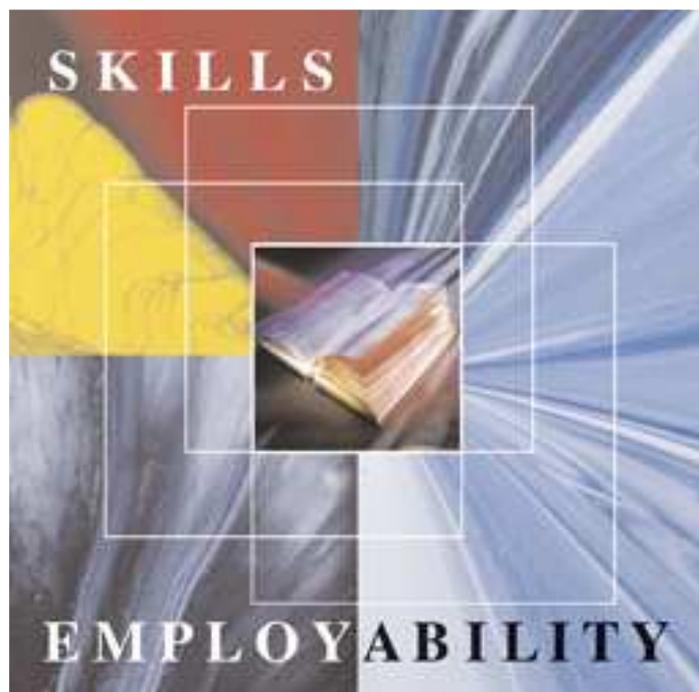




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The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Vocational Training and Employment

Tripartite European Regional Meeting: Proceedings

International Labour Office, Geneva
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1. INTRODUCTION

The social exclusion and discrimination faced by persons with disabilities has increasingly been acknowledged as a human rights issue. A paradigm shift, from a medical and charity based welfare model of disability, to today's rights based model, acknowledges the movement to link disability issues to a full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Also, evidence already shows that a rights based framework for looking at disability has increased social and economic development.

The human rights framework recognizes citizens with disabilities as having the same rights as citizens without disabilities. A rights based approach also recognizes that equal treatment, equal opportunity, and non-discrimination provide for inclusive opportunities for women and men with disabilities in mainstream society. Furthermore, a rights based approach recognizes that barriers and prejudices are the most disabling for both individuals and society, particularly when these barriers impede access to skill development and decent work.

Global momentum to give effect to the enjoyment of rights has increasingly been based on the human rights principles of equal treatment, equal opportunity, non-discrimination and full inclusion in mainstream society. These principles have been integrated in International Labour Organization (ILO) Standards for decades, namely Convention No. 159 concerning the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) which explicitly calls for mainstreaming. The more recent United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the General Assembly in 2006, highlight the additional momentum and focused attention given to the issues faced by persons with disabilities.

The UN Convention explicitly outlines disability issues within a human rights framework, and further, calls upon governments to adapt already adopted laws and policies, and to develop new ones in alignment with the Convention and the human rights framework. The new Convention has provided a strong statement on mainstreaming, explicitly calling upon states to open up opportunities in mainstream workplaces, both in the public and private sectors, whereas in the past, it has been accepted that workers with disabilities were often unemployed or worked in sheltered workshops.

While legislative and policy measures are necessary for change, they are not sufficient to give effect to the enjoyment of rights. Many countries have identified the need for systematic information regarding the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities in vocational training and employment in the open labour market. The need for more information will require countries and international organizations to network and systematically gather the information required to move forward.

At the European Regional Meeting on *The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Vocational Training and Employment*, Geneva, 9 March 2007, the ILO, along with the CTNERHI, France, and the Office of the Secretary of State for Families and Persons with Disabilities, Belgium discussed with delegates of a number of European countries, and representatives of employers' and workers' organizations, how to structure and organize applied research, international

comparative studies, and the systematic gathering and sharing of information that address the questions regarding equal opportunity and effective inclusion of persons with disabilities in vocational training and employment in the open labour market. The primary objective for this preliminary meeting was to initiate the process, and develop a formal proposal for the applied research, including the organization of an international platform to coordinate and advise the process.

2. OVERVIEW

2.1 Themes

- The role of the ILO and the Decent Work Agenda
- The present situation: Vocational training and employment for persons with disabilities
 - The role of international human rights standards
 - Lifelong approach to training: Economic and technology changes calling for adaptation of current system for new lifelong approaches
 - Current data available
- The components of effective inclusion
 - Aims for analyzing pathways
 - Benchmarking inclusion
- Agenda for action
 - Establishment of a platform for reflection and the exchange of European experiences on the vocational integration/inclusion of persons with disabilities

2.2 Participants

The meeting was attended by 34 participants who represented nine countries of the European Union (EU) (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain); Switzerland; and two worker member organizations. There was an even gender balance among participants, with 17 women and 17 men attending; one of the participants had an apparent disability.

2.3 Resource materials

- ILO: *Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace* (Geneva, 2002).
- ILO: *Proceedings of the Expert Group Meeting on Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Vocational Training* (Bangkok, 2006).
- ILO: Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159).
- ILO: Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Recommendation, 1983 (No. 168).
- ILO: Vocational Rehabilitation (Disabled) Recommendation, 1955 (No. 99).
- A. O'Reilly: *The Right to Decent Work of Persons with Disabilities, Skills and Employability Working Paper No. 14* (Geneva, ILO, 2003).
- T. Alfthan: *Mainstreaming education and training for people with disabilities: Programmes and issues*. Internal ILO document. Jan. 2005. Unpublished.

Background papers for the workshop:

- G. Bogard: *Lifelong Training: A New Cultural Approach to the Relationship Between Training and Disability*.
- M. Mercier: *Social Representations, Training and Employment of Persons with Disabilities*.
- B. Murray: *Vocational Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities: the Components of Effective Inclusion*.

- D. Velche: *Disability, Training and Employment in Europe.*
- H. Vlemencq: *Establishment of a European Network for the Vocational Inclusion/Integration of Persons with Disabilities.*

3. OFFICIAL OPENING

The meeting was officially opened by Mr Friedrich Buttler, ILO Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia. Welcoming participants on behalf of the ILO to the European Regional Meeting, Mr Buttler started by linking the subject matter of the conference to the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and to the growing momentum worldwide for the promotion of full participation of people with disabilities on an equal basis with non-disabled persons, before speaking briefly about the challenges ahead and what the ILO hoped would emerge from this meeting.

The role of the ILO in relation to people with disabilities

The goal of the ILO is to promote opportunities for women and men, including those with disabilities, to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. This is what can be called the mission statement which forms the framework of the ILO Decent Work Agenda. In the past few years, this agenda of rights, employment, social protection and social dialogue has risen up the priority list of political leaders, as well as of working women and men and business people across the globe. In September 2005, over 150 Heads of State and Government at the United Nations World Summit took up the agenda and highlighted the fundamental role of decent work in development strategies and poverty reduction. While strongly supporting a fair globalization, they resolved to place full and productive employment and decent work for all at the center of international and national development and poverty reduction strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In July 2006, the United Nations Economic and Social Council, in a Ministerial Declaration, called on the whole multinational system to mainstream full and productive employment and decent work for all in their policies, programmes and activities in order to achieve the MDGs.

For many years, the ILO has promoted equality of opportunity and treatment for people with disabilities through its conventions and recommendations, and through policy advice, dissemination of information, seminars, training programmes and publications, and through technical cooperation with developing countries in the form of projects. The ILO's focus on promoting training and employment of women and men with disabilities in the mainstream - that is enabling them to participate on an equal basis with non-disabled persons - dates back to the first international standard on disability in 1955- Recommendation No. 99 on the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons.

Since then, this theme has been reinforced with greater emphasis in different standards, in particular, in the ILO Convention concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons (No. 159) and in the ILO Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace, adopted in 2001.

Growing momentum worldwide for the promotion of full participation of disabled people, with equality

In recent years, global momentum for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the mainstream society has built up around the world. This is reflected at international level in numerous initiatives which have been introduced by the United Nations culminating in the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in December 2006. This convention marks a significant change in policy approach at international level – viewing disability issues primarily as issues of human rights. The influence of the Convention is already discernable, even though it is open for ratification from the end of March 2007. This momentum is also reflected in regional initiatives, particularly in the form of ‘Decades of Persons with Disabilities’ declared in different parts of the world.

Europe is no exception to this general trend. The focus on promoting full participation of persons with disabilities in society has been prioritised since the 1990s, by the EU and by the Council of Europe. Recently, the Council of Europe has adopted a Disability Action Plan to promote the rights and full participation of people with disabilities in society – improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in Europe 2006 – 2015, to give effect to a Ministerial Declaration and a Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation in 2003.

The rights of persons with disabilities are referred to in the EU Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000), and are anchored in the EU Directive on Discrimination (2000). The European Year of People with Disabilities in 2003 brought considerable attention to the obstacles to full participation which disabled people face, and the possible solutions, leading to the adoption of a Disability Action Plan 2004 – 2009, which emphasises the need to promote disabled people’s access to the labour market, and on employability measures such as life-long learning, as well as information technology and access to the built environment. These themes will hopefully be highlighted this year, which is the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. Figures available from EUROSTAT show that, in 2002, people with long standing health problems or disabilities made up 15 per cent of the total EU population – over 50 million people in the enlarged EU.

Challenges faced

The challenges faced in promoting the inclusion of people with different disabilities are reflected in the Communication from the European Commission on the situation of disabled people in the enlarged EU, calling for a structured approach to disability mainstreaming. As proposed in this communication, a High Level Group on Disability is set up to monitor the latest policies and priorities of Governments concerning people with disabilities, to pool information and experience, and to advise the Commission on methods for reporting in future on the EU-wide situation. These challenges are also reflected in the Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on Equal Opportunities for people with disabilities, issued in January 2007, in which the Commission and Member States are urged to move from a Disability Action Plan to a broad-scale EU strategy for people with disabilities. In this Opinion, the EESC calls on the Commission and Member States to make information available on good practices and effective approaches, and to actively follow the High Level Group on Disability guidelines on mainstreaming disability in different policy areas.

Purpose of the Regional Meeting

In concluding, Mr Buttler reiterated that the purpose of the meeting is to take a step in the direction of gathering detailed information on good and promising practice on inclusion of persons with disabilities in vocational training and employment. At the end of the meeting, he hoped that there would be agreement to collaborate in the systematic gathering of such information, and to set up a multi-country and interagency network to collaborate on this task, and to work to produce practical guidelines for use in the enlarged EU as well as other parts of the world.

Mr Buttler closed his introductory remarks by thanking the sponsors of the meeting, including the Cabinet of the Secretary of State for Families and for Persons with Disabilities of the Belgian Federal Government, and the Centre Technique National d'Études et de Recherches sur les Handicaps et les Inadaptations (CTNERHI) in Paris and wishing participants very successful deliberations.

4. THE PRESENT SITUATION

Mr Marc Maudinet, Director, CTNERHI, opened the first session of the day by outlining some broader objectives for this meeting, which include specifying some of the ideas regarding the integration of persons with disabilities into the workplace that will lead to the more widespread formulation of good practices.

4.1 Vocational training and employment of persons with disabilities – The role of international human rights standards

Barbara Murray, Senior Disability Specialist, ILO, Geneva

To provide a backdrop for the day's discussion, Barbara Murray gave an overview of the ILO's international labour standards concerning people with disabilities and examined evidence on the implementation of these standards, ending with a summary of the recently adopted United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which sets out to dismantle barriers to full inclusion.

Introduction

The ILO's primary goal is to promote opportunities for women and men, including those with disabilities, to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. An important means of achieving this is through ILO international labour standards. These standards are particularly relevant in the international legal system because they are the result of lengthy tripartite processes, going through many rounds of negotiations before being formally endorsed by governments, employers and workers.

Early ILO standards and persons with disabilities

One of the earliest international acknowledgements of the right of people with disabilities to work opportunities was made by the ILO in 1944. In the comprehensive Employment (Transition from War to Peace) Recommendation No. 71, 1944, the ILO stated unequivocally that disabled workers, 'whatever the origin of their disability, should be provided with full opportunities for rehabilitation, specialized vocational guidance, training and retraining, and employment on useful work.' Persons with disabilities should, wherever possible, be trained with other workers, under the same conditions and the same pay, and called for equality of employment opportunity for disabled workers and for affirmative action to promote the employment of workers with serious disabilities.

The ILO went on to adopt a Recommendation on the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons in 1955 which served as the basis for national legislation and practice in relation to vocational guidance, vocational training and placement of disabled persons for almost 30 years, until the adoption in 1983 of ILO Convention No. 159 and the accompanying Recommendation No. 168 concerning the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons.

ILO Convention concerning Human Resources Development (No.142)

Like many other ILO Standards, the Human Resources Development Convention, (No. 142), adopted in 1975, supports the principle of including disabled persons in vocational training and related employability services. This Convention states that policies and programmes for human resource development, including counselling and skills development, whether in formal or informal systems, "shall encourage

and enable all persons, on an equal basis and without any discrimination whatsoever, to develop and use their capabilities for work in their own best interests and in accordance with their own aspirations....” More recently, this principle was reinforced in the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195).

To encourage, assist and enable persons with disabilities to exercise their right to work on an equal basis and without discrimination, Convention No. 142 calls on member States to develop and implement open, flexible and complementary systems of general, technical and vocational education, educational and vocational guidance and vocational training, including continuing employment information. The accompanying Recommendation No. 150 spells out in considerable detail how the provisions of Convention No. 142 should be effected. Persons with disabilities should have access to mainstream vocational guidance and vocational training programmes provided for the general population or, where this was not desirable, to specially adjusted programmes. It recommends that every effort should be made to educate the general public, employers and workers on the need to provide disabled persons with guidance and training to enable them to find suitable employment, on the adjustments in employment which some of them might require, and on the desirability of special support for them in their employment. Persons with disabilities were, as far as possible, to be integrated into productive life in a normal working environment.

ILO Convention concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons (No. 159)

The ILO Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention No. 159 requires member States, in accordance with national conditions, practice and possibilities, to formulate, implement and periodically review a national policy on vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons.

Convention No. 159 sets out a number of fundamental principles which should underlie vocational rehabilitation and employment policies, highlighting those of equal opportunity and treatment, affirmative measures which should not be regarded as discriminating against other workers, integration of persons with disabilities into mainstream work-related programmes and services, services for those in rural areas and remote communities, the training of qualified staff, and the need to consult employers’ and workers’ organizations as well as representative organizations of and for disabled persons (DPOs). The accompanying Recommendation No. 168 details measures which should be taken to promote equitable employment opportunities, including the making of ‘reasonable adaptations to workplaces, job design, tools, machinery and work organization’, and outlines steps which should be taken to ensure that the consultative processes mentioned in the Convention work effectively¹.

ILO Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace

The ILO Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace (2001) was drawn up to provide guidance to employers on practical means of implementing

¹ ILO Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Recommendation (No. 168), 1983.

the types of measures contained in international instruments such as those mentioned earlier.² While addressed mainly to employers, the Code should also prove of considerable benefit to governments, which play a primary role in providing the necessary legislative framework for promoting equal opportunities and treatment in the workplace, and to workers' representatives, whose main concern is to protect workers' interests. The contents of the Code are based on the principles underpinning international instruments and initiatives. The Code should, accordingly, also help to inform the principles and contents of the employment provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2006.

What is the implementation evidence?

After a member country has ratified an ILO convention the government is obliged to report to the ILO on its implementation, one year after ratification and on a five-yearly basis thereafter. The reports are scrutinized by ILO's independent Committee of Experts that supervise the application of Conventions and Recommendations in ILO member countries. The Committee reports its observations to the annual International Labour Conference and, if needed, sends direct requests to the government in question for further information or follow-up action to the report.

The most recent analysis of the implementation of ILO Convention No. 159 was carried out in 1998.

The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) is one of two supervisory bodies with responsibility for the regular supervision of the observance by Member States of their standards-related obligations³. Members of the CEACR, appointed by the ILO Governing Body for a renewable period of three years, are appointed in a personal capacity among impartial persons of technical competence and independent standing, drawn from all parts of the world. The CEACR reviews the periodic reports of Member States on the measures which they have taken to give effect to the provisions of Conventions which they have ratified.

In its report on a General Survey on the implementation of the provisions of Convention No. 159 and Recommendation No. 168,⁴ the CEACR commented that the principle of equality of opportunity and equality of treatment in employment for disabled persons requires particular attention in an environment characterized by global competition and deregulation of labour markets, and emphasized the applicability of the Convention to all Member States.

'Convention No. 159 is a promotional convention: it sets objectives and lays down basic principles to be observed in attaining them. Because its provisions are flexible as to the attainment of its objectives, due account can be taken of the situation prevailing in each country. They can be applied in all Member States,

² ILO Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace, 2002.

³ The other regular supervisory body is the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards.

⁴ ILO Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons, 1998.

regardless of the stage they have reached in their activities for the vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons’.

Recalling the fundamental importance of consultations between governments and the social partners, the Committee emphasized that consulting representative organizations of persons with disabilities on vocational rehabilitation and employment matters was a crucial element of the consultation process. It went on to strongly urge Member States to promote the formation of truly representative organizations of people with disabilities and to facilitate communication between such organizations and administrative and technical bodies involved in vocational rehabilitation.

Noting that governments had not supplied detailed information on the situation of people with disabilities living in rural areas and isolated communities, the Committee observed that these persons are doubly affected, by their disability and by their distance from services available to the general population and to people with disabilities living in urban centres and highlighted the importance of community-based rehabilitation programmes in facilitating the integration of some disabled persons into the economic and social life of their communities.

Observing on a general trend in national practice concerning persons with disabilities towards the use of general services for vocational guidance, training, placement, employment and other related services which exist from workers in general, the Committee noted that this process of mainstreaming has contributed considerably to changing negative ideas and attitudes in regard to the place and role of people with disabilities in working life and in society.

In a final comment, the Committee emphasized that the implementation of the Convention’s provisions and the measures advocated by Recommendation No. 168 did not necessarily require vast resources, but depended on a commitment of the relevant stakeholders. In view of this and the fact that both instruments take into account the diversity of national situations and conditions, it urged Member States which had not yet done so to ratify the Convention.

What are the issues?

Despite existing national, regional and international laws and other instruments, and despite the activities of international bodies and the efforts of non-governmental organizations, persons with disabilities throughout the world continue to be subjected to widespread violations of their human rights. This is an undeniable fact. In the field of employment, the available statistics indicate that the unemployment rate among workers with disabilities tends to be twice or three times that of other workers. Problems of access to the physical environment, including transportation, housing and workplaces, coupled with still-held prejudices among many employers, co-workers and the general public, aggravate an already difficult situation. This is not to suggest that there has been no improvement. The significant growth in domestic anti-discrimination legislation in recent years is encouraging, even though adoption of a law does not guarantee its enforcement. The persistent efforts of international agencies, and in particular the ILO, in promoting equal opportunity and treatment in employment continue to make important inroads into the economic and social exclusion of persons with disabilities. If the provisions contained in the international treaties and other instruments discussed in this report were fully implemented, full equality and participation for persons with disabilities in the employment field would be

achieved. This, regrettably, is not yet the case. For people with disabilities and their representative organizations, there is more to be done.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will provide an impetus to Governments, employers' and workers' organizations, DPOs, service providers and other disability advocates to move the disability agenda forward. Adopted in 2006 following several years of negotiation, the convention does not create new rights, but rather elaborates in detail on how rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, can be realized for people with disabilities. Article 23 the Universal Declaration, regarding the Right to Work, states that:

'Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Everyone, without discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.'

The Convention represents a major change in approach to work and employment for persons with disabilities, in that it prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in all forms of employment, and calls on states to open up opportunities in mainstream workplaces, both in the public and private sectors. To facilitate this, the Convention promotes the access of disabled persons to freely chosen work, general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training, as well as vocational rehabilitation, job retention and return-to work programmes. It will help disabled people find and keep jobs by promoting improved accessibility of workplaces, calling for improved transport and access to information in written and electronic form. The Convention recognises that for many disabled persons in developing countries, self employment or micro business may be the first option, and in some cases, the only option. States are called on to promote such opportunities. The right to exercise labour and trade union rights is also promoted in the convention.

Concepts of reasonable accommodation, accessibility and affirmative action, underlying the provisions on employment, have been established in recent legislation in different parts of the world, but are new in many countries.

Action to improve opportunities in work and employment will be guided by several of the general principles underlying the Convention – the principles of non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, accessibility, equality between men and women, and also the principles of respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons; and that of full and effective participation and inclusion in society.

Open for ratification from 30 March 2007, the Convention will enter into force one month after 20 ratifications have been registered.

4.1.1 Discussion

Discussion following the first session was based on questions raised by participants regarding provision for training, available statistics, implications of

globalization on employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, and also on the major areas of friction between unions and employers organizations regarding the employment of persons with disabilities.

Mr Maudinet began the discussion by re-emphasizing Ms Murray's point that the UN Convention does not contain any new rights, but highlights those already prescribed by existing human rights documents. Mr Maudinet also highlighted that the European Action Plan highlights measures for partners to take to address remaining issues.

Quota systems

Commenting on a question regarding tensions between employers' and workers' organizations about quota systems, Mr Stefano Oriano, Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL), workers' representative, Italy, said that a primary source of conflict regarding quota systems stems from the fact that that companies do not respect the quota systems. It is of concern to workers' organizations that employers do not comply with the 7 per cent quota in Italy, despite reform of the system reducing the original quota of 15 per cent. Even when employers are sanctioned, they do not comply and frequently even ignore the sanction. Non-compliance is an example of bad practice.

Training for service providers

Ms Murray responded to a question regarding ILO provisions for training of employers as future recruiters and managers, citing the framework for employers provided by the ILO Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace. The ILO's role is not to train employers, but to work with them to promote and sponsor programmes that promote the Code of Practice, through activities such as sensitization of employers on disability issues and the business case for employing disabled workers in partnership with employer organizations and supporting the formation of employer networks on disability, in Asia, and Africa. The ILO Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace, like that on HIV/AIDS, promotes a tripartite approach in the workplace, underlying the important roles played by trade unions, as well as government and DPOs, in addition to employers, who are the main target audience of the Code.

Available statistics

A question was posed about the need for statistics on the employment situation of persons with disabilities. Ms Murray said that it has been very difficult to get reliable statistics comparing employment rates between men and women with disabilities. In the EU, statistics show that 52 per cent of disabled persons are outside the active labour force - many have entirely abandoned the idea of working, or even of working towards employment at all. Statistics also show that more women are receiving social security benefits. Mr Dominique Velche, CTNERHI, added that statistics do occasionally highlight the discrepancy of employment rates between men and women - for example, in France women with disabilities who have higher educational levels were less likely to get jobs than to males with disabilities and the same level of education. Despite the tentative nature of available statistics, it is clear that women with disabilities are at a comparative disadvantage compared to men with disabilities who experience the same degree of disability.

Implications of globalization

In response to a question on the impact of globalization, Mr Butler said that the clear tendency is that if people lose from globalization, the most vulnerable groups will be the most greatly affected. Globalization's effects on sectors affect women to a particularly high degree. As persons with disabilities are increasingly integrated into mainstream vocational training and employment systems, it will become less possible to determine whether exclusion is a result of disability as distinct from gender or qualifications. Nonetheless, the political consequences are clear on this issue of mainstreaming – account must be taken of the changes arising from globalization.

4.2 Lifelong training: A new cultural approach - the relationship between training and disability

Gérald Bogard, Association pour la formation professionnelle des adultes (AFPA), France

Mr Gérald Bogard introduced his discussion with an analogy referencing an exhibit outside the Place des Nations in Geneva – a large chair with three legs which still remains standing. This analogy was used to conclude that there is no set concept or way of looking at the issues, and focusing too much on certain models may be too simplistic.

In his discussion, Mr Bogard began by emphasising that an investigation is pertinent, and should be systematically conducted to determine the disparities as well as similarities between both national systems and partnership arrangements to, for example, create and improve the complementarities needed in vocational training and employment systems.

What is disability and who are we talking about?

Is the disability an integral part of the person? In fact, nothing could be further from the truth! “Disability” is a social construct, a category manufactured by specific institutional and administrative approaches. In all the Member States, disabled persons are the subject of specific vocational integration policies. But each Member State has defined “disabled persons” in its own way. Some countries use the criteria of a physical, sensory or mental handicap to categorize the workers concerned, while others have recourse to a “negative” definition and speak of people who cannot find employment in normal conditions. Each national case is the result of hierarchies of values, social protection choices, institutional constructions and the action of specific social players. As a result, the figures vary widely. What does it mean to say that one in every thousand workers in Portugal, Italy or Greece is disabled, three in every thousand in France and 12 in every thousand in the Netherlands? Variations in European figures is due more to totally different methods of evaluation and counting than to the performance of health and case management systems.

The World Health Organization (WHO)'s work provides a great deal of food for thought, in that it defines disability as the outcome of interaction between personal – namely social and contextual – and environmental factors, meaning those generated by how a society functions. In other words, disability is not an individual failing; it is the outcome of difficulties encountered by an individual struggling with a poorly adapted environment. That individual is in a situation of

disability. Defining disability can be difficult, particularly since disability is not the person, but rather depends on the situation. For example, a person who uses a wheelchair, and has a ramp along with everything needed to function in daily life is not disabled, in his or her while a person who breaks a leg skiing and lives on the sixth floor is. Disability can result from the accumulation of elements, which make a person disabled in his or her environment.

Finally, situations of disability change over time: a growing number of companies have to deal with disabilities in that they continue to employ staff who have become handicapped in the course of their working lives as a result of occupational or other accidents and illnesses. As the age pyramid changes shape, companies will have to manage more and more new situations of disability.

The main point to bear in mind is that people with disabilities are not a small minority of the EU's population. According to the lowest estimate, they account for 11 per cent of EU's citizens. That figure would no doubt have to be expanded to include people with cognitive difficulties and people who do not enjoy full physical capacity but are not truly disabled in the classic sense. And it must be born in mind that disability statistics are always changing, because while some people are born with a disability, many people incur a disability later in life, resulting from, for example, HIV/AIDS or as a result of an accident. It must also be recalled, in using statistics to plan and develop training programmes that they may cloak the variability, "the various shapes and sizes", which should must serve as a *leitmotif* in planning.

The changing economy

In today's economy, people have to be qualified and integrated. But in what framework? Socio-economic relations are shifting, and there are sweeping changes in the production system in terms of both structure and governance. New ties are being forged between what is global and local, while the division of labour is changing worldwide. The transition from labour-intensive to technology- and information-intensive production systems plays a decisive role.

The economy has become largely service-based, raising serious questions about vocational integration. Work is changing in nature, requiring increasingly less physical strength and increasingly more "brain power." The industrial model is a thing of the past. Competencies are now relative, requiring workers to constantly be learning new skills. Wage-earners are being encouraged to master a variety of skills so that each can perform several tasks and replace another as required, without having to slacken the pace of the throughput. Everywhere quality has become a priority requirement, and the demand for skilled labour risen sharply.

This means workers have more skills and are given greater responsibilities, but also that they are under greater pressure to be productive. This is an integrative process, which should not be rigid. Adaptation and re-adaptation suggest adapting the worker for the job: however, jobs change too quickly for this to be reasonable. A more useful approach will be to give individuals the means to develop themselves. The fast pace of technological progress and professional mobility imply that future wage-earners need the intellectual wherewithal to adapt and change, not only jobs, but fields and careers as well.

Recognizing competence

More and more, training systems are called on to meet production imperatives by helping to develop skills that far exceed the scope of formal learning and require,

if they are to take root, experience of all aspects of life in society. A consensus has thus emerged as to the minimum definition of competence and how to make it operational in context, in order to specify its fields of efficiency and hence its degree of transferability. This approach is particularly important in that it affords another way of seeing unqualified jobs and making them a part of the momentum for change. When “unqualified” jobs are discredited, not only are skills denied, but the idea is also conveyed (often taken on by the wage-earners themselves) that their skills are not transferable to more valued activities or that they are an inadequate springboard to further training. In many jobs, particularly those deemed to be unqualified, it is the skills and dexterity acquired by experience and consolidated over time by repeated action in different contexts that are decisive in defining professionalism. It would be effective to develop systems that give credit for skills obtained through jobs traditionally considered less qualified and to identify transferable skills which can serve as a means of accessing further training and more valued activities.

Lifelong learning

Education is no longer everything. Changes in jobs and the labour market require that the system be managed with different processes. The objective is to transform training systems, so individuals are trained to adjust throughout their entire lives. The challenge for training is to teach individuals to master constant technological development.

In this world of constant change, the skills themselves are not as important as their “implementation at work.” Initial training, no matter how sophisticated, is no longer the passport to lifelong employment. Quite the contrary, vocational training has become a key component of employment change and adaptation. Of particular relevance to this process are factors regarding disablement.

The concept of lifelong training is predicated on reconstructing education and training systems while taking into consideration factors and requirements resulting from changes to our economic and production systems.

Studies show that there is a considerable fall in employability for those over the age of forty-five, and little to no opportunities for training exist. Furthermore, training opportunities are essentially non-existent after the age of fifty-five. What is learned in school is not sufficient training for life. Yet “lifelong training” is far from being anything more than a concept, and remains the foundation on which many experiments are being built.

Implications for the inclusion of disabled persons

Is there room for the weak in more competitive economies? The evaluation of traditional policies for disabled persons gives rise to doubt. The Europe of the Lisbon process is betting on an increase in the employment rate that is hard to reconcile with increasingly selective labour markets, in which physical appearance and good health are overvalued. The under-qualification of the majority of disabled workers, results in a reduced “employability” in the labour market. This is compounded by stereotypes and attitudes held by the company.

The objective should be to use the individual’s attributable capacities and potential in paving the way to autonomy. Integration aids exist but there is a need to develop a true engineering approach to social and occupational integration that is closely linked to lifelong training. Effective implementation of lifelong implies

a heavy investment in terms of innovations in training and experienced professionals.

Helping someone find employment implies taking account of the additional constraints they face: physical aptitudes, individual capacity and skills, mobility and flexibility in terms of the job and its socio-economic environment.

What changes are required?

The approach to social and occupational integration must be completely rethought. Modifying this state of affairs does not involve merely budget transfers, but restructuring and recomposing the system, professional practices, teaching content and methods, and so on. Competence, experience, certification and structuring of peoples' working lives are the main indicators of successful restructuring.

Redefining the links with the company must bear in mind the businesses' needs to remain competitive; employers will therefore be concerned with economic impacts. Working with employers should also involve recruiters. Presently, recruiters tend to recall outward characteristics more than capacity for performing the tasks of the job, presenting the tremendous challenge of fighting stereotypes and a generally low tolerance for disability.

The framework of lifelong training, although still very superficial, appears to help put in perspective the knowledge acquisition dimension in terms of guidance and certification. What is even more lacking is forward planning and innovative solutions. The management of disabilities must be reviewed in a more social and forward-looking context overall.

Little is known about the integration of workers with disabilities into small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Europe; however, they make up a majority of the production system, and could be a prime target to integrate persons with disabilities into the open labour market. Mistakes are made by regarding SMEs the same ways as large corporations. For example, training can happen differently. One new and innovative way to structure training could be on a peer basis.

The new qualifications model reverses the approach in which the individual adapts to the organization of the company. This model has been based on the observation that, in an economic crisis, enterprises hire people with higher qualifications for posts that had previously been held by people with lower qualifications. This process is tantamount to the marginalization of those with low qualifications, whether they are already outside the company or risk becoming so. This phenomenon calls for a need to modernize the organization of labour, reverse the process, and bring about the vocational integration of the less qualified.

Competencies confer a concept for lifelong training and validating the experience acquired. Today individuals look for a secure career path, and no longer a secure job. To adjust to these trends, training systems must begin working more with companies and individuals on career development, based on a model of giving the individual the means needed to develop a career, instead of merely adapting the individual to the company. The objective will be to train individuals in the skills needed for their career through this new approach based on lifelong learning.

Additional questions to consider

Other questions which require attention in improving training opportunities for people with disabilities are: how to improve coordination; how to plan policy for the creation of jobs in areas that correspond to people's needs; how to engineer true "integration" and not just "training"; and how to heighten employer involvement.

4.2.1 Discussion

In the discussion session which followed this presentation, participants raised questions concerning the components of effective inclusion, including quotas systems, the business case for hiring persons with disabilities, the need to adapt training system to meet the needs of labour market, and means of identifying and developing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Quota systems

Ms Isabelle Mérian, FAGERH, a Paris-based national network providing guidance, training and placement services for people with disabilities, commented that companies frequently approach recruiting agencies seeking any disabled person to hire, so that the companies are in compliance with the quota requirements. This as a starting point is not a very good approach. A better approach is for the recruitment or placement agency to match the skills required for a given job with those of a prospective employee, thereby making the placement based on the skills of the individual. The objective is not to hire a person with a disability in a hurry, but to hire more people with disabilities whose skills correspond to the needs demanded by the job.

In response to the issue of quotas, Mr Bogard pointed out that, in France, quotas have not been connected to individual jobs, but rather to the degree of difficulty of the job, corresponding to the degree of disability. There have been interesting case studies on the topic, specifically studies which focus on the accumulation of disability (e.g. when an elderly woman has severe intellectual disability). This approach has meant that companies look at the issue of disability more broadly. Research should examine the needs of companies, and the reasons why a company might wish to the requirement to hire a person with a disability.

Business case for hiring persons with disabilities

Mr Francisco Arnau Navarro, Permanent Mission of Spain to the UN, made the point that, in a capitalist society, businesses need to make money and are not charities. To come up with solutions, the proposed platform will need to look at economic aspects. Managers see matters from economic perspectives. "Decent Work," moral values are basically European. Perhaps Asia or Africa have a different concept of work. International organizations, such as the ILO, need to address the economic arguments, since there are many statistics that indicate there is no need to deceive employers on the benefits of employing persons with disabilities. Studies are needed that look at the number of workers who are disabled in employment, programmes, and also look at the budget, in order to convince capitalist companies that meeting certain standards will make them more profitable. The delegate recommended that ILO work relating to disability should link to activities on corporate social responsibility.

Adapting training systems

Mr Buttler, ILO EUROPE, said that in addition to adapting the training system to the needs of labour market, there is a corresponding need to develop individual capacity to adapt, where the main objective of learning is to learn how to learn. Current training systems are presently not well adapted to the workplace because they are not well adapted to learning, or teaching people how to learn. The current objectives of the ILO Skills and Employability Department include:

Identifying work opportunities for people with disabilities

Mr Robert Bechina, Austria, pointed out that introducing incentive measures for employers, introducing laws and developing skills do not necessarily lead to jobs and work places for disabled persons. Research is needed into innovative ideas, including monitoring and reporting, a topic of interest to the EU.

Mr Bogard pointed out that identifying actual functions for a specific job will lead to job generation and give answers to individual employers. For that, further research will be needed to assess jobs from ground up, based on functions identified. Once this is done, there should be room to employ experienced workers as well as those with no experience and those with varying skills levels.

4.3 Social representations, training and employment of persons with disabilities

Michel Mercier, Department of Psychology and Faculty of Medicine, Namur University, Belgium

Mr Michel Mercier opened his presentation with an overview of the theory of social images, which aims at understanding how these images work in society. Social representations both impede and facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities. Training should aim to act on the impeding and facilitating factors. Social integration is dependent upon opinions that are based on social images. This takes place on various levels, including the macro-social, the meso-social, and the micro-social.

On the macro-social level, representations are generated by the positions of international organizations. Examples of measures that develop international positions include positive, or affirmative actions in declarations. Some view these actions as a source of reverse discrimination, affecting social representations of workers who are disabled in an impeding way.

The WHO has introduced the International Classification of Functioning, and identified the concept of social participation. The ILO has introduced this platform for communication, as well as the GLADNET network, both which will look at how social representations can be taken into account when implementing positive action measures, in order to design access for all. The ILO also collaborates for the development of training programmes for both public and private employers and workers in order to change social representations.

At the meso-social level, social representations are generated by and within employers', workers' and disabled persons' organizations (DPOs). According to available studies, employers tend to represent persons with disabilities as lacking in skills, having low value, yielding loss and low productivity. Employers also perceive many administrative obstacles to hiring a person with a disability.

Workers' organizations have contributed to negative social representations, in that positive action targeting people with disabilities has been perceived by other workers as additional privileges. These social representations must be changed through education and action to raise awareness.

When it comes to DPOs, people with disabilities internalize negative social representations and often consider themselves as unworthy of access to work, and perceive themselves as less qualified. People with disabilities thus often put themselves in the victim's seat. DPOs can bring about changes in social representations through action to raise awareness and education, and by setting up empowerment groups. Campaigns set up with associations in order to change the social representations have been effective.

At a micro-social level, positive action includes workplace and architectural accessibility, as well as access to human resource departments, recruitment, and selection tests, in both the private and public sector. Additionally, adapting workstations includes measure to develop technology, measures to ensure awareness of available technology, and action to inform the public at large.

Making employers aware of their responsibility, through tools such as quotas, can induce public and private employers to realize and assume responsibility. Frequently, once a company recruits and hires one person with a disability, and the appointment is successful, the company will recruit and employ other people with disabilities. Research shows that more people with disabilities are employed in countries with quota systems than in countries without. Further research is needed to compare data on quota effectiveness amongst European countries.

In-house coaching and mentoring is another positive action measure that will facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities. Programmes must coach people in finding jobs, keeping jobs, or going back to jobs. In many cases, coaching promotes employment sustainability, and can also facilitate further integration into a company.

Allowances and taxation are other measures that facilitate or impede the employment of persons with disabilities. Examples include subsidies, grants, as well as other fiscal measures. Welfare benefits are often an impediment to employment. Also, problems arise when subsidies or grants are linked to the aggregated spouses' income, known in Belgium as the "price of love."

The facilitating measures outlined are in line with the objective of the European platform and the framework for its implementation. The European platform should take account of the broader issue of social representations with regard to the employment of persons with disabilities. Constantly changing attitudes can and must be addressed by means of training and awareness-raising which should focus on changing and influencing social representations.

4.4 Data on disability on the path to integration: Handicap >> Training >> Employment

Dominique Velche, CTNERHI, Paris

The attitudes of employers, co-workers and the general public are central in efforts to reduce the occurrence and incidence of the discrimination people with disabilities face in employment. But this is only half of the problem. Today, the worker must also have the appropriate level of skill, which must be regularly

maintained and developed. An examination of ways in which individual European countries include training policy as tools, allows us to understand the role training plays in the measures to improve the vocational integration of persons with disabilities.

There is a widespread lack of training among persons with disabilities. Evaluating the extent of the problem through international documentation and comparative data is more difficult than it may seem for several reasons. First of all, it is not easy to define such a diverse population. An inclusive definition that would facilitate evaluation is further complicated by the fact that countries have historically used varying definitions. An additional complication arises from differences between education systems and the varying impact the same level of education can have on different individuals, their outcomes and concrete circumstances. It is also difficult to identify training deficiencies across countries, for similar reasons.

A deficit in training presents a major disadvantage from the outset when it comes to obtaining employment. Training deficits are the result of several processes. First of all, children with disabilities are often far behind in school, and this impedes their access to vocational training. This lag in skills may be due to the disruption of studies in connection with time spent in therapy, or may be a direct result of difficulties in communication or comprehension of class work. Regardless of the source, there is frequently a gap from the outset.

The initial deficiency is compounded by inequalities in access to further training, either due to discrimination in connection with the labour market perception of persons with disabilities, or more generally because, only too often, persons with disabilities do not have the level of education required to gain access to vocational training that will lead to qualification.

A good level of training would facilitate access to employment. Many statistics on the working population as a whole show a strong correlation between the level of education or skill and the employment rate.⁵

Since many unskilled jobs are now being eliminated as the result of globalization, it is becoming particularly difficult for those without marketable skills, or those whose skills have lost value, to find or retain a job. These persons, including many people who experience a disability, have to compete with people who have higher qualifications or who are younger and have newly acquired skills.

Research on access to employment focuses extensively on regulations concerning non-discrimination. More extensive problems arise from insufficient training, however. The notion of discrimination and access to employment only works if people have the same skills. Non-discrimination laws that have been passed only prohibit discrimination in employment where equal skills are present. Even when the law is applied, the labour world effectively excludes those who have a disability, not necessarily because of their functional disabilities, but because of their level of training, which is inadequate or at least uncompetitive. Vocational training can thus be an effective strategy for improving the situation of disabled persons in employment.

⁵ See, for example, OECD (2006) Education at a Glance 2006, Tables A8 ff.

Different countries and cultures face different issues when it comes to research, data collection, and making recommendations. As a result, strategies pursued may differ from one country to another, in terms of education and efforts to mainstream children with disabilities. Some countries may have policies to integrate students with disabilities into general schools, while others may not be nearly so advanced in educational policies. According to research in Sweden, children with disabilities leave integrated schools, with skills training and a diploma. Strategies to ensure that young people with disabilities acquire an adequate level of initial training should include the abolition of age limits that are often imposed for completing a training course.

In terms of employment, some countries have well developed mechanisms to keep people in employment, or compulsory adaptation measures. In such circumstances, employers might be firmly invited, if not obliged, to plan, evaluate, organize and support the rehabilitation of their workers with disabilities. In Sweden, for example, vocational rehabilitation is compulsory for persons with disabilities themselves, meaning they are only entitled to receive benefits if rehabilitation is impossible.

There is nothing more controversial than the question of sheltered employment. Some countries, such as Austria and Portugal, virtually reject this form of employment completely, while other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Spain or Ireland, try to find alternatives to reduce sheltered employment or limit its expansion. In yet other countries, such as the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and France, sheltered employment plays a decisive role in employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The fact that people with disabilities do not make up a homogenous group affects the standardization of approaches. Sheltered employment establishments can be regarded either essentially as places of employment or as places providing training and development towards mainstream employment, although these two functions are not necessarily compatible. In Ireland, for example, the role of sheltered employment establishments is essentially to provide training. Several schemes promote access for people with disabilities to employment in mainstream settings by combining support and training with trials. In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, the *Workstep* programme is offered as a real alternative to sheltered employment rather than a transitional training opportunity.

Supported employment is another form of employment that can be viewed as a complement to sheltered employment, in instances where it is an initiative designed to contribute to the efforts to help people find and retain a mainstream job. Supported employment can also be viewed as an alternative to segregated or sheltered employment.

Despite the difficulties in developing a standard approach, one point is clear: higher education correlates with a higher employment rate.

4.5 Discussion

The discussion session which followed Mr Velche's presentation focused on points arising from both his and Mr Mercier's papers.

Defining disability as a universal issue

It was agreed that access is a global problem affecting everyone. Further research will need to take the dis/Ability continuum into account, since everyone either already experiences disability or is likely to experience disability in the future for many potential reasons, but primarily due to aging. Initiatives must promote solidarity between those who have an existing disability and those who do not.

The business case for hiring persons with disabilities

New approaches to the topic of the employment of disabled persons must be backed by research. Mr Velche provided an example of how to rethink profitability and output of workers. If a person who has a disability produces less than others, the rate can be calculated. Someone may be 20 per cent less productive, for example, than an average worker (although it is difficult to define what or who the average worker is). Economic research shows that after five hours of work, the average worker is less productive. A person with a disability could replace the average worker at this point, and be just as or more productive. It would be highly relevant to analyse productivity and how this is dealt with in policies.

Sheltered employment

Ms Murray suggested that supported employment can be viewed as an alternative to sheltered work, and serve as a bridge to open employment in the range of options available. The commitment to enable people with disabilities to work in the open labour market, reflected in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is likely to give rise to increased attention to developing supported employment as a means of making currently segregated systems more open and inclusive.

In response, Mr Velche noted that many countries are currently doing this. For example, the United Kingdom is replacing sheltered employment with the *Workstep* programme to move away from protective employment. He added that a range of systems for vocational training and employment of disabled persons exist and that these need to be examined and documented.

Avoiding the “Benefits Trap”

The Benefits Trap is a familiar theme and issue in many countries. There is a need to pool information on fiscal incentive measures and their impacts. Issues to address include the fact that social security and other allowances frequently provide income support which is higher than income from employment. Social security and allowances are typically considered a safer income than wages or salaries and people fear giving up the more secure allowance for insecure employment, with a risk of losing the job, leading to total loss of income. An additional issue is that disabled people organizations are often afraid to promote activation towards employment because of the concern that those who do not apply will be discriminated against.

Some potential solutions were discussed. In France, for example, new laws allow an accumulation of income, providing people with disabilities a chance to gain work experience without losing income linked to work. Belgium's aid is an integrated aid, which might help to combat some of the 'benefit trap' issues. The United Kingdom offers tax credits, where people with disabilities are permitted to

work up to 16 hours and remain entitled to benefit, providing security to individuals as well as their families.

Mr Bogard pointed out that a study on images of people with disabilities found that working as a volunteer is frequently seen as adding more social value, than, for example, working in a factory. This suggests that it may make sense to promote voluntary work, where people with disabilities can add value and gain experience. A “universal allowance” might promote provide income to work as a volunteer or for other types of work.

5. VOCATIONAL INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: THE COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE INCLUSION

Moderated by Barbara Murray

5.1 Pathways for students with disabilities to tertiary education and employment

Katerina Ananiadou, Analyst, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Directorate for Education, Paris

The OECD is leading a relevant research project on *Analysing Pathways*, focussed on students with disabilities in transition from secondary education to tertiary education and employment. The period of transition from education to employment is one in which all individuals – not just people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups - have to resolve certain issues. This period is further intensified by today's changing labour market.

Vulnerable groups face even greater risks of being further marginalized during this phase of transition. Frequently, a person with a disability is unable to live his or her life as flexibly as a person without a disability might. This brings more compelling pressure to plan pathways well in advance.

Analysing Pathways will examine the effectiveness and quality of links and coordination between higher education and vocational training systems. The study will look at opportunities to forge pathways and increase continuity between agencies and across sectors, including those linking health care, education, employment, and other sectors that are necessary for successful transition.

A lifelong-learning approach will be a fundamental basis for this study. Additional aims of this programme include empowering individuals to enable or disable policies and practices. Empowerment has strong implications for education, particularly because of how it affects students' self-perceptions, and can increase their capacity to learn how to learn skills, thereby enabling students to update their own skills once they have entered the labour market. As discussed in morning sessions, this lifelong learning approach is critical, particularly to updating skills as required by today's labour market.

Analysing Pathways is a longitudinal study based on tracking change, effectiveness and impact of processes on situations over time. The study will focus on many dimensions of independence, including financial and residential independence, and not just employment and academic outcomes. Another relevant outcome, for example, may stem from research regarding the impact of technology for students. The study will consider economic factors and political outcomes with a view to transforming current understandings of inclusion.

Twenty countries were represented at an OECD meeting in February 2007, to discuss potential participation in this research, a discussion which is on-going. Details of the research methodology will be finalized, once a decision is reached on participating countries.

5.2 Benchmarking inclusion

Christine Evans-Klock, Director, ILO Skills and Employability Department, Geneva

Ms Evans-Klock noted that this is a time of great change, with the emergence of the knowledge society, the development of globalization and technological change, all of which have significant implications for the labour market in general, and for employment opportunities in particular. Sometimes the changes are positive, but in many cases, they are negative - for example, when certain low-skills jobs disappear due to automation, or are displaced to other countries due to international competition, and the skills requirements of available jobs increases.

In this knowledge society, it is the individual's skills and capabilities, along with investment in education and training, which constitute the key to economic and social development. Education and training assist people in the escape from poverty by raising their outputs. Enterprises also benefit through the improvement of their productivity and competitiveness in globalized markets.

In this society, persons with disabilities must have access to education and training in marketable skills to facilitate entry to decent work at the start of their working lives. They must also have access to education and training on a continuing basis, in the form of life-long training, throughout their working lives, to maintain decent work. This is far from reality, for all disabled persons, today, even in countries which have held this as a policy goal for many years

As these changes are having effect, there has been a fundamental shift in the way in which disability issues are viewed by policy makers, which has resulted in a transformation in the way in which programmes and services are designed and delivered. Disability issues are now being regarded increasingly as issues of human rights, rather than individual issues or medical problems.

The new UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a strong statement of this approach, as it calls on states to open up opportunities in mainstream workplaces, both in the public and private sectors, as distinct from the past where workers with disabilities were often unemployed or worked in sheltered workshops. The Convention also promotes the access of disabled persons to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services, vocational and continuing training, vocational rehabilitation, job retention and return-to work programmes.

The goal of full participation of persons with disabilities underlying the Convention is already anchored in national policy and legislation in many countries, and will become even more widespread in the coming years.

To facilitate this process and to monitor the effectiveness of training provision and employment promotion for people with disabilities, we need to know what vocational training institutions are doing at present and what more they need to do to effectively implement the new policy of inclusion. We need to document good and 'promising' practice in these areas.

Further research will be needed to identify the benchmarks required in the training field. Some examples of the kind of information that needs to be gathered includes:

- Have training institutions developed a written strategy on inclusive vocational training, and how is 'inclusion' defined?
- What changes, if any, have been made to the training centre rules and procedures to facilitate the attendance of people with disabilities?
- What introduction training and on-going support has been provided for training centre management, instructors and other staff, to ensure adequate preparation for the introduction of an inclusive approach?
- What has been done to improve the accessibility of the training institutions, inside and out, and to make information available in accessible format?
- The question about costs is inevitable in any country: Does the introduction of an inclusive approach involve additional costs, and if so, how are these funded?
- What role do the former special training centres for persons with disabilities now play?

Much could be learned from comparable information on these and other aspects of vocational training institutions, and from systematically gathered information on the effectiveness of these centres in catering to disabled trainees – in terms of successful completion and subsequent career path. This information – would enable other agencies which newly adopt the policy goal of inclusion to build on this experience.

Other questions for further research regarding employment of persons with disabilities, some of which have been addressed in the day's discussions, include:

- What employment options are open to job-seekers with disabilities?
- What supports are provided to enable and encourage persons with disabilities to take up employment?
- What incentives are in place for employers, and what impact have these incentives had?
- What statistical information is gathered in each country to monitor the employment situation?

These and other questions will lead answers which will be beneficial to policy makers and service providers everywhere.

In terms of the ILO's role in the process, one of the ways in which the ILO works to promote equal opportunity and treatment for men and women with disabilities in training and employment, is through the development of knowledge on good and 'promising' practice in disability policies, programmes and services. The information gathered in this way is used in the preparation of good practice guides, and in the provision of policy advice.

The ILO has published several practical guides in the area of job placement of persons with disabilities, and these have been translated into many languages and customized for different regions of the world. The ILO has also prepared guidelines on rights-based legislation concerning persons with disabilities, which have similarly been translated into numerous languages. The ILO recently commissioned surveys on skills development for persons with disabilities in several countries of Southern Africa, and carried out a review of good practice in

skills development through community-based rehabilitation in countries of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. This work has been carried out in partnership with the Government of Ireland, as well as the Governments of Flanders and Finland.

The question of inclusive vocational training, promoted through ILO standards since 1955, is one area of priority, and given that this approach has been in place in some countries for a number of years by now, it is timely for the Office to take part in a systematic review of experience in this field, with a view to producing practical guides for widespread dissemination through the ILO's global tripartite-plus network. In the same way, the Office attaches priority to gathering good practice examples in the area of employment.

The ILO looks forward to hearing the views of colleagues on these topics during the discussion, and would also look forward to future collaboration with some or all participants of this meeting, if such collaboration is agreed on by the end of this meeting or in its aftermath.

5.3 Discussion

The discussion session following the first two presentations in the afternoon session focused on current initiatives being carried out internationally, and other practical topics which need to be researched.

Relevant initiatives

Mr Patrik Kuusinen, Ministry of Labour, Finland, said that research had been initiated in Finland to examine the effectiveness of approaches used. He felt that a tripartite approach to research such as this would be beneficial.

Ms Hanna Schelz, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Germany, informed delegates that Germany plans to hold a conference on 11 and 12 June, based on three topics that will include the "Integration of persons with disabilities in vocational training and the labour market." Ms Schelz added that she would be happy to inform the Conference about the 9 March Regional Meeting and its outcome. The Conference will also involve a ministerial gathering to discuss the UN Convention and Member State steps to comply with it.

Mr Leo Sheedy, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Ireland, informed delegates of the new national disability strategy, developed through a consultative, tripartite forum that helps to set priorities regarding job search, retention, and support. Indicators in Ireland are currently under consideration, but not yet developed. In 2002, the *Ability Award* went to an employer who had demonstrated excellence in developing good practices and promoting these practices among other employers.

Additional research topics requiring attention

Delegates agreed that information needed to be gathered systematically on a number of topics, including:

- Jobs available in the market.
- Skills and qualifications of people with disabilities in various fields, such as communication technology.
- Future directions in vocational training
- Vocabulary used, in the context of context and culture.
- Indicators of good and bad practice, and conditions for success.

Tripartite-plus approach

Information gathering and other research exercises should draw on involvement of social partners. There are many perspectives involved, including those of employers, unions, individuals, and policymakers. Association of employers and trade unions play an important role in identifying good as well as bad practices. Without their involvement, that of employers and managers, as well as that of disabled persons and their representatives, it will not be possible to compile a clear, comprehensive picture of what really constitutes good or best practice.

Dissemination

Information on good or promising practice in inclusive vocational training and employment will need to be disseminated to as wide a group as possible through projects, the training of trainers programmes, and through workshops with key people, trainers and advocates. Relevant, well designed practical guides and other tools, including videos, would need to be prepared, to ensure that the good practice information can be widely used in the design of policies, programmes and support services in different countries.

6. AGENDA FOR ACTION

Moderated by Hugues Vlemincq, Assistant Director, Office of the Secretary of State for Families and Persons with Disabilities, Belgium

6.1 Establishment of a platform for reflection and the exchange of European experiences on the vocational integration/inclusion of persons with disabilities

Hugues Vlemincq

Mr Vlemincq felt that an effective platform for communication was essential for co-operation between all stakeholders, and between the authorities involved in promoting inclusive vocational training and employment for people with disabilities. Currently there is no structured network or platform for European countries to effectively communicate on the topic of good practices for effective inclusion of persons with disabilities in these areas, even though interest has frequently been expressed in an exchange of good practice and ideas for progress. He felt that it is important to move forward on this agenda in a pragmatic way, and the establishment of a network would assist in this.

International standards relating to persons with disabilities include the ILO standards, the EU Plan of Action stressing the vocational integration of persons with disabilities, and the UN Convention, in particular Article 27 on Work and Employment, which will lead to a number of legislative measures to foster further integration. There is discrepancy and a lot of debate between EU countries on best approaches for the implementation of international standards, from quota systems to sheltered and supported employment. The objective of this platform or network would not be to standardize approaches across countries, as there are many cultures and contexts that have given rise to specific policies within these countries. Rather, the aim would be to have some exchange of practice and experience through a network that fosters these exchanges in a structural manner.

This platform should identify ways to collaborate with all social partners and stakeholders, and incorporate all points of view. The ILO presence would make it possible to provide a platform that allows the presence of social partners, which no individual government could produce. The ILO presence would also ensure long-term structure.

Suggested topics for the platform to address and gather information on, include the following:

1. **Employment services:** vocational guidance, vocational training, assistance in looking for and obtaining employment and other related services for disabled persons,
2. **Training for employment:** regular and/or specialized services, programmes, technical and vocational rehabilitation, employer involvement and accessibility strategies.
3. **Financial support:** wage subsidies, subsidized training costs, hiring bonuses, subsidies to finance monitoring services, tax credits, social security reductions, total or partial combination with disability benefits, guaranteed right to benefits in the event of job loss and subsidies for disabled persons wishing to start their own businesses or a cooperative.

4. **Technical and personal support:** examples are post-placement support, transportation, sheltered jobs, sign language interpretation, technical aids and appliances, technological development.
5. **Quota systems:** in public services and/or the private sector, penalties for failure to comply, alternatives for employers, etc.
6. **Anti-discrimination legislation:** in particular its implementation as concerns recruitment, hiring, employment and promotion conditions, occupational security and hygiene, provisions on “reasonable” arrangements, penalties.
7. **Information and awareness campaigns:** awards or labels for employers, training and awareness for employers in managing diversity, information wickets, awareness campaigns organized by the public authorities or employer groups.
8. **Managing disability:** specific measures at the workplace, participation of persons with disabilities, job retention.

The network could use various means of facilitating its work, for example through collaboration with the Global Applied Disability Research and Information Network on Employment and Training (GLADNET) which was initially set up by the ILO in 1995 to facilitate the international sharing of information on effective training and employment policies and programmes as well as collaborative applied research projects; and the global exchange of information via the Internet. The aim would be to for stakeholders to share ideas and information, on a global scale, and arrive at joint approaches to common problems in order to promote disability policy and programme reform with and emphasis on integrated training and employment options for working age persons with disabilities.

Discussions resulting from this meeting will provide details to be included in a formal proposal, including details regarding a second meeting to take place, possibly in the second half of 2007, involving a maximum number of participants, social partners and experts.

6.2 Discussion

In the ensuing discussion, the focus was on topics which the research network might take up, in addition to the eight topics already outlined. The discussion also focused on the need to effectively include social partners as well as other organizational elements.

Additional research topics

Mr Kuusinen, Ministry of Labour, Finland highlighted the need for more information on how programmes and services target specific population groups. For example, who is using the employment services, and if the service users are not from the target population, then who are they, what use are they making of them and what measures are they availing of? For example, who is using subsidies to start their own businesses? These services have a very low utilization rate in Finland, so there is a need to find a way of effectively reaching the target population.

Ms Céline Champion, Federal Office of Social Insurance, Switzerland said that the Swiss government would be interested gathering information on preventative approaches – ways of tackling problems before people lose their jobs.

It was also noted that a focus on lifelong training should be included, particularly since it is a topic that has been explicitly discussed throughout the day.

Social partners involvement

It was agreed that ways of involving the social partners would need to be considered, particularly since their representation at the meeting was limited, and no employer representatives were available to attend. The concerns of social partners might not be the same as those expressed, and their involvement was necessary to move the agenda forward. It was agreed that the ILO would hold in-house consultations on how to attract the interest and participation of employers (perhaps through the angle of diversity, which is a currently topic of employer interest) and worker representatives. In order to do so, separate consultations might be required. The involvement of temporary employment agencies might also be valuable.

Cross-sectoral approach

Disability issues are cross-cutting, and the involvement of all government ministries is required, with coordination to ensure that the policies adopted under different portfolios are mutually complementary. This should be a topic examined in the network.

Reliable statistics

Statistics are indispensable. There has been evaluation from a range of perspectives, but pragmatic, reliable figures are not available, and there is great variation from country to country. EUROSTAT figures indicate that the labour force participation rate of persons with disabilities is significantly less than their non-disabled peers.

Website accessibility

In terms of internet access, accessibility will be necessary in all languages. The website of the Association Européenne Nationale pour la Formation Professionnelle (AEPF)'s is an example of good practice in this respect.

Follow-up meeting

As a follow-up to the European Regional Meeting, which is more like a working group session to bring the agenda forward, it was proposed that further conference might be organized later in 2007. A date to consider for that meeting would be around 3 December 2007, to coincide with the International Day of Disabled Persons, the theme of which is 'Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities'. This timing of the meeting might bring increased media attention. A decision would be required on the format for future work - whether a series of expert meetings, promotional meetings should be provided for, rather than one conference.

6.3 Structure, organization and financing of a research and work plan on the vocational integration/inclusion of persons with disabilities

Barbara Murray/Marc Maudinet

In looking forward, Mr Maudinet identified two important elements to be considered:

- Communication of Information: how to pool and create links; how to ensure access of information, and specifically, how to ensure access in different languages.
- How to work collectively, to approach the questions raised, in a way that tackles and gives effect to all proposals, in order of importance.

Mr Maudinet said that the ILO would make it possible to meet the broad scope of opinions, and avoid outcomes that are ideologically bias and skewed, in the proposed project. A coordinating team would need to be established, working between the various structures, and working full time.

The question was then posed to the ILO, regarding interest, and means to set up the project proposed, and to have it running in 2008.

The ILO addressed this, stating that it certainly is interested in the topic of inclusive vocational training and employment of persons with disabilities. The Office has been gathering information on good practice for some time, and will look forward to future collaboration. The proposed project would require funds to ensure coordination without which it would not succeed. Belgium, France and Germany have acknowledged a great need for this information, and have expressed that they have gone as far as they can with the knowledge and approaches held. Time is ripe now to initiate a systematic information-gathering exercise, particularly given the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the likelihood that European member states will seek advice regarding its implementation.

6.4 Discussion

The final discussion of the day focussed on the level of support for the proposed project over the coming year.

The representative of the Swiss Federal Office of Social Insurance felt that the project topic would be of great interest, but that consultation would be required with other colleagues before commitment could be given. In response to her query about the estimated project cost, B. Murray said that a related ILO project proposal drafted several years earlier, had an estimated budget of \$US500,000; this proposal would need to be revised in light of the discussion which had taken place in the course of the day.

Mr Stefano Oriano, CGIL, said that his organization would be very interested in the project since it concerned matters pertaining to persons with disabilities.

A suggestion made that, rather than involving all EU Member States from the outset, the project might start by working closely with the countries that are very interested in the topic, namely Finland, Switzerland, Belgium, and perhaps Greece; and that, after a first round of publications, other countries might be brought in, utilizing work done with the core countries to move the agenda forward throughout the European region and elsewhere.

Ms Christine Evans-Klock, ILO, stated that in looking at both supply and demand sides, there is certainly a demand for this information, and that it is positive to hear participants say that the ILO can play a needed role. The ILO is not a funding agency, however, and relies on partnerships and technical cooperation projects to operationalize the type of initiative proposed. This sort of process provides very important learning for policy advice given to countries in other parts of the world

that need to know what is effective and cannot afford to experiment. The ILO looks forward to a more specific proposal, which takes into account the concerns raised today.

Mr Maudinet, Director of CTNERHI, responded that at this stage of reflection, and with the information gathered here, the planning team put in place for this meeting should be able to develop a project proposal in collaboration with the ILO, to then propose to the governments and the social partners. The second phase of the proposal will be to call on countries to make commitments. Finally, Mr Maudinet added, without this type of pragmatic approach, there are just ideas without the means to implement.

7. OFFICIAL CLOSURE

Ms Barbara Murray, in welcoming Mr José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Director, ILO Employment Sector, outlined the primary outcomes from the day's discussions, as summarized below:

- Emphasis on involving social partners, namely employers and workers organizations, in the identification of good practice in inclusive vocational training and employment.
- Agreement that the ILO is very well positioned to address the topic and move the agenda of inclusion forward, particularly due to its tripartite structure, and because the ILO's objective regarding persons with disabilities is to promote decent work opportunities through mainstreaming.
- Agreement on the need for a pragmatic approach, to discontinue practices that do not work to make room for other approaches, and more promising practices.
- Some countries of Europe feel that they have gone as far as they can go with the practices already considered exemplary, as expressed in this forum by Finland and others, and need more systematic information and stimulus to make further progress

7.1 Inclusion of persons with disabilities – Moving the agenda forward

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Director, ILO Employment Sector, Geneva

Noting that the meeting seems to have been very productive, Mr Salazar emphasised the importance of documenting and disseminating information on the experiences of countries that have adopted inclusion as a policy goal. The importance of this is heightened by the recent adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which represents a fundamental change in the way in which disability is understood in policy terms – a shift from a medical model of disability to a rights-based approach.

He recalled that the ILO is committed to promoting opportunities for persons with disabilities through its standards, knowledge development, advocacy and technical cooperation activities, as discussed at this meeting. An emphasis is placed in the ILO Employment Sector's Vision Statement on the development of skills and employability for everyone, and in particular for marginalized groups. Employment Sector Partnerships are central to the ILO's work in this field, and multi-faceted approaches are needed to move the agenda forward.

The ILO was very happy to collaborate with partners, including new partners such as those represented at this meeting, he said, in developing guides on good practice in the field of vocational training and employment for persons with disabilities, and in making these widely available through its global networks.

The purpose today was to work towards agreement to establish a multi-country and inter-agency group to collaborate in this exercise, and to work to produce practical guidelines for use in the enlarged EU as well as other parts of the world. The ILO will also collaborate in the organization of a working meeting to advance this topic, later this year, if this is agreed.

Mr Salazar officially closed the meeting, with a special acknowledgment to CTNERHI, and the Belgium Secretariat of State for the Family and Persons with Disabilities, for their collaboration and assistance at the planning stage, and for their sponsorship of the meeting. He thanked participants for their attendance, and wished the group successful continued collaboration.

Annex: List of Participants

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16 Invited, 10 Represented

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