



Integrating disabled people into mainstream employment: Learning from European models and practices

10 January 2008

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Summary Report

On 10 January 2008 in Warsaw, Poland, Workability Europe and several of its Polish members organised the first of a cycle of Conferences presenting European systems of vocational rehabilitation for people with disabilities. Polish members leading the initiative include CIOP-PIB (Central Institute for Labour Protection-National Research Institute), KIG-R (National Chamber of Commerce and Rehabilitation), POPON (Polish Organisation of Disabled Persons' Employers), Association "Disabled for the Environment EKON" and Stowarzyszenie Przyjaciół Integracji (Friends of Integration Association - 'Integracja').

The main goal of these Conferences is to raise awareness about different European systems and models of vocational rehabilitation programmes for people with disabilities and to reflect on their respective advantages and disadvantages. The focus of this opening event was on the British and the German systems. Marek Lukomski of EKON stated,



"We hope that comparing different European systems would be a helpful experience of mutual learning. The exchange of know-how should also benefit the Polish authorities in the preparation of amendments to the law concerning people with disabilities."



This first Conference gathered about 80 participants coming from a wide national audience including MPs, civil servants, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders. Some of the important figures present were: Jaroslaw Duda - Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People, Slawomir Piechota - Member of Polish Parliament and the Chair of the Social Policy

and Family Committee, Roman Uhlig – Vice-President of PFRON (State Fund for Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities) and Ms Krystyna Mrugalska - President of the Board of Polish Association for Persons with Mental Handicap. Workability Europe's President Hans Vrind was one of the keynote speakers providing participants with an insight into the European disability scene. Several large service providers from the UK, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Norway and the Netherlands were also represented.

After each presentation there was plenty of time for interactive discussion. Conference participants actively engaged with the panel asking questions about the presented systems and expressing their concerns and expectations on the future employment conditions for people with disabilities in Poland.



****The next Conference is scheduled for 26 March 2008 in Warsaw.****