

Podcast: Interview with experts

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

Good morning. Thank you very much for accepting the invitation to do this podcast together and I would like to thank you in general for all the support you have given us at project Include 3.

My name is Georgia Karaoli. I am a senior project manager at SYNTHESIS, which is a center for research and education. I am responsible for the Include 3 project in Cyprus.

which has to do with the integration of people with mental disabilities into the open market of employment.

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself so that the listeners can also hear who we are talking to,

And we thank you for being here and for all the cooperation.

Stella Fournaraki (speaker)

My name is Fornaraki Stella, and I am a Psychologist at the Christou Steliou Ioannou Foundation.

Natasa Nikolaou (speaker)

And I am Natassa Nikolaou, and I am a Social Worker

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

Thank you very much!

Stella Fournaraki (speaker)

The Christou Steliou Ioannou Foundation has been operating since 1983.

It is a donation of the family of Elis and Christos Ioannou in memory of their son...

The Foundation is a donation of the families of Elis and Stelios Ioannou in memory of their son Christos, who was killed in a car accident.

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It serves adult people with moderate and mild mental disability from the Nicosia district.

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

Ok

Stella Fournaraki (speaker)

Our goal is social and professional self-sustenance.

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

Yes, yes, very nice. Thank you very much.

Same question (was mentioned before), that is, what is your approach when it comes to professional integration of people with intellectual disabilities and the creation of professional satisfaction?

Stella Fournaraki (speaker)

Okay, when it comes to professional integration, we do not mean just to find a job, to have a job.

But with finding a position where he feels respected, accepted, that they offer to the common good and that themselves develop as a person.

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

Of course, like any person.

Stella Fournaraki (speaker)

Yes, as each one of us. We focus very much on the combination of the individual's skills and interests with the real needs that exist in the free labour market.

And we usually work with the goal not only of employment, but also the work satisfaction of the individual himself.

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

Very important, very important and we imagine that it is something that is very important, and that you assess periodically, they do not find a place of cooperation and they are done. It is a journey that ...

Stella Fournaraki (speaker)

Certainly, and we are here precisely to redefine the needs, to see the degree of satisfaction of the individual,

because many times they can start in a position of work where their expectations are not satisfied, they want to change, and the appropriate efforts are made in order to create a new work that is more interesting to them, in order to be more productive and more satisfied themselves.

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

So they come to you so that you can make the connection.

Stella Fournaraki (speaker)

Usually we are the ones who make the first contact.

We present the work of the Foundation, we propose a collaboration, we already have an experience in the field of professional development for 30 years, so there is already a network with which we cooperate.

But at the same time, we see that more and more companies come to us and suggest a collaboration and some working positions.

And so, gradually, a network of employers has been built, with social sensitivity, that help us and employ people.

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

Lovely! So both of the parties

You can reach to them or they can come to you in order to make contact.

Stella Fournaraki (speaker)

Very important.

Exactly! Sometimes there may be some connections from the parents of the same child, who know that their child is in the process of finding a job, they have some acquaintances, some relationships with employers, and there may be specific proposals and specific ideas and after the operation to be directed to the person.

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

So, there is also flexibility in this matter.

Stella Fournaraki (speaker)

Indeed.

We usually work for the empowerment of self-image and self-esteem.

It's very important, yes.

They also have to strengthen their autonomy, but they also often have to deal with their stress and fear.

We talk to them about the needs they are dealing with, what they will face in the workplace, we strengthen their strategies for self-regulation and we give them the necessary tools they will need to manage any situation in the workplace. An important part of the transition stage is also their co-operation. Most people reach us at the age of 18-20 without a clear desire or demand for a job and they do not know what their options are.

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

Yes

Stella Fournaraki (speaker)

Thus, it is very important for us to support them in this difficult and important phase of their lives, because our experience shows that often people with large plans, with very high and perhaps unrealistic goals can come and it requires a lot of attention and proper cohesion so that without being discouraged they can redefine their goals and their course.

It is very important that we see the evolution of this person many times and the satisfaction in their eyes from this evolution.

It is very common to meet people who are very closed, distrustful, they do not have self-confidence and at the first stages we cannot even imagine that they will come out, they will be sold and all that and we arrive after a period of time to see them working now and fully equipped and satisfied, which is a great feeling for us.

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

The truth is that be surprised positively, either by yourself or by other people, is one of the most beautiful feelings.

Stella Fournaraki (speaker)

Indeed

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

And just to point out that the space here is very beautiful, it is in nature, it breathes joy, it is all clean and surrounded by a positive atmosphere.

Natasa Nikolaou (speaker)

Moreover based on what you said about the environment.

We share the same beliefs and values of empathy, patience, humility, to believe that we can see a change in people, to accept the differentness, to understand that not everybody acts the same as we do, sometimes due to limitations.

Georgia Karaoli (speaker)

Yes, the most important.

Great, thank you very much for your time, for sharing your thoughts, knowledge and feelings. And we hope it will be a pleasant journey for the people that will hear this podcast.

Stella & Natasa (speakers)

Thank you very much as well!