

NETWORKS IN THE COM-IN PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

Project COM-IN

**Training programmes for counsellors for implementing community
integration of difficult-to-employ people (COM-IN)**

Programme: Erasmus +

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NETWORKS IN THE COM-IN PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

This document aims to explore and analyze various forms of networks and connections in partner countries that facilitate the employment of difficult-to-employ persons (DTE). It outlines the structure and operation of these networks, which range from informal collaborations to formal associations, and discusses their purposes, including promoting public services, enhancing job inclusion, and advocating for policy measures to empower organizations working with DTE.

Forms of networks

In partners' countries we find out several networks and connections for employment of difficult to employ persons (DTE). These networks operate at different levels - local, regional, national or international.

Networks can have different forms. They can:

- Operate as informal networks that consist of different organizations (NGOs, public institutions, private companies) that are working with DTE in different areas (education and training, rehabilitation, mentoring and counselling, etc.).
- Work as consortia, which are based on agreements among partners. Consortia also consist of different (above mentioned) organizations, which are working with DTE.
- Act as partnerships in local, regional, national or international projects.
- Operate as formal association, in which are included different organizations (NGOs, public institutions, private companies) that are working with DTE.

Most of the identified networks are working as informal networks or as consortia that are composed of different organizations. We identified the largest number of networks in France, somewhat less in Italy and the least in Slovenia.

Purpose of the networks

The purpose of operation of networks, mentioned in previous chapter, can be different:

- Promotion of public services and removing obstacles to job search procedures.
- Contribution to the qualitative and quantitative standards of the service provided for DTE.
- Working and social rehabilitation: joint treatment of individual cases of social or working integration.
- Job inclusion.
- Capitalization of information and knowledge in different professional sectors. Aim: to empower organizations, which are operating in specific sector.
- Preparation of starting points for the implementation of programs for DTE.
- Cooperation and evaluation of professional materials that are intended for working with DTE.
- Representation of the common interests of members in the permanent professional bodies of regional/national decision makers.
- Proposing policy measures and policies in the field of DTE empowerment (advocacy).
- Organisation of quality trainings for members in the field of employment, employment rehabilitation, career orientation, etc.
- Promotion of cooperation with other associations on national and international level.
- Collaboration in national and EU projects.

Number of the network members

The number of network members can be very different. It varies from a couple of members (e.g. in local or project partnerships) to 100 members and more (e.g. national multi-sectoral associations, etc.).

Decision – making and network management

The decision-making process varies depending on the type of the network:

- Working groups that are coordinated by public authorities:
 - In preparation of political-strategic decisions partners can make proposal and the public authority finalise decisions.
 - In preparation of operation-organisational decisions each partner can contribute to the decision-making process.
- Partnerships:
 - Each member of the network participates equally in the adoption of decisions, which are usually made by consensus.

Network members participate at different levels of decision-making in the networks:

- Preparation of the network's annual operation plan.
- Preparation of annual regional (local, etc.) employment plans.
- Preparation of regional or national programs and policies (regulations, laws, etc.).
- Joint advocacy activities in changing programs, legislation, etc.

The networks can be managed in different ways:

- If they operate as legal entities, they are managed by management bodies that are specific to the individual organizational form (i.e. executive board, supervisory board, general assembly, etc.).
- Local networks are generally led by public authorities.
- In case of specific projects, the project leaders are identified by a specific partnership agreement.

Usually, the basis for task sharing and management is a signed contract; each partner must respect rules and obligations that are defined by the contract.

Partners' proposals for improving the network performance

The project partners made the following suggestions to improve the functioning of the networks:

- Provision of a full-time network coordinator; the problem, of course, is the financing of the coordinator.
- Promotion of sustainable relationships among partners.
- Promotion and support of the network's sustainable development and continuity beyond the specific action or project implemented.
- Implementation of monitoring and evaluation methods to maximise the impact of the networks. Renewal of agreements according to partners' and public needs.
- Promotion of more objective-oriented decision-making within the network.
- Improvement of network's communication to share a global and proactive vision and to make strategic partnerships known.

Partners' membership in networks for social and working integration of DTE

Mostly all the partners are members of local/regional, national or international networks for social and working integration of DTE. As members of networks, partners often participate in management bodies. Bigger partners are usually collaborating in more networks, especially international ones.

We have identified two types of networks:

- Territorial networks. These networks are developed to jointly address specific challenges and needs in specific territory/region. Especially in Italy and France, a lot of networking within the regions can be observed.
- Content networks. These networks are intended to address a specific topic or challenge, i.e. job inclusion of NEET, methods/tools for working integration, training methods, policy making, etc.

Membership in networks is also an indicator of the level of:

- Connection of the organization with local, national or international environment.
- Addressing the needs of local/regional, national or international environment by the organization.

Networking is also an indicator of the connectivity and cooperation of areas: the more cooperation there is, the more interconnected the areas are.

NETWORKS FOR KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE IN THE AREA OF WORKING AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF DTE

Forms of networks

Networks for knowledge exchange in working and social integration of difficult to employ persons have different forms.

They operate as:

- Informal networks that consist of different organizations (NGOs, public institutions, private companies) that are working with DTE in different areas (education and training, rehabilitation, mentoring and counselling, etc.).
- Social (virtual) networks, where various organizations are signed-up.
- Consortia, which are based on agreements among partners.
- Formal association, in which are included different organizations

Networks, which were presented in the chapter “Networks for social and working integration of DTE”, are often used as networks for the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

The most of networks are working in the form of:

- Informal network that consists of a group of people.
- Social (virtual) network.
Networks, which consist of a group of people, often operate also as virtual networks.
- Consortium that is composed of different organizations.

Number of the network members

The number of network members can be very different. It varies from a couple of members to 100 members and more (e.g. national multi-sectoral associations, etc.).

Activities of the knowledge exchange networks

Activities of the knowledge exchange networks are various:

- Conversations and consultations.
- Sharing information and good practises.
- Joint promotion in the territory.
- Joint trainings/workshops of network members in the area of social and working integration.
- Cooperation at organization of joint events in the area of social and working integration.

The mode of knowledge exchange between network members

Different modes are used for knowledge exchange among network members:

- Video conferences.
- Social networks.
- E-mails.
- “Live” meetings.
- “Live” workshops.
- Exchange of promotion/presentation materials.
- Promotion of partners/network members in events of other partners.

The coordinator/promotor of knowledge exchange varies on the specific network. It could be a management body of specific network or members that have specific topic/initiative.

Partners' proposals for improving the knowledge exchange

The project partners made the following suggestions to improve the functioning of the networks:

- Provision of a full-time network coordinator; the problem, of course, is the financing of the coordinator.
- Exchange of needs and companies' expectations on recruitment, skills development.
- Promotion and support of the network's sustainable development and continuity beyond the specific action or project implemented.
- Implementation of monitoring and evaluation methods to maximise the impact of the networks.
- Promotion of more objective-oriented decision-making within the network.
- Improvement of network's communication to share a global and proactive vision and to make strategic partnerships known.
- Forward-looking and innovation of approach to anticipate changes in the labour market.

Partner's proposals for knowledge exchange in the networks are very similar as partners' proposals for improving the network performance (in the chapter »Networks for social and working integration of DTE"). The level of network performance is therefore closely reflected on the level of knowledge exchange.

Partners' membership in networks for knowledge exchange in the area of working and social integration of difficult to employ persons (DTE)

All of the partners are members of networks for knowledge exchange in the area of working and social integration of difficult to employ persons (DTE). These networks can operate in a certain territory (i.e. local professional networks...) or more widely (e.g. collaborative platforms...).

Networks, which were treated in the chapter “Networks for social and working integration of DTE, include also knowledge and experience exchange. Apparently, among the main objectives of the networks, we can find also the exchange of experiences and competences in order to promote the innovation of the services dedicated to the social inclusion of vulnerable groups.



Project partners

The 9 partners from 3 countries participating in the project are:

SASS School of Advanced Social Studies (SLO) (coordinator),

Ustanova Fundacija BiT Planota so.p. (SLO),

ŠENTPRIMA – Institute for Rehabilitation and Education (SLO),

Employment Service of Slovenia (SLO),

Istituto Regionale per l’Educazione e gli Studi Cooperative IRECOOP Veneto (I),

Veneto Lavoro (I),

SOFORM SCARL (I),

France Travail Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes (F),

Association EDIAS (F).

and our associate partner is:

EUROPEAN NETWORK OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION ENTERPRISES – ENSIE (B).

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