



FIELD REPORT

on

Supported

apprenticeships for

persons with

disabilities

**Securing the transition to
labor market for persons with
disabilities through the
Supported Apprenticeship
Scheme**

December 2024



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Glossary :

- Role of the VIC's and definition

The vocational integration counsellor of people with disabilities is a professional mentor who supports marginalised groups of people to integrate in the workforce. They start supporting them with their integration as apprentices and then continue to mentor them on the open labour market. VICs leverage their expertise to guide these job seekers towards sustainable employment and help them develop the necessary skills. The responsibilities of the VICs vary from assessing individual needs, providing job search assistance, engaging with employers, monitoring and follow up, etc. The role of the VICs is explained in detail in Chapter III.

- Definition of Apprenticeship

According to ILO, supported apprenticeship for people with disabilities is a program that provides PwD with many benefits because of their hands-on approach and efficient learning transfer. Through the apprenticeship program they have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills to companies, which also allows employers the chance to assess their potential and hire them. Disability-inclusive apprenticeship programs can serve as a crucial connection between this underprivileged demographic and gainful work. (Source: <https://www.ilo.org/topics/apprenticeships/publications-and-tools/digital-toolkit-quality-apprenticeships/system-and-policy-level-key-building-blocks-quality-apprenticeships-system/inclusiveness/quality-apprenticeships-and-people-disabilities>)

- Occupational therapist

The medical field of occupational therapy (OT) uses evaluation, coaching, consultation, and intervention to help people, organisations, or communities acquire, regain, or sustain fulfilling careers. Occupational therapists are medical professionals who have received training and education to promote both physical and mental well-being. Teaching, educating, and encouraging engagement in activities that take up a person's time are the areas of expertise for occupational therapists. Occupational therapists (OTs) and occupational therapy assistants (OTAs) make up this independent health profession, which is occasionally referred to as an associated health profession. The functions of OTs and OTAs differ; OTs are authorised to perform thorough occupational therapy assessments. Both experts assist those who wish to enhance their capacity to engage in fulfilling careers. (Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupational_therapy)

- Training

In the supported apprenticeship scheme training to apprentices is provided by both sides - the VICs and employers. The training provided from the VICs includes CV writing, introducing, occupational training, etc. The training provided by the employer is related to the integration of the apprentices in the workplace, getting used to the daily work, developing work habits, etc.

- Employer



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Employer in the SAS project is the person who provides apprenticeship work to the person from marginalized group. In the SAS project the employers are from different sectors - NGOs, IT, automotive sector, holiday resorts, etc.



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CHAPTER I – Introduction

1. Context and objectives of the project.

SAS Project Objectives

The **Supported Apprenticeship Scheme (SAS)** is designed to facilitate the integration of people with disabilities (PwD) into the workforce through a structured, supported apprenticeship scheme. Supported apprenticeships combine traditional workplace training with tailored guidance and assistance from **Vocational Integration Counselors (VICs)** to meet the unique needs of apprentices with disabilities.

The primary goal of the SAS project is to develop an **European framework** to implement the supported apprenticeship practices across partner countries and evaluate its implementation. This framework will take into account diverse legislative, financial, and administrative contexts to ensure PwD have equal opportunities to benefit from apprenticeship programs. The project's main objectives include:

- Creating an European framework for supported apprenticeships for PwD, allowing for a coordinated approach while adapting to national contexts.
- Training Vocational Integration Counselors (VICs), who are essential in guiding PwD through their apprenticeships by offering tailored support and monitoring their progress.
- Piloting this framework through experimental implementations across different countries, with the involvement of apprentices, VICs, employers, and training centers.
- Collecting and analyzing data on these experiments to identify challenges, successes, and opportunities for improvement. The findings will inform the creation of policy recommendations to promote the long-term sustainability of supported apprenticeships in Europe.

Key Deliverables (2022-2024)

1. **PR1 – European report** analyzing apprenticeship opportunities and challenges for PwD, as well as national frameworks across partner countries.
2. **PR2 – National adaptations** of the European framework, ensuring that it aligns with local administrative processes, legal requirements, and financial structures.
3. **PR3 – A European training module** for VICs, providing them with the necessary tools, skills, and knowledge to support apprentices with disabilities throughout their learning journey.
4. **PR4 – Field report** documenting the experiences of VICs in supporting apprentices with disabilities, based on experimental projects across seven partner countries. The



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report will gather insights from VICs, including their challenges, successes, and best practices, through workshops and peer learning.

5. **PR5 – Policy recommendations**, drawn from the data collected during the project, aiming to encourage the adoption of supported apprenticeships across Europe and facilitate their long-term sustainability.
6. **PR6 – Closing conference** in Paris in November 2024, where the project's findings, key deliverables, and policy recommendations will be disseminated. This event will bring together stakeholders from various sectors, including training centers, employers, and policymakers, to raise awareness and encourage further adoption of supported apprenticeships.

[Project Timeline \(2022-2024\)](#)

The project spans three years, from 2022 to 2024, with key milestones including:

- **2022:** Project launch, initial research, and development of the framework.
- **2023:** Training for Vocational Integration Counselors (VICs), experimental implementation, and data collection through surveys and feedback.
- **2024:** Project conclusion, policy recommendations, and dissemination of results at the closing conference in Paris.

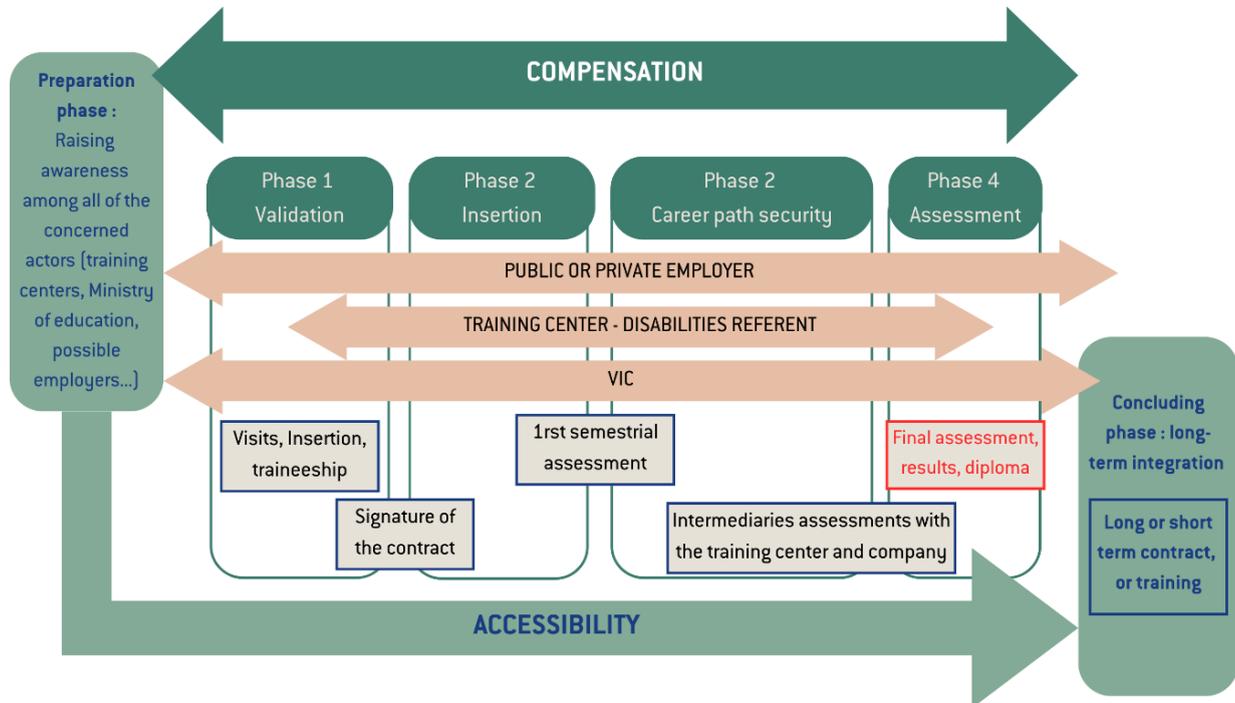
This overview sets the stage for understanding the broader objectives and expected outcomes of the SAS project, providing a foundation for the detailed analysis that will follow in the field report.

2. Summary of the referential

The Supported Apprenticeship Scheme (SAS) presents an innovative approach to integrating people with disabilities (PwD) into the workforce through a structured apprenticeship model. Key features of the project include:

- **Tailored Vocational Support:** The methodology focuses on Vocational Integration Counselors (VICs) who provide continuous, personalized support to PwD throughout their apprenticeship journey, from initial orientation to job placement.
- **European Standardization with National Adaptations:** The framework aims to establish a standardized European model for supported apprenticeships while allowing for flexibility to meet the legislative, administrative, and financial requirements specific to each participating country.
- **Collaborative Stakeholder Engagement:** The approach emphasizes collaboration among VICs, employers, training centers, and public authorities to ensure a comprehensive, supportive environment that enhances PwD's career success.

Key Steps of the SAS methodology:



1. Preparation and orientation phase

In this initial phase, PwD are prepared for the apprenticeship experience through:

- **Awareness and orientation:** PwD learn about available training programs and explore various vocational options. Visits to training centers and workplaces help them understand different work environments.
- **Employer and training centers search:** VICs assist PwD in finding suitable employers and training centers aligned with their career goals and needs.
- **Contract negotiation:** The VIC plays a key role in contract negotiations, ensuring clear expectations between the apprentice and employer.
- **Administrative formalities:** This includes official recognition of PwD status and securing necessary financial support to cover the costs associated with supported apprenticeships.

2. Integration into the workplace (Phase 1)

After the apprenticeship contract is established, the focus shifts to workplace integration, including:

- **Skill assessment and adaptation:** Positioning tests assess the apprentice's skills, and a Pedagogical Adaptation Plan (PAP) is created to support learning both in the workplace and training center.



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- **Implementation of accommodations:** The VIC ensures that necessary accommodations—whether physical, educational, or organizational—are effectively set up to ease the transition from school to the workplace.

3. *Securing the apprenticeship journey (Phase 2)*

This phase aims to ensure a stable and successful apprenticeship through:

- **Progress monitoring:** Regular evaluations, including biannual assessments, allow for adjustments to the PAP based on the apprentice's progress.
- **Addressing challenges:** The VIC supports the apprentice in overcoming both professional and personal challenges, resolving any workplace issues, and keeping their learning on track.
- **Stability support:** The VIC collaborates with the employer and training center to maintain a stable work and learning environment.

4. *Final assessment and long-term integration (Phase 3)*

In this final phase, the focus shifts to the apprentice's long-term career trajectory, including:

- **Final Evaluation:** A comprehensive review of the apprenticeship assesses the apprentice's development based on job competency frameworks.
- **Career Path Decisions:** If competencies are met, apprentices may transition to permanent employment or pursue other opportunities. If more time is needed, the contract may be extended, or alternative career paths considered.
- **Ongoing Support:** The VIC continues to provide guidance after the apprenticeship to help PwD establish their career path and consolidate their position.

Collaboration Among Stakeholders

A defining aspect of the SAS methodology is the collaborative work between various actors who support the apprentice. The VIC coordinates efforts among:

- **Employers:** They provide hands-on training in real-world settings and work with VICs to ensure an inclusive workplace.
- **Training centers:** These centers offer complementary technical and theoretical education, with the VIC ensuring that training programs are adapted to the apprentice's needs.
- **Public authorities and funders:** National disability support organizations and funding bodies are also involved to help provide necessary resources.



“It takes a village to raise a child. It takes a factory to train a new apprentice.”



This collaborative approach maximizes the chances of success for PwD, enabling a smoother transition into the labor market and fostering long-term career integration.

5. Explanation of the field report's purpose

The present field report (PR4) will focus on the European experiences of Vocational Integration Counselors (VICs) who support apprentices with disabilities. VICs, playing a crucial role in the implementation of supported apprenticeships, will document their daily experiences in logbooks, capturing challenges, solutions, and effective practices. Additionally, a peer-learning workshop for the 16 participating VICs will encourage the exchange of experiences and insights. Both the logbooks and the workshop findings will contribute to provide concrete evidence of VICs' daily work, clarify their missions as outlined in the Referential and training module, and emphasize the challenges they face, such as legislative and administrative barriers.

The insights gathered through these activities will be compiled into a comprehensive report, examining VICs' field experiences, identifying key areas of focus, and highlighting the support VICs require within this framework. The impact of PR4 will extend both within and beyond the project. Internally, it will contribute essential feedback during the project's evaluation phase, inform dissemination events, and serve as a resource within consortium members' networks to raise awareness of VICs' roles in supported apprenticeships. Externally, the report will support research in disability and vocational counseling and inform the labor market about this unique, evolving role, highlighting its significance in promoting employment inclusion for persons with disabilities. This report, innovative in its European scope and enriched by data from 16 VICs across seven countries, will offer valuable, transferable insights into best practices, obstacles, and solutions for VICs, providing a model for similar roles in diverse European contexts.



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CHAPTER II - Methodology

1. Data collection process

The **logbooks** used by **Vocational Integration Counselors (VICs)** in the SAS project are essential tools for maintaining regular, structured follow-up of apprentices with disabilities. They ensure that the apprentices' progress is documented, challenges are addressed, and communication among all stakeholders—employers, training centers, and counselors—is smooth and effective.

Objectives of the Logbooks

Personalized tracking: The logbooks allow VICs to monitor the apprentices' progress in a detailed and individualized manner. VICs document the development of skills, the adaptation to the workplace, and any challenges the apprentice may face.

Coordination between stakeholders: Logbooks are shared with relevant actors (employers, training centers, and other stakeholders) to ensure clear communication and the timely adjustment of support strategies.

Documenting interventions: VICs record interventions made to help apprentices overcome obstacles, whether it's adjusting teaching methods or finding solutions to improve workplace inclusion.

Typical Content of Logbooks

Logbooks usually follow a standard format, including:

SAS Project
Securing the transition to labor market for persons with disabilities through the Supported Apprenticeship Scheme

Vocational Integration Counsellor
Logbook

Each VIC involved in the experimentation will keep digitalized logbooks on their day-to-day experience. Through the intermediary of each partner, LADAPT will collect the logbooks every three months. This logbook can be filled in English or in the VIC's own language, however partners will be asked to summarize in English the major points in logbooks of their 2 VICs. The logbooks of VICs throughout the experiment will enable the production of the first part of FPA4 VICs' field progress & feedback report of experiment.

Please use this logbook and answer the questions (if relevant) to report about your experience. Go straight to the point, add some pictures if you have, send everything to joelle@ladapt.org ! Thanks in advance.

Name of the partner organisation
LADAPT

Name of the VIC
Catherine LE COINTE

Supported Apprentices | Number and profile of apprentices
2 apprentices: Elisabeth C. and Léa B.

Career Objectives of the Apprentices | Career goals, training followed and host company

- Elisabeth: Maintain her engagement in her vocational training despite personal challenges that may impact her daily life.
- Léa: Ensure Léa integrates well into the new company.

Methods/Activities Apprenticeship | A few details about the activities you carried out with the apprentice and the methods you used

- Elisabeth: Weekly interviews with Elisabeth following the change of apprenticeship supervisor.
- Léa: Suggested 4 hours per month of additional pedagogical remediation sessions, complementing the support offered at the CFA.

Methods/Activities Training Centre | A few details about the activities you carried out with the trainers and the methods you used

- Coordination with the CFA's disability advisor through regular exchanges.
- Meetings with instructors to anticipate exam accommodation requests.
- Following up on recommendations from the needs assessment.

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General information: Details about the apprentice, employer, and training center.

Learning objectives: A reference to the skills the apprentice is expected to acquire, based on the job framework.

Regular observations: Notes on the apprentice's progress, their experiences in both the workplace and training center, and any areas of concern.

Challenges and solutions: Any challenges the apprentice encounters are documented, along with the actions taken by the VIC or other stakeholders to address them.



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Intervention details: Specific details on the adjustments made (e.g., pedagogical adaptations, workplace accommodations).

Periodic reviews: Summarized reports at regular intervals to assess the apprentice's progress and reassess support needs.

Importance of logbooks in SAS Project

Logbooks are key to ensure that apprentices are adequately supported throughout their learning journey. They serve as a **centralized communication tool** that helps VICs, employers, and training centers remain aligned and responsive to the needs of each apprentice. This continuous feedback loop is critical to the success of the supported apprenticeship model. As a matter of fact, having field feedback every three months is an asset for the SAS project, allowing for comprehensive analysis of all documents at the end. The SAS project remains innovative as it attempts to implement a working methodology in five different national contexts.

2. Methodology of Analysis

Methodology for logbooks

The goal of the logbook analysis was to summarize the most important details in order to extract the most pertinent insights. The approach focused on identifying the key elements that represent the advancements, difficulties, and enhancements made by the apprentices and their mentors during the project rather than compiling every detail. This method offers thorough insights into each apprentice's journey while enabling a more efficient analysis.

To compile the responses from different partners, NASO and LADAPT created a comprehensive table (see Annex 2). The contextual profiles of the apprentices (current position, age, background, activities, and the number of apprentices under each mentor) are among the important data points included in this table. The table also describes the particular difficulties encountered, the applicability and efficacy of the SAS methodology in each situation, the goals for the upcoming months, and how these have changed over the course of the logbook entries. Progress is consistently tracked thanks to this structured format, which makes it easy to compare results across various partners and situations. To ensure completeness, additional data were requested from partners at the project's conclusion. This final request aims to fill in any gaps that may exist, providing a holistic view of the apprentices' progression and the overall effectiveness of the methodology.

Methodology for the workshop

The logbook collection was finished in the summer of 2024, and the data was translated as needed. Trends, recurrent themes, and any areas that needed more research were found during a preliminary analysis. We were able to identify possible gaps in the data and start



drawing conclusions thanks to this preliminary analysis. Parallel to these preliminary findings, a two-days workshop has been held. There were two goals for the workshop:

- Initially, in order to address any areas that required additional information (for example, more in-depth comments on the SAS methodology, the frequency and efficacy of meetings, and the guiding principles of the logbooks), and,
- Second, to help partners have a conversation in order to get more qualitative information.

In addition to being data-driven, this cooperative approach made sure that the analysis was enhanced by the first-hand experiences and insights of project participants. We made sure that any gaps found in the initial analysis were filled by involving partners in this manner, which resulted in a more thorough final assessment.

Qualitative comparison

The qualitative analysis sought to highlight both the common elements and the differences across various national contexts. By comparing how the SAS methodology was applied and perceived in different environments, we were able to identify key trends that indicate the strengths and areas for improvement in the approach. For example, while some challenges may have been unique to specific countries or contexts, there were also universal themes, such as the importance of regular mentorship and the value of clear communication channels.

The wealth of material collected throughout the project offers a substantial foundation for a comprehensive final analysis. By the end of the project, we expect to have accumulated a rich dataset that will enable us to draw meaningful conclusions about the efficacy of the SAS methodology and its adaptability across diverse settings.

3. Limits of the key findings / methods

The turnover of **Vocational Integration Counselors (VICs)** was one of the main challenges. Because every new VIC needs to be onboarded and acquainted with the project's methodology, high turnover rates can interfere with the continuity of support given to apprentices. In addition to having an impact on the apprentices' development, this turnover makes it more difficult to gather consistent data because different counselors may approach logbook completion and feedback differently.

Secondly, the **varying levels of qualification among VICs, influenced by different national and cultural contexts**, also posed a challenge. In some countries, vocational integration systems and training for counselors are more developed, while in others, the approach to supporting apprentices with disabilities is less established. As a result, VICs in certain contexts were not fully prepared or familiar with the specific requirements of the SAS methodology. Thus, all of the VIC's didn't face the same challenges, while some have had good relations with companies since the beginning, others had to build them.



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Thirdly, **another constraining factor was time constraints.** Many of the project's professionals, especially those in social service positions, are under a lot of pressure and frequently don't have much time to finish documentation. VICs and other professionals are juggling a lot of duties because social service providers are usually understaffed, which makes the situation worse. As a result, the logbooks were not as detailed as intended.

Fourthly, the **material to analyze by the end of the logbook period** was completed with the aforementioned workshop. The workshop provided an opportunity to gather additional qualitative insights and fill in any gaps left by the logbook. This additional layer of information was essential to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the project's outcomes. Indeed, insights and thoughts are not always easy to write down, a more fluid discussion has been experienced and exchange of thoughts during the workshop. Indeed, the findings from the workshop, which brought together feedback from all partners, were instrumental in overcoming some of these limitations. By directly addressing the areas where data was lacking, the workshop allowed us to refine the analysis and ensure that all relevant aspects were covered.

Finally, the **issue of translation poses a potential limitation.** When documents are translated from one language to another, there is always a risk of losing nuance or precision. This can lead to discrepancies in how information is interpreted across different contexts. To mitigate this risk, we employed a rigorous translation process and cross-checked key documents to ensure that essential details were retained. However, it remains a factor to consider when interpreting the final results.



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CHAPTER III – Results of the Logbook Analysis

1. Overview of collected data

Project Result 4 of the SAS project essentially shapes the general outcomes of the project experiment by closely collecting and analysing feedback from the VICs, referred to as logbooks. This plays an important role in the assessment phase of the apprenticeship scheme experiment. Importance would be an understatement in labelling these logbooks since they present a structured approach to take notes on observations, insights, and responses made by the VICs. In this respect, validity and reliability for the evaluation process get enhanced.

The activities related to the logbook play an important role in the sociological analysis methodology of the consortium, with priority placed on investigating a profile that has high importance within the scope of the initiative. In doing so, then, by getting first-hand accounts and experiences from the field, it will be possible to comprehend the VICs' improvement, their duties as well as the specific obligations they take up. Such input from the real world will serve not just to confirm whether or not the coherence of the methodologies of the project is confirmed but will also be evidence that is visible of how effective it is.

The compiled logbooks from each apprentice shed light on the challenges faced by the VICs and on the different barriers that could come up in the process of engagement. These barriers are reflective of the legal and administrative barriers that might deter the successful execution of apprenticeships. The national fact sheets were geared at responding to these contextual challenges. Indeed, in recording these challenges, the logbook emerges as a useful adjunct for assessing the approach without considering an administrative and legislative background. In this way, the logbook helped to pinpoint those areas that needed attention and improvement. This was achieved by directing the project to more effective strategies for addressing those issues. The input from the logbooks, when aggregated comprehensively, therefore provides an important feedback loop for keeping the project responsive and adaptable to the interests of the VICs, their apprentices, and the wider objectives of the SAS initiative.



2. Role of the VIC

The role of Vocational Integration Counselors (VICs) is crucial in supporting the workforce integration of marginalized groups, such as individuals with disabilities and young people, across Europe. VICs leverage their expertise to guide these job seekers towards sustainable employment and help them develop the necessary skills.

In Europe, VICs primarily undertake a range of key responsibilities to facilitate the employment of disadvantaged individuals. These responsibilities include :

- ✓ Assessing individual needs: Evaluating job seekers' skills, competencies, and career aspirations to identify skill gaps and design personalized development plans.
- ✓ Providing job search assistance: Helping with resume writing, application processes, interview preparation, and networking.
- ✓ Facilitating training and skills development: Connecting individuals with relevant training programs, skill-building opportunities, and vocational courses.
- ✓ Offering psychosocial support: Addressing issues like low self-confidence, mental health challenges, and experiences of discrimination.
- ✓ Engaging with employers: Creating employment pathways, facilitating apprenticeships, and negotiating tailored arrangements.
- ✓ Monitoring and follow-up: Tracking individuals' progress to promote long-term, sustainable workforce integration.

The European experience with VICs provides insights into how various countries promote the integration of marginalized groups, including people with disabilities and young people, into the workforce. Indeed, VICs play a pivotal role in guiding and supporting these individuals toward sustainable employment and helping them develop skills that meet labor market demands. As one VIC noted :

"I keep a close dialogue with the trainer, and talk to the trainer daily, to keep us both informed about the apprentices. I also coordinated the meeting between the VIC(me), apprentices, trainer and supervisors at the IT-section (host company)."
(SpirOslo_LogbookN°4)



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This quote highlights the pivotal role VICs play in supporting people with disabilities towards the supported apprenticeship process, by facilitating the communication between all of the concerned actors.

The European experience with VICs demonstrates the critical importance of these professionals in bridging the gap between marginalized job seekers and the labor market. By leveraging a comprehensive set of skills and responsibilities, VICs are instrumental in empowering individuals, collaborating with employers, and ultimately promoting sustainable workforce integration.



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3. Activities implemented

Based on the provided information in the logbooks, a lot of activities were implemented to support individuals in their career path, along with the methodologies used in both group and individual settings:

Activities for supporting individuals toward employment

1) Regular meetings and feedback:

- **Individual support:** frequent meetings with apprentices (e.g., in France) to gather feedback, particularly as they approach critical periods like exams, addressing their stress and emotional well-being.
- **Collaboration with host companies:** regular coordination with the host company and or employer, including discussions with supervisors and training staff, to ensure that apprentices' needs are met and that they are progressing effectively.

2) Job placement assistance:

- **Drafting applications:** assistance in writing applications for permanent contracts to secure employment after completing their apprenticeships.
- **Job search support:** active support in guiding apprentices in their job search, including the presentation of employment-related steps and transitioning to supported employment programs.
- **Job alternatives search:** identifying job alternatives related to the interests of beneficiaries (e.g., in Spain), ensuring that placements align with their preferences.

3) Career guidance and training:

- **Information sessions:** organising meetings to inform apprentices about training opportunities and the content of their prospective educational paths (meeting regarding future training).
- **Professional file finalisation:** helping apprentices finalise their professional documentation to enhance their employability.
- **Social security registration:** assisting apprentices in registering as workers with disabilities with social security to ensure they receive necessary support.

4) Integration and awareness-raising:



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- **Team awareness sessions:** conducting awareness sessions within companies to promote understanding of apprentices' needs and difficulties (e.g., in France).
- **Family support:** providing guidance to the families of apprentices to help them adapt to their loved ones' employment situations and to encourage independence (e.g., a supporting apprentice's mother).
- **Workplace visits:** utilizing workplace visits as a motivational strategy to reinforce engagement and support.

5) **Monitoring and assessment:**

- **Ongoing evaluation:** continuous assessment of the apprentices' needs and challenges, including regular follow-ups to monitor their progress and well-being (e.g., an apprentice's financial assistance request).
- **Ergonomic assessments:** engaging ergonomists to evaluate work environments and suggest necessary adjustments to facilitate apprentices' integration (e.g., in France's case).
- **Support in workplace management:** assisting apprentices in managing vacation requests and time off to promote a healthy work-life balance.

6) **Networking and collaboration:**

- **Coordination with disability advisors:** regular communication with disability advisors and other stakeholders to address accommodations and support needs (e.g., coordination with cfa's disability advisor).
- **Engagement with job centres:** collaborating with local job centres to share best practices and ensure they are aware of projects related to the employment of individuals with disabilities.
- **Active contact:** maintaining active contact with apprentices to ensure that the entire learning and employment process is stable and beneficial for both.

7) **Practical skill development:**

- **Cash management training (Italy):** activities focused in helping apprentices recognize the value of money, manage cash, and complete invoice booklets, utilising compensatory aids like calculators and visual supports.
- **Coffee making skills (Italy):** practical training sessions aimed at teaching apprentices how to prepare coffee, fostering independent skill development.
- **Food preparation skills (Bulgaria):** practical training sessions aimed to teach the apprentices how to prepare food for themselves.



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- **Team building activities (Italy):** workshops designed to enhance teamwork among apprentices, promoting collaboration and social interaction.
- **Autonomy projects (Italy):** initiatives to improve apprentices' independent mobility, including navigation skills, pedestrian crossings, and public transport usage.

8) Warehouse operations and logistics (Norway):

- **Goods receipt processing:** involves receiving goods, registering their receipt, and reporting this electronically to customers.
- **Order processing and packaging:** managing customer orders, packing items for transport, and creating necessary shipping documents.
- **Practical skills development:** activities like forklift operation practice, allowing apprentices to gain hands-on experience in warehouse management.

Methodologies used

In addition to one-on-one counseling, VICs employ a range of approaches to support apprentices, including:

- **Formal meetings and interviews:** regular structured meetings with apprentices, employers, and stakeholders to assess progress, provide support, and gather feedback.
- **Informal engagement:** ongoing informal dialogue with trainers, supervisors, and family members to maintain a supportive environment and address any emerging concerns.
- **Group training and awareness-raising:** conducting group-level training sessions for employees to enhance understanding of disabilities, reasonable adjustments, and the role of vocational integration counselors (VICs).
- **Feedback and follow-up mechanisms:** utilizing structured logbooks and evaluation methods to track apprentices' progress and adapt support strategies in real-time.
- **Social activities:** organizing informal social events (e.g., summer gatherings) to strengthen relationships among apprentices, training staff, and families, fostering a sense of community and support.

This comprehensive approach combines individual support, collaborative efforts with stakeholders, and awareness-raising activities to create a conducive environment for apprentices to transition successfully into the labor market.



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Challenges and opportunities

Challenges

The evaluation of the project, based on logbooks and feedback from the field, reveals a wide range of challenges faced by partners in different countries throughout the duration of the project. The initial barriers faced by Vocational Integration Counsellors (VICs) were particularly significant, with more difficulties encountered in the early stages than later. This development suggests that the VICs adapted over time and overcame some of the initial barriers.

The main challenges encountered during the project were primarily methodological, as the logbooks were not designed to analyse wider contextual factors. In contrast to the country sheets produced at the beginning of the project, which focused on context, the logbooks focused on the application and adaptation of the prescribed methodology. Vocational integration counsellors (VICs) highlighted a particular challenge in the initial understanding and implementation of the methodology. While legislative hurdles, administrative barriers and discrimination were important issues for stakeholders, these factors were reflected more in the Country Sheets than in the Logbooks, which focused on the technical aspects of the project.

The apprenticeship programme itself faced several notable challenges, including a lack of funding, low motivation among employers and the marginalisation of apprentices. Workplaces were often found to lack inclusivity and employers demonstrated limited knowledge of how to support people with disabilities appropriately. Prejudices persisted, contributing to the difficulties faced by apprentices. In addition, the lack of systematic mentoring by VICs and the focus of employers on productivity and bottom line results further hindered the success of the programme. Recruiting apprentices proved challenging and legislative gaps meant there was no formal support system for people with disabilities.

The Apprenticeship program itself faced several notable challenges, including a lack of funding, low employer motivation, and the marginalization of apprentices. Workplaces were often found to be lacking in inclusivity, and employers demonstrated limited knowledge regarding how to appropriately support people with disabilities. Prejudices persisted, contributing to the difficulties faced by apprentices. Moreover, the absence of systematic mentorship from VICs and the employers' focus on productivity and final results further hindered the program's success. The recruitment of apprentices proved challenging, and legislative gaps meant there was no formal support system in place for people with disabilities.

Some colleagues demonstrate a fixed mindset when it comes to the learning potential of the apprentices, particularly those with learning disabilities. This mindset manifests in the way they perceive and respond to the apprentices' progress. For example, even when apprentices make small but significant improvements, these achievements often go unnoticed or are undervalued by their colleagues. This lack of recognition can have a



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demotivating effect on the apprentices, as they are not given the positive reinforcement they need to feel encouraged and supported in their learning journey. Over time, this can lead to a stagnant learning environment where apprentices are not motivated to push their boundaries or strive for further growth.

The apprentices are frequently given tasks that are overly simple and repetitive, which do not challenge their abilities or foster skill development. These routine tasks may be assigned with the intention of making the apprentices' workload manageable, but they also inadvertently limit their opportunities to engage in more complex and meaningful work. As a result, the apprentices are often deprived of the chance to experience a true sense of accomplishment that comes from overcoming challenges and developing new skills. This can lead to a lack of fulfilment and a sense that their potential is being underutilized, which may impact their overall motivation and growth within the program.

The project also faces significant challenges related to attendance issues among the apprentices. These attendance problems can stem from various factors, including the apprentices' personal circumstances, health issues, or lack of motivation. When apprentices are frequently absent, it disrupts their learning process and makes it difficult for them to keep up with the training program. This inconsistency in attendance further complicates their ability to make consistent progress and fully participate in the learning opportunities provided by the project. Additionally, these attendance issues can exacerbate the existing challenges of a fixed mindset and limited task complexity, as apprentices miss out on valuable learning experiences and opportunities for growth.

These challenges can be summarized as follows:

- Lack of funding
- Low employer motivation
- Marginalization of apprentices
- Lack of inclusivity in the workplace
- Limited employer knowledge on supporting people with disabilities
- Persistent prejudices
- Absence of systematic mentorship from VICs
- Employer focus on productivity and final outcomes
- Difficulties in recruiting apprentices
- Legislative gaps, with no formal support for people with disabilities

Specific challenges related to the methodology also emerged:

- **Initial understanding of the methodology:** At the start of the project, some organizations struggled to grasp the methodology and define the roles of various stakeholders. The development of more practical, interactive tools could facilitate clearer learning.
- **Adaptation to national contexts:** Tailoring the methodology to specific national contexts—taking into account local policies, cultural differences, and best practices for career decision-making—could enhance its effectiveness.



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- **Career guidance and information:** Providing more comprehensive guidance, both before and during the decision-making process, would be beneficial. Offering detailed information about career paths, training opportunities, and the relevance of various professions would strengthen support.
- **Evaluation of relevance:** Continuous evaluation is needed to ensure that the training and support provided align with the evolving job market and the specific needs of individuals with disabilities.

Focus on challenges in workplace integration:

1. **Workplace integration:** Raising awareness among colleagues regarding the specific needs of apprentices with disabilities proved difficult. For example, an apprentice faced resistance from his colleagues in recognizing and accommodating his condition. As a Logbook outlined they had to organize :



"Mediation sessions with the two concerned colleagues to raise awareness about an apprentice' difficulties" because of the "Difficulty raising awareness among an apprentice' two colleagues, who remain closed off and attribute bad intentions to the apprentice rather than recognizing his disability." (LADAPTLogbookN°2)

2. **Company engagement:** Some companies struggled to adjust their operations to accommodate apprentices with disabilities. In some cases, significant job evaluations and ergonomic assessments were required to adapt the role to the apprentice's needs.
3. **Support during difficult situations:** Emotional and social challenges, such as workplace conflicts or contract terminations, posed significant hurdles. Mediation was sometimes necessary, as demonstrated in Alexis' case, to prevent conflicts or terminations.
4. **Involvement of ergonomists:** In several instances, ergonomists were involved in adapting workstations to the physical limitations of apprentices, thereby improving their integration within the company.
5. **Administrative complexity:** Monitoring apprentices and implementing necessary adaptations often involved complex coordination between multiple stakeholders, including training centers, companies, and employment support services. This complexity added an additional layer of difficulty to the program's overall implementation.

This analysis demonstrates that while progress has been made, significant challenges remain, particularly in terms of stakeholder engagement, workplace inclusivity, and the effective explanation of the methodology. These issues require ongoing efforts to ensure the long-term success of the program.

Opportunities

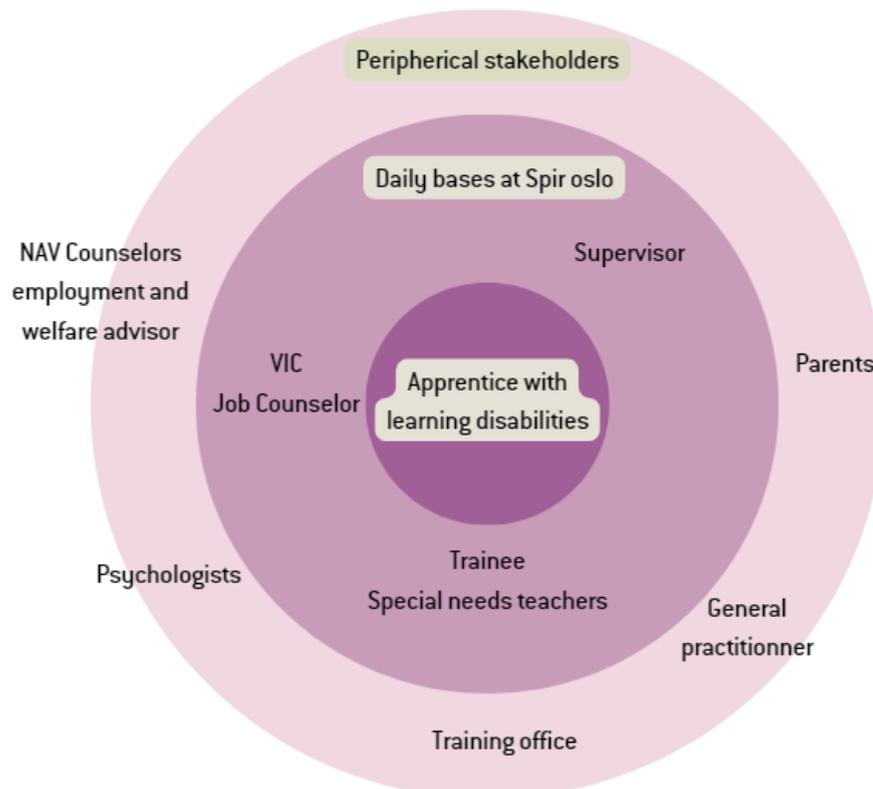
The project presents several promising opportunities that have contributed to the personal and professional growth of apprentices, while also highlighting the value of the



methodology applied. These opportunities emphasize both individual development and the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders.

- **Personal development:** The project has significantly contributed to the apprentices' personal development, fostering confidence and autonomy. Vocational Integration Counselors (VICs) have played a pivotal role by providing tailored support to each apprentice. For instance, an apprentice's confidence and engagement in his training were bolstered through regular feedback and ergonomic adjustments, enabling him to better navigate his work environment and succeed in his apprenticeship.
- **Collaboration with stakeholders:** One of the core strengths of the project has been the effective collaboration between VICs, training centers, services providers, and companies. This ongoing coordination fosters a supportive and responsive environment, addressing the individual needs of apprentices. Such collaboration includes ensuring appropriate exam accommodations, assessing ergonomic requirements, and mediating conflicts when necessary. This collective effort has been vital in creating a comprehensive support system for apprentices throughout their training.

"The methods used are helpful for all stakeholders involved, as communication between the educational system, apprentices, and companies is often tedious and limited. This approach allows individuals to gradually acquire skills to perform some tasks independently, which is one of the project's goals." (Intras_LogbookN°4)





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Scheme produced by Spir Oslo to illustrate the persons engaged around an apprentice.

- **Securing long-term employment:** A key focus of the methodology is not only to facilitate successful apprenticeships but also to ensure that apprentices are well-prepared for future employment opportunities beyond the program. Through continuous evaluations and negotiations for permanent contracts, apprentices have been able to secure potential long-term employment opportunities. This forward-looking approach ensures that apprentices transition smoothly into the labor market, maximizing the impact of the program on their professional futures.



4. Methodology outcomes

General outcomes

The methodology employs a holistic approach, which is a key strength. The methodology's key strength is its holistic approach, which integrates regular feedback, ergonomic assessments and conflict mediation. By addressing both professional and personal aspects of the apprentices' experience, the methodology provides a comprehensive support system.

"This method is believed to have a significant impact on apprentices, as the introduction of the VIC figure has been able to support and introduce them into the working world in a more appropriate way, assessing their potential so that they can best exploit it in jobs that match their skills and aptitudes."(Divalenza_LogbookN°2)

This approach guarantees that the requirements of apprentices are continually monitored and addressed, resulting in more effective and sustained outcomes.

Practical assistance is available on an as-needed basis. The structured use of logbooks in the project allows for the systematic tracking of progress, the identification of challenges, and the documentation of successes. The logbooks are an invaluable resource for refining the approach in real time and providing practical support through case-specific interventions. This structure ensures that issues are dealt with promptly and also creates a repository of information that can be used to improve future implementations of the programme.

The ability to adapt the approach to suit different contexts in the field is a further advantage. One of the key advantages of this methodology is its flexibility to be adapted to different national and local contexts. The regular collection of field data enables a feedback loop that allows the methodology to be adjusted in response to the specific needs of each apprentice and the unique challenges of their environment. This adaptability ensures the approach is flexible and dynamic, enabling effective application across diverse settings while maintaining a consistent focus on the project goals.

In summary, the project not only addresses significant challenges but also opens up valuable opportunities for apprentices through personal development, stakeholder collaboration, and long-term employment preparation. The methodology, with its comprehensive and adaptable approach, offers a practical and effective framework that supports the apprentices and enhances their integration into the workforce. The next steps should focus on co-developing a more practical, step-by-step methodology at the European level to provide Vocational Integration Counselors (VICs) with clearer guidance and support in its implementation.



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Impact on the training module and referential

Each partner has a different number of apprentices and mentors (VICs) involved in the project. In most cases, the apprentices are aged between 20-30 years old and are actively seeking employment, despite all of them having mental disabilities. The activities offered through their apprenticeship programs vary. The current stage of the apprentices is taking their professional qualification exams. Some of them will continue working in the same place while the others will find new jobs on the open labor market.

When it comes to the Vocational Integration Councillors (VICs) they will continue to support the apprentices when they need but they will give them more independence at work. Currently, the VICs in every organisation are different numbers but the trend is that one VIC is responsible for approximately 1,5-2 apprentices which is reasonable.



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CHAPTER 4 – Results of the Peer Learning Workshop

1. Agenda workshop

Day One – September 11, 2024	Day Two – September 12, 2024
<p>09:00 – 09:30 Coffee and Networking Informal networking session to allow participants to get acquainted.</p> <p>09:30 – 09:45 Welcome and Introduction Overview of the workshop objectives and a brief introduction of participants by DiValenza.</p> <p>09:45 – 10:15 Ice Breaker: Personal Experiences with PIDs Participants shared personal experiences and challenges related to working with PIDs, using brief videos as a medium.</p> <p>10:15 – 11:00 Speed Boat Brainstorming: Challenges for PIDs in the Labor Market Identification of key challenges PIDs face in finding and maintaining employment.</p> <p>11:00 – 11:45 Discussion: Identifying Opportunities and Solutions Brainstorming potential job roles for PIDs and ways to enhance their inclusion in the workplace.</p> <p>12:00 – 12:45 Discussion: Employer Awareness and Support Presentation on how to raise employer awareness and better support PIDs in the labor market, followed by a discussion on improving existing campaigns.</p> <p>12:45 – 13:00 Summary and Q&A Recap of the morning's key points and open the floor for questions.</p>	<p>09:30 – 09:45 Welcome Back and Recap of Day One Review of previous day's discussions and presentation of the agenda for Day Two.</p> <p>09:45 – 10:15 Ice Breaker: Sharing Best Practices Participants shared successful best practices or outcomes achieved within the SAS Project.</p> <p>10:15 – 11:00 Discussion: Best Practices and Methodology Presentation of case studies and techniques that have proven effective in integrating PIDs into the workforce.</p> <p>11:15 – 12:15 Policy Recommendation Session EPR led the discussion on policy recommendations drafted for the SAS project, with feedback from participants.</p> <p>12:15 – 13:00 Wrap-up and Next Steps Summary of the workshop's key takeaways, action points, and planning for future collaboration.</p>



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2. Key benefits of the methodology in supporting individuals with disabilities

A seamless transition from training to employment

One of the primary advantages of the SAS methodology is its ability to create a smooth transition from training centers to the workforce. By structuring the learning process around real-world work environments and gradually increasing task complexity, apprentices are well-prepared to face the demands of employment. This practical approach bridges the gap between vocational training and job placement, offering apprentices hands-on experience that enhances their confidence and employability.

This structured progression not only supports apprentices in developing necessary skills but also boosts their chances of securing long-term employment. The methodology's focus on gradually increasing responsibility helps apprentices feel prepared for the demands of full-time employment, thereby improving their overall success in the labor market.

Empowering individuals through personal development and financial independence

Another significant benefit is that the methodology places a strong emphasis on individual development. Apprentices are provided with tailored learning objectives and personalized support, allowing them to focus on mastering specific skills without feeling overwhelmed by the process. Moreover, aligning the apprentices' professional aspirations with suitable job roles is essential to sustain their motivation and well-being, while also meeting employer expectations. As one logbook highlights,

"We consider it necessary to match the training, expectations, and desires of the person with the job offered to guarantee well-being for the individual and satisfaction for the company." (Intras_LogbookN°6)

This tailored approach ensures that their progress is closely monitored, and adjustments can be made to address areas of difficulty while building on their strengths.

Furthermore, the remuneration apprentices receive plays a crucial role in their empowerment. Being compensated for their work provides not only financial independence but also validates their contributions in the workplace. This recognition instills a sense of pride and reinforces their role as valuable and equal participants in the workforce.

Regular feedback and continuous monitoring

The three-monthly feedback reports are a cornerstone of the methodology. These structured check-ins between apprentices, VICs, employers, and training centers provide an opportunity to assess progress, recalibrate support plans, and address any challenges that



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may arise. This continuous monitoring ensures that no apprentice is left behind and that adjustments can be made in real-time to meet evolving needs.

This constant feedback loop helps to align all stakeholders and ensures that the support provided remains relevant and effective. By maintaining open lines of communication between all parties involved, the methodology fosters a collaborative environment where apprentices are supported at every step of their journey.



[Integration of Data collection and use of a Software \(Spir Oslo\)](#)

The use of software to track the progress of professional integration for people with disabilities enables organizations to adopt a more systematic and personalized approach to monitoring. By centralizing information, automating key processes, and providing real-time insights, these tools help identify barriers to inclusion early on, assess the effectiveness of tailored interventions, and ensure that individuals receive the specific support they need throughout their professional journey. This approach enhances collaboration between vocational counsellors, employers, and other stakeholders, improves accountability, and ultimately leads to more sustainable and successful long-term integration of people with disabilities into the workforce.

Below the screenshot and explanation of the information that can be found in the software developed. The website is available here : <https://www.praktiskutdanning.no/>

What is Fagbrev.io?

Fagbrev.io is a system designed for the administration, training, and follow-up of apprentices. It simplifies the apprenticeship process for the apprentice, the company, and the training office.

Easy Documentation

The system makes documenting work so simple that apprentices are more likely to complete it, ensuring timely and accurate reporting of their learning experiences.



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The screenshot shows the Fagbrev.io dashboard for user Amund Bjertnes. The interface includes a search bar at the top, a navigation menu on the left, and a main content area. The main content area features a welcome message, a summary of statistics (3 companies, 8 apprentices, 8 employees), and a reminder list with two items. A calendar widget on the right shows the current date as Wednesday, October 2nd.

Information:

- **Number of Apprentices**
A detailed count of the current apprentices under supervision.
- **Number of Employees (Vocational Supervisors)**
Total number of vocational supervisors and other key staff involved in apprentice training and development.
- **Number of Companies**
List of the total companies participating in the apprenticeship program.
- **Groups**
Information on the number and structure of groups, if applicable, for better coordination and planning.
- **Funding (Tilskudd)**
Track and manage any financial grants or funding related to apprenticeships, ensuring applications are submitted, and funds are distributed according to deadlines.

Checklist:

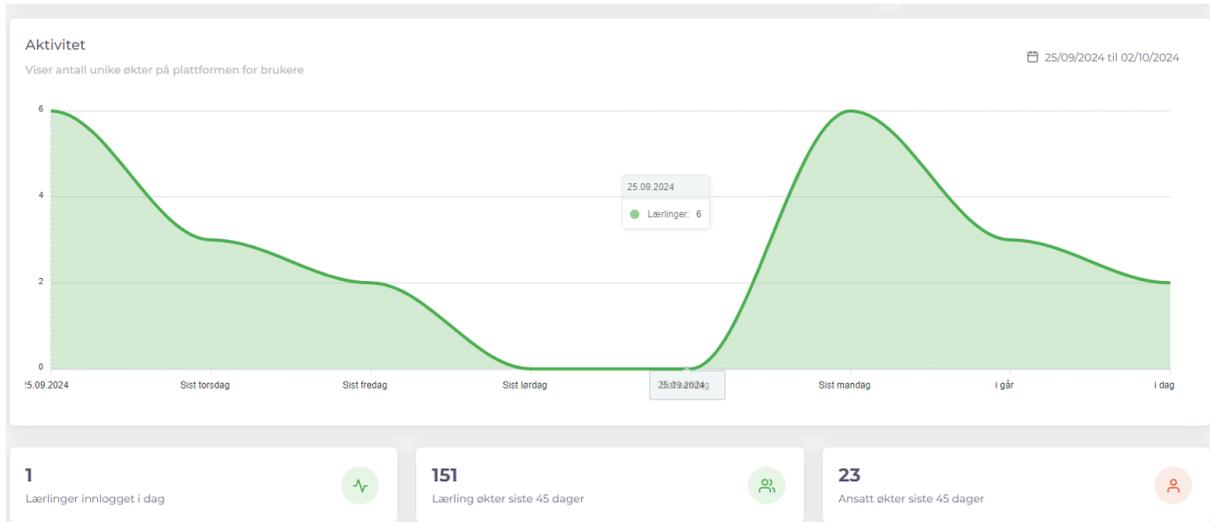
- **Trade Certification Registration (Fagprøve)**
Ensure timely registration of apprentices for their trade certification exam. Include deadlines, required documentation, and responsible personnel.



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- **Semi-Annual Evaluations**

Schedule and conduct semi-annual evaluations for all apprentices. This should include a review of performance, feedback, and future development goals.



Statistics Overview

- **Total Logins**

The cumulative number of logins by all users over a defined period.

- **Apprentice Logins**

The total number of logins specifically by apprentices, highlighting their engagement with the system.

- **Sessions (Submissions)**

The number of completed sessions, including the total submissions made by apprentices. This tracks their progress and interaction with assigned tasks or evaluations.

More information : Spir Oslo.

[Providing social service for professional integration](#)

There is such a social service in Bulgaria whose main aim is to create and develop employment skills in users, as well as to assist in their employment. The social service works primarily with people who have never been employed or who have left work because of their acquired illness.

The activities include:



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- preparation and support of the people with disabilities to become decent working people
- training them in how to observe simple hygiene habits
- teaching PID how to prepare their CVs

The social service established training programs and activities that not only expand the knowledge skills of the users but also contribute to their social and employment integration.

After getting to know each other, the assistants prepare a training plan according to their individual specifics and whether they have experience in the workplace. They start preparing the users from the basic level - from appearance to behaviour. PID are also taught on social soft skills needed to function effectively in a work environment.

When the user is finally employed then the experts from the social service support them and encourage them in this endeavour, helping them when they experience difficulties in the work environment.



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3. Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing the Methodology Across Europe

[Addressing prejudices and misconceptions in the workplace](#)

While the SAS methodology has brought about many positive changes in the inclusion of individuals with disabilities, several challenges have emerged, particularly around the attitudes and perceptions of colleagues. Prejudices and stereotypes about the abilities of people with disabilities can lead to reluctance in fully integrating them into the team. In some cases, colleagues hesitate to take on active roles in supporting apprentices due to uncertainties or preconceived notions about their capabilities.

Overcoming these challenges requires continuous efforts in raising awareness and fostering an inclusive work culture. Employers and colleagues alike must be encouraged to share responsibility for integrating individuals with disabilities, making it clear that inclusivity benefits everyone. This highlights the importance of ongoing training and capacity-building to dismantle these barriers and create an environment of shared responsibility and mutual respect.

[Effective tools for reflective practice: the logbooks](#)

One key innovation of the methodology is the introduction of the logbook, which has been widely praised for its effectiveness. This tool encourages daily reflective practice among vocational integration counsellors (VICs) and other team members. By documenting daily activities and progress, the logbook provides a structured approach to identifying the evolving needs of apprentices and adjusting support accordingly. The regular three-month feedback is another critical component of the methodology. These structured check-ins provide an opportunity to assess the apprentice's progress, discuss any challenges they may be facing, and recalibrate the support plan as necessary. The three-month intervals ensure that progress is continuously monitored and that any issues are addressed promptly, preventing apprentices from falling behind. This constant feedback loop also helps to keep all stakeholders—employers, vocational counsellors, and training centers—aligned, ensuring that everyone is working toward the same goals and that the apprentice receives the support they need to succeed.

Moreover, the logbook serves as an important awareness-raising tool, helping colleagues better understand the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. It highlights the importance of tailoring support to each individual's specific needs, ensuring a more personalized and adaptive approach. Through this structured reflection, VICs and employers can fine-tune strategies to improve the quality of support provided.

[Balancing routine with flexibility in task assignments](#)

A persistent challenge lies in balancing routine with adaptability in task assignments. While routine is essential for apprentices to build confidence and consistency, assigning repetitive



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tasks over time can lead to disengagement and demotivation. Apprentices may feel stagnated if they are not presented with opportunities to develop new skills.

To mitigate this, VICs and employers must remain flexible and adapt tasks to match the apprentice's growing skills and evolving capabilities. Introducing more complex or varied tasks as the apprentice progresses helps maintain motivation and fosters a sense of achievement. This approach requires careful planning and close coordination to ensure that tasks remain challenging yet achievable, allowing apprentices to grow without feeling overwhelmed.

[Tailoring the methodology to national contexts](#)

Another significant challenge encountered in the project is the need for the methodology to be adapted to specific national contexts. Feedback from participants highlighted that the methodology, in some cases, feels too general to fully address the unique legal, social, and cultural environments of different countries. Legal frameworks and workplace cultures vary greatly across Europe, and tailoring the approach to these variations would ensure that it remains relevant and effective.

This could involve modifying timelines, vocational training types, or incorporating more culturally relevant support mechanisms. The methodology's flexibility to accommodate these national nuances would significantly enhance its impact and make it more adaptable across different countries.



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4. VICs' Insights and Methodology Improvement Suggestions

Personal insights: the experience of supporting apprentices

Vocational Integration Counselors (VICs) consistently highlight the rewarding nature of their work, particularly in witnessing the personal and professional growth of apprentices with disabilities. As apprentices gain confidence and autonomy, VICs observe tangible progress that underscores the impact of structured support. This progression is not only beneficial to the apprentices but also contributes to the professional satisfaction of VICs, who see their role as integral to facilitating long-term employment outcomes. These positive developments affirm the value of the methodology, strengthening VICs' dedication to fostering environments that enable apprentices to reach their full potential.

Engaging employers: overcoming challenges and promoting disability inclusion

A notable challenge in the vocational integration process lies in effectively engaging employers. While some employers may express hesitance due to concerns or misconceptions about accommodating individuals with disabilities, others may simply be unaware of the existing resources designed to support inclusive practices. Addressing this issue requires a concerted effort to raise awareness of the tools and processes available for adapting work environments and responsibilities.

Training programs, such as workshops or informational sessions, can be implemented to educate employers on the advantages of a diverse workforce. Research and case studies consistently show that inclusion fosters innovation, improves team dynamics, and enhances overall workplace culture. By presenting concrete evidence of these benefits and showcasing successful examples, employers are more likely to view inclusion as a practical, mutually beneficial strategy rather than a challenge. This approach not only facilitates the integration of individuals with disabilities but also contributes to building more resilient and dynamic organizations.

Additionally, innovative tools like Norway's real-time tracking software, which monitors the progress of employees with disabilities, provide employers with valuable insights into individual development and ongoing support needs. Implementing similar tools across different contexts could further streamline the integration process, ensuring that apprentices' progress is consistently monitored and adaptations are made as necessary.

Adapting to national contexts and enhancing career guidance

The SAS methodology has demonstrated effectiveness across various regions; however, feedback indicates that further customization could enhance its impact, particularly in aligning the approach with specific national legal frameworks and vocational standards. Each country operates under distinct regulatory, cultural, and economic conditions that



influence the successful integration of individuals with disabilities into the workforce. By adapting the methodology to better reflect these unique contexts, stakeholders can ensure that the support provided is more relevant and directly applicable to local challenges.

Another key recommendation for strengthening the methodology is the incorporation of comprehensive career guidance, both before and throughout the apprenticeship period. Career counselling tailored to the interests and abilities of each apprentice can assist them in making more informed decisions regarding their career trajectories. Ongoing guidance ensures that apprentices remain engaged, motivated, and focused on long-term objectives, while also allowing for adjustments to learning plans as apprentices' skills develop.

Finally, increasing awareness of available training programs and support services is crucial for maximizing the reach and impact of the SAS methodology. Many individuals with disabilities, as well as their families and potential employers, may not be fully aware of the vocational opportunities and resources designed to assist them. Expanding communication efforts and collaborating with advocacy organizations can help bridge this information gap, ultimately enabling more individuals to access the support they need to succeed in their careers.



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CHAPTER 5 - Synthesis and Recommendations

1. Key lessons learned

The logbooks from the Vocational Integration Counselors (VICs) highlight various challenges encountered by partners across different countries. Initial difficulties were more substantial compared to those faced later in the project, indicating a gradual adaptation and resolution of early obstacles. Key issues identified include administrative challenges and instances of discrimination and prejudice. A critical challenge relates to the implementation of the prescribed methodology, with tools that were maybe not adapted by being too theoretical and maybe not practical and clear in the structure. The development of more practical and interactive tools could enhance the learning process and clarify the implementation of the methodology. Addressing these complexities will require sustained effort and attention to ensure the project's long-term success.

In a more general understanding, these logbooks highlighted general and societal issues. Indeed, people with disabilities encounter significant challenges, including inadequate funding to engage themselves in an apprenticeship, low employer engagement, marginalization of apprentices, limited inclusivity in workplaces, persistent prejudices, a lack of systematic mentorship, difficulty in recruiting apprentices, and gaps in legislation. The methodology itself provides some support to create a fully comprehensive environment to raise awareness among colleagues and employers, to adapt the work condition to the personal situation of the person, to help people with disabilities to get more confident.

2. Recommendations for program improvement:

The European policy recommendations in the SAS project are responsible for the European Platform for Rehabilitation. During the workshop that took place on Sept 11-12, 2024 in Paris, France, a preliminary set of ideas and targeted questions were presented among the participants. The discussion generated useful recommendations on program improvement as these main suggestions:

1. **Encourage more real exchanges between VICs, as completing documents is often challenging.** This is a good recommendation as through communication the Vocational Integration counsellors can be more supportive in exchanging ideas or even reporting. The usual written reports can be replaced by short videos or even one to one meetings.
2. **Opportunities for sharing best practices - a platform for VICs** can be established in every country where the VICs can share their best practices. Such a platform would give them the chance to exchange ideas, to popularise their activities and initiatives.



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- 3. Simplification and dissemination of the SAS methodology :** There should be a collation of the supported apprenticeship model to ensure that effective strategies and practices are made available to a wider audience promoting the effective and uniform strategies for inclusion of people with disabilities.

3. Expected impact on the project

It is still difficult to employ people with disabilities. To make workplaces fairer and more sustainable, we need to focus on inclusion. This chapter looks at what helps inclusion succeed, including personalised policies, raising awareness and making workplaces more practical. It also highlights that we need to help both people with disabilities and employers to make sure that they can get jobs and go to school.

Key factors for achieving inclusion

Equality and personalised approaches.

Treating PwD the same as everyone else is not enough to achieve equality. It means making laws and policies that meet their needs, and making sure they are treated fairly and have the same chances as everyone else. Personalised approaches help PwD reach their full potential. Each person is different. If society adapts policies and programs, PwD can succeed on equal terms with their peers.

Gender and disabilities

The intersection of gender and disability requires particular attention, indeed women with disabilities often face multiple barriers that limit their professional opportunities. Specific support mechanisms are needed to empower women with disabilities, particularly those who are vulnerable due to factors like violence or economic dependency.

Raising Awareness and Early Intervention:

It has been noted and observed in the first chapter of this assignment that disability does need to be tolerated and accepted in society as well as in the workplace. This awareness has to start early on, preferably in preschool, so that the appropriate agents of change are now able to make the choices concerning their career paths which they want to take, as opposed to those which are bound by expectations. The internment also helps to distinguish between real integration attempts and charity work, thus allowing PwD to participate as productive members of society instead of being the dependents of the society.

Reinforcing and Building Coordination for Inclusive Workplaces:

Inclusiveness in workplaces can only be guaranteed if all parties whether, employers, managers or colleagues, work together towards that target. This coordination only helps make sure that the workplace environment is encouraging and accommodating to PwD. It



is also vital to allow PwD to actively participate in PwD in processes where decision making regarding their work is done.

It is essential for organizations to shift the center of the workplace process to the person in order to cultivate the sense of ownership and commitment to inclusion.

Future key points and concepts

Several key actions and concepts will be vital for ensuring sustainable inclusion for PwD in the workforce:

Financial support for vocational integration Counselors (VICs): Financial support for vocational integration counselors (VICs) is particularly crucial. It is needed to effectively support PwD throughout the employment journey. It is essential to allocate sufficient resources to VICs. These professionals play a pivotal role in facilitating employment opportunities and assisting PwD in their integration into the workforce. Ensuring their continual support will reinforce the foundational framework for PwD employment. However, vocational integration counselors (VICs) across various European nations should have opportunities to exchange methods and best practices. This collaboration, although difficult, will nurture a more resilient and cohesive strategy for improving the inclusion of individuals with disabilities. It will allow for shared learning and the development of more effective approaches to address common challenges.

Comprehensive training for employers (and their apprentices): Employers must be sufficiently prepared to support individuals with disabilities (PwD). They should have a clear understanding of how to address the needs of people with disabilities and to acknowledge the advantages of a diverse workforce. Apprentices, however, should also receive targeted training to prepare them for the realities of the workplace. Furthermore, training programs should be crafted to reduce employer biases and promote inclusive hiring practices, because this is essential for fostering a more equitable environment.

Change your approach toward employment quotas: In most of the countries, the quotas fail to promote integration although they are thought to be able to raise the level of employment. It is preferable for employers to hire the PwD because they believe in diversity and inclusion as opposed to enforcing employment quotas. A change in the view towards these quotas will assist in steering the focus towards developing workplaces that respect the contributions and talents the PwD possesses.

Appreciate higher employer participation: Employers should deal with the inclusion process actively knowing that there are benefits associated with them hiring the PwD and how these will add up to a diverse and qualified workforce.

Increased variety of support services: The needs of PwD should be supported by a wider range of services relevant to them. Specific placement services for each type of disability will allow for the timely creation of job opportunities for PwD as well as readily available support systems, making the inclusion process smoother and easier.



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Adequate monitoring and supervision: Immediate appraisals of the performance of authorities overseeing placement services is an important feedback mechanism that helps this authority to adjust and make improvements on its existing system to remove hindrances that may prevent effective workplace integration of PWDs.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this project has some realistic objectives which can be achieved within the timeline set, creating an inclusive labor market for people with disabilities through specific legal, gender-based policies and measures, and through effective partnership and collaboration among various stakeholders. The focus of such future activities as the provision of support to employer's inclusive employer's training and the expansion of scope of services to be rendered under the project, will allow to create a protective and inclusive environment for people with disabilities both in education and in employment. Such efforts will not only create avenues for PwD in employment but also improve the workforce for the future by making it more diverse, equitable and inclusive.



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Conclusion :

Within the SAS project, people with disabilities are entering the open labor market through supported apprenticeship schemes. This scheme combines standard vocational training with customised vocational integration counselling from a professional. The project aims to popularise the supported apprentice programs in the participating countries, taking into account their different administrative, financial, and legal contexts.

The purpose of this report is to create a professional profile of one of the important players in the program - the Vocational Integration Counsellors. They are important as they support the apprentices to integrate them into the workforce. The job of the VICs is to identify individual needs, provide job search support, and refer job seekers to suitable training programs. They also provide psychosocial support to overcome barriers such as lack of self-confidence and mental health problems. VICs work with employers to create employment opportunities, apprenticeships and tailored employment contracts for disadvantaged groups. Once people find work or start training, VICs monitor their progress to ensure a sustainable integration process. This model shows common strategies, practices and challenges for professional integration in different countries.

Through the work on the project a feedback was collected and analysed from the VICs through lookbooks. These lookbooks are important for the evaluation phase of the apprenticeship scheme experiment, providing structured documentation and enhancing the validity and reliability of the evaluation process. The logbooks contributed to the analysis by gathering firsthand experiences offering valuable insights into the VICs' progress, responsibilities, and tasks. They also highlight challenges faced by VICs, such as legislative and administrative obstacles, and help guide the project towards more effective strategies. The comprehensive feedback collected through the logbooks ensures the project remains responsive and adaptable to the needs of the VICs, apprentices, and the broader objectives of the SAS initiative.

Another important topic is the policy recommendations made by the project partners. The recommendations highlight how crucial it is to encourage in-person and video interactions between Vocational Integration Counsellors (VICs) in order to improve communication and idea sharing. It also recommends creating a forum where VICs may exchange best practices and discuss their projects and activities. It is also emphasised how important it is to spend heavily on PwD support staff, such as managers, trainers, counsellors, and teachers, as they are vital to their successful integration into the workforce. To ensure fair treatment and enable PwD to realise their full potential, equality and legal treatment should be customised to their unique needs. The topic of women with disabilities was put into account highlighting the need for more attention to be paid to helping them, especially those who are victims of assault or other vulnerabilities.



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Annexes:

Annex 1. The Logbook Model



SAS Project
Securing the translation to labor market for persons with disabilities through the Supported Apprenticeship Scheme

Vocational Integration Counsellor Logbook

Each VIC involved in the experimentation will keep digitalized logbooks on their day-to-day experience. Through the intermediary of each partner, LADAPT will collect the logbooks every three months. This logbook can be filled in English or in the Vic's own language, however partners will be asked to summarise in English the major points in logbooks of their 2 VICs. The logbooks of VICs throughout the experiment will enable the production of the first part of PR4: VICs' field progress & feedback report of experiment.

Please use this logbook and answer the questions (if relevant) to report about your experience. Go straight to the point, add some pictures if you have, send everything to Jouanneau.orane@ladapt.net ! Thanks in advance.

Name of the partner organisation
LADAPT

Name of the VIC
Catherine LE COINTE

Supported Apprentices <i>Number and profile of apprentices</i>
2 apprentices: Elisabeth C. and Léa B.

Career Objectives of the Apprentices <i>Career goals, training followed and host company</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elisabeth: Maintain her engagement in her vocational training despite personal challenges that may impact her daily life. Léa: Ensure Léa integrates well into the new company.

Methods/Activities Apprentice <i>A few details about the activities you carried out with the apprentice and the methods you used</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elisabeth: Weekly interviews with Elisabeth following the change of apprenticeship supervisor. Léa: Suggested 4 hours per month of additional pedagogical remediation sessions, complementing the support offered at the CFA.

Methods/Activities Training Centre <i>A few details about the activities you carried out with the trainers and the methods you used</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination with the CFA's disability advisor through regular exchanges. Meetings with instructors to anticipate exam accommodation requests. Following up on recommendations from the needs assessment.



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