

Sheltered employment in the 'Util Deco' authorised protected units

Publication date: October 2015
Updated: December 2019

ROMANIA

The rationale behind the practice is that sheltered employment in an authorised unit can be used as a period of transition towards the free labour market for young people with disabilities. Participants are employed within the 'Util Deco' protected units of the Alaturi de Voi Foundation in Iasi, a work integration social enterprise. They are regularly trained and supported to enhance their skills and keep their jobs, as well as to produce quality, competitive products and services that are sold on the open market. In early 2018, there were 44 employees, including 19 youngsters with disabilities, working in the 'Util Deco' authorised protected units in Iasi.

Name of the PES

Fundatia Alaturi de Voi, Romania (ADV Romania).
Close to You Foundation, Romania.

When was the practice implemented?

2008–ongoing.

Which organisation was involved in its implementation?

The local PES office of Iasi is responsible for registering young people with disabilities. The General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection of Iasi is responsible for referring potential participants to the practice.

Which groups were targeted by the practice?

Jobseekers:

- ▶ Young people with disabilities (including HIV/AIDS) aged at least 18.

What were the practice's main objectives?

The practice aims at providing sheltered employment for young people with disabilities. 'Util Deco' uses the revenues obtained from the delivery of services and the sale of goods produced for social purposes and for the further development of the workshops. Counselling, professional guidance, qualification and mediation services are provided to the disabled by the Foundation, free of charge.

What activities were carried out?

The following activities are carried out by 'Util Deco':

- ▶ Recruitment and selection processes according to a set of qualification criteria.
- ▶ Support for employed people provided by a multidisciplinary team of specialists (social workers, trainers/instructors, professional guidance counsellors, human resource and work security experts) to facilitate the work and social integration of people with disabilities.
- ▶ Social and vocational evaluation process of youngsters with disabilities (integrated individualised plan). They are placed in a programme of counselling and professional guidance to identify their needs and to facilitate effective employment in a protected unit. The employment is based on a legal work contract under Romanian legislation.
- ▶ Individual or group counselling and professional guidance are conducted on the basis of people's abilities, work capacity and available options.
- ▶ Vocational training courses and regular support for participants are provided in the form of workshops, e.g. services of archiving and document storage, the production of protection equipment, manual binding and typography.
- ▶ Provision of vocational, social and psychological support according to needs.
- ▶ Advice on the free labour market is provided upon request.

What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?

The Iasi 'Util Deco' unit operates four workshops. All activities are connected to the specific features of each workshop. On the one hand, there is training for participants; on the other, the production of services and goods. In early 2018, Util Deco employed 44 people, 19 of whom were disabled. 'Util Deco' were created as authorised units within the Alaturi de Voi Foundation in 2008. The organisation has its own management system and runs independent economic activities through its Iasi centre.

What were the source(s) of funding?	Self-funding from the economic activities run by 'Util Deco' protected units.
What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?	<p><u>People reached:</u> Over 100 persons with disabilities were employed in Util Deco. After a hiring period, they were helped to enter the labour market. For good adaptation, they have benefited from between 3 and 6 months' job coaching. Counselling and professional guidance were delivered to 405 youngsters with disabilities between 2008 and 2018.</p> <p><u>Products:</u> 'Util Deco' have produced several manuals. These cover the rules of operation, including employees' rights and obligations according to the legislation and organisation policy. There is also a specific manual on the provision of psychological support and a manual on social assistance. Several websites contain information related to the practice and have been updated within the practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The website www.utildeco.ro describes the services and goods produced by the disabled (in Romanian). ▶ The webpage www.jobdirect.eu was established in May 2016 as an Agency for Placement and Assistance at the Workplace, offering services of evaluation, testing, counselling, professional capacity building, mediation and placement on the labour market, as well as job coaching for people with disabilities or for groups at risk. ▶ The webpage www.wise.travel. Wise.travel was established in August 2016, initially under the name UtilDeco Travel. In June 2018, the agency was reauthorised as a tour operator under the brand WISE. travel, offering travel services and event organisation, while 50 % of its profit is donated to NGOs and social enterprises. ▶ A video about the practice can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsLQC55V_JE.
What outcomes have been identified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In 2008, 'Util Deco' operated 4 workshops located in Iasi. ▶ More than 100 people with disabilities worked in the protected unit between 2008 and 2018. ▶ 19 persons with disabilities were employed in 2018 in Util Deco. ▶ In the period 2016-2018, 70 people with disabilities were employed on the JobDirect labour market, in addition to those who were initially employed in the protected unit. ▶ More than 300 young people with disabilities benefited from counselling and professional guidance and qualification services in various fields. ▶ The specific experience accumulated as a protected unit contributed to the approval of the Social Economy Law in 2015. The "Close to You" foundation was one of the promoters of this law.
What are the lessons learnt and success factors?	<p>According to the first evaluation, for the period 2008-2011:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The qualification courses had a positive impact on increasing the abilities and competences of the disabled people, both to find a job in 'Util Deco' and to join the labour market. ▶ The evaluator concluded that the practice had not sought to monitor the number of graduates who found a job on the free labour market, as its target was for the placement of participants in the protected units. ▶ The tailoring and IT workshops were considered the most useful for finding employment in the open labour market, whereas hand-made binding was mostly required for the 'Util Deco' economic activity. <p>According to the second evaluation report, for the period July 2010 to August 2012, during the project implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Adequate and upgraded equipment in the protected workshops contributed to an increase in the trainees' abilities and competences and to the success of the socially oriented business. ▶ The integrated approach of service delivery to disabled people was successful in ensuring that participants were able to keep their jobs.



Contact details for further information

Name: ACHITEI, Angela

Telephone: +40 232 275 568; +40 745 609 209

Email: angela.achitei@alaturidevoi.ro

Website: www.alaturidevoi.ro