

**EUROPEAN REGIONAL COUNCIL
of the World Federation for Mental Health
Boulevard Clovis 7 - B-1040 Brussels
tel. *32-2/280.04.68 - fax *32-2/280.16.04**

SUMMARY REPORT

Symposium on Training and Employment for People with a Psycho-Social Disability

Aske Kursgård, Sweden, 14-17 October 1995

INTRODUCTION

This European Symposium was organised upon the initiative of the International Labour Office (ILO), by the European Regional Council of the World Federation for Mental Health (ERC-WFMH) in collaboration with the European Network of Users and Ex-Users in mental health, the World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation (WAPR), the Confederation of European Firms, Employment Initiatives and Co-operatives for people with psycho-social handicaps (CEFEC) and EuroPsy Rehabilitation.

The Symposium was hosted by the Government of Sweden and held in the Conference and Training Centre of the Swedish Labour Market Board, which, together with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour, sponsored this invitational Symposium.

There were 48 participants (Appendix 1), including a number from relevant organisations in the host country, representatives from 12 member states of the European Union, representatives from ILO and from the WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Mental Health, Montreal, Canada.

The programme of plenaries and workshops (Appendix 2) with interpretation in English and French, provided opportunity for wide ranging policy discussions on key issues in the labour market, in the workplace and within social enterprises for persons with psycho-social disabilities.

A number of principle recommendations were prepared by the participants at the Symposium addressed to national and international governmental organisations, including specifically a call to expand further ILO Convention 159 on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of disabled persons to include explicitly people experiencing psychosocial disabilities.

A number of key issues have been identified for further discussion, debate and consideration by all parties, governmental and non governmental, concerned with vocational rehabilitation and employment of people with psycho-social disabilities and their rights to enjoy equal opportunities and treatment in respect of access to, retention and advancement in real employment.

PRINCIPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Whereas the UN General Assembly in its Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons of 1975 declares disabled persons' right to secure and retain employment or to engage in a useful, productive and remunerative occupation ;

Whereas General Assembly resolution 37/52 adopting the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons which establishes the rights of individuals with disabilities for full participation and equality of opportunities and the right to work ;

Whereas the UN Standard Rules on the equalisation of opportunities for disabled persons, are explicit on the full participation of people with disabilities ;

Whereas the ILO Convention 159 concerning vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons provides guidelines towards the Formulation of training and employment policies leading to equality for disabled people ;

Whereas, in its White Paper "European Social Programme - A Way Forward for the Union" the European Commission proposed that at the next opportunity to revise the Treaties, serious consideration must be given to the introduction of a specific reference to outlawing discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, age and disability ;

Whereas it is the opinion of the Social Affairs and Employment Committee in the European Parliament that "at the beginning of Title VIII (of the Treaty) on social policy, a reference to the principle of equal treatment irrespective of race, sex, disability or religion should be included.

We the participants of the European Symposium on Training and Employment for People with a Psycho-Social Disability, gathered at Aske Kursgard, Sweden, representing consumers of and professionals in mental health services as well as employment experts from 12 EU member states and from the WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Mental Health, Montreal, Canada, support and recommend the following principles :

1. People experiencing psycho-social disabilities should enjoy equal opportunity and treatment in respect of access to, retention and advancement in paid employment which corresponds to their own informed choice and takes account of existing skills. In this principle, the rights of men and women experiencing psycho-social disabilities should be respected.
2. Equality of opportunity for persons experiencing psycho-social disabilities shall extend to all levels of work organisation and management. This calls for respect for confidentiality of personal information.

National governments shall be encouraged to support the revision of ILO Convention 159 concerning vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons, with the objective to include explicitly people experiencing psycho-social disabilities.

3. Every workplace should conform to standards established by the social partners ensuring a healthy and empowering workplace.
4. Special positive measures such as wage subsidies and supported employment schemes shall not be regarded as stigmatising nor discriminatory against other workers.

KEY ISSUES FROM WORKSHOP SESSIONS

1. General

(1) An internationally agreed definition is needed of "psychosocial disabilities". Because people have the right to self definition, users and ex-users of psychiatric services have to have an input to this consideration, which has not, as yet, been the situation. The definition must not be based on medical diagnosis and should emphasise an individual's ability as well as disability.

(2) The right to work for people with psychosocial disabilities is not inscribed in the legislation of all member states as it should be, based on the principle of the same right to work as all other citizens.

(3) Health care and work are separate issues and should be dealt with as such, respecting for all their civil and human rights. The issue of work for people with psychosocial disabilities must be distanced from medical control and compulsory or coercive measures or treatments. There is no place for therapies as a compulsory part of work schemes.

(4) Work should make an improvement in, or at least not disadvantage people's economic status, but yet not create the illusion of improvement through the lowering of benefits in order to compel people to take low paid jobs. Those who take up paid work should not risk losing benefits permanently. There must be a substantial transitional period during which benefits can resume.

(5) National policies should promote human/employment rights and the facilitation of real informed choice in relation to work. There should be support and funding for user and ex-user advocacy and user and ex-user led initiatives in relation to work for people with psychosocial disabilities.

(6) Legislation must ensure anti-discriminatory laws and affirmative legislation to promote the employment of disadvantaged groups, particularly people with psychosocial disabilities.

(7) A range of opportunities and routes to employment to suit the different needs of individuals.

2. Labour market

(1) Labour market instruments should include measures for people with psychosocial disabilities. These should include wage subsidies to compensate reduced productivity, supported employment with special measures for the provision of psychosocial support to people who are at risk of losing employment through mental health problems.

(2) People with psychosocial disabilities should have employment under same conditions as all other employees. Equal participation implies the same rights and obligations for all employees whatever is their degree and kind of disability.

3. Work place

(1) Workplaces should be encouraged to develop flexible work practices, make reasonable accommodation and provide support structure which allows workers with psychosocial disabilities to partake in the workplace. Such measures should be non stigmatising and available to all employees.

(2) Employers should recognise that people with psychosocial disabilities have a wide range of capabilities and all roles within the workplace, including management, should be open to them.

4. Individual

(1) The skills of people with psychosocial disabilities should be used to the full at all levels of the workplace.

(2) Training/preparation for employment should be oriented towards future labour market needs and should include full access to further and higher education.

(3) Individuals should be enabled to plan their careers based on a full range of choices, taking account of their current skills rather than be confined to a limited range of special services.

(4) Real and informed choices about employment and training options should be available under equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity calls for respect for confidentiality of personal information.

5. CONCLUSION

This symposium recognises that there are many components to employment and training opportunities for people with psychosocial disabilities which encompass a range of work models of which Social Firms are one only.

It also acknowledges the significance of non work activities to people seeking participation as citizens of their community as parents, artists and social activities.

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S U M M A R Y R E P O R T

EUROPEAN SYMPOSIUM ON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH A PSYCHO-SOCIAL DISABILITY

Aske Kursgård, Sweden

14 - 17 October 1995

Organised by the European Regional Council of the World Federation for Mental Health (ERC-WFMH) and the Swedish National Labour Market Administration, in joint cooperation with the Confederation of European Firms, Employment Initiatives and Cooperatives for Psychically Disabled (CEFEC), the European Network of Users and Ex-Users in Mental Health, Euro-Psy Rehabilitation and the World Association for Psycho-Social Rehabilitation (WAPR)

Under the auspices of the International Labour Office (ILO) and the European Commission (Actions in favour of disabled people - Helios Programme) and with the support of the National Social Insurance Board, the National Board of Public Health and the National Labour Market Board.