

EASPD report following meeting with KVANK members June 2016

Developing an Inclusive Labour Market in Finland

Introduction

EASPD and KVANK (Network of the disability organisations) invited members of KVANK Committee of work and daily activities to consultation and discussion on developing an inclusive labour market in Finland. This report is written following to that discussion as a commentary to the EASPD country report which aims to provide the European Commission with up-to-date information about the current state of play in the development of inclusive labour markets at national level.

General Framework

In Finland there is 25 000 working age person with intellectual disability (17-65 years old). In daytime activities there is 500-600 persons, in sheltered workshops about 9000 persons and in community employment more than 2000. There is only less than 500 persons working with work contract and real salary. It is estimated that more than 3000 person have clear work potential. (Hannu Vesala, Kehitysvammaliitto 2013).

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities establishes that the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others (Article 27, 2006). In legislation there is written, that some sort of daytime activity is subjective benefit. Unfortunately, we have seen that in recent years these services have been cut a lot. So nowadays it's common that person with intellectual disability have only few days of this service per week and rest of the week he/she stays at home.

There are many forms of daytime activity and support. Sheltered workshops provide vocational training and meaningful daytime activity, for example woodworks, handicrafts, kitchen work, cleaning, sub-contract work (packaging, assembly,...) In sheltered workshop the allowance can be something between 0€-12€. Community employment means working in real work places, but as a part of municipality's social service. It means you do real work, but don't get real works benefits as salary, paid annual leave, sick leave, insurances etc. Community employment should be short-term training period, passage to work with contract, but unfortunately there are many people who have been in community employment many years. The allowance in community employment is from 0€ to 12€ per day.

Most people with intellectual disability are receiving a disability pension in Finland. Person receiving the pension can work and get the salary, but if the salary is more than 743,84€ per month the pension has to be put aside. It's quite rare that a person with disability puts the pension onside so we can say that this creates kind of benefit trap.

Legislative framework in Finland would be enabling inclusive labour market, but in practice it is not always used that way. The long history of institutions is still very visible in organizing daily

activities. There are very few people with disabilities in working with real contracts. There is a strong scheme of working under social contract, so person doesn't get real salary but still pension

In Finnish society unemployment figures are relatively high. In 2015 the unemployment rate was 11,8% which is higher than it has been in fifteen years. The average unemployment rate in 2015 was 9,4%. (http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/tyti/2015/13/tyti_2015_13_2016-04-12_kat_002_fi.html) This creates obstacles for people with disabilities entering labour markets. Also attitudes are not so favorable on this.

Stakeholder Cooperation

In Finland there are many different stakeholders that are involved in developing an inclusive labour market. The two largest are Kela, The Social Insurance Institution of Finland, and The Employment and Economic Development Office (TE Office). TE Office is a national organization that provides services to jobseekers and unemployed and employers and enterprise at a regional level throughout Finland. And of course the social and health care of the municipalities and service providers have a big role in supporting inclusive labour market in Finland.

The weakness of the stakeholder cooperation is that there is quite big differences in services which depends on the region where you live. In some communities there are really good services and the cooperation works well but in some areas there is lack of knowledge and resources. The problem with the TE Office is that they have knowledge but it doesn't meet other stakeholders or clients. There are not enough resources and the services are going to be more and more in the web so they are not accessible for everyone.

The transition from the vocational school to labour market is not so well organized as it could be. There should be more cooperation between the schools and for example the jobseeking or job coaching. In Finland quite many people ends up to the day activity center instead of the job even if there is potential and there could be many opportunities to find a real job. That is because there isn't enough support just after the vocational school or actually the cooperation between jobseekers should start already in the last year of school so that the path from the school to working life could start successfully.

One thing that should be also better in Finland is supporting enterprises to employ people with the need of support. There are some good targeted actions to support enterprises, such as the Helsinki's supported employment. Due to this support, the job coach meets with the PWD and makes conversation about carrier plans and person's possibilities. Then the coach searches for appropriate companies and then customizes work tasks together with employer. The supported employment programs are concretely and financially, but they are not so well known in companies; this is because the collaboration between for example with the TE Office and enterprises isn't close enough. Also, there should be more job coaches available and knowledge about special needs of people with intellectual disability especially in communication.

Targeted Action

in Finland there are quite many different targeted actions that are defined by the law. One and the most known is financial support for the salary expenses which enterprise is able to get when employing unemployed person. The problem in this form of support is that it is relying on budget so it is really hard to get it in the end of the year. That is also a problem in longer employment relationship when employer can't be sure to get the financial support for the next year.

There is also possible to get support for arranging working conditions. That is one thing that is not so well known but it can help a lot by having physical arrangement or support from the other employer. TE Office gives some support for persons who already have some job so that the support helps them to keep the job. The support is really important but it is not a subjective right to get it, it depends on the money. The training that the municipalities offer for jobseeking and getting the job is really important support too, but it depends on the area where you live if it is possible to get it.

There is no special quota for people with disability for the employers.

It has been noticed that individual approach brings best results. As already mentioned, there is not enough job coaches available so this is again a good system which is not available for everyone who would benefit from it. There is also other kind of forms of support, especially training, but quite often there should be special support in the right environment to make best out of the potential of the person. As we have seen these targeted action makes it possible to support person individually but if these are used is depending on budget, attitudes and knowledge of decision makers and the availability of the services in the local community. These actions should maybe be more binding in order to make them more generally used. Also, it's seen as a big structural problem in Finland that there is no limit for this period of time a person can work under social contract -this makes it far too tempting for employers so that they don't have to invest money on salaries and other legal demands there is when person is working with contract.

Availability of Support

Lot of easy to read information exists of labour market (how to find a job, what support is available etc.) but it is not really accessible; people don't know where it is and how to use it. There should be more care management and social work to help people to find information.

The unemployment is quite high in Finland and it means that it is all the time more difficult to find a job for people who have support needs. The attitudes are not so favourable to support them when there is a lot of other people who are unemployed too.

Availability of support is relying on budget so it is depending on financial situation of municipality and region.

Personal assistant is one thing that works really differently in municipalities. It can be really well used to support inclusive labour markets but it is again depending on decision makers and budgets.

As mentioned before, this leads to a situation in which the accessibility to labour market depends a lot from these reasons outside the person with disability, not so much on his/hers wishes and dreams. As said in previous chapter, there should be more binding elements in the law and more possibilities to complain if authorities are not filling these obligations. In Finland there is at the moment big structural change going on in which local model (each municipality is responsible on health and social care) is transformed into regional model. The system will be centralized a lot (from 330 municipalities into 18 areas) in practice and also in finances. Municipalities are having entitlement to carry taxes but in this new system central government will distribute the money. One objective in this change is to create more equal opportunities for people living in different area. We are hoping that this change will affect in this sense.

Research

There is some information from the inclusive labour markets in Finland but it is not enough. here are quite many different terms that are used and it is not so clear what they mean. The self-advocates are not included as much as they should be, it is mostly done by asking from the authorities. All municipalities don't answer so the results are not always as applicable as they could be. This should be higher on the agenda of universities and high level education, the same goes with all kinds of disability research. Also in development actives more emphasis has been in developing housing issues and services and daily activities have not been so much on the agenda. We think this should change and hopefully some project will start in coming years. One promising thing regarding this that there will be special funding stream in the Ministry for Social and Health Affairs for the regional authorities to develop inclusive labour markets. In 2017 we will see what kind of project and development activities will be starting in the regions.