction:

Effective communication is critical to the inclusion of people with disabilities in any setting. This subchapter covers general and specific strategies for communicating with people with different disabilities. By improving your communication skills, you can avoid misunderstandings and unintentional insults. Remember that communication involves words, tone of voice, body language and context.

Effective communication with people with disabilities involves speaking to them as you would to anyone else, using an age-appropriate tone of voice and treating adults as adults. Always address the person with a disability directly, even if they are accompanied by a caregiver. Use language that puts the person at the center, e.g. "person who uses a wheelchair" instead of "wheelchair bound", and avoid negative language such as "suffers from" or "crippled". These practices promote respect and inclusion.

Respect and consideration in communicating with people with disabilities also means avoiding assumptions about their abilities or needs. Always ask before you offer help and respect their right to refuse. Take the time to listen carefully and ask questions when necessary, rather than pretending to understand everything. Use respectful language and avoid asking intrusive questions about their disability to create a respectful and inclusive environment.

Non-verbal communication is crucial when dealing with people with disabilities. Pay attention to signals such as eye contact, body movements and tone of voice, as these can convey important information. Make sure you maintain good eye contact, but avoid staring. Always consider the context and situation when interpreting non-verbal signals. Effective communication often involves a combination of verbal and non-verbal methods to achieve better understanding and include everyone.

Effective communication with people with cognitive disabilities involves treating them as adults and adapting communication methods to their reactions. This includes using simple, direct language and visual aids, avoiding

abstract terms and repeating information in different ways. Questions should be phrased in a way that does not suggest desired answers and precise instructions should be given. Communication should be possible in written or verbal form, depending on the person's preference. Professionals should be patient, flexible and supportive and use language that focuses on the person or foregrounds identity, depending on the person's preference. Minimizing distractions and eliminating background noise are also critical to clear communication.

To establish effective communication with people with cognitive disabilities, individuals should focus on inclusion, clarity, accessibility, rapport and flexibility. It is important to speak directly to the person, use their preferred methods of communication and ensure information is in easy-to-read or plain English. Building rapport through a positive attitude and engaging the person before asking formal questions helps to create a comfortable environment. Using open-ended questions, confirming understanding and maintaining consistency in communication also contribute to an effective interaction. Minimizing distractions from the environment, speaking clearly and slowly, and allowing sufficient time to process and respond to questions ensure respectful and effective communication.

Part of preparing for inclusion in the workplace is informing existing employees about a new team member's disability and their role. Use appropriate terminology and ask about the new employee's preferences. Encourage respectful curiosity without intrusive questions and provide appropriate forms of communication and support during social interactions. This preparation fosters a welcoming and inclusive environment for all employees.

Working with individuals and leaders from the disability community is essential to fostering an inclusive environment. Listening to their needs and providing assistive devices such as captioning will enable their participation. Business leaders should solicit feedback through surveys and provide accessibility training to new employees. By understanding and supporting the disability community, companies can build strong connections and ensure positive outcomes. This commitment helps to create a workplace that values inclusion and is actively responsive to the needs of all members.

Creating an accessibility response plan is critical to be able to react to unforeseen circumstances. Organizations should develop action plans, such as continuity plans, to quickly respond to digital accessibility emergencies. The use of forms and guidelines ensures the timely processing of accessibility requests. Addressing attitudes and prejudices through accessibility training improves awareness and promotes inclusion. An open-minded approach, active listening and encouraging questions give people with disabilities the opportunity to voice their needs, promoting an inclusive and supportive environment.

Effective communication and inclusion in the workplace requires engaging with the disability community to understand their needs and provide the necessary tools such as captioning. Developing an accessibility response plan ensures that organizations are prepared for unforeseen circumstances, while addressing attitudes and biases through training promotes a positive environment. Implementing feedback mechanisms and ensuring clear, respectful communication promotes a supportive and inclusive workplace. Crucial steps include using person-centered or identity-based language that aligns with individual preferences and creating digital accessibility contingency plans. Through these measures, companies can build a close relationship with people with disabilities and ensure equal participation for all employees.

Activities, teaching and learning materials:

A1: Empathy and Bias Awareness Exercise

A2: Storytelling with Visual Aids

Sources:

- Verbit. (2024). *Strategies to Ensure Effective Communication for People with Disabilities*. Retrieved March 3, 2025, from: <https://verbit.ai/resources/strategies-to-ensure-effective-communication-for-people-with-disabilities/>
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- JAN, Job Accommodation Network. (2024). *Communication tips for working with individuals with intellectual disabilities*. Retrieved March 3, 2025, from: <https://askjan.org/articles/Communication-Tips-for-Working-with-Individuals-with-Intellectual-Disabilities.cfm>

You can find the online self-study unit at the following link:

Unit 4: Transfer into local/national context

Responsible organisation(s):

Synthesis

Positioning within the Include³ method:

The knowledge from Unit 4 is important on a meta-level to transfer phases 1-4 to the local/national context.

Topic:

Adaption of inclusive strategies to the local or national context.

Learning objectives: On completion of the unit, learners will be able to:

- Adapt inclusion strategies to local and national settings.
- Understand cultural, legal and systemic factors that influence the successful implementation of inclusive practices.

Introduction:

Adapting inclusive strategies to local and national contexts ensures relevance and sustainability. Global principles of inclusion provide a solid foundation, but to achieve real impact, these must be tailored to reflect cultural, legal, and systemic differences in local contexts. Effective contextualization bridges the gap between universal ideals and the unique challenges faced by communities. By integrating these strategies thoughtfully, inclusion becomes a tool for empowerment, fostering equitable participation and long-term sustainability.

Transferring inclusion strategies requires a deep understanding of local and national landscapes. Mapping these contexts includes identifying existing policies, engaging with stakeholders, and addressing societal and cultural nuances. This process ensures that solutions are not only appropriate but also accepted by the communities they are intended to serve. By taking a methodical approach to mapping, we can identify gaps, leverage existing resources, and design actionable strategies that resonate with specific environments.

International frameworks such as those from the OECD and UNICEF provide valuable guidelines for building inclusive systems. These resources emphasize the need for evidence-based decision-making, contextual adaptation, and collaboration among stakeholders. By reviewing and applying these frameworks to your local context, you can identify strengths and areas for improvement in current policies. Use these tools to establish a foundation for impactful and inclusive practices tailored to meet local challenges.

Collaboration is essential to ensure the success of inclusive strategies. Engaging with local governments, educators, community leaders, and NGOs brings diverse perspectives and expertise to the table. Partnerships enable the pooling of resources and foster collective ownership of solutions. Collaborative efforts also increase the likelihood of adoption and sustainability, as stakeholders are more likely to support strategies they've helped shape. Building trust and maintaining open communication are key to successful partnerships.

The Maltese National Inclusive Education Framework

The Maltese National Inclusive Education Framework is an excellent case study of how inclusive practices can be integrated into national policies. It emphasizes the importance of adapting strategies to reflect the specific needs and challenges of a country. By examining such examples, you can learn how to design frameworks that are actionable, measurable, and sustainable. This case study highlights the value of clear objectives, stakeholder collaboration, and consistent monitoring. Use these insights to inspire your local adaptations.

How to promote inclusion (strategies) in the local context:

- Storytelling is a powerful tool to promote inclusion. Sharing success stories from local or national contexts demonstrates the tangible impact of inclusive practices. Stories can inspire communities, motivate stakeholders, and create a sense of shared purpose. When communicated effectively, these narratives highlight the human side of inclusion, showcasing the potential for transformation and empowerment. They also serve as evidence of progress, encouraging ongoing commitment and support for inclusion initiatives.
- Equipping stakeholders with accessible materials and targeted training is essential for successful implementation of inclusive practices. The Include 3 Project highlights the importance of designing resources that meet the diverse needs of educators, employers, and communities. Tailoring materials to local contexts ensures that they are both relevant and effective. Providing training on how to use these resources further enhances their impact, empowering stakeholders to actively contribute to inclusive environments. This approach empowers individuals to actively contribute to inclusive environments, ensuring sustainable and meaningful outcomes for all members of society.
- Sustainability is the ultimate goal of any inclusion strategy. Achieving this requires building strong networks, leveraging technology for accessibility, and embedding inclusion into institutional practices. Strategies should focus on creating systems that can adapt and thrive in the face of changing needs. By prioritizing sustainability, inclusion becomes a lasting commitment rather than a temporary solution, ensuring equitable opportunities for all members of society.
- Equipping stakeholders with accessible materials and targeted training is essential for successful implementation of inclusive practices. The Include 3 Project highlights the importance of designing resources that meet the diverse needs of educators, employers, and communities. Tailoring materials to local contexts ensures that they are both relevant and effective. Providing training on how to use these resources further enhances their impact, empowering stakeholders to actively contribute to inclusive environments. This approach empowers individuals to actively contribute to inclusive environments, ensuring sustainable and meaningful outcomes for all members of society.

Activities, teaching and learning material:

- A1: Stakeholder Mapping
- A2: Case Study Workshop

Sources:

- OECD. (2021). *Promoting inclusive education for diverse societies: A conceptual framework*. OECD Education Working Paper No. 260
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- Maltese Ministry for Education and Employment. (2019, revised 2022). *A National Inclusive Education Framework*. <https://nsss.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/National-Inclusive-Education-Framework.pdf>
- PMC. (2017). *Access to curriculum for students with disabilities at higher education institutions: How does the National University of Lesotho fare?*. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5502469/>
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You can find the online self-study unit at the following link:

Unit 5: Elaborating strength and aspirations of people with disabilities

Responsible organisation(s):

Ozara d.o.o

Positioning within the Include³ method:

The knowledge from Unit 5 is very important for phases 1 and 2 as it supports the client in finding out own interests, strengths and possible occupational fields.

Topic:

Analysis of the needs of the labor market, particularly with regard to the skills and needs of people with intellectual disabilities. The focus is on the individual assessment of skills and interests in order to support the transition to the regular labor market.

Learning objectives: On completion of the unit, learners will be able to:

- Recognize the strengths and challenges of people with intellectual disabilities.
- Analyze personal preferences and skills.
- To understand the influence of intellectual disabilities on career choices.

Introduction:

The aim of workshops for people with disabilities is to prepare and support them for the transition to the regular labor market. However, many people with disabilities, especially those with cognitive impairments, remain in such workshops for long periods of time or even their entire working life. This points to the failure to achieve the inclusion goals of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and a recent European Parliament directive. To facilitate a sustainable transition, it is crucial to match the needs of people with disabilities with the requirements of the labor market. Counseling plays a central role in this process by identifying the strengths, interests and training needs of those seeking counseling. Counselors in workshops for people with disabilities also maintain contact with employers and act as mediators. Appropriate guidance ensures that vocational training is adapted to individual learning needs, abilities and goals as well as to the requirements and support offered by the labor market.

In this unit you will be able to provide personalized assessment procedures to understand individual skills.

WHAT IS A PERSONALIZED ASSESSMENT?

It is a careful and thoughtful process that takes into account the unique needs and abilities of each person. The key principles to consider in this process are:

Understanding the individual: Before implementing a self-assessment tool, it is important to understand the individual's cognitive abilities, communication skills and personal preferences. If possible, consult with HR or a

psychologist, rehabilitation specialist or other available services to better understand the needs of your prospective employee. **Flexible, adaptive and user-friendly assessment tools:** Instruments should allow for both individual and group work and provide meaningful, practical and actionable insights. Always be mindful of individuals' cognitive abilities and consider whether the tools need to be adapted with simplified language, visual aids/pictures or other additional guidance and support. **Support with self-assessment activities:** Support means involving trusted individuals from the prospective employee's community (explore this community in advance) if needed. However, it must be ensured that the feedback and responses are only supported/facilitated and not influenced by the support persons.

HOW IS A PERSONALIZED ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTED?

The implementation of self-assessment tools for people with intellectual disabilities to analyze and match the needs of the labor market involves a multi-step process that includes the following:

- **Job customization:** This means modifying the work tasks to match the person's skills and strengths. This may include adapting the work tasks, the work environment or the work schedule to meet the person's needs.
- **Workplace adjustments:** This includes the necessary adjustments to the workplace to ensure that the person can carry out their work effectively. This may include providing assistive technology, modifying the physical environment or providing additional support or supervision.
- **Promoting inclusion:** It is important to promote an inclusive workplace culture where all employees are valued and respected. This could include diversity and inclusion training for all employees, promoting open communication and creating a supportive and inclusive work culture.

Because there is much information available on effective strategies to support job seekers with disabilities, employment counselors use this information, tools and strategies in different ways. It is important to remember five essential elements:

- Building trust
- Understanding the jobseeker with a disability
- Planning the support
- Identification of suitable tasks/jobs
- Support after recruitment

Building a trusting relationship is critical to engaging the individual and gaining insight into their deep-rooted preferences, goals and motivations. This is critical to increase the likelihood of a successful job match, high job satisfaction and job retention, and reduce the need for post-employment support. A career guidance counselor can use a self-checklist to ensure that the above elements are addressed in the assessment process: Please see an example that can be used for this.

Activities, teaching and learning materials:

1. **Personalized evaluation:**
 - Understanding the person's cognitive abilities and preferences.
 - Flexible and adaptive assessment tools that are easy to understand and use visual aids.

- Support from trusted persons in self-assessment activities without influencing the answers.
2. **Implementation of personalized assessment:**
 - Adaptation of job roles to the person's abilities.
 - Workplace adaptations, such as assistance technology or changes to the working environment.
 - Promoting an inclusive corporate culture through training and support.
 3. **Activity 1:** "Personal Traits" Worksheet
Draw a self-portrait and pin positive and negative traits. Group activity with reflection.
 4. **Activity 2:** "Individual Planning"
questionnaire to identify interests and preferences (e.g. indoor/outdoor work, teamwork) and skills assessment through practical tasks (e.g. sorting objects).
 5. **Job shadowing:**
Observation of professionals in their job (e.g. chef, cashier, gardener) for a realistic assessment of job tasks and working environments.
 6. **Activity 3:** Case studies
Exploration of best practice examples from own country. Analyze and reflect on successful employment stories of people with intellectual disabilities.

Sources:

- Butterworth, J., Migliore, A., Bose, J., Lyons, O., & Nye-Lengerman, K. (2017). *Assisting job seekers with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A guide for employment consultants*. ThinkWork.
https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1087&context=ici_pubs
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RTVSLO. (2013, December 10). *Karin na praksi pri varuhinji človekovih pravic* [Video].
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You can find the online self-study unit at the following link:

Unit 6: Analysing labour market needs

Responsible organisation(s):

Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit (HdBA)

Positioning within the Include³ method:

The knowledge from Unit 6 is important for phase 3 of the include³-method as it supports the implementation of the decision.

Topic:

Identifying and analyzing the needs of companies and the labor market for hiring people with disabilities and providing information

Learning objectives:

On completion of the learning unit, learners will be able to:

- Help employers to identify activities in their organization that can be combined with a job for people with disabilities.
- define the qualification requirements together with employers and people with disabilities
- examine the information needs of employers and people with disabilities
- inform employers about the preparation, onboarding process and follow-up of the transition to an internship or job

Introduction:

Before hiring a person with a disability, an employer is faced with a number of questions. Will the person fit into my company? Which administrative procedures do I have to take on? How will my employees react? Sometimes these questions also lead to the company developing fears and not hiring the person.

A number of requirements must be met before a company decides to include a person with a disability. These include, for example

- Openness: Openness can be achieved by reducing prejudices, translating advantages and examples of good practice.
- Information and awareness-raising: This includes information on clear and understandable communication, managing people with disabilities, working together in teams and specific, individual and disability-related characteristics.
- Incentives: These include, for example, financial support that rewards the employment of a person with a disability or helps to reduce financial disadvantages. At the same time, however, a "network guide" that can help through the funding jungle is also important.
- Workplace requirements: In order to be able to provide a specific workplace, the employer must first know the company's needs. From this, an individual workplace can be designed in conjunction with the wishes and strengths of the person with a disability.
- Help with onboarding and implementation: Even after hiring, the employer has information requirements for onboarding.

In this learning unit, the focus is on **job requirements**, in particular on systematic job analysis, the job carving method and the first meeting between the company and the potential employee with a disability.

Workplace analysis

Work analysis is about systematically analyzing and describing work activities. Requirements analysis is a sub-form of work analysis. The aim of the requirements analysis is to identify the sensorimotor, cognitive, social and emotional-motivational requirements that the job holder should fulfil. It therefore describes specific characteristics that a (future) job holder should possess.

When hiring a person with an intellectual disability, however, we do not start from the analysis of an existing job that is occupied by the person with a disability. Rather, the job must be created individually for the person with a disability.

Especially when the employer hires a person with a cognitive disability for the first time, you can guide and support them with advice.

Jobcaving

Job carving is another method. Here, a job is created in the company for a person with a disability from existing work tasks. The job then matches the wishes, strengths and needs (e.g. working hours) of the person with a disability. Job carving also considers aids and support options.

The advantage for the company is that skilled workers can be relieved of simple tasks.

Job carving consists of several steps (Nietupski & Hamre-Nietupski, 2000, own adaptations):

1. At the beginning, one or more people are identified for whom the job is to be created. You can already see the difference to the requirements analysis here: the process starts with the person with a disability.
2. An image of an "ideal job" is then created for the person with a disability.
3. Then select an industry or employer that could fit this image.
4. Subsequently, an employer must be found within this industry who sees the advantages of job carving.
5. An interview is conducted to identify possible work tasks.
6. Finally, the work tasks are assigned to the potential employees.

The method can also be used for an internship.

Activities, teaching and learning materials:

- **A1: Card sorting – a collaborative job carving activity for employers, future employees with disabilities and counsellors**
- **A2: Preparation for self-presentation – worksheet for future employees or interns with disabilities (plain language)**
- **A3: Tips for company presentation: Factsheet for employers**

- **A4: Preparation for company presentation**

Sources:

- Blickle, G. (2019). *Anforderungsanalyse*. In F. W. Nerdinger, G. Blickle & N. Schaper (Eds.), *Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie* (4th Ed., p. 235-249). Springer.
- Hötten, R., & Hirsch, T. (2014). *Jobcoaching: Die betriebliche Inklusion von Menschen mit Behinderung gestalten*. Balance.
- jik. (2021, June 1). *Jobcarving: Stellenprofile neu denken*. Retrieved March 3, 2025, from: <https://jobinklusive.org/?s=jobcarving>
- KOFA. (2018, December 3). *Inklusion am Arbeitsplatz: 10 Gründe Menschen mit Behinderung zu beschäftigen*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGYaNcQLGaE>
- Nietupski, J.A., Hamre-Nietupski, S. (2000). *A Systematic Process for Carving Supported Employment Positions for People with Severe Disabilities*. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities* 12, 103-119 (2000). <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1009404916115>
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- VALiD. (2020, October 26). *Episode 1 Employing people with intellectual disability*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFtUIZeX9Tg>
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You can find the online self-study unit at the following link:

Unit 7: Connecting labour market needs and individual needs

Responsible organisation(s):

Ozara d.o.o

Positioning within the Include³ method:

The knowledge from Unit 7 is important for phase 3 of the include³-method as it supports decision making processes.

Topic: The development of personalized learning plans for people with disabilities that are tailored to individual career goals, as well as the promotion of lifelong learning and the development of professional skills, taking into account the requirements of the labor market.

Learning objectives:

After completing the learning unit, learners will be able to

- Create individualized learning plans for people with intellectual disabilities that are tailored to personal career goals.
- Set SMART goals for personal and professional growth.
- Create a plan for skills development.
- Understand the importance of lifelong learning.
- interpret labor market data and use it for professional decision-making.
- Identify cross-sectoral labor market trends and adapt the skills and qualifications of people with disabilities.

Introduction:

For career counselors working with people with intellectual disabilities, it is crucial to interpret labor market data accurately and use it effectively to support career decision-making. There are already several initiatives in the European Union that support this issue and people with disabilities. The sustainability of jobs, especially for the most vulnerable, is specifically addressed in the EU Disability Strategy 2021-2030. This highlights the need to strengthen the capacity of employment services for people with disabilities and to intensify cooperation with social partners and disability organizations.

Participation in working life is the best way to ensure economic independence and social inclusion. However, the employment gap between people with and without disabilities remains large.

Promoting skills development in line with the requirements of the labor market is important. However, this process is also linked to understanding current labor market trends. Professionals working with people with disabilities therefore inevitably need to identify sectors with high labor demand and understand the skills and qualifications in demand, as well as keeping up to date with new and emerging industries that could offer potential opportunities. It

is important to follow an inclusive matching process that identifies ways in which the needs of the labor market can be linked to the skills of people with disabilities.

Activities, teaching and learning materials:

- Creation of a personal learning plan based on SMART goals.
- Examination of labor market trends and identification of sectors with high labor demand.
- Use of best practice examples for the employment of people with intellectual disabilities (e.g. from the INCLUDE 3 project).
- Practical exercises and testimonials from people with disabilities who like their work.
- Conducting one-on-one sessions for the individual search for job opportunities.
- Use of the SMART goal model to support a structured learning process and promote inclusion.

Sources:

- European Commission (2021). *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030*. Retrieved March 3, 2025, from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0101>
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion. Directorate D - Social Rights and Inclusion. Unit EMPL.D.3 - Disability and Inclusion (2023). *Catalogue of positive actions to encourage the hiring of persons with disabilities and combating stereotypes*. Retrieved March 3, 2025, from: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/858cc3f5-98a3-11ee-b164-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>
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- Parrarellearning (n.d.). How to Create SMART Goals for Effective IEPs. Retrieved from: Retrieved March 3, 2025, from: <https://www.parallelllearning.com/post/how-to-create-smart-goals-for-effective-ieps>
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You can find the online self-study unit at the following link:

Unit 8: Collaboration in networks

Responsible organisation(s):

VHS Bildungsinstitut VoG

Positioning within the Include³ method:

The knowledge from Unit 8 is important for all phases (phases 1-4) of the include³-method, as it supports knowledge about networks that play a central role for the whole transition process.

Topic:

Networking and cooperation to support the inclusion of people with disabilities in the primary labor market as part of the **Include³ method**.

Learning objectives:

On completion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- Understand the importance of networks to support the professional inclusion of people with disabilities.
- To reflect the two types of networks (consultant and client network) within the **include3 method**.
- develop and apply skills for active networking.
- Effectively build and maintain networks to maximize resources and promote the self-determination of people with disabilities.

Introduction

Unit 8, Cooperation in networks, shows the aims and tasks of networking in the Include³ method. Networking is an important part of the Include³ method, because the inclusion of people with disabilities in the primary labor market is a complex task with a variety of tasks. A counselor cannot do this alone, but needs support from many sides, the network partners.

The network part of the Include3 method is based on four pillars:

- The first pillar is knowledge: this means gathering information about opportunities for people with disabilities, such as training, funding, etc., new mentoring programs or special offers from institutions or employers.
- The second pillar is cooperation: this means establishing contacts for high-quality advice, which means interacting in a social context.
- The third pillar is cooperation: this means working together with institutions and other organizations in the interests of people with disabilities.
- The fourth pillar is reflection, i.e. discussing strategies and opportunities that can maximize outcomes for the person with disabilities.

The include3 method requires two types of networks:

1. The counsellor network, which means contacts with institutions, employees, potential employers and other organizations. This network can be used by the counsellor himself to support the client's consulting concerns.
2. The client network, i.e. a personal network around the person with disabilities, which may consist of family, teachers, medical support, etc.

Networking is important for the Include³ method because the network partners can support the counselor and the person with disabilities. The support can include new resources and solutions for inclusion, building a safety net for people with disabilities, seeking external support and critically reflecting on their own work.

A number of skills need to be cultivated for networking to be fruitful. Relationships with network partners must be based on trust, empathy, understanding and regular contact.

The client network is an important part of case management. It helps to get support from the family or other network partners in difficult situations. It is also important for cooperation with institutions or other social workers or superiors.

As a CGC, you need some skills to build this network:

- In addition to your personal attitude, communication skills include actively listening to your communication partner. This means not only verbal but also non-verbal communication.
- The relationships you want to build must be based on trust, empathy, understanding and regular contact.
- You have to present yourself at events, conferences or in online networks and pass on your own experience in the working environment.
- The last part is the follow-up, i.e. staying in contact with the network partners to exchange information and connect the partners with other networkers.
- To practice these skills, you need to look for opportunities, which can be events, business fairs or even business social media platforms like LinkedIn.

Activities, teaching and learning materials:

Task 1: Create a list of network partners in the counsellor network with contact details and the specific support these partners can provide.

Task 2: Create an elevator pitch for a self-presentation at a networking event.

Task 3: Complete a quiz with questions on the topic of the consultant network.

Task 4: Create a digital mind map or visual format that maps the client's network (PWD) with contact information and specific partner support.

Sources:

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- FernUniversität in Hagen (2021, April 28): *Prof. Dr. Nina Kolley: Forschung zu sozialen Beziehungen und Netzwerken* video. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CL57A3k7s78>

You can find the online self-study unit at the following link:

Unit 9: Reflection of integration process and stress coping

Responsible organisation(s):

Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit (HdBA) and VHS Bildungsinstitut VoG

Positioning within the Include³ method:

The knowledge from Unit 9 is especially important for phase 4 of the include³-method as it fosters reflection and coping in the realization of the decision.

Positioning within the Include³ method:

The knowledge from unit 9 is particularly important for understanding the Include³ method phases 4, as it teaches reflection and coping strategies.

Topic:

Reflection, conflicts and stress coping and strategies for being able to reflect and cope with stress

Learning Objectives:

On completion of this unit, learners (counsellors) will be able to:

- Understand the concept of stress and reflection and to explain these concepts to their clients.
- Apply reflection questions for clients and identify stress symptoms.
- Guide their clients to use coping strategies.

Introduction:

Why is it important to deal with stress, conflicts and reflection during the transition from sheltered employment to the general labour market?

Coping can prevent premature termination of internships and employment relationships due to excessive stress. Conflicts in the company can also lead to dissatisfaction of employees or superiors and thus a return to the workshop.

Regular reflections can help to identify stress and conflicts as well as dissatisfaction at an early stage and to find out more about the own needs of the person with disabilities. They form the basis for subsequent discussions with companies and finding solutions, and prepare an empowering participation of people with disabilities.

However, it is not a matter of preventing the termination of the internship or employment relationship by all means. Within the framework of the participation and self-determination of people with disabilities, various solutions are to be developed. On the one hand, people with disabilities should learn to cope with stressful situations with coping strategies and, on the other hand, to accept their own needs and to leave the company empowered by any internship/job changes.

What is stress?

Stress is a physical and mental reaction to stimulus events, that bother one's balance and demand or exceed coping mechanisms. In everyday work, it can, for example, arise from time pressure, uncertainties or complex tasks. These are the so-called stressors. Stressors require an adaptation response from the person after they have cognitively assessed the stressor on the one hand and their resources for coping with it on the other.

Changes in life can also lead to an individual experiencing stress.

A distinction is made between acute stress, which is temporary and whose beginning and end can be clearly defined, and chronic stress, which lasts for a longer period and in which the individual perceives the demands to be greater than the resources available to them.

Stress coping means to deal with stress. Coping includes behavioural and mental reactions that are undertaken to counter the stressor.

Stress manifests itself for instance through symptoms such as a rapid heartbeat, increased blood pressure, sweating or muscle tension, restlessness, irritability, difficulty concentrating or exhaustion.

Stress reactions can be divided into four types:

- 1) Physical stress reactions (changes in physical processes, e.g. rapid heartbeat, sweating)
- 2) Cognitive stress reactions (changes in attention, thinking and memory performance, e.g. inattention, concentration problems)
- 3) Emotional stress reactions (changes in emotions, e.g. anger, inner restlessness and anxiety)
- 4) Behavioural stress reactions (changes in behaviour, e.g. working late, nail-biting)

These subdivisions are important for your work with the client, as they enable you to recognize stress, for example, if your client cannot directly express that he or she is feeling stressed.

What is reflection?

Reflection involves scrutinizing and comparing thoughts about something. After making a realization, you look at how you are doing with this realization. Reflection is a mental process in which one refers to oneself. Reflection is the conscious process of reflecting on one's own experiences and actions. It helps to gain insights, strengthen self-confidence and improve future decisions.

The counsellor can support the reflection by mirroring observations and verbalizing the client's emotions.

The counsellor can also support the reflection with interpretative information and thus categorize new experiences. Interpretive information help, for example, in coping with resolutions and clarifying the causes of failures.

What are conflicts?

Conflicts in the company are situations in which differences of opinion or tensions arise between employees. They can arise from different expectations, misunderstandings or unfair distribution of tasks. Such conflicts can cause stress and affect the working atmosphere if they are not resolved constructively.

Conflicts don't always have to be negative. If approached in a respectful and constructive way, they can lead to improvements in the working environment and strengthen understanding between employees.

How can you take up this knowledge in your counselling practice?

In practice, you should encourage your clients to answer questions about the internship or workplace, such as: 'What do I like about this job? What are my strengths in this job? Do I feel comfortable here?' These questions promote self-awareness and help to find out whether the employment is suitable in the long term.

How can I guide people to cope with stress? The first step is to find stress factors in everyday work and life. There are many sources of stress and the better your client knows them, the easier they can cope with them.

Stress coping is essential to counteract stress. Guide your clients to recognize stress by teaching them to pay attention to physical signals such as rapid breathing or tension.

Positive thinking is one possibility (tips for further reading: Bartholdt & Schütz, 2010, p. 134). It is an important skill for dealing with stress. Positive thinking describes the conscious decision to focus on solution-oriented and encouraging thoughts, even in difficult situations. Instead of focusing on the negative or unchangeable, your client shall recognize good and positive things or situations.

This approach influences how we perceive challenges. An optimistic attitude can mitigate the body's stress response because it reduces the release of stress hormones such as cortisol. People who think positively tend to be more resilient and can process setbacks more quickly.

A central aspect of positive thinking is reframing. Here, stressful thoughts are questioned and replaced by realistic but optimistic perspectives. Instead of thinking, "I'll never make it," the thought might be, "I'm going to do my best and learn in the process."

Activities, teaching and learning materials:

A1: Check yourself for symptoms of stress

A2: Tips for dealing with stress

A3: Happy moments

A4: Reflection on my work and my workplace

Sources:

- Bartholdt, L., & Schütz, A. (2010). Stress im Arbeitskontext: Ursachen, Bewältigung und Prävention (Originalausgabe). Beltz.

- Bender, M., Wehmeier, P. M., Illig, M., & Helfrich, A. (2021). Stress am Arbeitsplatz Manual für die Psychoedukation zur Bewältigung von arbeitsplatzbezogenem Stress (PeBaS). W. Kohlhammer.
- Ertelt, B.-J., & Schulz, W. E. (2019). Handbuch Beratungskompetenz Mit Übungen zur Entwicklung von Beratungsfertigkeiten in Bildung und Beruf (4th Ed.). Springer Gabler.
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You can find the online self-study unit at the following link:

Appendix

Didactic material Unit 1

Worksheets

Didactic material Unit 2

Didactic material Unit 3

Didactic material Unit 4

Didactic material Unit 5

Didactic material Unit 6

Didactic material Unit 7

Didactic material Unit 8

Didactic material Unit 9

[HdBA - the University of Applied Labour Studies](#), as the national institution responsible for the education of specialists to work in the Federal Employment Agency, has a particular expertise on questions of vocational education and training (VET) and counselling with regards to such questions. This includes the education and training of counsellors working in the specialist departments for supporting people with disabilities who are, among other things, responsible for assigning clients into the VET section of sheltered workshops. HdBA has a specialized chair for inclusion studies and focused resources on this area over recent years.

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[OZARA](#) service and disability company d.o.o. is one of the national key service providers in the field of vocational rehabilitation and social inclusion. Enjoying indisputable status of professional authority in the field of training, employment of persons with disabilities, social inclusion, vocational and employment rehabilitation in Slovenia, OZARA d.o.o. brings crucial resources to the consortium by transferring its knowledge regarding the needs identified in the scope of project proposal. It has around 150 potential end users, and tens of professional workers and mentors, supporting these disadvantaged groups.

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[The VHS Bildungsinstitut](#) (Adult Education Center) is the educational service of the Christian Labour Movement (CAB) in East Belgium, in the German speaking Community. The CAB is the largest social movement in Belgium. The VHS is engaged mainly in social-political learning activities, such as trainings for project coordinators for cultural and social projects, and in the ACADEMY 50+ in training for elderly people in different subjects such as political sciences, sociology, philosophy, history, cognitive stimulation, etc. After 2015, the VHS coordinated the integration pathway in East Belgium with language classes (German) on different levels and civic lessons for all people coming to the German speaking Community. The VHS is also involved in trainings for unemployed persons in application techniques, and integration into the labor market. These are also topics that are discussed in several Erasmus+ projects.

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[SYNTHESIS](#) Center for Research and Education Ltd is a pioneering organization which initiates and implements projects of positive social impact, with a focus on social inclusion and accessibility of services and products for everyone. SYNTHESIS is one of the leading institutions in Cyprus in the fields of social entrepreneurship and social innovation. It founded and manages HUB NICOSIA, an educational centre and a community of organizations with cultural, environmental and social aims. SYNTHESIS main target groups are people from the marginalized/ disadvantaged / vulnerable parts of the society, such as youth, adults and the aging population, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, people with physical and mental disabilities.

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[VšJ "eMundus"](#) has a broad expertise in the development of various ICT applications. The mission of eMundus is to actively promote the development of the knowledge society by developing services related to educational activities, information technology, innovation and practical applications in education and social activities, ecology, healthy lifestyles and harmonious education in order to ensure quality cooperation.

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