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IDEA-VET: Inclusion, Diversity, and EmployAbility in Vocational Education and Training

How to Create Inclusive Work and Training Environments for People with Intellectual Disabilities

Your paragraph text

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Key Action 2

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This guide has been designed for educators, VET providers, employers, and policymakers to support the inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities in vocational education and training (VET) and in the labor market.

It combines theoretical frameworks (disability models, symbolic interactionism, co-agency) with practical tools, activities, and case studies (e.g., Casa Vittoria & KAZED) to help stakeholders create accessible, equitable, and empowering environments.

The content has been developed collaboratively within the IDEA-VET project, based on research, training experiences, and contributions from partners and participants.

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1. Introduction

The IDEA-VET project (Inclusion, Diversity and EmployAbility in Vocational Education and Training) was developed to address the persistent barriers faced by individuals with intellectual disabilities in education, employment, and social life. Too often, these individuals are excluded not because of their abilities, but because of systemic barriers, stereotypes, and a lack of inclusive practices in vocational education and the labor market.



This guide is one of the key outputs of the project and is designed to serve as a practical tool and reference framework for:

- Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers seeking to make their environments accessible and inclusive,
- Job coaches, educators and trainers who want to integrate co-agency and interactionist methods into their practice,
- Employers and workplace managers who aim to build inclusive teams and benefit from the diversity of human talent, and
- Policymakers and stakeholders committed to building fairer and more equitable systems of education and employment.



This guide combines academic foundations with hands-on tools. It provides:

- A conceptual framework, explaining key theories such as the medical and social models of disability, symbolic interactionism, and co-agency;
- Practical strategies and activities for inclusive teaching, coaching, mentoring, and workplace adaptation;
- Transferable case studies (Casa Vittoria, KAZED and from Netherlands) that showcase real-life examples of inclusion in action;
- Types of employment (open employment, supported employment, self-employment, and social enterprises) to help stakeholders design realistic and sustainable pathways to work;
- Checklists, templates, and exercises that stakeholders can directly use in training and work environments.

The approach of IDEA-VET is rooted in the following principles:

- Rights-based perspective: Inclusion is not charity, it is a right, as emphasized by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).
- Person-centered planning: Each individual with an intellectual disability has unique strengths, aspirations, and needs.
- Co-agency: Inclusion happens when individuals, families, educators, employers, and communities act together.
- Focus on ability: Every person has valuable skills and contributions to offer; the challenge is to build systems that recognize and enhance them.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is not meant to be read once and set aside. It is a toolkit for action.

- Trainers and educators can use it to design sessions, adapt activities, and reflect on their teaching practices.
- Employers can consult it to make their workplaces more inclusive, to support employees with intellectual disabilities, and to explore different types of employment models (such as open employment, supported employment, and social enterprises) that can be implemented in their organizations.
- Policymakers and stakeholders can use it as evidence of practical models for shaping inclusive systems.



By combining theory, practice, and inspiration, the guide supports a shift from exclusion to empowerment, ensuring that people with intellectual disabilities are not only participants but also active contributors in education, work, and society.

2. Conceptual Framework (Theory in Practice)

2.1 Disability Models

Understanding disability is the foundation of creating inclusive environments. The way we define and approach disability directly influences how we design education, workplaces, and support systems. Over time, different models of disability have shaped policies and practices.





1. The Medical Model (Çolak & Hergüner, 2016; Kanyılmaz Polat, 2020; Vargus-Adams & Majneme, 2014)

- Focuses on the individual's impairment as the source of the problem.
- Disability is seen as a deficit or limitation within the person.
- The goal is often to “fix” or “rehabilitate” the person so they can adapt to society.

Limitations:

- Reduces individuals to their impairments.
- Neglects the social and environmental barriers they face.
- Can unintentionally reinforce stigma by treating people as “patients” rather than active citizens.



2. The Social Model

- Argues that disability is not caused by the impairment itself, but by barriers in society (physical, attitudinal, systemic).
- Examples: inaccessible buildings, rigid teaching methods, discriminatory hiring practices.
- The solution lies in removing barriers and changing attitudes, not in changing the person.

Strengths:

- Empowers individuals as rights-holders.
- Shifts responsibility from the individual to society and institutions.
- Basis of many international policies (e.g., UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

3. The Biopsychosocial /ICF Model (WHO, 2001)

- Integrates both the medical and social perspectives into a holistic framework.
- Known as the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).
- Disability is understood as the interaction between a person's health condition and the environment in which they live.

Key elements:

- Impairments (in body function or structure).
- Activity limitations (difficulties in executing tasks).
- Participation restrictions (barriers to social, educational, or work life).

This model allows for a common language to talk about disability across education, health, and labor sectors.

4. Practical Implications for VET and Work Inclusion

- Move away from “fixing” individuals and focus on adapting environments.
- Assess barriers in learning and workplaces (communication, accessibility, social attitudes).
- Design person-centered plans that combine skills development with environmental adjustments.
- Promote agency and self-representation so that individuals with intellectual disabilities can actively shape their learning and career pathways.
- Provide job coach support where appropriate, ensuring that individuals with intellectual disabilities receive personalized guidance in the workplace, while employers benefit from smoother integration and sustainable performance.



5. Reflection Activity for Trainers/Employers:

- Think about your own context (classroom, training center, workplace).
- Ask: Which model is most visible in my environment?
- Discuss with colleagues: What would change if we applied the social or ICF model instead?



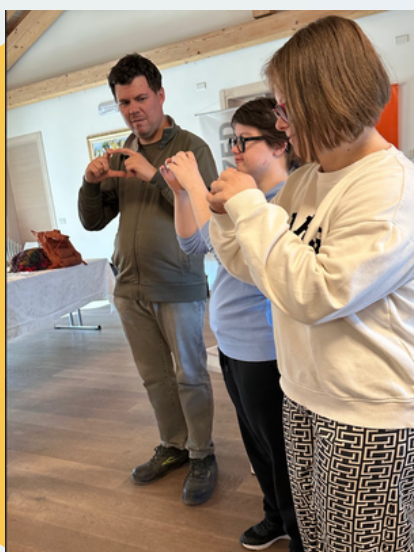
2.2 Symbolic Interactionism & Identity

Disability is not only a medical or social condition; it is also a socially constructed identity. The theory of symbolic interactionism helps us understand how individuals with intellectual disabilities experience themselves and are perceived by others in daily life.

Core Principles of Symbolic Interactionism

Herbert Blumer (1969) outlined three assumptions:

1. Meanings guide action – people act toward things based on the meanings those things have for them.
2. Meanings come from social interaction – we learn what “ability” or “disability” means through interactions with others.
3. Meanings are interpreted and transformed – each individual processes and reshapes those meanings in their own way.



In practice: A young person with an intellectual disability may internalize negative labels from society (“incapable”) or, conversely, may build a strong sense of self when supported with positive narratives (“contributor,” “team member”). In reality, however, the negative side is often more visible: many young people with intellectual disabilities hesitate to participate even in association activities, carrying feelings of self-stigma linked to their condition. In some societies, terms related to intellectual disability are even misused as insults, reinforcing exclusion and discouraging self-confidence.

Identity Formation and Disability

Identity is shaped by two types of narratives:

- Hetero-attributions: what others say about me (family, teachers, employers, peers).
- Self-attributions: what I say about myself.

When these align negatively (e.g., both self and others see someone only as “disabled”), a narrow disabled identity may form.

When individuals are supported to explore broader roles (student, worker, artist, friend), identity becomes multi-dimensional and empowering.

Practical Relevance for Inclusion

- Educators and employers play a crucial role in shaping identity through the language they use, the opportunities they provide, and the expectations they set.
- Inclusion is not only about removing physical barriers but also about changing narratives and valuing contributions.





Practical Activities

Identity Mapping Exercise

- Ask participants to create two lists:
 - “What others say about me”
 - “What I say about myself”
- Discuss similarities and differences, and highlight positive attributes.
- Encourage learners to recognize how external labels can influence their self-perception and sense of identity.

Key message: Identity is Shaped by Interaction

The way others describe us has a strong effect on how we see ourselves. Supporting positive self-descriptions helps people with intellectual disabilities build confidence and develop an empowered identity.

Role Expansion Workshop

- Invite learners to describe themselves in multiple roles (e.g., student, friend, football player, employee).
- Reflect together: How do these roles influence how you see yourself? How do others see you?
- Emphasize that identity is multi-dimensional and should not be reduced to “disability.”



2.3 Co-Agency & Inclusion

One of the central ideas of the IDEA-VET project is co-agency. While agency refers to an individual's capacity to make choices and influence their own life, co-agency highlights the shared responsibility among learners, educators, families, employers, and communities in supporting those choices.

According to Albert Bandura (2001), agency is:

- The ability to influence one's functioning and life outcomes through action.
- Not just about planning, but also about self-regulation (adjusting actions when needed).
- Linked to self-awareness and self-efficacy – believing in one's own ability to act.

For individuals with intellectual disabilities, agency may be limited by external barriers, not by lack of ability. Therefore, systems need to enable and reinforce agency.



The OECD Learning Framework 2030 describes co-agency as:

- A network of interactive relationships where learners are supported by teachers, peers, families, and communities.
- A recognition that everyone is a learner, including trainers, employers, and family members.
- A process where goals are co-constructed, not imposed.

Example: A young trainee sets a goal to work in a bakery. The VET trainer adapts lessons to bakery-related skills, the employer provides a supportive internship, and the family helps with practice at home. Together, they form a co-agency system.



Why Co-Agency Matters for Inclusion

- Promotes shared ownership of outcomes (no one is left alone).
- Helps individuals move from being “passive recipients” to active participants.
- Builds sustainable inclusion, because multiple actors are invested in success.





Practical Approaches to Co-Agency

1. Co-constructed Goal Setting

- Hold meetings with the learner, family, and VET provider.
- Define personal, academic, and career goals together.
- Document them in an Individual Learning & Work Plan.
- Ensure alignment with labor market needs and opportunities.

2. Feedback and Feedforward

- Regular check-ins where the learner reflects on progress.
- Trainers and employers provide supportive feedback + forward-looking suggestions.

3. Shared Learning Environments

- Create spaces where learners, families, educators, and employers learn from each other.
- Example: A workshop where employers learn inclusive practices from the learners themselves.

Key Message: Inclusion cannot be achieved by individuals acting alone. Co-agency ensures that people with intellectual disabilities are supported by a circle of relationships, making their participation in education, work, and society both possible and sustainable.

3. Practical Strategies for Inclusion

Inclusive education and employment require intentional strategies that combine accessibility, empowerment, and collaboration. The following approaches provide concrete steps for creating environments where individuals with intellectual disabilities can thrive.

3.1 In VET Environments

Vocational education and training (VET) is a critical gateway to employment. To ensure accessibility and equity, training centers must:



Design Accessible Learning

- Apply universal design principles (clear signage, flexible furniture, visual aids).
- Ensure materials are available in easy-to-read formats and compatible with assistive technologies.
- Use visual supports, simple language, and modular e-learning platforms to meet diverse needs.

Use Non-Formal and Participatory Methods

- Encourage peer education: students with disabilities supporting each other.
- Include role-playing, storytelling, and group projects to make learning interactive.
- Facilitate check-in / check-out circles so learners share feelings, expectations, and reflections.

Career Profiling and Individualized Plans

- Conduct vocational assessments tailored to each learner's strengths and preferences.
- Create personalized learning plans linked to realistic job opportunities.
- Involve families and employers in the planning process.
- Contact institutions and organizations that can provide job coach support, ensuring learners and employers have access to professional guidance throughout the transition into work

Practical Tool: Use a Career Mapping Worksheet where learners list skills they enjoy, tasks they want to try, and environments they feel comfortable in.



3.2 In Workplaces

Employers play a key role in enabling inclusion. Strategies include:

Supported Employment

- Provide job coaching before, during, and after placement.
- Assign a mentor or buddy in the workplace.
- Offer gradual transitions, starting with short tasks and building responsibility.





Small but Impactful Adjustments

- Simplify and clarify instructions.
- Use visual task lists or step-by-step guides.
- Provide quiet spaces and predictable routines to reduce stress.
- Adjust uniforms or tools if needed (e.g., adapted clothing, lighter equipment).

Building an Inclusive Culture

- Implement zero-tolerance policies on discrimination.
- Celebrate diversity and highlight contributions of employees with ID.
- Share success stories internally to challenge stereotypes.

Checklist for Employers

- Have I adapted communication methods?
- Is there a clear mentor for the new employee?
- Are colleagues informed and supportive?
- Is feedback given regularly in simple and constructive ways?
- Is the progress of the targeted training and employment being monitored and reviewed regularly?



3.3 In Society

True inclusion extends beyond classrooms and workplaces. Communities can:

Raise Awareness

- Organize public events, exhibitions, and campaigns led by people with disabilities.
- Promote inclusive stories through media and social platforms.
- Partner with local schools and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) to create visibility.





Involve Families

- Offer information sessions and workshops for caregivers.
- Involve families in transition planning from school to work.
- Recognize the family as a key support system in sustaining inclusion.

Create Community Labs

- Build local networks where educators, employers, families, and learners collaborate.
- Share good practices and resources.
- Co-design community projects (gardens, cafés, art shows) where individuals with ID take visible roles.





Example Activity: Organize a “Focus on Ability Fair” where learners showcase their skills (cooking, art, music, services) to employers and community members.

Key Message: Inclusion is not achieved by isolated efforts. It requires consistent strategies across education, work, and society, guided by accessibility, participation, and shared responsibility.



4. Tools & Methods (Toolkit Section)

This section provides hands-on resources to translate inclusion principles into daily practice. The tools are adaptable and can be used in classrooms, training centers, and workplaces.

4.1 Checklists

Inclusive Pedagogy Checklist (for Trainers & Educators)

- Are materials available in easy-to-read and/or visual formats?
- Is the classroom accessible (ramps, clear signage, flexible furniture)?
- Do I use non-formal methods (role-play, group projects, peer education)?
- Are students encouraged to set personal learning goals?
- Do I regularly check-in with learners about how they feel and what they need?



Workplace Adaptation Checklist (for Employers)

- Is there a workplace mentor/buddy assigned?
- Are tasks broken down into clear steps (with visuals if needed)?
- Is feedback given in simple, constructive language?
- Are uniforms, tools, and routines adapted if necessary?
- Are colleagues trained in disability awareness?
- Is there a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination?
- Is on-the-job training provided so that employees can develop vocational skills directly in the workplace?



4.2 Templates

Individual Learning & Work Plan (ILWP)

Learner/Employee Name:

Strengths & Abilities:

Preferred Work/Training Areas:

Short-Term Goals (3–6 months):

Long-Term Goals (1–2 years):

Support Needed (coaching, tools, family role):

Agreed by (learner, family, trainer, employer):

Feedback & Feedforward Form

- What went well today?

- What could be improved?

- Next steps (suggestions for future action):





4.3 Activities

Activity 1: Check-In / Check-Out Circle

- At the start of a session, ask each participant: "How do you feel today? What do you expect from this session?"
- At the end, ask: "What did you learn? How do you feel now?"
- Purpose: builds trust, tracks emotional engagement, and ensures voices are heard.





Activity 2: Identity Mapping

- Materials: paper, markers.
- Step 1: Participants draw a circle in the center with their name.
- Step 2: Around the circle, they add roles they play (student, worker, friend, artist).
- Step 3: Discuss how each role contributes to identity and confidence.
- Purpose: broadens self-perception beyond the “disabled” label.

Activity 3: Role-Play for Workplace Scenarios

- Create short role-plays (e.g., greeting a customer, asking for help, handling a mistake).
- Learners practice in pairs or groups, rotating roles.
- Trainers/employers provide constructive feedback.
- Purpose: builds communication skills and workplace confidence.

Activity 4: Focus on Ability Workshop

- Each participant lists 3 things they are good at.
- The group discusses how these strengths can be applied in work or training.
- Trainers highlight transferable skills (e.g., patience, creativity, teamwork).
- Purpose: shifts perspective from limitations to strengths.

Key Message: Checklists, templates, and participatory activities transform abstract principles into practical tools. They are flexible and can be adapted for different contexts, ensuring that inclusion is actionable and measurable.

Transferable Lessons

- Symbolic practices (like uniforms) can reinforce equality.
- Training must be accompanied by continuous mentoring and not seen as a one-time effort.
- Partnerships with schools, health services, and local authorities are essential for long-term sustainability.
- Families should be viewed as partners in the employment journey, not as external supporters.



Case Study 1: KAZED (Turkey)

Background

KAZED was founded by a group of families and educators who shared a vision: to improve the independent living skills and employability of young people with intellectual disabilities. Starting small, with family-led activities and individual support programs, KAZED gradually grew into a recognized multidimensional support network that now offers vocational training, job coaching, and community awareness programs.



Inclusive Practices

- Vocational Training: KAZED offers structured training in hospitality, office support, and service sectors, tailored to learners' strengths and needs.
- Job Coaching: Each participant is paired with a job coach who provides guidance during the transition into the workplace, supports adaptation, and facilitates communication with employers.
- Partnerships: KAZED collaborates with universities, public education centers, employment agencies, and municipalities. These partnerships create pathways for learners into real employment.
- Awareness & Advocacy: The organization runs seminars, public campaigns, and family workshops to reduce stigma and raise awareness about inclusive employment.
- Family Involvement: Families participate in decision-making, workshops, and planning, ensuring that support extends beyond the workplace.

5. Case Studies (Inspiration Section)

Case Study 2: Casa Vittoria (Italy)

Background

Casa Vittoria was born in 2010 from the initiative of six families, each with children with Down syndrome. What began as a simple vegetable garden gradually evolved into a multi-functional hospitality facility that today includes a restaurant, hotel, greenhouses, and an event space. The aim has always been clear: to create an environment where people with intellectual disabilities can learn, work, and build a professional identity while being fully included in their community.

Inclusive Practices

- **Employment & Training:** Casa Vittoria employs individuals with Down syndrome as part of its permanent staff. It also welcomes trainees and volunteers with other intellectual disabilities through partnerships with vocational schools.
- **Mentorship & Professional Development:** Professional chefs, hospitality experts, and trainers are brought in not only to teach technical skills but also to model inclusive practices. They are selected for their empathy and ability to work with diverse learners.
- **Family Engagement:** Families remain actively involved in career guidance and personal support, ensuring that transitions into work are smoother and more sustainable.
- **Identity & Belonging:** All staff wear the same uniform, symbolizing equality and reinforcing a sense of belonging. This simple act helps reduce stereotypes and highlights each individual's contribution.

Impact

- Casa Vittoria demonstrates that inclusion in the hospitality sector is not only possible but beneficial:
- Employees gain independence, skills, and self-esteem.
- Families experience relief and pride as their loved ones thrive in real work environments.
- Customers and community members change their perceptions of disability by directly interacting with competent staff.

Impact

KAZED has supported dozens of individuals with intellectual disabilities in accessing meaningful training and work opportunities. Its partnerships have led to internships, supported employment placements, and stronger community acceptance. Families report improved independence for their children and greater optimism for the future. As a response to the common concern among families “What will happen later / after us?” KAZED has emphasized employment from the very beginning. By setting employment as a clear goal, it has not only given young people a concrete pathway to follow but also offered families reassurance and hope for the future.



Transferable Lessons

- Supported employment (job coaching + workplace adaptation) is one of the most effective models for long-term success.
- Broad partnerships multiply opportunities—no single institution can achieve inclusion alone.
- Awareness campaigns are essential to challenge cultural barriers and stereotypes.
- Starting small with family-driven initiatives can, over time, influence systems and policy.

Case Study 3: De Loods (Netherlands)

Background

De Loods is a social enterprise and learning workplace located in Utrecht, Netherlands. It was founded in 2014 with the mission to provide meaningful work for people with intellectual disabilities in a community-based setting. The initiative runs a second-hand furniture workshop, café, and creative space, turning donated goods into upcycled furniture while offering a welcoming hub for local residents.

Inclusive Practices

- **Hands-On Learning Environment:** Participants learn practical skills — woodworking, painting, customer service — in a real production environment, supported by trained instructors.
- **Peer Collaboration:** Teams are mixed, with participants, volunteers, and skilled craftspeople working side by side, encouraging social inclusion and peer learning.
- **Individual Work Plans:** Each participant follows a personalized plan outlining skill goals, preferred tasks, and work rhythm. Progress is tracked with regular feedback sessions.
- **Community Events:** De Loods regularly hosts open days, exhibitions, and sales events where participants present their work, interact with customers, and showcase their talents.
- **Transition to Open Employment:** Participants who are ready are supported to move into external employment, with job coaches facilitating the transition and follow-up support.





Impact

De Loods has become a recognized example of how creative, small-scale enterprises can combine social, economic, and environmental value. More than 60% of participants have progressed to either supported or open employment after completing their training. Families have reported improvements in confidence, communication, and social participation.

Transferable Lessons

- Combining creativity (upcycling, art, design) with employability skills motivates learners and keeps training engaging.
- Small-scale, local projects can have high visibility and community impact, reducing stigma.
- Ongoing job coach support is essential for successful transition into external jobs.
- Involving the public through events helps break stereotypes and create inclusive communities.

Why These Case Studies Matter

Both Casa Vittoria and KAZED highlight that:

- Inclusion is not charity; it is a right and a source of enrichment for communities and workplaces.
- The most effective strategies are participatory and collaborative, involving families, institutions, and society.
- Small initiatives can grow into sustainable models with long-term impact.
- Practical lessons such as mentorship, family engagement, job coaching, and symbolic equality are transferable across countries and sectors.

These examples show that with creativity, persistence, and collaboration, inclusive work environments are achievable everywhere.



6. Monitoring, Evaluation & Sustainability

Creating inclusive environments is not a one-time effort — it requires continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation. To ensure that inclusion practices are effective and sustainable, stakeholders must establish clear indicators, collect feedback, and integrate inclusion into institutional systems.



6.1 Why Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Matter

- **Quality assurance:** Ensures that inclusion strategies actually work for learners and employees.
- **Accountability:** Demonstrates results to funders, policymakers, and communities.
- **Improvement:** Identifies gaps and areas for development.
- **Empowerment:** Involves learners and families in shaping programs through their feedback.





6.2 Indicators of Inclusive Practice

Monitoring inclusion should not only measure numbers (e.g., how many participants are employed) but also quality of participation and lived experiences. Suggested indicators include:

Accessibility

- % of training materials available in easy-to-read or visual formats.
- Presence of physical and digital accessibility features (ramps, signage, screen-reader compatibility).

Participation & Retention

- Attendance and completion rates of learners with intellectual disabilities.
- Retention rates in employment after training.

Skill Development

- Evidence of improvement in vocational, social, and adaptive skills.
- Learners' self-reported confidence and autonomy.

Workplace Inclusion

- Number of workplaces offering supported employment placements.
- Employers reporting satisfaction with inclusive practices.
- Employees with ID reporting positive relationships with colleagues.

Cultural Change

- Increased awareness among educators, employers, and communities (measured by surveys or focus groups).
- Media and community initiatives showcasing inclusion.



6.3 Methods of Data Collection

- Quantitative data: attendance records, job placements, retention rates, survey scores.
- Qualitative data: interviews, focus groups, reflective journals, case stories.
- Feedback loops: regular feedback from learners, families, trainers, and employers.
- Self-assessment tools: learners evaluate their progress and sense of inclusion.

Practical Tip: Create short, easy-to-read evaluation forms so learners with intellectual disabilities can directly share their views.



6.4 Continuous Improvement Cycles

- Collect data at regular intervals (e.g., each semester or work cycle).
- Share findings with all stakeholders (learners, families, staff, employers).
- Adjust training and workplace practices based on feedback.
- Celebrate successes publicly to reinforce positive cultural change.



6.5 Ensuring Sustainability

Institutional Embedding

- Integrate inclusive practices into official policies and procedures of schools, training centers, and companies.
- Make inclusion part of staff performance indicators and organizational goals.

Capacity Building

- Regular training for educators, mentors, and employers in inclusive pedagogy and workplace adaptations.
- Peer-to-peer learning networks among VET providers and companies.

Policy & Advocacy

- Engage with local governments, chambers of commerce, and ministries to advocate for inclusive employment policies.
- Promote inclusion through platforms like the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform to encourage replication.

Community Engagement

- Continue awareness campaigns beyond the project's lifetime.
- Build partnerships with NGOs, families, municipalities, and local businesses to sustain inclusive opportunities.



Key Message: Monitoring and evaluation ensure that inclusion efforts are effective and learner-centered, while sustainability strategies guarantee that these efforts do not disappear after a single project. Inclusion becomes a long-term cultural and institutional commitment.

7. Conclusion & Policy Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The IDEA-VET project demonstrates that inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities in vocational education, employment, and social life is both achievable and essential.





Through this guide, we have seen that:

- Disability is not a limitation of the individual, but a condition that arises when environmental circumstances and social structures fail to respond to the needs of the individual.
- Identity is shaped by interaction by changing narratives and expectations, we can empower people to see themselves beyond stereotypes.
- Inclusion is a shared responsibility (co-agency): learners, families, educators, employers, and communities all have roles to play.
- Practical tools, training strategies, and workplace adjustments are available and adaptable across different sectors and countries.
- Real-life examples like Casa Vittoria, KAZED and De Loods prove that small initiatives can grow into powerful, sustainable models of inclusion.



7.2 Policy Recommendations

To scale and sustain inclusive practices, we recommend action at multiple levels:

For Educators & VET Providers

- Embed inclusive pedagogy in curricula and training modules.
- Use individualized learning plans and participatory methods.
- Ensure universal accessibility of classrooms, workshops, and materials.
- Train staff regularly in disability awareness and interactionist approaches.



For Employers

- Adopt supported employment as a standard model.
- Provide reasonable accommodations (e.g., simplified instructions, visual aids, flexible hours).
- Establish mentoring systems and cultivate a workplace culture of inclusion.
- Celebrate success stories to challenge stereotypes and inspire others.

For Policymakers & Institutions

- Align national and regional strategies with the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and EU disability rights frameworks.
- Provide incentives (funding, recognition, certification) for inclusive employers and VET providers.
- Embed inclusion indicators into education and labor policies.
- Support cross-sector collaboration between schools, companies, families, and NGOs.
- Encourage municipalities and NGOs to jointly deliver vocational training programs tailored to different disability groups, ensuring that such trainings are widely implemented at the local level. In this way, vocational education can demonstrate concrete results in terms of sustainability and inclusiveness across cities.

For Communities & Families

- Actively participate in awareness campaigns and advocacy.
- Create community labs where people with intellectual disabilities contribute visibly to social projects.
- Support families with training and guidance, recognizing them as key actors in sustainable inclusion.



7.3 Call to Action

Inclusion is not charity. It is a human right and a social investment. Every stakeholder, educators, employers, policymakers, and citizens, has the power to contribute to a society where people with intellectual disabilities are seen as capable, valuable, and equal participants. This guide is not the end, but a starting point. By applying these principles and tools, and by learning from inspiring case studies, we can move from theory to practice, from exclusion to empowerment, and from words to action.

Together, we can ensure that inclusion becomes the norm, not the exception.



8. Appendices

8.1 Glossary of Key Terms

- **Agency** – The ability of individuals to make choices and influence their own lives through their actions.
- **Co-Agency** – Shared responsibility for learning and inclusion, involving the individual, educators, families, employers, and communities.
- **Disability Models** – Frameworks for understanding disability, including the Medical Model, Social Model, and Biopsychosocial/ICF Model.
- **ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health)** – A WHO framework (2001) that combines medical and social perspectives, emphasizing participation and functioning.
- **Interactionism** – A sociological theory that explains how identity and meaning are constructed through social interaction.
- **Intellectual Disability (ID)** – A developmental condition characterized by limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, often requiring tailored educational and social support.
- **Supported Employment** – A model of employment where individuals with disabilities receive tailored support (e.g., job coaching, workplace adaptation) before, during, and after job placement.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** – Designing environments and materials to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation.
- **Vocational Education and Training (VET)** – Education and training programs that equip learners with practical skills for the labor market.
- **Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)** – An independent, non-profit organization that operates outside of government structures, often focusing on social, cultural, environmental, or humanitarian activities.



8.2 Resource List & Bibliography

Key References

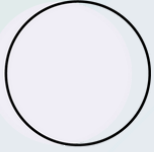
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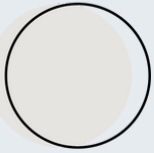
8.3 Contact Information of Project Partners



- **S.I.D.E.S. APS (Italy)**

Website: <https://www.sides-aps.com/>

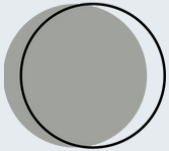
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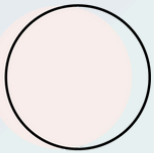
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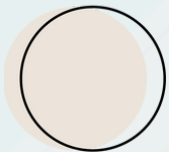
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