Empowerment facing a complex reality

Handbook

for Empowering Strategies in Social Services and Vocational Rehabilitation

Final deliverable of the Equip(ment) Transnational partnership of Equal projects: REQUEST, Training Quality and Koutsi.

Supported by ESF, promoting a modern, innovative and sustainable European Social Model with more and better jobs in an inclusive society based on equal opportunities.
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Rationale

The EQUAL policy brief\(^1\) reports that ‘approximately 26 million people of working age within the EU15 have some form of disability and only 40% of them are employed. The unemployment rate of people with a moderate illness or disability is about twice as high as for persons with no disability, while the unemployment rate of persons with a severe illness or disability is about three times the level of non-disabled persons.’

‘In addition, because of the way in which they have been cared for or educated, people with disabilities are often not eager to take the initiative, nor prepared to take advantage of active employment measures. Integration agencies can also unconsciously ‘conspire’ to maintain this passive stance, as they often take action on behalf of people with disabilities without involving them in the relevant decisions.’

The Report of the Employment Task Force\(^2\) states: ‘Activation is all the more necessary for these people (people with disabilities), as part of a broader inclusion strategy.’ The report identifies Member States that need to introduce more active labour market policies and those that should reconsider the link between social or disability benefits and participation in such measures.

The European Employment Strategy, Guideline 1 calls on Member States for ‘personalised action, special attention to people facing greatest difficulties’ and Guideline 7 encourages the integration of such people ‘by developing their employability, increasing job opportunities and preventing all forms of discrimination against them.’

In addition to its European Employment Strategy, the EU also has a Disability Strategy that promotes the full participation of people with disabilities and their involvement in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of changes in policies, practices and programmes.

\(^1\) EQUAL Policy Brief Recognising your own potential, 2007
\(^2\) 26 November 2003
EQUAL has addressed the issue of facilitating the full participation of people with disabilities by strategies allowing them to have a say in designing and implementing measures to increase their employability. EQUAL experiments have tried to counteract integration or re-integration being a lengthy process and realising that the longer it continues, the more people will be discouraged from engaging in any form of pro-active behaviour. These tests and experiments have:

- Created new instruments to measure empowerment;
- Developed new roles to promote empowerment in vocational integration;
- Developed a new approach to promote empowerment in career progression;
- Reinforced empowerment in vocational integration by adopting empowerment approaches in social integration activities.

One of the EQUAL experiments which offered new approaches to empowering people with disabilities to steer their own integration or rehabilitation processes is the EQUIP(ment) partnership, in which projects from Finland, Belgium, and the Netherlands came together to develop a two-sided approach to empowerment. Their results are presented in this handbook for empowering strategies.
Equip(ment)

This handbook is the outcome of three EQUAL projects co-operating in a transnational partnership entitled Equip(ment). The partnership organised two winter schools, in which approximately 70 people from the three projects and partners of their networks came together for three days, discussing empowerment, the empowering environment, and its relevance for quality management and strategies in service providing, and for professional competencies, job coaching, and HRM. Besides, professionals from the participating projects discussed the various complex issues and models, as well as their practical applicability.

Collecting the information on behalf of this handbook involved concerted meetings with Ruth Cazaerck, Luc Henau, Luc Struyvelt, and Lieve Geirnaert from Job & co, a cluster of services for vocational training and guidance, work experience and social enterprises in Ghent, Belgium; Petteri Ora, Terhi Haiminen, and Ulla Kauranen from the Kiipula Foundation in Turenki, Finland; and with Annemarieke Meelker, Ingrid Scheurink, and Tessa Zaeyen from the Bartiméus, Pluryn and Hoensbroek rehabilitation centres in the Netherlands, respectively. Concerning the quality and the role of empowerment in quality systems, discussions with Guus van Beek, managing director of EQUASS (European Quality Assurance for Social Services) of the EPR (European Platform for Rehabilitation) were highly appreciated.

An academic baseline was laid by Professor F. Nijhuis of the University of Maastricht, dr. Brigit van Lierop, dr. Nathalie Janssen, and their co-workers at the Dutch Institute for Rehabilitation (iRv) in Hoensbroek, the Netherlands. In a previous EQUAL project, they defined the basic components of an individual’s empowerment. This definition was based on a literature study and in-depth interviews with representatives of the target group, professionals in the social and vocational rehabilitation sector, and service-providing organisations.
Based on the key elements of empowerment as described by van Lierop et al., an assessment instrument was developed as well as a method to improve or strengthen weak components in someone’s individual empowerment. The assessment tool measures to what extent a work-disabled individual is capable of taking his or her own direction in life and in rehabilitation or return to work. Over 400 people in the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, and Austria completed this questionnaire and provided the research group with reference material.

These empowerment ‘roots’ were shared by the Equip(ment) partners to build a framework for ‘the empowering environment.’ The Dutch project developed criteria, indicators, and instruments to define, assess, and develop empowering values in service-providing organisations and empowering competences of professionals employed by these organisations. The Belgian and Finnish groups concentrated their work on practical applications of these concepts in quality management, job-coaching, and educational systems. A more extensive description of the Equip(ment) projects can be found in an appendix of this handbook.
Reading guide

In the Rationale, the underlying issues have been summarised, i.e., participation lag in the labour market, education, economy, and society of various groups of people (unemployed, disabled, school drop-outs, religious, or racial minorities etc.). In order to answer the question how this participation should be improved, the hypothesis of empowerment and the role of the environment is introduced.

In Chapter One, the basic concept and definitions of individual empowerment are described as well as practical instruments that are now available to strengthen someone’s autonomy or individual empowerment. The six-component model of empowerment is explained, both theoretically and in terms of typical quotes by people.

Chapter Two deals with the role of the environment. ‘Environment’ is regarded as a bird’s nest, with the interaction between a professional and clients (client, job seeker, end-user) in the centre. Around this centre of interaction, the environment comprises professionals, colleagues, and managers, the service-providing educational or other organisations with their strategic procedures and policies, and their leadership, structure and culture. Around this organisation is the framework of social and governmental institutions, including legislation, financial constraints, and policies in the field of social inclusion, labour market and rehabilitation. This Chapter also presents instruments for assessing the degree to which an organisation has created an empowering environment for its clients as well as for its professional staff.

Chapter Three elaborates the added value of empowerment as a collective starting point. What does empowerment mean for the culture and mission of an organisation? What are the consequences for HRM, professional behaviour, and competencies? And how can an organisation improve its performance as an empowering environment?

In Chapter Four this concept has been elaborated into a job-coaching model with instruments based on the principles of the ‘empowering environment.’ The contributions in this chapter are from the Finnish project Koutsu ‘The Job Coach’.
In Chapter Five, the link between empowerment and quality is made. This Chapter gives an overview of the presence or absence of empowering elements in the descriptions of various existing national and European quality marks and models. Consequently, the empowerment concept is applied to the European Foundation of Quality Management’s (EFQM) Excellence Model. Businesses in Europe have come to rely on this model as a way of managing activities to gain efficiency, effectiveness, and competitive advantage. In order better to meet the needs of clients, employees, financial stakeholders, and the community at large, the impact of empowerment is considered. The majority of the material presented in this chapter is from the Belgian project ‘Training Quality’.

In Chapter Six, policy recommendations are described, based on the principles and concepts presented in this handbook. Policy recommendations are structured according to the main streams involved: education, labour market, and social security. On the level of the organisation, recommendations concern an organisation’s mission and the policies derived from this mission: business strategy, HRM, and quality management in these areas. On the level of professional functioning, recommendations concern aspects that have a major impact on the individual empowerment of clients: open communication, respect for autonomy, and support of the client’s positive identity.
Introduction

Background
‘Empowerment’ is a process for people, organisations, and communities to get control over the decisions affecting their lives. The term has been used by a number of non-management and management disciplines, such as those linked to cultural minorities, politics, community care, and human resource management. It is described in many ways which are sometimes contradictory and may evoke unpredictable attitudes and behaviour, depending on subjective perception and experience. When using ‘empowerment’, organisations, institutions, professionals as well as political bodies should start with open and clear definitions, which go beyond vague interpretations and abstract concepts.

The Conclusions and recommendations for quality standards for social services of the EU Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of December 2005 already include elements of empowerment, for instance concerning participation, partnership, and client autonomy. The main challenging questions formulated in these conclusions were: ‘How to assure that the client comes first in quality systems?’ and ‘What are the relevant quality indicators and criteria in this respect?’

At the 2007 EQUAL conference in Dublin, Walter Faber, the Head of the EQUAL Unit at the European Commission, formulated its relevance as follows: ‘Empowerment is very relevant to the European Employment Strategy, which is concerned with making employment a realistic possibility for all. The need to pay special attention to promoting the inclusion of disadvantaged people in the labour market is an important element of this strategy. Again, this implies enabling disadvantaged people to take an active part in their own process of integration into work.’

At that same conference, it was also agreed that there is a need to work further on the definition and core components of empowerment, so that the empowerment approach could more easily be integrated into projects as well as in the operational practice of European and national employment schemes. It should be possible to build on a few common components, and then to break these components down into more precise definitions and elements.
Many EQUAL projects struggled to define and measure the concept of empowerment. A number of definitions and boundary conditions were mentioned, and it was agreed that any method should provide both a quantitative and a qualitative evidence base. It is also evident that practical toolkits are needed to make empowerment operational in processes in which internal leadership, directorship, or empowerment is an issue, such as in HRM, diversity management, coaching, supported employment, etc.

Aims
With this handbook, we aim to promote new empowering strategies in services provided to people at risk of unemployment because of a labour disability, people in a vocational rehabilitation process, people with special needs seeking a job or a qualification for the labour market, and marginalised groups in society. The book contains recommendations and quality standards for empowerment and empowering strategies on strategic, tactical, and operational levels.

Empowerment and expectations for good quality services are described from the client’s perspective. The issue of the empowering environment is addressed from the perspectives of society (e.g., policy, legislation, and financing of the social security and health systems), the organisation (e.g., working conditions, procedures, and quality assurance systems), and professionals (e.g., attitudes, behaviour, and competencies towards clients).

This handbook presents empowerment and the empowering environment as a conceptual framework based on an academic foundation. It also presents practical instruments and examples of good practice in the field of quality systems and job coaching that are based on this framework. The comprehensive descriptions, practical instruments, and methods described are applicable to organisations and target groups, such as job-coaching organisations, social security agencies, and service providers for people with special needs. Moreover, the findings and tools are applicable to various management instruments in HRM and Quality Management, such as personal development, career coaching, employment mobility, and team building.
Mission
Our mission in this handbook consists of three statements. These are:

1. *Empowerment is a necessary condition for sustainable rehabilitation.*
   When people possess a certain inner leadership, they are capable of self-reflection and have the capacity to make an informed, independent decision. With this increased autonomy, they are able to make their own choices, and these might lead to better prospects for the rehabilitation process.

2. *Empowerment comes from both sides.* This means that empowerment not only should focus on ‘the client in the centre’, it also involves the environment which should enable clients to exercise their autonomy. This is called ‘the empowering environment.’

3. *Empowering leadership is based on motivating.* With respect to the clients’ environment, this mission statement means that the first priority and main quality target of service providers as well as management should be promoting intrinsic motivation and autonomy, i.e. empowerment, rather than management by procedural and controlling mechanisms. The more coherent this approach from the environment is, the better it will facilitate individual empowerment.
Conceptual Background

Empowerment?

In many dictionaries, a pre-twentieth-century definition of ‘to empower’ is ‘to give power to.’ As early as the 17th century, the term had meanings like ‘authorise, delegate, or enable.’ At present, empowerment is a complicated concept and includes a dynamic transfer of power over a certain period of time. There are two kinds of empowerment: firstly, the kind where there is an empowerer, transferring power to those to be empowered. Secondly, the kind where power is created out of nothing by an individual or group that was previously powerless. This could be called ‘self-empowerment.’

Whatever the definition, empowerment always involves self-empowerment as it involves a change in the state of mind of the individuals or groups who become empowered. Empowerment also implies an increase in awareness and consideration of both parties involved. This in turn provides the opportunity for progress to a richer life for everybody involved. People become empowered when they move up to a higher level of self-understanding.

In the 20th century, we saw many examples of political empowerment, led by people such as Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel, and Lech Walesa. An imposing example of empowerment was the peaceful end of communism in Europe and the fall of the Berlin wall.

On behalf of the Swedish Kvinnoforum, Anna Tengqvist investigated in an EQUAL-project the core of empowerment and how empowerment connects
values, agency, life space, and power to sustainable development. To find out what is at this core of empowerment, Tengqvist compared successful empowerment projects in Europe. During a conference, women and men from empowerment projects have described their own empowerment work and what they consider as central in this work. Kvinnoforum’s general definition of empowerment is: ‘Empowerment is all those processes that increase women and men’s ownership of their lives, at individual, group and societal level’.

The study aims to demonstrate how the values and ideas of empowerment can be used to improve the ways in which societal problems could be solved, but also to improve the way in which a sustainable society should be shaped in the future. This social aspect of empowerment is deeply intertwined with the aspects of ecologic and economic sustainability, and the lack of sustainability in the three aspects can be said to stem from the same core of values and thinking.

Usually empowerment is defined as ‘increasing the spiritual, political, social, or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves developing confidence in own capacities.’ A Wikipedia commentary says: ‘Realising the impracticality of everyone anarchistically attempting to exercise power over everyone else, empowerment advocates offer the attractions of power, but constrains its application to potentiality and feel-good uses within the individual psyche.’

In a work environment, employees say they do not have enough empowerment whereas managers claim that they give it. According to John Mortimer, managing director of the Vanguard Group: ‘empowerment is a consequence of a style of management, and not an action. This means that you cannot get empowerment by forcing it, but by creating the conditions for empowerment to flourish. In this respect empowerment becomes a process of sharing information, training and allowing employees to manage their jobs in order to obtain optimum results.’

Maybe the best everyday definition of empowerment is simply: ‘helping people to help themselves’ or ‘leading people to learn to lead themselves.’ But how can we bring all these philosophical definitions and debates into practice?

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3 Building Socially Sustainable Societies – Empowerment for a Sustainable Social Development Dec 2006, Stockholm, Sweden
What are the implications for the vocational rehabilitation market and for the quality of services provided to the end-users?

Empowerment in vocational rehabilitation

Empowerment occurs at various levels, such as individual, group, and community. It is recognised as an important aspect in many areas, such as in women’s emancipation, national politics, business management and leadership, and in economic development of the poor. ‘Empowerment’ is also attracting increased attention as a starting-point for successful approaches to vocational rehabilitation, re-integration, and enhancing the employability of people with a distance from the labour market. Though empowerment is developed as a personal quality, the environment plays a major role. Empowerment thus becomes manifest in the interaction between individual and environment.

However, in most methods used in guidance, assessment, training, and vocational rehabilitation of people with special needs, the empowerment concept is still poorly integrated. What is more, an approach taking the empowerment of an individual as a starting-point is not part of the daily practice and training of staff, nor of the general mind-set of employers and social partners. Nor has empowerment of the individual been explicitly included as a criterion in relevant quality models and systems, such as EFQM and INK\(^4\). Furthermore, there is a lack of tools to assess and implement empowering strategies and practices of organisations and professionals.

It is in this very topic that the initiators of this handbook found each other. In our common point of view, the empowering approach is crucial for sustainable success in rehabilitation. In order to improve this empowering approach or quality, we think that the concept of empowerment should be integrated into all the phases of this process, i.e. assessment, training, guidance, coaching, counselling, and job-finding.

It is also crucial to focus on the interactions between clients and professionals. It is clear that each individual step in the vocational rehabilitation process involves interactions with one or more professionals. This means that an empowering approach becomes manifest in professionals’ behaviour and in

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\(^4\) Recently EQUASS explicitly included Empowerment as an indicator of quality.
the competencies of guides, counsellors, job coaches, etc. Managers, policy-makers, and social partners should create the proper circumstances for enabling professionals to act in an empowering way.

The six components model

Without there being any consensus about the exact definition, it is a better idea to describe what empowerment does. An extensive search of the literature and in-depth interviews with stakeholders and end-users made clear that empowerment, internal leadership, or self-steering gives individuals confidence in their ability to achieve a certain goal. It is a dynamic personal feature and may vary over time. Basically, six components are distinguished. These are:

- **Competence**, i.e. trust in your own abilities (sometimes also called: self-efficacy);
- **Self-determination**, i.e. the ability to make your own choices;
- **Meaning**, i.e. experiencing the sense in your labour activities matching your own values;
- **Impact**, i.e. the feeling that someone’s decisions have an impact or an effect on someone’s life;
- **Sense of positive identity**, i.e. a positive attitude towards the self, coping with disability, impairment or limitations and giving space to other life elements;
- **Group orientation**, i.e. realising that you are part of a group or social structure, and that there is mutual dependency as well as a need for support.

To illustrate these components and put them into a less theoretical context, a number of quotes, fears, and opinions have been collected.

Concerning **competence** you may ask yourself: ‘Do I trust my competencies to achieve a certain task or assignment?’ Some people have great confidence in their abilities, others have less. Perhaps you have self-confidence in one but not in another area. When someone says: ‘I know what I can’, ‘I can manage!’ or ‘I trust that I have the required skills to do that’ he or she illustrates a high level of this component of empowerment. ‘I am not sure I can do that’, ‘Tell me, should I be able to do that?’ or ‘I’m afraid that this is not my type of job’ reflect a lower level
**Conceptual Background**

**Self-determination** is an important component of empowerment. It says: ‘I realise that I am the one who decides about myself.’ It is important to be able to make your own autonomous choices and decisions in life; it gives you a feeling you control your own situation. The question is: ‘do I have the feeling that I make my own choices, or am I inclined to listen to what other people think?’ A high degree of self-determination lies behind: ‘I am the one who decides over myself’, ‘I can make my own choices, don’t bother me’, or ‘This is my opinion, and I don’t agree with you.’ On the other hand, you might hear: ‘Tell me what is best for me’, ‘I never know what to do first’ or ‘What would you do if you were me?’

The **meaning** component means you feel that your work and your choices are significant, meaningful, and compatible with your values, opinions, and behaviour. The choices in rehabilitation, in personal development, or in your career are also meaningful. In general we might say that without meaning, nothing is achieved or changed. In this respect, reactions such as ‘What is the use of my taking all that trouble to integrate, Why should I bother?’, ‘That’s not for me’ are signals of poor meaning. On the other hand, most job satisfaction and work enthusiasm result from high levels of this component: ‘Yes, that’s just what I always wanted’, ‘this is important, this is what matters in my work.’

**Impact** gives you the feeling that you can influence the role you play in an organisation. It is the feeling that ‘it matters when I say something.’ For people in a rehabilitation process, this means, for instance, that they can direct their lives, and that their choices do have an impact. On the positive side of this component, you will hear things like: ‘I decide what happens in my life’, or ‘OK, I take that risk, at least it’s my own choice.’ On the other, lower impact scale: ‘Sometimes I have the feeling that my opinion doesn’t matter’, ‘Everything that happens to me is determined by others’ and ‘If they are not able to find a job I’ll stay unemployed’
Sense of positive identity implies that you have a positive self-image. It says that you accept your limitations or disabilities, and you do not use these as an excuse for not making a choice or decision. There is space for other things, like work, a relationship, or a social life. A high positive identity is expressed in statements such as: ‘The fact that I’m disabled doesn’t bother me too much’, ‘I’m entitled to support when I need it, and therefore I will ask for it’, or ‘I know what I can and accept my limitations.’ A low positive identity means low self-esteem, as reflected in: ‘Being disabled, it all too often looks as if I count for less than other people’ or ‘I prefer not to ask somebody for support, since I don’t want to feel dependent.’

Group orientation is the component of empowerment where you realise that you are part of a community. You are aware that there always will be a certain dependency and that it is necessary to co-operate. People with a strong sense of group orientation realise that they function in a social context and that their behaviour matters to others: ‘Having an argument with somebody, I stay calm and try to find a reasonable solution co-operatively’, or ‘I can rely on other people’s support’, ‘I appreciate your opinion.’ If you lack group orientation you assume that the environment will always accommodate itself to your situation: ‘I go my own way, nobody has to tell me what to do’, ‘Nobody pays any attention to me, I always have to ask, why should I bother about others?’

Measuring empowerment

Once the statements reflecting these six components had been collected, an instrument was designed to assess someone’s individual empowerment profile. With help of this instrument, clients are enabled to discover their own way of looking at strong and weak elements in their empowerment. The tool measures to what extent work-disabled individuals are capable of taking their own direction in life, whether in rehabilitation or in return to labour.

The questionnaire contains 60 statements dealing with one or more com-

5 The instrument was developed in the VrijBaan-project, co-financed by EQUAL. On a national and European level, this empowerment approach is recognised as ‘best practice.’ At the European EQUAL-conference ‘Free movement of good ideas’, the VrijBaan project was presented in the workshop ‘Making work, a real option for all.’ The European Committee organised this conference in order to promote promising project results to the European policymakers.
ponents of empowerment. It is a self-assessment, a kind of mirror showing to what extent a person thinks him- or herself capable of making decisions during the rehabilitation process. This self-image may be the first step to give this process a new impetus or direction, at least your own direction. Some examples of statements from the empowerment instrument are presented in the Table 1.

By completing the empowerment questionnaire, people take warning from a group of over 400 former labour-disabled people who presently have a job and, moreover, feel secure that they can find another job if necessary and keep their position on the labour market.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Empowerment measuring instrument</th>
<th>Completely not applicable</th>
<th>Completely applicable</th>
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<tr>
<td>9. I don't have much confidence in my own abilities</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I generally have a strong inner drive to increase my knowledge and skills</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Being disabled, it all too often looks as if I count for less than other people</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I still experience my disability as something that does not belong to me</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I usually know what I like best</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I get a feeling of personal satisfaction when I do my work well</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<td>...</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<td>...</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19. I have little control over what happens to me</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<td>20. I think people do not give me the chance to prove what I'm capable of</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<td>21. I often feel helpless when faced with the problems of life</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<td>22. I think that others will always show a lack of understanding towards disabled people</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23. I don't find it a problem that I haven't had as successful a career as other people</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. To me, my disability is an ordinary, accepted part of my personality</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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Individual profiles

In Figure 3, two results from two different people are presented. The left-hand profile reflects the empowerment of John, a pleasant young man, 22 years of age. John takes medication for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). ‘I am the good guy, who does everything for everyone,’ he says. John does not like to receive criticism and needs a safe environment to function. His behaviour appears to others as ‘socially desirable.’ With regard to important decisions in life, he says: ‘I always discuss all issues with my parents, because they know what is best for me.’ Obviously, John is not very self-confident concerning his abilities. Neither is he capable of taking decisions, whereas he is a very sociable person who feels good about himself.

The profile on the right is of an elderly woman, Rose. Rose takes all duties in life very seriously. She is a full-time secretary and, since her parents are in weak health, she looks after them as a volunteer helper. Over the past year, Rose has got an increasing number of physical complaints, which she finds difficult to accept. Having too many things on her mind, she feels depressed, but does not admit this to others, saying: ‘I haven't been sick for 15 years’, ‘I've always enjoyed working’ and ‘Come here, I will do that for you.’ In fact, however, Rose does not feel well, and she obviously cannot accept her present limitations; moreover, she thinks she can handle her life and hesitates to ask for help.
Conceptual Background

Strengthening empowerment

With the help of the instrument, clients begin to reflect on their inner leadership and their empowerment. The test gives answers to such questions as: ‘to what extent am I capable of directing my own rehabilitation process?’ and ‘which elements of my personal functioning should I develop further in order to find a better job, easier, or faster?’ In a follow-up meeting, clients may discuss with their coach or advisor what steps they should be take to improve empowerment, on the basis of the test results. The first step is usually to improve the weaker points in the profile.

On the basis of the empowerment profile, people can work on empowerment strengthening more effectively. In order to achieve this, some 160 dedicated exercises and training modules have been described, each of them addressing one or more specific empowerment components.

An empowerment-reinforcing training programme is generally offered to groups of 10 individuals and might take between 30 – 50 hrs of training, spread over several weeks or months. The programme consists of carefully selected modules, based on the group members’ empowerment profiles. During the empowerment training, the trainees develop the necessary self-esteem, personal skills, and attitudes to take control over their process of going back to work.

In order to achieve such an empowerment training programme with success, specific skills and competencies are required. There should be a logical order and variety in the selected training-subjects and modules. A professional trainer or coach takes into account the learning demands and the physical and cognitive capacities of the trainees. Moreover, the trainers’ personal approach and interaction with trainees is crucial. This approach should be ‘empowering’, meaning that professionals give clients self-confidence and stimulate and support them during their process of developing internal leadership.

They can do so by coaching the development of a realistic self-image in clients, by encouraging the self-discovery of possibilities and capacities (competence, self-efficacy, self-image), by supporting clients in making their own choices (self-determination), by indicating the boundaries and consequences of decisions and choices (impact, group orientation), and, last but not least, by checking and stimulating intrinsic motivation: whether choices match the clients’ ideas and values (meaning).
Results and experiences

The new empowerment approach as described above is called the VrijBaan Empowerment Method. Basically, the need for personality training is assessed by measuring individual empowerment. Consequently, on an individual level, a special training programme is composed, aiming to empower participants to become more active and improve their self-steering capacity in finding and sustaining a job of their own. With the help of the mirror which is the outcome of the empowerment questionnaire, and a trainer or coach, clients choose to reinforce certain empowerment components in a purposive personality training programme.

The method was experimentally tested both on a national and on an international level. Individual empowerment profiles were completed by more than 400 individuals with a moderate to large distance to the labour market, i.e. labour disabled or long-term unemployed people. Over 200 people were involved in experimental studies, in which both the instrument and additional empowerment training were applied. The responses of clients indicate that they feel safer and better equipped to take initiatives in their own rehabilitation process.

Trainees were especially satisfied with the way in which the instrument gave them insight into their own personality. The targeted approach of the training modules was also appreciated. One trainee represented the general feeling of most trainees as follows: ‘Too often I must attend a training programme in which I am not interested, whereas in this empowerment training I have an influence on what I learn, and I can choose the direction in which I want to develop new empowerment skills.’

Indeed, 62% of the trainees who enrolled in an empowerment training programme indicate that the training had a great impact on their lives. They felt stronger mentally and had more self-confidence and self-awareness. Sixty-seven per cent felt that the training had improved their ability to guide their rehabilitation process. Almost three quarters of the trainees who had received the empowerment training indicated that they gained more self-understanding, meaning they became more reflective and aware of their positive and negative qualities. They also reported a considerable increase in their awareness of their attitudes towards others. The empowerment training led to another way of coping with disability in 34% of participants, and 40% of the participants indicated that the training had enabled them to make choices, to say ‘no’, and to accept their disability with greater confidence.
**Empowering Environment**

**Introduction**

An empowerment training course focuses on the six components in great detail. Course members become aware of their responsibility, their ability to make choices, or the values and standards underlying their behaviour. They practise skills to become more clearly aware of the impact of their choices and the effect of their actions on others and on their own situation. In addition, they exercise to gain more confidence in their own capacities.

However, if, after intensive training, candidates come up against a wall of bureaucracy, patronising behaviour, or a lack of understanding, there is a risk that their recently acquired skills will not have the maximal effect. Therefore, following the training course, an environment is needed that really enables them to take over control of their own lives. What do we mean by ‘an empowering environment’? Which preconditions/criteria apply to it? Is it possible to get a picture of it, to determine the extent to which an organisation satisfies the criteria of ‘an empowering environment’?

Before answering these questions, we will first take a closer look on the environment. Since people with a disability have to rely, and sometimes depend on supporting structures, their interaction with the environment plays a key role in the level of empowerment. Where empowerment enables an individual to reach certain goals, the environment should enable that individual to develop and exercise their empowerment. In the broad sense, ‘environment’ includes many people, organisations, and processes, as well as the societal context of legislation, policy, and the technological and economic situation.
Empowering features may be present in or absent from these environment structures.

![Interaction model](image)

**Figure 4. Interaction model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENVIRONMENT</th>
<th>PROCESS</th>
<th>INDIVIDUAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persons, organisations, societal systems, facilities</td>
<td>Interactions in emotional, social and formal relations</td>
<td>Empowerment, identity, values, skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An interactive model of environment is used as a starting-point. This model consists of three areas, as depicted in Figure 4: the inner area represents the individual, a person with a level of self-respect and awareness of his/her own values and competences, abilities to think and act autonomously, and a certain self-managing ability. These characteristics determine the individuals' empowerment.

The outer area in the Figure represents the environment. It includes (supporting) persons, some very close to the individual, such as family, friends, others more distant such as teachers, colleagues, employers, and coaches. Some environment structures are at a greater distance but do have a considerable influence, such as social security regulations, service providers, the health care system, and legislation. Rehabilitation institutes and training organisations for coaches and teachers are also part of this environment, as well as the social security system, labour market policies, and even the economic situation.

Both the individual and the environment are involved in a complex process, consisting of many different interactive or communicative processes within emotional, informal, and formal relations. In all these interactions empow-
Empowering Environment

Concerning Professionals part of the individuals’ environment, professionals are the first and most important promoters in enabling individuals to develop their empowerment. Empowering mainly takes place in the day-to-day practice of coaching, guidance, and counselling during vocational rehabilitation programmes, career development, or job mobility processes. Professionals should also play a key role in promoting the concept of empowerment and empowering environment to the other actors in the environment, e.g., the social network. In both tasks, the organisations on behalf of which professionals work have a responsibility too. They have to enable professionals to act in an empowering way towards the consumers and to disseminate the concept of empowerment within their wider environment.

This leads to the image of an ‘empowering environment’ as a chain starting with the communication between professionals and clients, then expanding to the organisations of these professionals and other entities in the social environment, and ending with the societal context of policies and systems for social security, the labour market, education, and rehabilitation. The next question concerns the criteria underlying this ‘empowering environment’.

Professionals’ perspective

Empowering approach

The ‘empowering environment’ becomes especially visible in attitude, treatment and approach towards clients. What does this mean in practice for social services, such as job coaching and counselling in vocational rehabilitation and mobility? Based on the hypothesis that individual empowerment is an important condition for successful and sustainable rehabilitation, stimulating empowerment in an interactive process between professional and consumer is called ‘empowering approach.’
Within the framework of Equal-project REQUEST⁶, it was examined⁷ how professionals can contribute positively to the development of individual empowerment and how negative effects on empowerment can be minimised. The study consisted of a literature study and in-depth interviews with stakeholders and hands-on experts. After being analysed and categorised, the data from the literature study and the interviews were presented in two ‘Delphi rounds’ to experts at institutions taking part in the project. This led to a consensus on a number of professional activities and skills that are characteristic of an empowering attitude towards clients involved in a rehabilitation process.

The main behavioural points with respect to the components are:

- **Competence** → giving confidence in clients’ own competencies
- **Self-determination** → enabling autonomous decisions and choices
- **Impact** → giving influence in the process
- **Positive identity** → stimulating self-awareness and self-esteem
- **Meaning** → acknowledge values and behaviour
- **Group orientation** → offering support when requested

In Table 2, the behaviour of professionals expected to act in an empowering way is described in more detail with reference to the six components of empowerment.

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⁶ REQUEST: Rehabilitation Quality and Empowering Strategies

⁷ B. van Lierop, D. Van der Pijl, K. Van Soest: iRv (06) 14-03/04275/52981/July. a scientific basis for an instrument ‘to determine the extent to which an organisation acts in an empowering way towards people who have work-related questions.'
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Self-determination</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - provide feedback or coaching regarding the competencies required to make realistic choices.  
- stimulate clients to trust their decision-making skills to take their own decisions.  
- help clients to overcome their fear of failure, to accept that things can go wrong and to deal with setbacks.  
- provide feedback or coaching regarding clients’ use of their skills/capacities for their rehabilitation process or their work. The support is mainly intended to ensure clients have a realistic idea of their capacities, of what they can and cannot do, for example, by using assessment instruments.  
- provide feedback or coaching regarding the clients’ responsibilities for their own (rehabilitation) process.  
- make it clear that clients and nobody else are responsible for what they do in the framework of their case or their work. | - enable clients to make their own choices within the confines of what they are able to do (in compliance with prevailing laws, regulations, and procedures).  
- give clients the possibility to make their own decisions and enable them to make choices within the confines of what is possible in the organisation and what is generally acceptable, even if they think that clients cannot deal with that process of choice.  
- provide clients with support when making choices in their process or their work.  
- give clients the opportunity to discover what they want.  
- give clients sufficient information to be able to make decisions and make sure that they obtain enough information about the possibilities, opportunities, and risks.  
- are aware of the boundaries within which choices may be made and inform clients about these boundaries.  
- inform clients about their rights and obligations, communicate with them so that they are aware of the impact of their choices, and give them the opportunity to make their own decisions and manage their own affairs within given margins.  
- give clients the confidence and the space to make their own choices, even if they conflict with the professionals’ views. | - take clients seriously and are open to what clients say, they listen and show that they understand clients and take clients’ limitations seriously.  
- are in regular contact with clients and shows that they are doing their best by concrete actions and that they are aware of and respect the wishes of clients.  
- show that clients matter to them. They do not send any impersonal or standard letters but show that they are there for clients in particular.  
- give clients the opportunity to express constructive criticism and safeguard privacy of clients.  
- do not make decisions about clients without involving clients.  
- involve clients when making appointments and give clients the chance to be heard if they do not agree with a particular decision. |
### Table 2b: Professional empowering behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Positive identity</th>
<th>Group orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- empathise with the values and standards of clients, for example, by stimulating clients to act according to their own principles and by helping them to discover their own values and standards.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- stimulate in particular choices and decisions that are meaningful to clients, for example, in relation to the process or the working environment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- give clients the opportunity to reflect on information, choices, and activities against their own values and standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- help clients to reflect on their behaviour. Within the confines of what is possible, they give clients the opportunity to become accustomed to situations that are completely new and unknown to them, and do not provide more information and guidance than clients say they can 'digest.'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- take into account the clients' values and standards.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- support clients in realistically accepting limitations, boundaries, possibilities, and impossibilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Create, if necessary, the opportunity for clients to accept the limitations and explains the meaning of the limitation for the action to be taken.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- give clients the confidence to undertake something or take the initiative, and stimulate them to make their own choices within their possibilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If necessary, they create the opportunity for clients to accept their limitations and they explain the meaning of the limitation for the action or choices to be taken.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- stimulate clients to work together with others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- clearly explain the effect of behaviour on others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- stimulate clients to become aware and give them the opportunity to experience that their behaviour can have a negative or positive effect on others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- encourage clients to be aware of the consequences of their actions.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- make clear to clients that they do not have to do everything by themselves. In doing this, they explain the importance of staying in communication with all the relevant people involved.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- make clear that if there are any problems, clients can always turn to them for support as well as to others.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Empowering skills
In order to show this empowering approach, professionals should have certain skills and attitudes. These are listed in Table 3. It is clear that, since the empowering environment especially becomes manifest in interaction, most of these skills are communicative skills. However, additionally there are some aspects in personality that might favour the empowering approach, or at least the empowering intentions and attitudes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Professional empowering skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assuming responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity with the frameworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clarifying expectations
Approaching clients in an empowering way means empathising with those clients’ perception of their environment. Empowering professionals make a distinction between what they themselves expect from the procedure and what others expect from it. And while doing so, they are always aware of their own convictions, attitudes, and prejudices.

Respecting interests
What interests professionals and what is crucial for clients? In case of conflicting interests, it is important for either party to preserve his own identity, self-respect, and self-confidence, but they should also respect these qualities in the other person. The empowering professionals’ task is to safeguard and encourage this.

Personal mission, conviction
This includes the professionals’ higher beliefs and values. Are they really confident that clients make good choices? Or do professionals always know what is best for their clients? For many professionals, their ‘professional responsibility’ - taking care of clients - is a huge obstacle to an empowering approach.

Motivating / inspiring
In their relationship with clients, the professionals’ people skills play a role. Do they act with compassion? Can they show that clients matter to them, that they are really interested in what clients want or do? Do they know how to make a distinction between what they want as professionals and what clients want? Are they able to motivate and inspire clients?

Core qualities and balance
Describing the skills, behaviours and attitudes related to the empowering approaching of people, raises also the question whether empowerment has boundaries or limitations in itself. Can someone for instance be ‘over-empowered’? Which core qualities characterise the level of each empowerment component? What are typical challenges in developing components? And on the other hand what are pitfalls and allergies to be aware of in order to come to a well-balanced growth in empowerment?

Although the answers to these questions will be different for each individual person, a group of professionals*, in playing the core quadrant game...

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* Winter school II 10, 11 & 12 december 2007, Ghent
of Daniel Ofman\(^9\), was able to identify qualities that in general could be considered as specifically related to the various empowerment components. Depending on someone’s personal traits, these qualities can be characterised as core qualities, challenges, pitfalls or allergies. For each empowerment components some qualities can be listed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Qualities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Self-confidence, insecurity, self-reflection, self-overestimation, self-underestimation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td>Decisiveness, indecisiveness, autonomy, obstinacy, stubbornness, egocentricity;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Self-awareness, open-mindedness, dogmatism, indifference, unawareness;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Sense of influence, omnipotence, fatalism, realism, modesty, (sub-) dominance;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of positive identity</td>
<td>Modesty, self-consciousness, sense of inferiority, self-respect, arrogance;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group orientation</td>
<td>Independence, sense for co-operation, individualism, dependence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As an example Figure 5 presents a core quadrant for one component in which the qualities are placed and identified. However, there are more quali-

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\(^9\) Daniel Ofman, Core Quadrant game, 2005

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**Figure 5. Core quadrant of qualities.** Assuming someone mentions ‘Modesty’ as a core quality with respect to the sense of positive identity, too much of this quality could lead to a sense of inferiority, while this person indicates an aversion for arrogance. His or her challenge lies in finding or developing more self respect.
ties that could be added to each component and the relative qualification as challenge, quality, pitfall and allergy differs from person to person.

From this exercise it was concluded that developing empowerment and empowering behaviour means continuously looking for a balance between the core qualities you are aware of, the challenges you want to achieve, the pitfalls or distortions you wish to prevent, and the allergies or aversions you seek to avoid. This looking for a balance applies to each empowerment component separately as well as to all components in relation to each other.

*Figure 5. Core quadrant of qualities. Assuming someone mentions ‘Modesty’ as his or her core quality with respect to the sense of positive identity, too much of this quality could lead to a sense of inferiority, while this person indicates an aversion for arrogance. His or her challenge lies in finding or developing more self respect.*

**The organisations’ perspective**

**Empowering organisation**

People with an employability impairment, e.g. a disability, have contact with professionals of various organisations and institutions during their rehabilitation process. The way they are treated by trainers, coaches, integration advisers, or officials at those institutions affects their individual empowerment. In order to support clients in their individual empowerment, ‘empowering behaviour’ or an ‘empowering approach’ is necessary. To do this, professionals must have specific skills and competencies.

However, at the same time it is of crucial importance that the organisation enables its professionals to act in an empowerment-stimulating way. The extent to which an organisation succeeds in integrating empowerment into its policy, and, thus, in realising an ‘empowering approach’ in managing its business processes, services, or production, is called the ‘empowering quality’ of that organisation.

Ashjanasy (Ashjanasy 2002 :739) wrote: ‘Over the centuries, ideas of hierarchy, power, and bureaucracy have come to define every aspect of our working lives. It is only with the relatively recent movement toward democratisation of the workplace, more commonly referred to as employee empowerment, that we have at last been freed from many of the strictures of organised power relationships. Principles of empowerment allow employees to realise their true potential, and to form extra organisational communities dedicated to solving particular problems.’
Thomas and Velthouse (Thomas and Velthouse 1990), conversely, wrote: ‘Autocratic organisations create feelings of powerlessness, underutilisation of employee potential, passiveness and poor performance. Empowerment emerges when the conditions creating powerlessness are removed, and action is motivated though envisioning and commitment, rather than punishment and controls.’ If empowerment in an organisation can have such an impact, it is relevant to bring the concept to more practical criteria.

**Criteria for an empowering organisation**

In her *Structural Theory of Power in Organisations*, Moss Kanter (1977) identified three important structures in an empowering organisation:

- access to information,
- appropriate resources and support to perform required tasks at a high level of achievement, and
- access to programmes that enable employees to develop and enhance their work experience.

Empowerment may emerge in the form of self-managed teams or communities of practice, which have the responsibility to manage their assigned tasks (Ozaralli 2003). As a consequence, an effective decision-making authority is assigned to these individuals and teams (Ford and Fottler 1995). This implies another set of structures and conditions, such as:

- active involvement in the realisation of a collective vision
- delegating decision-making power to employees or access to decision-making authority
- transformational, inspirational leadership at all levels of the organisation

Employees can be empowered through various instruments, such as training, building competencies, motivation, knowledge sharing, and placing employees in control of their work-place destiny (Sprietzer 1996). Training, raising awareness, and collecting knowledge on empowerment and empowering capacity building is an important step, but it is only the first one. To create an empowering organisation, we need to change a state of mind. This relates to internal beliefs of being in control of your future and of being able to make choices about how, when, where and which skills are advanced.

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10 Denise Jarratt, Patrick Ball and Stephen Kemmis of Charles Sturt University (New South Wales, Australia) reviewed a number of publications concerning key elements of an empowering organisation. Since their article is highly relevant in the context of this handbook, a number of quotes is made.
In their research within the framework of REQUEST, Van Lierop et al. collected a number of indicators and criteria for an empowering organisation, both through a literature search and through in-depth interviews with stakeholders. All statements, remarks, criteria, and values were categorised in the six component model. The different levels that could be identified, are: first, the organisation’s policy and strategy towards its employees (for instance HRM); second, the organisation’s policy and strategy towards its clients; and, third, the leadership of the organisation, i.e. how professionals and employees are approached by managers and supervisors. These criteria are listed in Table 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Self-determination</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Possesses instruments to determine the quality of the empowering behaviour and competencies of its professionals</td>
<td>- Has a communication structure in which all formal communication is defined and described in a protocol</td>
<td>- Enables professionals to co-decide on matters that have a direct or indirect impact on their assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Trains and re-trains professionals so that they can act in an empowering way in the best way possible</td>
<td>- Has a transparent structure in which everybody’s tasks, responsibilities, and authorisations are clear</td>
<td>- Has incorporated the empowering approach into its philosophy and mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provides clients with instruments, such as schooling, training, and guidance, to help with their development in a way that can be expected to be successful</td>
<td>- Has a structure in which professionals are stimulated to assume responsibility for their own assignments</td>
<td>- Has a structure / culture in which the active involvement and contribution of professionals is stimulated and rewarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Has a leadership culture in which professionals receive feedback and coaching concerning their functioning, the development of their competencies, and their career</td>
<td>- Has a clear and reliable decision-making procedure regarding clients (which is collectively underpinned and result-oriented)</td>
<td>- Has a clear and reliable decision-making procedure regarding clients (which is collectively underpinned and result-oriented)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Has a leadership culture in which professionals receive feedback and coaching concerning their responsibilities, skills, and competencies with respect to their service provision to clients</td>
<td>- Stimulates professionals to allow clients to influence their own rehabilitation or mobility process as much as possible</td>
<td>- Stimulates professionals to allow clients to influence their own rehabilitation or mobility process as much as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Delegates co-decision-making power to costumers concerning their own process within the confines of laws, regulations, and procedural margins</td>
<td>- Delegates co-decision-making power to costumers concerning their own process within the confines of laws, regulations, and procedural margins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Supports professionals, through its management, to make their own choices within their discretional space</td>
<td>- Has a transformational and inspiring leadership culture, based on mutual trust, respect, and commitment. No decision about a professional is made without consulting that professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Delegates to professionals decision-making power concerning costumers within the confines of laws, regulations, and procedural margins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4b. Criteria for an empowering organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Positive identity</th>
<th>Group orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Draws up an individually tailored range of duties for each professional</td>
<td>- Creates a working environment in which professionals feel good about their work</td>
<td>- Creates an internal consultation structure in which professionals can consult with each other and cooperate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stimulates professionals to do work that does not conflict with their own standards and values</td>
<td>- Creates a working environment in which professionals are treated with respect</td>
<td>- Provides professionals with information about the possibilities and opportunities offered by other organisations in the field of services to clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Has a leadership culture in which managers take into account values and standards of professionals in assignments and in personal approaching</td>
<td>- Has a coaching structure in which managers support professionals to cope with their strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>- Has a co-operative management culture in which self-managed teams are assigned the responsibility to manage their assigned tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Professionals get the opportunity for ethical deliberation and moral evaluation of their activities and duties</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Stimulates teambuilding and the sharing of power based on required and available expertise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creating an empowering organisation

REQUEST focuses on instruments to support organisations in creating an empowering environment. The environment of an organisation comprises professionals such as rehabilitation advisers, mobility intermediaries, career coaches, counsellors, advisers, or trainers, as well as their organisational context. To what extent does an organisation succeed in creating such an environment?

In order to develop empowerment in an organisation, it is relevant to assess or audit the current empowering status. Various indicators for the organisational culture may be defined for this purpose, such as teamwork practices, commitment, employee autonomy and trust from the side of the organisation, and job involvement, job and career satisfaction, and participation from the side of employees. Typical symptoms can be described for each of these indicators, both in the positive, empowering sense, as well as in the negative, disempowering sense. In Table 5, some examples of symptoms have been listed for each of the six empowerment components.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative, disempowering, demotivating</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and growth opportunities not actively pursued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of recognition for contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-determination</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of making decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of participation in decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New ideas not taken seriously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive identity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apathy and burnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People feel unappreciated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrust and cynicism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts or feelings not freely expressed for fear of repercussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top talent leaving for better opportunities or working environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group orientation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaming and victim mentality, gossip and backbiting, poisoning work environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders’ versus employees’ mindset</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An empowerment audit enables an organisation to learn about its employees’ capacity to adopt new behaviours. It evaluates the culture on values critical to professionals’ empowering behaviour and their willingness to learn and grow. The outcome of this assessment also determines the feasibility of new behaviours being adopted. With this awareness, an organisation can start to make adjustments. The instruments developed in the REQUEST project can be useful to this end.

**Quick Scan**

The ‘REQUEST Quick Scan’ provides professionals and organisations with feedback on the extent to which they have currently realised an empowering environment. It is a diagnostic instrument, which is a questionnaire consisting of 78 propositions. The outcome can be seen as a performance indicator for ‘empowering quality.’ Based on the outcomes, the Quick Scan awards ‘development points’, aimed at strengthening or improving ‘empowering quality.’ Part of this questionnaire is presented in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Empowering environment measuring instrument</th>
<th>Completely not applicable</th>
<th>Completely applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My organisation offers opportunities to acquire skills in an empowering approach.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organisation evaluates how I support clients in making their own decisions.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task and responsibilities of employees in my organisation are documented.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organisation has clients information system.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organisation has a review system for individual employee performance.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for empowering competencies are included in this review system.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreements with clients are documented.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organisation supports the involvement of clients in decisions that affect their rehabilitation.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The demands of clients are the starting-point of my counselling and my support.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it is important to know what my clients think and do.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask my clients about their needs and expectations of the rehabilitation process.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients are responsible for their rehabilitation, and it is my task to make this clear.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting-point in my support is that clients takes their own decisions.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I accept clients’ choices within the boundaries of the possibilities.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make the consequences of choices clear to my clients.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find it difficult to understand my clients’ choices, but I have to accept.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The questionnaire includes statements for employees to express their opinion about the performance of their organisation with respect to empowerment, as well as statements that apply to the way professionals look at their own empowering behaviour.

The outcome of the questionnaire, therefore, is a profile of the organisation’s empowerment performance as seen by the respondents. At the same time, each respondent receives a profile of the way they perform within the empowering approach of their organisation. This personal profile also specifies points that professionals need to develop, and suggestions for adapting behaviour in order to work in an empowering way.

![Empowering profile of an organisation](image)

**Figure 6. Empowering profile of an organisation**

An example of the empowering profile of an organisation is presented in Figure 6. Such a profile is created in six steps:
- Determine the relevant organisational unit;
- Have a representative group of employees fill in the questionnaire;
- Split the data into individual profiles and organisational data;
- Perform a statistical analysis of the organisational data;
- Hold a consensus meeting leading to the organisation’s empowering profile;
- Make recommendations for profile improvement.
Implementing empowerment

In response to the Quick Scan results and the recommendations based on these results, an organisation can decide to strengthen or improve its empowering quality. This may be done in different ways, for example, by reorganising its business processes, by designing protocols for particular process components, or by training people. In the REQUEST project, some modules were developed that can be used as part of an improvement programme. These modules have four themes:

- Empowering behaviour
- Empowering mission and philosophy
- Empowerment and HRM
- Empowering business strategies

The theme of each module has been elaborated on three levels. First, the introduction to each theme relates to knowledge and relevant environmental factors. Then, empowering behavioural aspects and skills for professionals, supervisors, and the organisation are discussed. Lastly, empowering behaviour is examined in detail on the level of personal mission, conviction, and/or empowering leadership. The modules use a number of different techniques, such as theoretical presentations, consultation interviews, group or individual guidance/coaching, and peer supervision.

Empowering behaviour

A three-day training module centres on the key question: 'What is empowerment and how can I bring it into practice?' The target audience includes professionals, managers, and HRM counsellors. They become aware of the relationship between empowered clients and an empowering environment. As a result, participants develop a personal checklist for creating an empowering environment and for their own professional development. The first day deals with basic knowledge of the concepts of empowerment and an empowering environment. The second day focuses on behaviour and skills needed for an empowering approach. Participants become aware of their current way of approaching their clients and formulate targets to improve or develop their skills. The third day focuses on values and beliefs with respect to empowerment. Participants discover the convictions that underlie their behaviour towards people in general, and how these affect their professional performance. The key goal is the growth towards motivating and inspirational leadership.
Empowering mission and philosophy
This module aims to raise the debate about standards and values, and codes of conduct within an organisation. Participants reflect on the organisation’s mission and how this is expressed in the practice of the services provided to clients. The underlying questions are: ‘To what extent is the mission brought into practice?’ and ‘How does autonomy and empowerment of professionals become visible in policy papers, in vision, and in action?’ Such a debate in an organisation is inevitable since empowerment is about organisational culture and values. Without this discussion, creating an empowering environment will be a cumbersome process. The module consists of three parts. The first part investigates the formal aspects via an analysis of empowering elements that are present in the current culture. This will lead to a set of operational conditions and enabling prerequisites. The second part is about leadership. Participants explore the contents, values, and instruments for transformational and empowering leadership. The third part addresses the tension between individual versus organisational values and mission.

Empowerment and HRM
This is a combination of consultancies, organisational research, and training and brainstorming sessions to get the organisation to reflect on the empowering value of its HRM policy. The objectives are to assess the extent to which an organisation has already realised empowerment in its strategies for staff development, and to find starting-points for further development of empowering qualities in the organisation. This module aims to improve coherence in implementing various HRM instruments, such as internal staff mobility, career development, staff training, and job rotation. The basic elements of such coherence are a common mission, shared starting-points supporting the organisation, a co-operative development and implementation approach, uniform communication, and staff involvement.

The first part focuses on practical affairs: in co-operation with staff and resources management, the organisation’s HRM handbook is analysed from an empowerment perspective. The key question is how and where empowerment has been integrated into the descriptions of staff members’ tasks and responsibilities, as well as in the staff performance evaluation system. Other targets for evaluation concern the codes of practice used by the organisation, such as codes for staff recruitment, team building, management development, and staff involvement. The second part addresses professionals’ and managers’ actual behaviour, working skills, and attitudes. Typical topics of interest are empowering skills and personal efficiency in conflict manage-
ment, annual staff performance evaluations, needs, expectations, and the match between qualities of staff members with goals of the organisation. The third part of the module aims to give an impetus to a consciousness-raising process about the roles of creativity, intuition, inspiration, and self-awareness in organisational processes and how these aspects contribute to the personal quality and well-being of the people in the organisation.

**Empowering business strategies**

The strategic policies of an organisation make up a complex entity of external developments and internal proactive or responsive actions, guidelines, or procedures. In some strategic aspects of an organisation, empowerment is an explicit object of interest, whereas in other aspects, its relevance is more implicit. For instance, in an organisation’s communication policy – the way in which an organisation informs its clients – there is a strategic element in which empowerment is extremely relevant. Is there a protocol for conversations with clients? Are clients involved in making decisions that affect them?

In quality management and quality policy, empowerment is a key issue. Is quality a top down phenomenon? Or does the organisation encourage its staff to make an active contribution to the structure, innovation, and quality of the services provided by the organisation?

Participants in this module may work on various aspects, depending on the needs indicated by the organisation itself. Each aspect is approached from a practical perspective – the skills and competence perspective – and from the perspective of the underlying vision and mission. Some of the key questions that have to be put in perspective are:

- Which pro-active strategy is used to increase and maintain inter-human coherence?
- Which pro-active strategy is used to increase the evidence base of the methods and services?
- How does the organisation stimulate entrepreneurship?
- Which strategies are used to make the work worthwhile for staff as well as for clients?
- How does the organisation manage processes of change?
Empowerment as a mission

Introduction

Having described the concepts of empowerment and empowering environment, the question arises how to bring these ideas into practice, either in service providing to people with special needs, or in the underlying work processes and process management, or in managing human resources in an organisation. Although during the Equip(ment) transnational co-operation over the last 5 years, a continuous debate focused on these practical implications, always all meetings, winter schools and workshops also came to a point where the underlying vision was questioned. Unless the diversity in points of view regarding the concept, the way of how to look at people’s dignity, and the motivation and inspiration to support people with special needs turned out to play a crucial role.

Before describing the practical implementation of empowerment in the job coach approach by the Finnish project, and the quality approach by the Belgian consortium, in this chapter some of the key elements of the underlying mission and vision debate are summarized and placed in the perspectives of some recent management models.

Fundamental attitude

In order to practice empowerment in terms of interaction between clients and their professional environment, a basic attitude is required. During the first winter school on empowerment, organised by the transnational partnership, such an attitude was expressed in the following statement:
‘A person with disabilities is NOT a disabled in the first place. He or she is a person, with his or her own personality, his or her own values and concepts, with family and friends, with emotions, and needs for love and affection, with self-awareness, dreams, and ambitions, with a certain level of education, certain competencies, and with every right to participate in society, in labour, and in political, cultural, and economic life’.

The disability, whether of a mental or physical nature, leads to specific demands in order for this person to function like every other citizen. These demands or needs may concern care, support, coaching, training, money, a wheelchair, or adaptation of the workplace. The most important need, however, is an understanding of intrinsic human values. A handicap due to a disability should not hinder an individual in his or her autonomous functioning. Nevertheless, the environment often causes such an individual to be excluded. In order to achieve an empowering environment, we have to provide available and accessible services, but, more than that, human values as well as individual autonomy should remain the highest priority.

This seems not so new. However, in practice this attitude is not yet commonly taken as a fundamental starting-point for integration. At least there is no clear awareness of its consequences. Employers in general do not realise this attitude as they see a person with special needs as a burden, as a patient, or a victim of misfortune. Politicians see ‘the disabled’ as a social problem that must be solved through legislation, a (social) care system rather than a support system. Even many professionals in care, training, or coaching, may acknowledge respect for individual autonomy on a rational, intellectual level, but it still has not become part of their emotional, intuitive, or spiritual life. Even for individuals with a disability themselves, their handicaps play a dominant role in their lives, an unavoidable obstacle, a misfortune, or a source of guilt. As a consequence, treatment as an autonomous person is not always expected.

Societal paradigm

The way in which we look at a group of persons and how we experience reality can be considered as a paradigm. Table 7 presents some societal paradigms expressed in basic human attitudes, viewpoints for acting and their consequences at various levels of society. Three possible models are compared with each other: the ‘Control’ model, the ‘Care’ model, and the ‘Empowerment’ model. For each model, typical quotes are presented,
Empowerment as a mission reflecting three perspectives, e.g. the personal perspective (an individual with special needs), the professional perspective of the supporting structure (coach, trainer, or health care professional), and the socio-political perspective (employers, politicians, etc.). Behind the ‘Control’ paradigm consists a strong conviction of a makeable society; a mechanistic approach of management, based on a firm belief in the power of procedures, legislation, protocols and in the efficiency and effectiveness of steering and controlling output. In practice a serious consequence of the need to be in continuous control is that it destroys trust and willingness of the people ‘under control’ to engage in spontaneous contributions to the organisations goals. This again leads to even more controlling efforts and thus to a vicious circle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7. Societal paradigms: ‘Control’, ‘Care’, ‘Empowerment’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic values</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy; procedures are leading, faults have to be sanctioned. The manager controls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The personal perspective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I worked hard, but ‘they’ don’t do what I say, ‘they’ refuse to co-operate’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Legislation and maintaining laws are the basis for a safe and well-being society’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where in the control model hierarchy and power are important values, the care model is rather based on solidarity values, such as compassion, taking care for the weak and the sick, and feeling responsible for their problems. This sense of responsibility to take over the responsibilities and tasks from those who are weak and less capable has advantages, but also considerable drawbacks: it often destroys the motivation to take initiative and to act autonomously.

This autonomy is the prime value in the ‘Empowerment’ paradigm. As a consequence, self efficacy, making your own choices, taking responsibility for your own decisions, and acting according your own values are crucial in this model.

In comparing these three ‘realities’, it is obvious that in practice they exist next to each other, although they might have different emphasis in various
societal segments. For instance in the health care sector ‘care’ will be the most important reality. However, over the last decades an increased maturity of patients led to more attention for their autonomy as well as to a decreased hierarchical position of the physician. In many organisations there still exists a strong belief in the necessity, benefit and usefulness of hierarchic structures, whereas in others an increased sense for the empowering values is seen. Indeed from a human rights point of view all reality models should take the individual autonomy of everyone, either patient, disabled, client, employee or customer, as a fundamental priority. Which other values should be present in an organisations’ culture in order to respect and support the autonomy of all its stakeholders, and are therefore crucial for developing an empowerment culture?

**Empowerment values**

In an organisational culture that aims to develop the autonomy and the empowerment of its employees or, in case of a social service provider, its clients, the following values with their corresponding practices should be embedded:

**Self-responsibility**

Individuals take responsibility to shape their job, team, position, mobility, rehabilitation or career, the way they wish it to be. This is the opposite to being a victim of the organisation.

**Authentic Communication**

Individual communication is open, honest, transparent, and vulnerable. Individuals discuss the real issues in an organisation. In some cases, people in ‘empowerment cultures’ feel they have a right and capacity to speak up about how to improve organisational functioning, but little capacity to raise grievances and more controversial issues. In other words, they are free to speak so long as they are ‘constructive’ and ‘reasonable.’ Authentic communication therefore also means, with good reasons, to express dissent and raise serious critical questions, and to have these views heard in a sincere way.

**Trust**

Individuals feel safe enough to try out new behaviours and take risks without fear of being reprimanded or put down by their superiors, colleagues or counsellors if they make mistakes. There is a genuine sense of good will that pervades the organisation.
Personal and Group Process Skills
Individuals and the organisation have established protocols and developed skills which are regularly deployed to resolve interpersonal issues that come up in project management and coaching. Issues are resolved quickly and cleanly.

Learning and Growing
Individuals are encouraged and rewarded to work on the real growth issues necessary for their personal development within the framework of the organisation or their process. Individuals challenge themselves and support each other to develop and grow.

Caring
The organisational and professional leadership demonstrate concern for individual well-being of clients, employees or customers in tangible ways. People feel valued and are inspired to make their very best effort.

Collective vision and ethics
In order to improve the performance of an organisation in terms of quality of products and services, many management instruments and tools are available, such as self steering teams, talent development, management development, career coaching, competence based HRM, etc. Considering the values required for facilitating growth of empowerment, either of employees, or professionals, or clients, it is clear that empowerment as such should not be considered as another, additional management tool or subject. Instead empowerment might rather looked at as a collective and unifying statement, that might function as the starting point for all professional acting and organisational innovations.

Ozaralli11 (2003) describes how empowerment may emerge in the form of self management in teams, in persons, or in communities of practice to manage their assigned tasks. An empowering approach in such situations is grounded in trust, commitment, and co-operation within and across the self-organised units. It might lead to a much higher job satisfaction, commitment and performance. Organisations that recognise the potential of empowerment also realise that empowerment must start with active involvement of professionals in developing a collective vision. Jarett argues that the empowerment

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process should be accompanied by an agreed value system and a set of principles to guide decision-making in later stages of the empowering development of the organisation (Jarratt et al., 1999).

Empowered employees require a clearly shared vision of their organisation and will align their behaviours and practices to that vision. Building a shared understanding of the values underpinning this vision provides a mechanism for employees to assess alternative decision options. A well-written code of conduct strengthens ethical corporate behaviour by clarifying standards of behaviour when undertaking activities as an organisation. Such guidelines promote ethical decision-making at all levels of the organisation. Kaptein and Wempe (1998) in their ‘Twelve Gordian knots when developing an organizational code of ethics’ argue that: ‘while it is important to sanction unethical or inappropriate behaviour, not all action should be verified by management’. The code should empower employees rather than serve as a sanctioning instrument; it should encourage joint responsibility rather than fear of retribution. These authors also argue that successful implementation will depend on the management’s trust and confidence in its employees, anticipating key problem areas, relevance of the code to the specific organisation, and support of top management by the development of a moral climate. ‘The development of morals cannot be the hobby of a few individuals; it must have organisation-wide support’.

Empowerment in Professional Job Coaching

Introduction

In providing services to people with disabilities or with a distance to the labour market, job coaching is an increasingly important instrument to support employability. In job coaching, there is a person-to-person relationship that might favour the individual empowering approach and offer more opportunities for individual growth. As described earlier, the main effect on individual empowerment comes from personal interaction and communication between professionals and clients. Moreover, freedom of choice, and, therefore, individual adaptation possibilities are greater in the individual job coaching process.

In the *Guides to Good Practice in Employment Counselling and Guidance*, two crucial roles for job coaching are described: ‘They can help individuals develop skills and abilities of self-assessment, information-seeking and decision-making, and they provide policymakers and practitioners with the tools to fill job vacancies and training places in a context of active labour market policy.’

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These guidelines describe practical conditions to improve the quality and efficiency of employment counselling services. These include access, the service itself, counselling procedures, training and counselling, planning and provision of services, and monitoring of the outcome.

The Finnish Koutsi ‘The Coach’ project brought these guidelines a step further by elaborating the job coaching instrument from an empowerment point of view. The project focused particularly on extending and intensifying the role of job coaches and on the way job coaching plays a crucial role in enabling consumers to strengthen their individual empowerment in the various phases of their integration or rehabilitation process. The main idea in the Finnish project was the use of real working places and – communities as tools for rehabilitation. First, we will describe the overall process of rehabilitation and the various roles a job coach plays in this process. Then we will present the empowering coaching model, describing the individual approach of clients by job coaches.

The vocational rehabilitation process

To improve the vocational rehabilitation process, the first challenge is to create more and better opportunities for guidance and counselling in real working environments instead of virtual environments of classrooms or training organisations. The second challenge is to develop better opportunities for tailored employment. Currently in many rehabilitation activities offered, a part is lacking which should be carried out in an authentic working environment. There are high thresholds for taking the step to the regular labour market, especially for students with special needs, to whom the diploma is too extensive or demanding. These hindrances are equally felt by clients (due to low empowerment), by rehabilitation professionals, and by employers (due to a mutually experienced gap between the education and care system on one hand and the regular economic system on the other). To bridge this gap, co-operation between employers, vocational organisations, and networks should be improved and labour-intensive methods should be developed. This implies a new role for job coaching as a kind of ‘empowerment-mediating’ taking care for maintaining client’s senses of empowerment in various contexts with changing demands and challenges.

The aim of the process of rehabilitation or integration to employment is to integrate vocational education and rehabilitation services into job coaching instruments. In doing so, more successful and sustainable employment for
Empowerment in Professional Job Coaching

people with distance to the labour market could be achieved. The process, as schematically depicted in Figure 7, consists of four main phases.

**Entry and orientation**
In the entry and orientation phase, the planning of the process takes place: exploring possible employment spots, assessing individual possibilities of clients involved, and building up the supporting networks. This phase lays the foundation for success, and, therefore, there are three sub-phases: Pre-entry, Entry, and Orientation. The Pre-entry phase focuses on the clients’ assessment and training. The Entry phase emphasises testing and tasting in the work environment. The Orientation phase, finally, mainly deals with the social and vocational environment through networking and communication.

**Working**
The orientation phase gradually develops towards the working phase. Now clients develop job behaviour and skills in work-related exercises and training ‘on the job.’ A considerable effort is made to involve employers and colleagues as workplace tutors. The main aim of this phase for clients is to develop a work identity. This means they can identify themselves with their work and that work gains meaning in their lives and becomes part of their personality.
Transition and integration
In the transition and integration phase, clients make a transition from learning on the job to working at the workplace. Integration into the workplace means that the employer takes over job support and guidance. This involves enabling clients to make plans, to decide how they want to grow, and to find a balance between work and private life.

Follow-up
The follow-up phase is a long-term period in which continuous growth is monitored. The sustainability of the rehabilitation process is checked and fed back to clients, their networks, and their employers. Also in this phase further personal plans for vocational and career development are made by clients and their employers together with the job coach, in his role of process supervisors or case manager.

Instruments and methods
Table 8 presents a practical guide for learning and binding together vocational development and the required individual empowerment to achieve a successful rehabilitation process. For each phase, the Table describes the clients’ expected vocational growth, the various activities that take place, job coaches’ duties and tasks, and the methods and tools required to guarantee a sustainable achievement as well as empowerment growth. The instruments used in the subsequent phases vary. During the preparation phase, assessment instruments, sheltered exercises, dossier building, and marketing instruments are indicated. During the work and transition phase, more practice-oriented tools for assessment, feedback, and labour settling are applicable. During the follow-up phase, instruments for monitoring and assuring sustainability and employability are mainly indicated.

With respect to the general approach in all phases, work-based methods were used in which employers and working life are strongly involved. From the clients’ point of view, this helps to clarify their own opportunities and possible limitations in employment. From the vocational trainers’ point of view, this provides an opportunity to assess and guide students in a genuine work environment. From a colleagues’ point of view, this fosters the growth

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15 Developed by Anne Munro and Jacci McCarthy (Reid Kerr College, Scotland), and Riikka Michelsson and Sirkku Niemi (Kiipula Vocational College), 2nd October 2007.
of long-term partnerships, which is beneficial to both clients and employers.

The most interesting and empowering methods and tools used in this integrated work rehabilitation model are:
- Training for a specific job (TSJ);
- Active rehabilitation assessment and guidance;
- Involvement model, networking and tutoring;
- Review, feedback, and self-evaluation.

**Training for a specific job (TSJ)**
Training for a specific job means that clients are introduced and specially trained for a particular job in a particular workplace. Such training mainly involves work experience and may start already in the preparatory phase of the rehabilitation process with supported work try-outs in various jobs, such as that of welder, shop assistant, or bricklayer.

The challenge for this instrument is the insufficient recognition of learning disabilities and, at least partially, undeveloped guidance and counselling services in adult and regular vocational education programmes. Training for a specific job might be the solution for numerous long-term unemployed people, school drop-outs, and special education students who were unable to complete a whole three-year vocational programme or for whom obtaining a diploma might be too demanding a challenge.

During the training, job coaches stimulate clients to take notice of the progress of their vocational competencies. In doing so, clients build up confidence in their own abilities and in their future. Confidence-building begins with confidence between clients and job coaches. The input of job coaches aims to integrate the various services in the field of vocational rehabilitation and training. The coaches assist clients in finding and planning a tailored path, in taking the right autonomous decisions, and in reflecting on meaning, influence, and future.

Training for a specific job can be implemented either as part of curriculum-based vocational education programme, or as a sub-contract for vocational colleges (with the third-sector organisation as service provider), or as labour-market training for adults.
### Table 8. Individual empowerment in the process of vocational development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PRE-ENTRY →</th>
<th>ENTRY →</th>
<th>ORIENTATION →</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work readiness</strong></td>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>0 - 3 months</td>
<td>1 - 6 months</td>
<td>6 - 20 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocational growth</strong></td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Testing and tasting</td>
<td>Feedback -&gt; informed choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What happens</strong></td>
<td>Information transfer</td>
<td>Job tasters Work experience</td>
<td>Feedback from clients &amp; employers Choices based on previous experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job coaching tasks</strong></td>
<td>Getting to know clients, developing trust, assessing soft skills and job skills Making individual plans Getting to know the networks, facilitating bonding, supporting parties (trainers/teachers) in the network Organising a network meeting</td>
<td>Finding on-the-job learning spots, meeting with employers, setting targets Learning the job together with the clients Supporting clients, employers, and settling into the workplace (site visits), identifying a supportive colleague Group meetings as supporting network</td>
<td>Evaluating on-the-job learning period Reviewing needs for identify training with clients, employers, and wider network, including family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods and tools</strong></td>
<td>ASSESSMENT &amp; EXERCISE Skills Assessment tool Empowerment assessment and training Networking ‘Letter to a friend’ – ‘Life cycle’ ‘Personal Study Plan’ ‘Personal Support Plan’</td>
<td>MARKETING Presentation Assisting clients to work Rehabilitation agreement</td>
<td>DOSSIER BUILDING Workplace assessment instrument, to identify gaps between job requirements and skills Training for specific job Regular network meetings reflecting on work experience ‘Family Day’ ‘Letter to a friend no. 2’ Group feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 8. Individual empowerment in the process of vocational development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORK →</th>
<th>TRANSITION →</th>
<th>FOLLOW-UP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing work identity</td>
<td>Balancing work &amp; private life</td>
<td>Staying employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 - 8 months</strong></td>
<td><strong>7 - 8 months</strong></td>
<td><strong>8 months onwards</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of attitude and outlook</td>
<td>Settling down</td>
<td>Adaptability and understanding working life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving up old roles</td>
<td>Adaptation to working life</td>
<td>Follow-up contact and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building experience-based confidence</td>
<td>Lower barriers to employment</td>
<td>Learning how to use resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring new skills, attitudes, knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging beneficial changes</td>
<td>Preparing transition to paid work</td>
<td>Supporting job finding and career development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encouraging long-term study, plans, work</td>
<td>Informing employers on support and benefits</td>
<td>Supporting alternative plans if employment is not possible</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Structuring trouble shooting</td>
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### FEEDBACK
- Training for specific job
- Regular feedback to employers, clients’ network
- Self-evaluating tools
- Involving target group conferences, work visits
- Collecting CVs, portfolios, pictures, videos, etc.
- Applying work-based coaching and exercises
  - ‘Virtual company’
  - ‘Second Hand Shop’
  - ‘Training cafés’

### ASSESSMENT & AGREEMENT
- Reviewing Personal Study Plan; re-assessing Soft Skills and Empowerment
- Assessing external factors of influence
- Assessing conditions of empowering environment
- Employment agreement
- Exercise: ‘Change one thing’

### MONITORING
- Network meetings
- Peer support
- Site visits & intervision
- Work tutoring
- Follow-up consultancies
Active rehabilitation assessment and guidance
Assessment of working capacity, soft skills, or vocational options often takes place in a clinical environment separated from everyday life (e.g., training, work, family and friends). Important information concerning clients’ capacities will not be found in such an assessment. Even a formal rehabilitation assessment may be a long and complex process far removed from the realities of life. This may affect the effectiveness and efficiency with which counseling and guiding services are offered. In addition, external assessment does not provide intrinsic information about the clients’ motivation and inner leadership (empowerment).

Active rehabilitation assessment takes place in the workplace. This assessment modality is the first step in developing someone’s vocational identity. It is based on the four main questions of the empowering coaching model, as described in one of the following sections, e.g., ‘What restricts you in the current situation?’, ‘What do you want to achieve?’, ‘What might help you (the resources question)?’, and ‘What hampers you (the barriers question)?’ In asking these questions, job coaches raise clients’ discussion and self-reflection on past experiences, wishes, and dreams (‘What you can do depends on what you actually think you could do’) and discover the clients’ work strengths and weaknesses.

Another effective instrument to monitor someone’s development and awareness of their individual growth is the peer group. When clients develop their work identity and become more empowered, they need peers to give them feedback: ‘How do I look?’, ‘Could I act that way?’, ‘Is it suitable and acceptable what I decide?’, etc. It is important for clients that there are job coaches to support them in organising such a peer group; at a later stage, job coaches can step back and leave the direction to clients.

Additional tests support the questions raised in the practical work situation. However, the most important drive for doing such tests does not come from the coaches or professionals ‘who want to know’, but rather from clients themselves ‘who are eager to grow.’ Currently used assessment instruments are the Rickter scale, the VrijBaan empowerment instrument, and various instruments to assess personal abilities and boundaries, occupational interests, mental and physical health, etc.
Involvement

Over the last few years, policymakers, health care professionals, and service providers to people with labour disabilities talk about the significance of user involvement in commissioning and delivery of services. A variety of factors play a role in this debate, one of which is undoubtedly the fact that there is no political base for continued expansion of the welfare state. The care paradigm is gradually being replaced by an autonomy paradigm, in which the end-users of care and support are considered to be autonomous consumers on a free market, well-informed about their rights and needs. One major consequence of this development is that environmental, economic, and social barriers that exclude disabled people from mainstream society have become more evident, since their capacities to act as an emancipated end-user have not been able to keep pace with social developments. As caring and sheltering facilities disappeared, society’s failure to address the needs of (work) disabled people has become even more evident.

The most common approach to this issue is to involve organisations that represent end-users; one could call this the empowerment of socially deprived target groups. Next to this collective empowerment, individual empowerment of clients has become more important in recent years. In order to establish or strengthen individual empowerment, another type of involvement is the engagement of the supporting social network of peers, friends, family, counsellors, and advisors. As the prime personal counsellors for vocational rehabilitation, job coaches play a crucial role in the development of such a network. It is important for improving clients’ social functioning, self-esteem, and social support. Reduced dependency, stronger self-advocacy, and much better access to self-help resources might also be achieved.

Networking already starts in the pre-entry and entry phase of the vocational rehabilitation process by creating a trust-based relationship between the counsellor and the consumer. A genuine and equal initial contact is followed by dialogical contact, in which the parties develop mutual understanding of aims and interests. This will lead to mutual trust and to co-operative goal-setting in small steps. It also makes positive and constructive feedback possible, which, in turn, will enhance self-respect and motivation. A trust-based relation is a starting-point for composing a group of ‘significant others’ who are important to clients. In this group, clients must feel continuity, coherence, and respect from in- and outside.

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17 Dr Colin Barnes at the ‘Executive Seminar on User Involvement’, Midlands Hotel, Derby, 23 July 1996
The aim of networking is to recognise the situations in which clients need more intensive guidance and to mobilise the best suited resources of the group. Their task is to follow and monitor the clients’ pathway and to co-operate with clients to find creative solutions for specific barriers. They can be active in searching and mapping out individual possibilities, abilities, and dreams. In the final phases of the rehabilitation process, e.g., in employment situations, work tutoring will become increasingly important. To perform this variety of tasks, there should be sufficient social, communicative, and empowering skills available in the group as well as knowledge of service products, the labour market situation, and legislative possibilities and constraints. A successful involvement process feeds itself and forms a basis for client empowerment. It will make a significant contribution to building up and maintaining a work identity.

Review, feedback, and self-evaluation

Giving feedback is part of the counselling process, the interaction and dialogue between clients and job coaches. Feedback is one basic element of the empowering approach. Provided the underlying conviction is one of respect and equality of the partners in the conversation, feedback contributes to clients experiencing a sense of positive identity. At the same time, feedback makes recent experiences significant: it gives meaning to decisions made or activities undertaken. Moreover, the transparency and efficiency of co-operation is increased by open and unbiased feedback without condemnation. It gives either party the opportunity to exert influence on the process of growth and development of competencies. Feedback is not the same as criticism. Negative critical remarks are often made, when sincere compliments as well as concrete points for improvement would be a much better and constructive option to take.

There are many models of feedback, such as the socio-dynamic approach of Peavy and Amundson, the Hamburger feedback-model, and the guidance and impact model of the IAEVG\textsuperscript{18}. Regardless of the specific model, however, the most important feature of feedback is not what you say but how you say it. Taking into account that approximately 55% of our communication is non-verbal, with intonation accounting for 37% and the spoken message for no more than 8%, it is obvious that attitude and its underlying bias are crucial. The commonly used model for giving feedback in an empowering approach includes four steps:

\textsuperscript{18} International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance
1. Mention the observed behaviour. It is important this should be done as objectively as possible, without condemnation or interpretations, but just as you have observed what happened.

2. Describe the impact of what you have observed. What did you feel, what were your thoughts? In feedback, it is important to point at observable behaviour and not at the person him- or herself. Where the former leaves space for change, the latter suggests that improvement is not feasible.

3. Explain what impact the observed behaviour had on you. Did you get angry, irritated, embarrassed, or offended, etc.

4. Make concrete suggestions what the other person could change in their behaviour in order to improve their performance. Consequently, it is important to ask feedback of the other person: did they understand you, and can you understand their reaction?

While developing work identity during the rehabilitation process, self-evaluation by clients becomes increasingly important. Especially in decision-making, the development of a positive identity, or asking for help without being embarrassed, the concept and elements of empowerment offer effective tools, both at the work place and at an organisational level. According to Chamberlin,19 ‘learning to think critically, unlearning the conditioning, and seeing things differently’ is a critical condition for growth in self-reflection and in the empowering process. It implies that clients start to reclaim their fixed ‘life stories’ and their immovable sense of competence. If people improve their ability to examine their own behaviour, motives, and feelings, they will also increase their self-management ability. This, in turn, leads to critical consideration of people’s perceptions of their competencies and capacities and to an increase in their decision-making power.

**New roles of job coaches**

Taking into account the integrated training, working, and networking features of the vocational rehabilitation model described in the foregoing, it is

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19 Judi Chamberlin: *A working definition of empowerment*, 1997, Centre for psychiatric rehabilitation, Boston, USA
obvious that the roles of job coaches are changing. The transition already starts at the underlying value, e.g., a more constructive instead of behaviouristic idea of human existence and learning. The basic aspects of this idea are learning by doing together in different places, giving time, space, and attention (= support and counselling), and believing in empowerment and inner leadership of the clients themselves. The roles of job coaches are presented in Figure 8.

During the rehabilitation process, the role develops from counselling and preparatory training to supporting and guiding on the job. The new element here is an initiating role in crossing the gap between vocational training and work. Besides these direct coaching roles, there are two rather crucial conditional roles: that of on-the-job introducing, teaching and that of promoting and facilitating of networks.

Together with clients, job coaches are the continuous factor in vocational training as well as in vocational rehabilitation. Job coaches assist in the rehabilitation assessment and offer clients guidance and support towards employment. They also accompany clients, and, if requested, support clients in everyday life, at school, and at work, and in the transition from school to work.

The networking role of job coaches is the critical success factor with respect to empowerment. Job coaches can be moderators in three different networks of clients: the vocational network, the social network, and the care network. Particularly in the first two networks, they play a central role as ‘empowerment messengers.’ By promoting the same empowering attitudes in all people involved in these three networks, coaches can also help to make empowerment sustainable. The main challenge is the dissemination and mediation of information concerning clients in the network.
The vocational network comprises three to five professionals, such as social workers, employment officials, vocational trainers, or colleagues. The vocational network provides clients with resources to deal with practical obstacles, such as finances, housing, or training. The core network is composed in accordance with the clients’ needs, and, therefore, its composition may change.

The social network is composed of clients’ relatives, friends, and other important people. Its role is to support the process of change in the clients’ personal and social lives. They are mainly involved in creating a new work and social identity.

In networks, many different goals may be defined. One is to empower clients and to make this feeling permanent. Another goal is to look for suitable services and jobs for clients. A third goal is to create special services, or service mixtures (‘flexicurity’) for a particular client. Because different goals are possible, it is practical to make arrangements or even assignments within the networks as to what their role is in the clients’ rehabilitation process. Job coaches should play a mediating role in this too.

**Basic coaching model**

Almost by definition, coaching puts clients in the centre in the sense that clients determine the direction of the process. In order to do so, they need certain skills. According to the empowerment model, these are the clients’ ability to make autonomous decisions, to make choices, to weigh the impact and consequences of choices, to reflect on the meaning of choices, and to

![Diagram of coaching model](image)
communicate with and rely on the environment. A positive self-image and a sense of positive identity are basic conditions.

The first step in each coaching process is to clarify the clients’ demands, not to the coach, but to the clients themselves. It is the clients who should develop an understanding of their own current situation: ‘What is not acceptable or no longer so?; why are there so many feelings of dissatisfaction in the present situation?; or what should be improved? Secondly, it is crucial for clients to find out what direction their development should take: what is their dream? What do they want to achieve? What is it they want to add to the present situation in order to get more personal satisfaction? Coaches are the supporters and facilitators of this process of investigating the future and making a concrete picture of the desired situation.

In the third step, there are two key questions that need to be considered: ‘What and who do you need to achieve your goals, e.g. what resources do you need?’ and ‘What and who do you see as your barriers?’ For both questions, a division may be made between internal and external or environmental resources and barriers. Empowering coaches give clients space, time, information, and feedback to discover the answers and solutions to these questions and problems. In doing so, they allow clients to discover their

Figure 10. Coaching cycle
own pathways to achieving their objectives, since finding your own solution always gives a higher level of acceptance and satisfaction than a solution presented by someone else.

Following the basic model, coaching is a cyclical process that continuously develops towards a new situation. Figure 10 represents this cyclical coaching process. This process can take place on a longer time scale, but also within one coaching session, in which the coach uses activating, reflecting, stimulating, and motivating techniques to pass through the various aspects of the coaching circle.

In encouraging empowerment, there are some specific coaching principles:

1. The final aim is a self-steering client. Self-awareness and self-reflection are essential starting-points in focusing on the final targets: a job or a respected position in society;

2. Taking responsibility for autonomous decisions is a necessary condition;

3. There must be ‘respectful equivalence’ between clients and coaches, based on trust in individual potential and unbiased communication. Empowering coaching provides interventions, facilities, support, and guidance in building self-steering capacity.
Empowerment and Quality

European Quality systems

There are various quality systems for service provision to people with special needs in Europe to structure the management of quality and to set guidelines, standards, and criteria for services. In the following, we present a brief summary of the quality management systems used in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Finland.

The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) International is an independent, non-profit organisation for the accreditation of human service providers in the areas of aging services, behavioural health, child and youth services, medical aids and supplies, employment and community services, medical rehabilitation, and opioid treatment programmes. CARF organisations currently accredit more than 5,000 providers in the US, Canada, Europe, and South America.

CARF organisations are committed to providing equal opportunities in all their employment practices, including selection, hiring, promotion, transfer, and compensation, to all qualified applicants and employees without regard to race, national origin, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, ancestry, marital status, gender identity, religion, and familial and/or any other status protected by law. CARF’s commonly accepted values of quality for service providers include.20

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20 CARF Standards for Quality Individualised Services 2003 and CARF Standards for Employment Services 2003
• Customers’ satisfaction with services delivered;
• Clients’ involvement in service planning teams in order to arrange individualised plans;
• Clients receiving services are involved in making informed employment-related decisions;
• Responsiveness to individual questions about services, and providing relevant and comprehensive information;
• Basic attitude of ‘The customer is always right and should be delighted by the services provided and by the service provider.’

In 2003 The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training presented the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF). Building on the key principles of the most relevant existing quality assurance models, CQAF constitutes a European reference framework to ensure and develop quality in vocational education and training. It was designed to help Member States and participating countries to develop, improve, monitor and evaluate their own systems and practices. Particular emphasis is put on the improvement and evaluation of the ‘outputs’ and ‘outcomes’ of vocational education and training in terms of increasing employability, improved match between demand and supply, and better access to lifelong training, in particular for disadvantaged people.

The CQAF comprises a model, to facilitate planning, implementation, evaluation and review of systems at the appropriate levels in Member States, a method for self-assessment and external review of systems, and a national or regional monitoring system with a possibility for a voluntary peer review at European level.

The measurement tool CQAF consists of four sets of reference indicators for quality, each of them having various core quality criteria identified. These are listed in Table 9.
In response to a European approach to quality, EQUASS (European Quality Assurance for Social Services) is a key stakeholder-supported initiative meant to encourage and promote best practices in the rehabilitation sector. In this quality system the specificities of the disadvantaged target groups are incorporated as well as the perspectives of the relevant stakeholders in the social sector. The system is applicable in the various legal, socio-economic and cultural contexts in Europe and enables organisations to engage in an externally accredited self-assessment and organisational learning process at a European level. An important feature of the system is that it is compatible with the existing National Quality systems in European countries.

EQUASS is based upon the work by the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) to develop a widely accepted and approved set of European Principles of Excellence.
These nine principles, as depicted in figure 11, are:
1. Showing leadership;
2. Protecting the rights of clients;
3. Operating on the basis of an ethical code, respecting the clients' dignity;
4. Operating in partnership with public and private sector organisations and agencies;
5. Promoting the participation and inclusion of people with disabilities;
6. Aiming at the improvement of clients' quality of life (i.e. person-centred);
7. Offering access to a continuum of holistic and community-based services (i.e. comprehensiveness);
8. Focusing on results in terms of benefits to clients;
9. Proactive in meeting market needs and oriented towards continuous improvement and innovation of services.

EQUASS includes three certification programmes based on the nine Principles of Quality. These are the EQUASS Assurance, the EQUASS Excellence and the EQUASS award.

The EQUASS Assurance guarantees quality of service provision by certifying compliance with 38 criteria based on the Principles for Quality. The EQUASS Excellence is awarded to service providers that can demonstrate
achievements and continuous improvement on all these principles. Finally, the EQUASS Award for out-standing performance is given to a social service provider as a result of a voluntary competition in evaluating and benchmarking. These programmes fully comply with the European requirements and the core criteria of the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Sector.

Critical to the success of the EQUASS are the transparency of its criteria, procedures, and documentation, its multiple stakeholder perspectives, and its highly valued training and consultancies services. The EQUASS accreditation service for quality assurance and quality control enables service providers in the social sector to engage in an external audit at a European level. The accreditation process consists of an internal self assessment based on a questionnaire approach, and an external audit by an independent and qualified auditor in a two-day site visit.

The empowering principles EQUASS promotes are:23

- The participation principle: organisations promote the participation and inclusion of people with disabilities at all levels of the organisation and within the community. The criteria used in this respect are active involvement of the people served in planning, decision-making, evaluation, and leadership development. For instance, the system recommends organisations to ‘institute an annual evaluation of participation of person served both on individual and/or group basis.’

- The person-centred principle: organisations operate processes driven by the needs of both the person served and potential beneficiaries, involve users as active members of the service team, respect the individual’s contribution by engaging them in self-assessment, welcome service-user feedback and evaluation, and value personal as well as service goals.

The European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE) is the European umbrella organisation for supported employment. The Union works to promote the Supported Employment model through the exchange of information and knowledge of good practice. The organisation also provides a platform for its members to network with other organisations and associations at a European and world level. It provides leadership and direction for supported employment organisations to increase employment opportunities for their clients.

23 European Quality Assurance for Social Services 2007
Empowerment and Quality

The Union has set a number of basic values and ethical standards for organisations offering supported employment services and is working on quality standards. In their basic values, empowerment is presented as ‘assisting individuals to make decisions on their lifestyle and participation in society,’ and ‘involving clients in the planning, evaluation, and development of services.’ Other values include empowering principles, e.g., concerning individuality, involvement, respect, self-determination, informed choice, confidentiality, flexibility, and accessibility.

Concerning the EUSE ethical principles, some of them evidently promote empowering behaviour by professionals:

- Professionals should maintain the highest levels of competence in their work, and should recognise the need to update their knowledge in their functional key areas;
- Professionals must be honest, fair, and respectful towards others in their professional activities;
- Professionals must respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all stakeholders;
- Professionals should be aware of the impact they have on people’s lifestyle and on the communities in which they live and work;
- Professionals have an obligation to ensure that confidential or sensitive information is protected;
- Professionals have an obligation to actively promote the maximum participation, decision-making, and autonomy of individuals within their process.

The ‘Blik op Werk’ quality mark aims to assure the quality of social services to employees, job seekers, employers, communities, and social authorities in the Netherlands. Its main indicators for quality are customer satisfaction and reliability. The quality mark is for services in employability, occupational health services, job-finding and social participation / reactivation.

External audits in the Quality mark concern regular assessment of 7 key indicators:

1. Client satisfaction with the provided services;
2. Customer’s and stakeholders’ satisfaction with the performance of the service providers;

24 Quality Standards of European Union of Supported Employment 2005
3. Achievements: does the provider deliver the agreed services and results?
4. Duration: is the providing of services within reasonable and agreed time limits as compared to average time needed for a successful result?
5. Privacy: does the provider work according to a privacy code and how do they deal with personal data?
6. Complaints management: assessed is what type of complaints are made and how these complaints are treated in an efficient, careful, timely and confident way.
7. Organisation: is the management of business processes of the provider adequate and is continuity of the organisation guaranteed?

According to the ‘Blik op werk’ quality mark there are three way of checking whether an organisation meets the quality standards: first is a result audit, during which an external assessor visits the organisation and evaluates its output in terms of performances and improvements; the second modality is a written inquiry that measures the satisfaction of employers, clients and customers; the third option to assess quality is a client audit, during which an assessor interviews clients concerning their satisfaction with the provided services and their suggestions for improvement.

The Vlaams Agentschap voor Personen met een Handicap (VAPH) is a Flemish government agency for Disabled Persons. The VAPH aims to promote participation, integration, and equal opportunities for the disabled in all areas of social life. The ultimate goal is to help people with a disability to lead a better and more independent life. The VAPH does this by subsidizing facilities and services for people with disabilities. From 2003 onwards, the organisations financed by the VAPH have to meet a set of minimal quality requirements. These standards are largely inspired by the EFQM excellence model.

Typical empowerment-related aspects in the VAPH minimum quality requirements are:25

- The organisation assures active involvement of the person served in the provision of services on an individual and on a collective basis;
- The organisation uses the experiences and insights of the person served

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25 Minimum Quality Standards, former Vlaams Fonds voor Sociale Integratie van Personen met een Handicap (VFSIPH)
in the provision of services on an individual and on a collective basis;
• The organisation takes measures to support and encourage the involvement of the person served in the provision of services on an individual and on a collective basis;
• The organisation takes into account and encourages the autonomy and self-determination of the person served;
• If possible, the person served has freedom of choice in services offered.

The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) was founded in 1988 by fourteen major European companies, striving for sustainable excellence in organisations in the European economy system. At present, EFQM has over 250 members from most European countries and from all sectors of society. The EFQM model of excellence provides a framework for monitoring progress in excellence, which means excellent management of organisations and their results with respect to financial performance, clients, personnel, and society. According to this model, these results are determined by leadership, which controls policy and strategy, supports their co-workers, and manages partnerships, means, and processes.

The EFQM model aims to serve the interests of the various stakeholders and to balance results and efforts in order to realise continuous and sustainable growth. The coherence and development of an organisation is described in nine fields. These are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Strategy and policy</th>
<th>Management of processes</th>
<th>Customers and providers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management of people</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>Governance and finances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management of resources</td>
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<td>Society</td>
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EFQM takes three fundamental organisation principles for achieve excellence. The first principle is the ‘Plan-Do-Check-Act’ cycle, which is an effective instrument in developing a dynamic organisation. To balance the virtual paradoxes of ‘controlling and development’, ‘consolidation and flexibility’, ‘standardisation and innovation’ is another important goal in an organisation. Finally, focusing on co-operation and motivation and clearing the way for missions and visions of different people in an organisation are increasingly considered crucial elements and conditions for excellence.
Businesses in Europe have come to rely on the EFQM Excellence Model as a way of managing activities to gain efficiency, effectiveness, and competitive advantage. Long-term success can only be achieved by meeting the needs of clients, employees, financial stakeholders, and the community at large. Through the implementation of organisational excellence initiatives, organisations can achieve significant benefits, such as increased efficiency, reduced costs, and greater satisfaction, all leading to better business results. The words of Jacques Delors, EC President at the time when the EFQM was founded and one of our strong supporters from the European Commission, still hold true today: ‘The battle for quality is one of the prerequisites for the success of your companies and for our competitive success.’

**Empowerment in Quality systems**

The question underlying a review of European quality systems was whether these systems included elements of empowerment. Especially in systems in the field of social security, one would expect explicit references to be made to elements of empowerment, such as involvement in decisions, the rights of clients in terms of equal opportunities, equal treatment and freedom of choice, self-determination, and equal participation.

More specifically, the following questions were investigated:
- Is empowerment an issue in the present quality systems?
- To what extent do the quality systems include criteria that encourage empowerment of their clients?
- Are any guidelines included in quality systems describing how service-providing organisations in the social sector should contribute to the empowerment process?

**National systems**

The national systems merely focus on legislation and formal conditions of quality. Although no explicit criteria for encouraging empowerment of clients are mentioned, there are some elements that have an empowering character, such as:
- Assuring the clients’ privacy by implementing a privacy protocol;
- Accessible complaint management system;
- Services conforming to clients’ requirements and needs;
- Complete, relevant, and comprehensive information provision;
- Service agreement and informed choices;
- Regular evaluation of information and services provision.
Some national systems mention principles that could be considered as particularly empowering, such as:

- Individual choice and clients’ involvement in decision-making, planning, delivery, and evaluation of services;
- Evidence-based forms of planning and definition of services, as well as of quality review;
- Promotion of full awareness of human rights of people with disabilities, including training and education of providers, professionals, caregivers, and authorities.

The Flemish national quality system contains the most elements addressing clients’ individual empowerment. These are: active involvement of clients, use of experience, encouraging autonomy, and freedom of choice. However, these elements have neither yet been embedded in practical guidelines, nor have they been implemented as criteria that are open to evaluation.

**International systems**

International systems, such as CARF, EUSE, and EQUASS describe standards, criteria, or principles for empowering clients. However, the issue of how an empowering environment is to be realised, is not addressed. Encouraging individual empowerment is considered a duty of a service provider, which should be addressed in their performance assessments. The empowerment-related aspects mentioned in these systems are:

- Active participation in all aspects of service provision;
- Evaluation of client participation;
- Services based on clients’ individual needs;
- Involvement in decision-making;
- Clients are the owners of information;
- Clients have to approve the services they receive;
- Registration and management of complaints;
- Assurance of clients’ rights of;
- Expertise and professionalism of personnel.

**Conclusions**

This analysis of the various systems leads us to conclude that, before the end of 2007, the word ‘empowerment’ was not used in any of the systems investigated. In the underlying principles, no explicit criteria were found that perceptibly encouraged client empowerment. However, EUSE and EQRQM have recently introduced empowerment in their descriptions. Although all systems take as their starting-point that services should be based on the identification
of clients’ individual needs and questions, this is merely described as a condition but not as an empowerment action. Moreover, all systems have some criteria and guidelines for a privacy protocol. Other possible empowering elements are implemented as tools and conditions but not as a professional service or activity.

In conclusion, empowerment is encouraged in some systems, but there is a gap between theory and practice. The Belgian Equal ‘Training Quality’ project aimed to develop their empowering approach in an organisation’s everyday practice and to investigate how this approach could be made to fit into the European Quality Management system EFQM.

Empowerment: an indicator of quality

Introduction
Since EFQM is the European guideline for quality, it makes sense to investigate to what extent it includes empowerment elements. If quality implies empowerment, then the EFQM model could serve as a framework for creating an empowering environment that enables maximum empowering opportunities for socially marginalised target groups.

Empowering approach for quality
The Belgian ‘Training Quality’ project essentially used a bottom-up approach. The project developed principles, methods, and guidelines for good practice in encouraging empowerment and added these to the EFQM model as an additional principle for service-providing organisations in the social sector. Their crucial starting-point is ‘praxis’, e.g., showing how quality indicators were developed and how these lead to action and recommendations for other organisations. For a number of quality indicators, such as customer satisfaction and job satisfaction, working or focus groups were established in which all levels of the organisation participated. Each group elaborated a specific tool for their particular indicator. This development process was empowering in itself, and the results were matched with all nine quality fields of the EFQM model. The EFQM model is depicted in Figure 12.

Dynamic quality management
In general, the conclusion of the Training Quality project was that, within the EFQM framework, an organisation can work on creating an empowering
Empowerment and Quality

environment in several ways. Involvement and participation in decision-making, management, and evaluation is a basic element: this is what makes the people who have to deliver quality the owners of it. By investing in empowerment, an organisation also invests in quality. Excellent achievements require investment in empowerment as a basic resource. How this could be done in the nine fields of excellence, while maintaining a balance among all fields, is described in the following sections.

Leadership

EFQM describes excellent leaders as ‘leaders who develop and facilitate the achievement of the mission and vision. They develop organisational values and systems required for sustainable success and implement these via their actions and behaviours. During periods of change, they retain a constancy of purpose. Where required, such leaders are able to change the direction of the organisation and inspire others to follow.’
Leadership commitments
How do we arrive at such creative and inspiring leadership that focuses on continuous improvement? Two leadership commitments are required. Firstly, leaders should guide the innovative organisation by mission, vision, and values. The starting-point lies in involving all staff levels and creating a broad organisational base. Such a sound base motivates people to contribute to the development, evaluation, and communication of the organisation’s values and mission and to accept the standards as their own values and standards. The second leadership commitment is to develop, implement, evaluate, and update the management system of the organisation through continuous communication with the organisation.

Empowerment and leadership
What are the leadership conditions and competencies required for introducing and developing empowering approaches in an organisation? Most important here is the way leaders look at their staff. There should be space for empowerment, open dialogue, communication, support, and personal growth, creating a transparent environment in which staff is involved and has an impact on what happens. This kind of management is a bottom-up steering power rather than a top-down controlling mechanism. This implies a coaching style that focuses on information, communication, support, and encouragement.

If there is commitment to change, employee empowerment becomes a realistic feature. In the kind of leadership perspective that enables empowerment, there is a sense of mission, pride, faith, respect, excitement, and commitment. Empowering (‘transformational’) leaders function at all levels of the organisation to provide formative learning and delegate responsibility by assigning projects that contain appropriate learning experiences. Innovative approaches to work and a critical reasoning approach to decision-making are also encouraged. ‘Transformational, empowering leaders create a dynamic organizational vision that often necessitates a metamorphosis in cultural values to reflect greater innovation. We can also propose that transformational behaviours on the part of leaders promote empowering cultural standards’ (Ozaralli 2003: 336).
Policy and strategy

The EFQM says: ‘Excellent organisations implement their mission and vision by developing a stakeholder-focused strategy that takes account of the market and sector in which it operates. Policies, plans, objectives, and processes are developed and deployed to deliver strategy.’

The strategic management of an organisation requires a range of issues to be addressed besides human resource management. How must an organisation anticipate or respond to the continuous changes in its environment, such as the rehabilitation market, developments on the labour market, technological developments, economic growth, and social issues? What type of organisation is the most effective? Should an organisation choose to grow, to merge, to co-operate, or to focus on core business? What must be its product strategy? What are consequences of developments in information technology, legislation, scientific research, and financing systems? These, and many other questions play a role in determining an organisation’s policy and strategy. What matters in the strategic answers to these questions is how these answers are effected. Involvement and participation of staff, supervisors, clients, and all other stakeholders with interests in the services of an organisation is an important step in what EFQM calls: ‘a stakeholder-focused strategy.’ Another important step is the communication of the organisations’ social aims and its supply of economic activities both internally and to their customer market. The remaining question is to what extent the empowerment perspective is manifested in policy and strategy.

Empowering strategies

The principle of empowerment is to utilise the power, knowledge, and intrinsic motivation of the people in an organisation. However, static hierarchical structures, tight working protocols, and engraved expectation patterns often limit people’s scope for developing themselves and for contributing to vital growth in an organisation. The role of management is to break through such ingrained patterns, especially in designing new and innovative strategies. The more the interests of all stakeholders are acknowledged in policy and strategy, the higher their acceptance and quality of execution. Breaking through patterns, however, does not mean full freedom for everyone; it means that there is a clear and commonly shared view on the organisation’s mission and aims and a strong commitment to the targets that should be achieved. In order to arrive at such commitments, various approaches of
increasing empowering value in strategy development might be considered:\(^{26}\)

- In a top-down approach, there are virtually no empowering elements; there is no involvement of staff, and the strategic responsibility is the exclusive right and duty of the board of directors or the supervising management. As a consequence, the detail level of protocols and control efforts are high.

- In a participative approach, stakeholders such as staff, customers, suppliers etc., have a say on strategic issues and optional strategies. In empowerment terms, this input reflects the impact component, and the role of the stakeholders remains an advisory one.

- In a consultation approach, the role of stakeholders is expanded since they are requested to approve or disapprove a proposed policy or strategy. This reflects a much stronger impact component; moreover, the competencies of advisors are now taken into consideration.

- In a delegation approach, stakeholders receive authority or licence to take their own strategic decisions within the confines of a framework. This implies delegation of power, acknowledgement of competencies, and trust in the stakeholders’ self-determination capacity with respect to the organisation’s mission and aims. The stakeholder has become a strategic ‘co-decider.’

- In a co-operative approach, a crucial step is taken in motivating stakeholders’ self-awareness, value, and pride. From ‘co-deciders’ they become ‘co-owners’ of the strategy. Policies and strategies are developed on an unsegregated basis in equivalent management-stakeholder partnerships. As a consequence, this addresses the empowerment components of meaning, positive identity, and group orientation.

The quality case

As an example, Table 10 illustrates the various approaches in the development and implementation of a quality management protocol. Key indicators here are the role of the stakeholders, in this particular case the staff employed, the ownership of quality (who owns the problem, who is responsible?), and the controlling efforts required to realise implementation of the protocol and to maintain the required level of quality. The last column indicates the empowerment components addressed in the various approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Stakeholder role</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Controlling effort</th>
<th>Empowerment component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top-down</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Quality manager</td>
<td>Very high and detailed</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>Quality manager</td>
<td>High and detailed</td>
<td>Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Recommending counsellor</td>
<td>Quality manager and delegate</td>
<td>Medium and framework-based</td>
<td>Impact, competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>Co-decider</td>
<td>Quality manager and staff</td>
<td>Low and framework-based</td>
<td>Impact, competence, self-determination, positive identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operation</td>
<td>Co-owner</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Framework-based</td>
<td>Impact, competence, self-determination, meaning, positive identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The approach described in the Table above also applies to the fields of strategic product planning, communication, project management, and innovation policy.

People

According to EFQM: ‘Excellent organisations manage, develop, and release the full potential of their people at an individual, team-based, and organisational level. They promote fairness and equality and involve and empower their people. They care for, communicate, reward, and recognise, in a way that motivates staff and builds commitment to using their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the organisation.’

Academic research shows that organisations use less than 20% of their employees’ potential. Developing such human potential requires an organisational culture that inspires employees to learn, grow, and give their very best, or, in other words ‘to empower employees.’ However, many change interventions wrongly assume that an organisation’s learning and growing
capacity is inherent, and that training employees is all that is needed for them to adopt the new empowering behaviour. The question is how optimal growth of knowledge, skills, competencies, and, above all, efforts and motivation can be achieved.

**Assignments for the organisation**

Processes and systems that are relevant to accomplish growth and development of people in an organisation include recruitment and selection processes, a culture of involvement and participation, performance evaluation, wages and job satisfaction, etc. There should be a continuous cycle in which these processes and systems are developed, implemented, evaluated, and actualised. Moreover, internal communication and staff involvement are essential conditions at each stage of this cycle.

An organisation should endeavour to strike a balance between individual and organisational objectives. In achieving this ambition, identifying and employing people’s specific competencies and talents to meet the organisation’s targets is an essential precondition. A continuous system for career and performance evaluation and planning is part of creating an empowering environment for professionals. This is advantageous not only for professionals but also for the beneficiaries of the services they deliver.

**Empowering people in practice**

In an empowering organisation, employees choose to go the extra mile for the sake of the organisation. Employees also choose to invest their competencies in the organisation rather than be available to the highest bidder. With regard to quality, empowered professionals assume the roles of both work producers and quality assurors, that is, they take full responsibility for the quality of the work undertaken by themselves as individuals or as members of a team.

Instruments for raising awareness and implementing empowerment in an organisations’ practice are:

- Building up effective and structural communication lines in the organisation;
- Involving staff in the design and execution of education, training, and development programmes at all organisational and individual levels;
- Implementing a widely accepted employment system with transparent and participative staff selection protocols, e.g., description and publication of vacancies, acquisition, selection, and introduction of new col-
leagues, etc.;
• A structured system of performance evaluation, career guidance, and personal development planning, supported by proper job descriptions, competence cards, annual reviews, and other tools;
• Promoting, encouraging, and supporting competence management, entrepreneurship, and self-steering teams.

Partnerships and resources

According to the EFQM principles, ‘excellent organisations plan to manage external partnerships, suppliers, and internal resources in order to support policy and strategy and the effective operation of processes. During planning and whilst managing partnerships and resources, they balance the current and future needs of the organisation, the community, and the environment.’

How can an organisation make the most of partnerships and resources and translate empowerment principles into co-operative practices and policies? As already described in other sections, the starting-point lies in an organisation’s values, mission, and goals. On the basis of its goals and its strategic policies, the organisation must identify its most significant partners, and develop, maintain, and strengthen its co-operation with these partners. The same goes for resources. There are many instruments and tools to keep partnerships and resources up-to date and dedicated to current and future needs.

Empowerment in resource management

In professional practice, rehabilitation experts need to be adept at many complex skills, both social and cognitive. Professionals are also required to be competent decision-makers in many different areas, such as budgeting, leadership strategies, and team building. The execution of resource management includes developing requirements, identifying sources of funding, determining cost, acquiring funds, distributing and controlling funds, tracking costs and obligations, cost capturing and reimbursement procedures, and establishing a management control process. The challenge for an empowering organisation is to provide professionals with valuable insight into the importance of resource management and empowerment. Training, performance evaluation, career planning, and intervision are typical instruments for developing teams that take responsibility for managing their own resources and networks within the organisation’s framework, laid down in its mission and vision statement.
Processes

On organisational processes, EFQM advises: ‘Excellent organisations design, manage, and improve processes in order to fully satisfy, and generate increasing value for, customers and other stakeholders.’

In rehabilitation and re-integration, the leading process is to coach and support clients towards being job-holders or towards being esteemed members of society. According to the empowerment paradigm, this implies that clients can master their own situation and their own future. The effectiveness and quality of this process, therefore, must be a matter of continuous focus, improvement, innovation, and evaluation, since this is essential for the existence and added value of organisations in this field.

Empowerment as a process

Basically, empowerment is a process in itself, and, as such, it is a new challenge for professionals, organisations, and service providers in the rehabilitation chain. The empowerment process replaces the classic care system, in which care providers are responsible for clients, and supporting and coaching are restricted by bureaucratic rules and procedures. In empowerment, the end-users of services take control of their own future and destination. Consequently, this raises the question why organisations hesitate to build new empowering processes when there appear to be so many advantages.

Fear of change and loss of control obviously prevent professionals and service providers from transferring control over the rehabilitation process to clients. Clients, on the other hand, are uncertain and hesitate whether they can handle the responsibility for taking charge of their lives.

Nijhuis27 raised the issue of the ‘empowerment avalanche’: in order to empower clients, empowered professionals are required; these, in turn, need empowering organisations, institutes, and companies; and these, in their turn, can only function within an empowering public framework. ‘Expecting clients to act autonomously and to create their own future, therefore, involves a complete and radical cultural change, both for professionals and for organisations, service providers, companies, and the civil service.’

27 Nijhuis, Equip(ment) Winter school report 3-2-2007, Request-VrijBaan.nl
The avalanche mentioned by Nijhuis is theoretical, but, in essence, there are indeed certain risks involved. These are manifest in the area of tension between the organisation’s mission and its employees’ personal interests; between the interest of professionals and those of clients; and between clients and organisations and the legislative framework in society. Organisations in the rehabilitation sector should focus on supporting and encouraging coaching methods and instruments that are based on an empowering approach. The crucial task for the organisation in the process of empowerment is to carefully design process structures that balance all stakeholders’ interests.

Some of the themes involved in balancing interests are:

- Individual freedom, autonomy \leftrightarrow Aims of the organisation
- Involvement and informed \leftrightarrow Adequate proactive / reactive strategy
- (de)Motivated people \leftrightarrow Social assignment to rehabilitate
- Indecisiveness \leftrightarrow Autonomous individual acting
- Resistance \leftrightarrow Innovation, re-organisation, change
- Focused on their own interests \leftrightarrow Focused on common interests
- Avoiding risks \leftrightarrow Facing challenges, result-oriented

The essential process in a service-providing organisation is to coach clients towards a job. Essential steps in this process are the intake, planning, coaching, and follow-up (see also Chapter 4). The internal processes of the organisation should support and strengthen this key rehabilitation process.

Results

EFQM defines four quality results fields. These are:

1. People results: ‘excellent organisations comprehensively measure and achieve outstanding results with respect to their people.’

2. Customer results: ‘excellent organisations comprehensively measure and achieve outstanding results with respect to their customers.’

3. Society results: ‘excellent organisations comprehensively measure and achieve outstanding results with respect to society.’

4. Key performance results: ‘excellent organisations comprehensively measure and achieve outstanding results with respect to the key element of their policy and strategy.’
In all results fields, the key words are: achievements, measurements, and outstanding quality. To measure achievements, there are dedicated instruments, such as questionnaires for job and career satisfaction, client satisfaction, and customer satisfaction. With respect to key performance results of the organisation and its professionals, further instruments are available, such as accountancy, production, and market share reports. Such information can be used to describe the quality of achievements, provided there is an adequate set of quality indicators and criteria that have to be met as well as adequate achievement assessment instruments.

**Indicators, criteria, and instruments**

In each results field, the perspectives of all stakeholders are relevant. For results regarding employees, for example, the main indicator is job satisfaction, which may include quality of work, career prospects, and working conditions. Indicators from the perspectives of the organisation and its customers may be professional performance, achievements, and (empowering) attitude. The associated criteria must balance the expectations and indicators from the stakeholders’ perspectives. What is important for employees, for instance, should be in balance with organisational interests and clients’ expectations. Responsibilities and tasks, on the one hand, and efforts and achievements, on the other, should also be balanced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results field</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| People        | - Job satisfaction  
- Quality of work  
- Working conditions  
- Career prospects  
- Flexibility / mobility  
- Communicative skills  
- Empowering competencies  
- Teamwork  
- ....... | Balance  
- Work – personal  
- Responsibilities – tasks  
- Efforts – achievements  
- Co-operative attitude  
- ....... | Job satisfaction instrument  
Annual performance evaluation  
Peer reviews  
....... |
In customer results, important indicators relate to involvement and participation, satisfaction with services received, information, and complaints. Important criteria are whether clients have found a job and whether the effort required to find this job is in proportion to this result. Empowerment growth during rehabilitation is also an important criterion.

| Table 12. Possible indicators, criteria, and instruments in the Customer Results field |
| Results field | Indicators | Criteria | Instruments |
| Customers / clients | - Self-steering capacity | Sustainable work | Client satisfaction instrument |
| | - Client satisfaction | Balance: effort – results | Empowerment instrument |
| | - Complaints management | Empowerment increase | Complaints protocol |
| | - Involvement / participation | Social network | |
| | - Information / communication | Self-confidence | |
| | - | No. of complaints | |

In the society results field, relevant indicators could be the social role of the organisation, public opinion about services delivered, and the organisation’s reputation as an employer and as a provider of outstanding services. As far as the key performance results go, the quality of services provided is the first priority. The appropriate indicators and criteria must be established in communication with the stakeholders, taking the empowering mission and value as a starting-point.

| Table 13. Possible indicators, criteria, and instruments in the Society and Key Performance Results field |
| Results field | Indicators | Criteria | Instruments |
| Society | Social role and impact | Social policy | Marketing instruments |
| | Reputation as employer | Labour market communication | Social audits |
| | Empowering profile | | |
| | Diversity | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Key performances | Quality of services | Quality policies | Quality audits |
| | Social and economic achievements | Outcomes and results | Certification |
| | Innovation and evidence-based products | Management achievement | Accountancy reports |
Empowering approach in results fields

From an empowerment point of view, there is indeed no straightforward prescription which indicators, which criteria, or which instruments must be used in any of the results fields. It is inherent to empowerment that organisations themselves, in consultation with all stakeholders, decide what is important, which indicators are relevant, and which criteria and instruments must be used to assess results in a particular field. Therefore, the indicators, criteria, and instruments listed in the Tables are illustrative but by no means exhaustive. They give a general indication. In order to create a firm base for an empowering environment, organisations must do the development exercise together with their stakeholders in each of the results fields. Commonly available tools for such tasks are working groups, output measurement instruments, and (Deming’s[28]) Plan-Do-Check-Act cycles.

Empowerment Quality Tools

Working groups

Involvement and participation are put into practice through working groups. A working group must be composed with care and should involve all stakeholders. Goals and responsibilities must be clearly defined as well as the impact, role, and authority of the working group, which may be participatory, advisory, delegating, or leading. This tool may be applied in all processes of change, in elaborating, implementing, and monitoring quality, and in regular evaluations of employee, client, and stakeholder satisfaction.

There are various types of working groups, depending on the theme. Quality monitoring, for instance, requires a permanent working group. Long-term working groups are also recommended for capacity building, expertise development, and training. Short-term working groups are more adequate for more temporary projects, such as the development of client satisfaction instrument or the implementation of a new coaching dossier. A third type of working group is the ad-hoc committee or focus group, which is product-oriented and is charged with a specific one-time assignment, such as an internal EFQM audit leading to a policy paper.

[28] Deming principle of continuous improvement reduce costs, reduce waist, increase customers satisfaction and increase as a service of the system continuous review in a plan, do and act quality cycle.

‘First you have to do what you have to do and then you can say you can do your best.’
Output measurement
Collecting reliable output data on various themes is crucial to enable an organisation to optimise its performance in other quality fields. All output measurements must be comparable, systematic, and action-oriented. Comparability means that a bias or reference measurement is followed by additional measurements on a regular basis. A systematic approach means there is a clearly specified objective for the measurement and a carefully prepared set up. Action-oriented means that a new policy, an improvement plan, or a strategic recommendation must be followed up by action to be taken. Table 14 presents a set-up for output measurement. Commonly used types of measurement are:

- Measuring a person’s or group’s perceptions of their environment. These data include subjective experiences, observations, emotions, and convictions in satisfaction measurement, for instance.

- Measuring performance involves more objective data about achievements in relation to targets, such as financial results, the annual business report, or integration results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 14. Methodical approach to satisfaction measurement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Preparation</td>
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<td>2. Execution</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Action plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Follow-up</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The dynamic PDCA cycle
The Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle is a well-known and widely used tool for quality management and a systematic approach to chance processes. In the ‘Training Quality’ project, a crucial conclusion was that empowerment is the driving force for bringing the vital dynamics in the processes governed by PDCA-cycles. When applied to EFQM on a macro-organisational level, the PLAN phase of the cycle covers the fields of ‘leadership’, and ‘policy and strategy’. The DO phase refers to the fields of ‘people’, ‘resources’, and ‘processes’. The CHECK phase covers the fields of ‘people’, ‘clients’, ‘society’, and ‘key performance’. Consequently, ACTING is connected with Growth, Innovation, and Learning (see Figure 10) and provides feedback to the Plan phase. The same PDCA cycle is repeated on the micro-organisational scale in each EFQM field.
Recommendations

We have formulated ten general recommendations on empowerment and creating an empowering environment. More specific recommendations could be made from the perspectives of clients, professionals, organisations, and society.

1. Meaningful involvement of end-users or clients is stressed under ‘Nothing for us without us’, or ‘Don’t do it for us, do it with us.’ It is clearly not enough to involve advocacy organisations or agencies that claim to represent the interests of particular groups. The end-users themselves have to be involved in discussions on issues with a direct impact on their lives. They must be briefed to take part in debates with decision-makers, and those who are in positions of power must be prepared to acknowledge their experience, aspirations, and needs.

2. Empowerment must always be approached both from individual and from environmental perspectives, where ‘environmental’ relates to social policies, practices of integration agencies, and behaviour of professionals. These environments should listen to the clients’ viewpoint and should increase their capacity to make choices and to transform these into action.

3. Quality standards such as EFQM would not, in their own right, guarantee an empowering environment. It is necessary to embed empowerment within the quality principles. Cooperative working should be promoted and should result in integrated partnerships that involve all the key players, including beneficiaries. The members of such partnerships should be referred to as shareholders rather than stakeholders, suggesting that all have an equal involvement.
4. An empowering approach creates a win-win situation for clients and supporting agencies. By allowing clients to make their own decisions on employment paths, supporting agencies are in a better position to sustain their involvement and progress towards employment. In addition, organisational empowerment contributes to the achievement of quality standards. However, empowerment must be embedded within operational quality principles.

5. Job coaches are a vital link between clients and employers. They can convince employers to employ a (previously disadvantaged) person who, having been through an empowering process, can offer a quality service to the employer. They also can build trust with employers and change their attitude towards employing people from diverse groups as being 'a burden' to it being 'a good thing.' Job coaches, however, must be aware of the risks of leading clients into jobs which are readily available at that time, as opposed to those which the client may choose themselves with the right encouragement. The evidenced benefit of this approach is that clients are more likely to sustain employment and/or progress in their careers if they make the choice of the job.

6. Policymakers must develop and implement policies that move the focus away from getting people into 'a job, any job' and towards getting them into employment that has potential to develop into a real career. It is important that policymakers acknowledge the requirement of involving all key players to facilitate effective mainstreaming of their outcomes and begin to ensure that resources are provided to allow it to happen.

7. The empowerment approach should be considered from the viewpoints of the different stakeholders in the rehabilitation field, e.g., professionals and organisations from the rehabilitation services, clients, and employers. Creating an empowering environment should refer to or link into existing quality systems.

8. Empowerment means a shift of power from the organisation to professionals and from professionals to clients under the basic conditions of open and transparent communication, exchange, and dialogue, involving clients themselves and enabling them to make autonomous decisions.
9. By taking opinions and insights of beneficiaries seriously, considerable improvements can be made to the formulation and development of policies relating to their social and vocational integration.

10. Initial contact with employers should be based on a two-pronged approach that combines raising employers’ awareness and convincing them of the benefits of diversity.
Annexes

Equip(ment Transnational partnership)²⁹

Equip(ment) is a transnational co-operation of three European partner-
EQUAL projects on empowerment. These are:
• **Koutsi**, co-ordinated by Kiipula Foundation, Finland www.koutsi.fi
• **Training Quality**, co-ordinated by Job & Co, Belgium
  www.jobenco.be
• **REQUEST**, co-ordinated by HCA, the Netherlands
  www.request-vrijbaan.nl

The aim of this transnational partnership is to promote equal opportuni-
ties for vocational (re)-integration and to encourage employability of disadvan-
taged groups or individuals. More specifically we want 'to promote
empowering strategies in rehabilitation services, service providers, policies, EU official boards, and member
state administrations'.

In previous projects, empowerment is looked at from an individual perspec-
tive. In the present project (Equip(ment)) we want to expand the empower-
ment concept from the individual perspective to the environment perspec-
tive. We seek to realise this by investigating and improving the empowering
elements in the quality of guidance and counselling of people with special
needs both during vocational training and vocational rehabilitation.

The objectives of the Equip(ment) partnership are:
• to describe the elements of an empowering environment
• to define criteria for an empowering approach and empowering quality
  both in the
  competences of professional staff (trainer, coach,…) and in the environ-
  ment (processes in service-providers, employers,..)
• to elaborate and include the empowerment concept into the existing

²⁹ The projects, co-operating in this transnational partnership are partly financed bij the EQUAL-
initiative of the European Commission.

The EQUAL Initiative is a laboratory for new ideas to the European Employment Strategy and the Social
inclusion process. Its mission is to promote a more inclusive work life through fighting discrimination
and exclusion based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.
EQUAL is implemented in and between Member States and is funded through the European Social Fund.
Recommendations

• to re-design processes and actions (assessment, rehabilitation, on-the-job training, job coaching,…) in terms of introducing elements of empowerment
• to develop instruments to evaluate and improve the extent of empowering quality or empowering approach
• to disseminate our findings and results through publishing ‘Implementation guidelines for empowering strategies’, and organisation of joint training programmes such as the winter school.

In the following section each project of the Equip(ment) partnership is summarized.

The Coach
Towards a specific job by evaluating and coaching

The employers and working life are strongly involved in all our development work. From client’s point of view this helps to clarify own opportunities and possible limitations towards employment. From trainer’s point of view this gives an opportunity to assess and give guidance to the student in genuine working environment. From colleague’s point of view it enables a long-term partnerships to benefit both students and employers.

Active rehabilitation assessment and guidance. The aim is to develop needs assessment methods and the assessment process of the ability to work by observing performance in the real-life working environment. The project will produce a model for vocational rehabilitation assessment method in the actual working environment and changing the rehabilitation research from a clinical assessment to an assessment which actively supports vocational rehabilitation and training.

Training towards a specific job. Training towards a specific job is a vocational training entirely tailored together with the student and a company. It consists of parts of the vocational degree and its main objective is to employ the student in a specific task. During the project a process model is developed for the applied vocational training for a specific job. The key elements are functioning cooperation with the employers, labour-intensive learning methods and a study guidance system that reaches the workplace, too. This means a certain job for a person in a certain work place. The training for the
job will happen mainly through working experience. The instrument is for students with special needs, to whom the diploma is too extensive / demanding and uses labour intensive methods, job coaching and Individual/Personal Study Plans (ISP/PSP).

Job coaching. Active guidance and assessment of rehabilitation as well as applied vocational training towards a specific job require strong tutelage throughout the process. The job description of the job coaches as support persons in rehabilitation and in training and as guides at work towards the working life will be established by tentative operations. Also the training programme of the job coaches will be produced as part of the Degree programme in Social Services, and, as vocational further training.

The Changing Roles of Trainers and Teachers Constructive vs. behaviouristic idea of human being and learning.

**Project approach.** Kiipula Rehabilitation Centre, Silta Association from Tampere and Riihimäki employment office are the central actors in the active vocational rehabilitation and guidance theme. The needs assessment method will be developed in conjunction with the development of the new methods of rehabilitation research.

Kiipula Vocational College and Kiipula Adult Education Centre together with Silta Association will develop the applied vocational training for a specific job and the labour-intensive methods. The Vocational College will test the model as a cooperative effort of various educational fields.

Silta Association will develop the applied vocational training for a specific job together with Tampere College. Kiipula Adult Education Centre in cooperation with Riihimäki employment office will design and implement an applied vocational business training programme for a specific job in 2006.

Salpaus Further Education from Lahti in cooperation with other partners will develop a comprehensive and customer-oriented guidance and support service system for the different stages of learning of the adult customers. In developmental activities of the actors of the service network Salpaus will emphasize specialization in tutelage and multi-professional cooperation.

Lahti University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Social and Health Care will refine job coaching as part of the Degree programme in Social Services and as a further educationary product. Three job coaches will be employed in the units of Kiipula foundation to work as support persons in the rehabilita-
tion guidance and assessment as well as to implement the applied vocational training for a specific job. The resulting experiences will be utilized in job coach training.

Transnational partners include projects from Belgium, Holland, Lithuania and Scotland. Cooperation consists of exchanging expertise and of designing and implementing joint publications and educational products.

**Partnership**

- **Kiipula Foundation** ([www.kiipula.fi](http://www.kiipula.fi)): Vocational College, Adult Education Centre and **Kiipula** Rehabilitation Centre from Janakkala.
  
  Project Manager petteri.ora@kiipula.fi

- **Lahti Region Educational Consortium** ([www.salpaus.fi](http://www.salpaus.fi)):
  
  Salpaus Further Education from Lahti Project Manager pirjo.malin@salpaus.fi

  Lahti University of Applied Sciences ([www.lamk.fi](http://www.lamk.fi)), Teacher of Social Services mari.hyyppa@lamk.fi

- **Riihimäki employment office** ([www.mol.fi](http://www.mol.fi))
  
  Project Manager anja.puustinen@mol.fi

- **Silta-Association Tampere** ([www.siltavalmennus.fi](http://www.siltavalmennus.fi))
  
  Project Coordinator kari-pekka.vulli@siltavalmennus.fi

**Transnational partners**

- Equal Employability, Scotland
- (Re-)Integracija i darbo rinka Kretingos rajone, Lithuania
- Equal greitkelis, Lithuania
- Training Quality, Belgium
- Request, The Netherlands

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www.kiipula.fi
REQUEST
Re-integration Quality and Empowering Strategies

When you are excluded from the labour market for a longer time, for whatever reason, your chances of finding a job again are drastically reduced. Re-integration therefore is a chronically issue. How can we find a way out? The Equal project REQUEST looks for answers in which ‘Empowerment’ plays a central role.

Taking over and giving control. When someone wants to return to, or re-integrate into the labour market, motivation and willingness to take active control are critical indicators for success. The extent, to which the returning individual is capable of taking this role, is a matter of empowerment.

In a previous project (VrijBaan) individual empowerment was the central theme. Empowerment, internal leadership or self-steering capacity provides confidence in someone’s ability to achieve a certain goal. It is also the feeling that what you want to achieve, meets your own standards and values, the feeling that you determine your own goals, and make your own decisions. Through measurement of individual empowerment, the need for personal training can be assessed. Consequently on an individual level, a training programme is aimed at empowering participants to become more active and improve their capacity to find a sustainable a job ‘of their own’.

However, also the environment plays an important, sometimes even crucial role. Services offered by job coaches, rehabilitation consultants or other professionals in this area, should support the individual empowerment of their clients. They should promote self-motivation, self-steering and support own initiative. An empowering environment reinforces internal leadership and gives control to the client. The REQUEST project seeks to create an empowering environment.

Empowering environment. The REQUEST project focuses on an empowerment stimulating or reinforcing environment. The aim is to develop approaching strategies, enabling clients to increase their capacity to handle their re-integrating process and to take their own responsibilities herein.

The empowering environment is directly reflected in the quality of interaction between professional and client, as well as in the degree to which an organisation enables the professional to act in an empowering way. The main research questions are:

• What do we mean, when talking about an ‘empowering environment’?
• Which criteria should be met, and is it possible to objectively assess empowering quality?
• To which extent do organisations meet the criteria for empowering quality?

**Project approach.** The approach of the project is based on daily practice in the re-integration chain. After a definition phase during which various instruments are developed, we want to create an empowering environment in four regional experiments. All key actors in the re-integration chain, such as CWI, UWV, rehabilitation institutes, schools, municipalities and some companies participate in these experiments. Via CWI (National Centres for Work and Income) a number of independent labour consultants are involved. Each participating organisation denominates a so called ‘empowerment messenger’. These messengers introduce empowerment and the empowering concept into their organisations and commence an awareness raising programme of information, presentation en explanation. Thereafter they organise a quick scan to assess the empowering quality of their organisations. The quick scan includes an enquiry within the organisations, a consensus meeting and the development of an improvement action plan.

Firstly we address the empowering competencies and skills of the professionals. Offering training and workshops, we want to enable them to enhance their empowering capacity. Secondly we want to increase the empowering quality of organisations themselves, i.e. procedures, management, policy and service providing processes. The central REQUEST team provides the required contents and facilities, such as promotion material, training and consultancy functions, and coaching.

For clients this practical approach will have a direct impact: support and room to take their own control in returning or re-integrating into the labour market. If necessary, or when clients indicate so, they can follow a VrijBaan Empowerment Training programme to acquire the proper competencies and skills.

**Partnership.** REQUEST is an initiative of REA College Nederland, the National centre of expertise and innovation where the four Dutch rehabilitation institutes have concentrated their expertise in re-integration and labour. The project leadership is carried by the Pluryn Werkenrode Group. In the four regions the UVW (executive authority for the social insurances) of Heerlen and Arnhem participate. Furthermore some big companies, such as Philips semiconductors, the ‘Belastingdienst’, and some municipalities take part in regional networks.
On a central level two interest groups are involved: the ANGO (general Dutch organisation for the disabled) and Programma VCP (Programme for the strengthening of client participation). The Institute for Rehabilitation issues (iRv) certifies the scientific support, and the national Centre for Work and Income (CWI) is an important partner in the disseminating process. An a transnational scale we co-operate with the Finnish EQUAL project ‘Job-coach’ (Kiipula Revalidation Centre, Kiipula) and the Belgian EQUAL project ‘Training Quality’ (Job & co, Ghent).

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TRAINING QUALITY

The aim of the TQ project is to enlarge the participation of people with a distance to the labour market. To realise this different strategies can be followed. Obviously one of the most sustainable should be to strengthen the empowerment of the final target group. In many projects empowerment is considered from an individual perspective. However it became clear that the empowerment has a strong relation with elements in the environment. An empowering environment will stimulate and support while developing and executing the own pathway of the participants.

Objectives. In the TQ project we work on the environment perspective of empowerment. How can we realise an empowering environment that enables maximum empowering opportunity for the target group? We take the EFQM excellence model as a framework. To strengthen the empowerment of jobseekers we are convinced that the first important enabler is the professional staff. In commonly used ISO-methodology there is much emphasis on development and procedures, and less on practise and evaluation. Therefore quality thinking is far from the everyday practise. Staff members experience this as a very distant talk about documents and registrations. Nevertheless
the staff is the principal party involved. Quality systems have to be integrated into the training and guidance support for the final target group. Starting from a vision on inclusion and empowerment (internal entrepreneurship), the staff is the privileged group to guide the quality of the working, to execute and to evaluate it. Today, we still lack instruments for this. Training and lifelong learning for staff will be an urgent task to reach our goals. That’s why in this project staff will be very important, both as target group for the training and results of the project as for the development of the instruments. Staff members will be involved in this project as the main target group.

**EFQM model.** How can we translate the quality of our work into systems that are acceptable and clear for all our stakeholders, also for the recognising government.

In general our activities remain socially not enough valuated. For this reason we will involve employers in our strategy. They are very important in the pathway approach of our jobseekers, both as possible job changes as for learning opportunities.

The other stakeholders for organisations in training en guidance in the analysis of the empowering environment of the final target group are the management and the more general social policy. Here again we think that EFQM could give us a good framework to make our quality standards clear. More and more government and subsidising authorities are using audit-procedures that can be derived from mainstream quality systems. The pressure to invest in this field is increasing. The new audit methods cause a forcing query for management to invest in quality. The problem here is that actual competences come mostly from social and pedagogical environments. It often lacks of simple and attainable models to import quality systems in our management. The experience in Job&Co and Jobcentre from the past years shows that the EFQM-model can be a fitting answer to a lot of problems shown above. However it is necessary that this model is further developed and made accessible for our (colleague)-organisations.

In other words, the necessity to import a likewise quality model is emerging in social-profit. The distance to an integrated quality-approach is still (too) big. Training and coaching for staff is a key proces in this view.

**Partnership**

The partnership includes partners with a similar vision, project content and goals. The synergy between the formulated goals of the different partners and the way the co-operation is worked out is an important support for each of the partners.
Partners in the TQ project were:

- Jobcentrum West-Vlaanderen, an organisation for training and guidance of jobseekers with a disability. Jobcentrum has been a ‘believer’ in the EFQM Quality system and uses the model as an instrument to realise its operational goals.
- Amelior, a centre for excellence offering training, consultancy and documentation to their clients in order for them to obtain excellent results in their work.
- VDAB, a governmental organisation for training and mediation of the unemployed and employed people on the labour market was involved for their major role in directing the labour market in Flanders and Belgium.
- HUB, Hogeschool Universiteit Brussel (formerly EHSAL) became a partner in investigating the possibilities of mainstream educational programmes for job coaches.’ The transnational partners work out parts of the quality process in the environment of the final target group. It could be very easy to divide the different criteria or aspects from the EFQM-model to different partners and to share the development of the different aspects in a common quality framework.

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Organisations, agencies, information resources regarding employment, occupation and vocational rehabilitation of disabled people

Worldwide

**Apse** The Association for People in Supported Employment is a membership organization formed in 1988 to improve and expand integrated employment opportunities, services, and outcomes for people experiencing disabilities.

**GLADNET** Gladnet maintains an international database, INFOBASE, which contains full text documents and bibliographic references concerning employment and training related to people with disabilities.

**International Forum on Disability Management** Download materials and reports of the International Forum on Disability Management; Maastricht - The Netherlands September 2004.

**International Labour Organization** The ILO is the UN specialized agency which seeks the promotion of social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights. One mandate is to provide technical assistance primarily in the fields of vocational training and vocational rehabilitation.

**Job Accommodation Network** The Job Accommodation Network is not a job placement service, but an international toll-free consulting service that provides information about job accommodations and the employability of people with disabilities.

**Study and Work Abroad** This catalog contains information about university studies, traineeships and volunteer work for people with disabilities in Europe, North America and other parts of the world.

Europe-wide

**Employment guidance services for people with disabilities CASE STUDIES database** This database of employment guidance services contains case studies from 16 EU Member States. These have been selected on the

Data from: www.rehadat.de
basis that they adopt new or enhanced approaches to providing employment services for the target group of people with disabilities or chronic illness.

**Equal** Funded by the European Social Fund, the initiative EQUAL is looking for new ways to reduce discrimination and inequalities of employees and job seekers and to improve the vocational integration of disadvantaged people.

**European Platform for Vocational Rehabilitation** The goal of the society is to arrange co-operation, at European level, for the promotion and implementation of the goals of vocational rehabilitation of the people with disabilities and socially disadvantaged and to recognise, address and better understand their special needs.

**European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE)** The European umbrella organisation for supported employment works to promote the Supported Employment model through the exchange of information and knowledge on good practice. EUSE also provides a platform for its members to networking with other organisations and associations at European and world level.

**Workability Europe** Employer body representing providers of work and employment services to people with disabilities in Europe. The growing membership provides work programmes for about 1,250,000 disabled people. Today Workability Europe has over 35 member organisations located in 20 countries.

**European Countries**

**Austria**
- **AMS Arbeitsmarktservice Austria.** Employment service for job seekers and employers.
- **Gleich & Gleich.** Information for employers, entrepreneurs, providers of services and goods, and building owners about barrier freedom and anti-discrimination legislation.
- **Sozialprojekte.com.** Internet platform for German and Austrian social firms, institutions, and sheltered workshops to present their products and services.
• **Unemployed.de.** Job offers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. It is possible to search for jobs for disabled people.
• **Wien Work.** Integrativ businesses and training centres corporation.

**Belgium**
• **AWIPH - Agence Wallonne pour l’Intégration des Personnes Handicapées.** Department for social and vocational integration of the disabled.
• **FOREM.** (Office Communautaire et Régional de la Formation Professionnelle et de l’Emploi) local employment service.
• **ORBEM / BGDA.** (Office Régional Bruxellois de l’Emploi) employment service for Bruxelles.
• **VDAB.** (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbetsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding) employment service and vocational training.

**Denmark**
• **Arbejdsformidlingen.** Employment service for employers and employees.

**Finland**
• **Ministry of Labour, Työministeriö.**

**France**
• **ANPE Agence Nationale Pour l’Emploi.** National employment service.
• **Centre national de recherche et de ressources pour la formation professionnelle des travailleurs handicapés.** National centre dedicated to research and information on the improvement of vocational training of disabled employees.
• **Groupement des Ateliers Protégés.** Association of businesses who offer supported employment.
• **Handitel.** Extensive information collection and search engine for all kinds of disabilities.
• **Handiweb.** Information on vocational rehabilitation.
• **L’Agefiph.** National agency to manage the compulsory levy to use it for benefits to boost the supply of jobs and training places for severely disabled people, benefits towards supplementary assistance in the working environment and other measures for the integration of severely disabled people.
• **Ministère de l’emploi et de la solidarité.** French Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
• **Ohé Prométhée.** National network for the promotion of vocational rehabilitation of disabled people.

• **SNAPEI (Syndicat National des Associations Gestionnaires d’Établissements et services pour Personnes Handicapés Mentales).**

• **Travail et handicap, emploi et maintien en activité des salariés.** Information for representatives of the disabled concerning job and handicap.

**Germany**

• **Assessment-Info.** Collection of assessment instruments to determine (disabled) employees’ abilities to work or to analyze workplaces.

• **Assistenzantrag.de.** Information about assistance at the workplace and personal assistance.

• **Assistenzbörse.** Internet project which provides information for employers and employees on support possibilities concerning independent living and personal assistance.

• **Bundesagentur für Arbeit.** German Federal Labour Office.

• **Bundesagentur für Arbeit / Statistische Angaben zur Beschäftigung.** German Federal Labour Office / Statistical data about work and employment.

• **Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Integrationsämter und Hauptfürsorgestellen (BIH).** The main regional assistance funds manages the compulsory levy to use it for benefits to boost the supply of jobs and training places for severely disabled people, benefits towards supplementary assistance in the working environment and other measures for the integration of severely disabled people.

• **Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Integrationsfirmen.**

• **Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Unterstützte Beschäftigung.** The National Organisation for Supported Employment offers advice to initiatives. It’s aim is to advance projects for supported employment.

• **Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Werkstätten für behinderte Menschen.** Federal Working Group Sheltered Workshops.

• **Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales.** Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

• **Chancengleichheit im Beruf.** (Career with Handycap) Individual qualification measures for severely disabled executives and employees.

• **Die Seite für die Schwerbehindertenvertretung.** Link collection concerning legal information to support the work of the representatives of the severely disabled.

• **Disability Management.** Information of the trade associations about disability management.
• Fachberatung für Arbeits- und Firmenprojekte (FAF). Advice for integration projects and social firms.

• Fachlexikon Behinderung und Beruf. Electronic dictionary on vocational rehabilitation.

• Jobs ohne Barrieren. Information about the initiative “job” of the Federal Ministry for Health and Social Security to improve and expand integrated employment opportunities and outcomes for people experiencing disabilities.

• jobs.schwerhoerigen-netz.eu - Jobs for people with a hearing impairment. Platform for hard of hearing people looking for jobs and for employers offering vacancies.

• Kein-Handicap. Job initiative for disabled people, information for employers.

• Kompetenz-plus. Information platform on disabled people at work for personnel administration staff and representatives of the severely disabled.

• Linksammlung zum Themenfeld Arbeit und Demographie. Collection of Internet resources which provide information about the topic demographic change and work.

• Sozialportal. Information about disabilities, diseases, and vocational rehabilitation in Germany.

• Sozialprojekte.com. Internet platform for German and Austrian social firms, institutions, and sheltered workshops to present their products and services.

• Stellenmarkt Selbstbestimmte Assistenz. Internet platform with job offers concerning self-determined assistance.

• Talentplus - portal. The portal is a service of REHADAT. It is a special guide to vocational reintegration for employers, employees and integration experts with comprehensive information about disability and working life.

Greece
• Oaed Greek Manpower Employment Organization.

Great Britain
• Jobcentreplus. UK government service for people of working age. Network of offices offering fully integrated work and benefit services.

• Remploy. Remploy provides productive employment in a supported environment for severely disabled people who are seeking work, within the Government’s Supported Employment Programme.
• **The Employers’ Forum on disability.** The Employers’ Forum on Disability is the employers’ organisation focused on the issue of disability in the workplace. It is funded and managed by employers. With over 365 members, the Forum represents organisations who employ over 20% of the UK workforce. The Forum is recognised as the authoritative voice on disability as it affects employers and service providers.

Ireland

• **FAS Foras Áiseanna Saothair.** Ireland’s national training and employment authority for employers and job seekers.

• **Gandon Enterprises.** Group of businesses which provides integrated social employment for people with disabilities. The Gandon group has also become Ireland’s largest single employer of workers with disabilities.

• **Rehab Group.** Independent, non-profit organisation which provides training, employment, social care and commercial services for disabled people in Ireland and the UK.

Iceland

• **Vinnumálastofnun.** Living and working in Iceland.

Italy

• **Arbeitsbörse.** Regional (Bozen/South Tyrol) employment service.

• **EUROPA LAVORO.** Italian site of the European Social Fund.

• **Ministerio del Lavoro et delle Politiche Sociali.** Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Luxembourg

• **ADEM, L’Administration de l’Emploi.** Employment service for employers and job seekers.

• **Service des Travailleurs Handicapés.** Employment service for disabled people.

Netherlands

• **ARBVO Arbeidsvoorziening.** Employment service for job seekers and employers.

• **Cedris.** National umbrella organisation for sheltered and supported employment organisations in the Netherlands and for companies active in the subsidised job area.
Norway
- **AETAT Arbeidsmarkedsetaten.** Employment service for job seekers and employers.

Poland
- **Popon.** Umbrella organisation for Sheltered workshops.

Portugal
- **IEFP Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional.** Employment service for job seekers and employers.

Sweden
- **AMS Abetsmarknadsstyrelsen.** Internet service of the Swedish National Labour Market Administration.

Switzerland
- **SECO Staatssekretariat für Wirtschaft.** State Secretary for Economic Affairs.
- **Unemployed.de.** Job offers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. It is possible to search for jobs for disabled people.

Spain
- **INEM Instituto Nacional de Empleo.** Spanish Federal Labour Office.

**non-European countries**

Australia
- **Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment Limited.** Founded in 1985 by the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment Limited is the most highly regarded EEO support network of its kind for employers.
- **Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission.**
- **VETinfoNET.** The overall aim of the 2007 VET Equity Development and Innovation Program (formerly Australians Working Together - AWT) funding is to encourage further development of a learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of learners, leading to equitable outcomes in training and employment. Among the target groups are people with disabilities.
Canada
- **Comité d’Adaptation de la Main d’Oeuvre pour les Personnes Handicapées.** Commission for the promotion of vocational integration.
- **National Institute of Disability Management and Research.**
- **The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work.** Canada-wide network of organizations and individuals. The mission is to promote and support meaningful and equitable employment of people with disabilities.
- **Workink.** The virtual employment resource centre directed by the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work. It provides its on-line visitors with labour market and career information, access to national, provincial, and territorial resources, and online experts' assistance.

Singapore
- **Disabled People’s Association Singapore.** Provides among other things information on employment and job opportunities.

USA
- **Equality Staffing.** Provides all the services needed to achieve diversity in the workplace (temporary and permanent placement, diversity analysis, diversity training, diversity consulting).
- **Job Accommodation Network.** The Job Accommodation Network is not a job placement service, but an international toll-free consulting service that provides information about job accommodations and the employability of people with disabilities.
- **National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult.** The National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult (NCWD) provides training, technical assistance, policy analysis, and information to improve access for all in the workforce development system.
- **US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).**
- **Worksupport.** Information on vocational rehabilitation.