



COOCOU/IO1-A1

Comprehensive Report of
Identification of Needs

The needs of cognitively
impaired persons
regarding the assessment
of competences

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Background of the Erasmus+ project COOCOU

The Erasmus+ funded EU-Project COOCOU focuses on the recognition of skills, qualifications and competences of cognitively impaired persons by developing and using a set of tools to assess and document those skills. Based on the analysis of competences and with the guidance of counsellors, COOCOU aims to help cognitively impaired persons find out about their competences, boost their self-confidence, support their empowerment and support them in finding a job or educational measure that suits their competence profile and interests, i.e. support their social and economic inclusion. The project offers innovative solutions to foster integration of people with cognitive impairments and fewer opportunities regarding the integration into the labour market and into society.

Background of the Comprehensive Report of Identification of Needs

Before starting to create the COOCOU toolkit, the partners carried out an identification of needs including a synopsis of examples of good practice in the COOCOU partner countries. The activity was led by the Austrian project partner *die Berater*®. The guiding questions were:

- What do organizations working with cognitively impaired persons need in order to assess their competences?
- What examples of good practice are already available?
- What do cognitively impaired persons need in order to make their competences visible?
- What should be included in addition to an adopted ProfilPASS?

The needs assessment combined desk research and focus group meetings with experts (or alternatively individual interviews with experts). During the desk research phase, information on the topic already available in the partner countries was gathered and analysed. For the expert groups, representatives of stakeholders in the field tackled by the COOCOU project (employers, professionals working with cognitively impaired persons, researchers, decision makers, funders, programme developers, cognitively impaired persons) were asked to participate in a focus group meeting or to be available for an interview (cf. annex 1 COOCOU National Report

Template and Interview guideline). The aim of the focus group meetings/interviews was to gain a broader view of the needs targeted in the COOCOU project proposal and to get an assessment of the measures already available and to identify concrete needs from different perspectives.

All findings of the national research activities were gathered in a national report template (cf. annex 1 COOCOU National Report Template and Interview guideline). The following partners provided national needs reports (also annexed to this document):

- *die Berater®*: national report Austria
- *DIE* (Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung): national report Germany
- *DAFNI KEK* (Dafni Kentro Epaggelmatikis Katartisis): national report Greece
- *LUV* (Andragoski zavod Ljudska univerza Velenje): national report Slovenia
- *DEFOIN* (Formacion para el Desarrollo y la Inserción): national report Spain
- *SwIdeas AB*: national report Sweden

Main findings of the needs analysis

Demographic data related to the target group

The COOCOU project aims to develop a barrier-free ProfilPASS for people with cognitive impairments. People with disabilities are restricted in various ways. Therefore, they perceive the events of the physical and social environment differently as barriers (BMAS, 2016, p. 45). The requirements for a barrier-free ProfilPASS can therefore be as different as the types of impairment. In order to develop an address-oriented ProfilPASS it is therefore necessary to name or define the target group that is to be reached with the barrier-free ProfilPASS more precisely.

For this purpose this report is based on the conceptual understanding of the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS). In the Federal Government's Second Participation Report on the Living Situations of People with Disabilities, the BMAS focuses on the concrete limitation when explaining the term impairment. It focuses on the limitations "that arise in interaction with environmental conditions and thus influence the opportunities for participation in society. People with impairments are [...] people with recognised disabilities and people with chronic illnesses or long-term health problems" (BMAS, 2016, pp. 15-16). According to this understanding of the term, autism and attention deficit disorders can also be classified as (mental) disabilities, depending on the (cognitive) impairment in everyday life that goes hand in hand with them.

At this point, this report points out that such a conceptual understanding is viewed quite critically by some actors - at least in the German-speaking world. The organisation *Mensch zuerst (People First)*, for example, is the first to advocate the alternative designation "Menschen mit Lernschwierigkeiten" (people with learning difficulties), because it understands the term mentally disabled as discriminatory (Mensch zuerst, 2019). Despite this criticism, the COOCOU project follows the BMAS definition, because this term is established in the scientific context and also because the prevailing data situation in Germany is based on this term (see also Schröttle and Hornberg, 2014, p. 9). However, the term mentally handicapped is used without any negative connotation.

On the following pages, the demographic findings of the partner countries will be presented in short. More detailed information can be found in the national reports.

Austria

In 2015, a microcensus survey with additional questions for people with impairments was conducted by Statistik Austria. In 2015, cognitive impairments or learning difficulties affected 0.8% of the population aged 15 and over. In numbers that means that around 60,000 people were permanently affected by various cognitive impairments (including trisomy 21 and dementia). Women and men (0.8% women and 0.9% men) were affected to about the same extent (BMASK, 2017, p. 256).¹

Around 80 000 people in Austria suffer from autism, however, suitable therapeutic options are quite limited (Lazarewska et. al., 2018).

A nationwide epidemiological study on the prevalence of mental disorders in Austrian adolescents between 10 and 18 years found that 9.3% of them suffered from neurodevelopmental disorders, 5.2% of those suffering from ADHD² (Wagner et. al., 2017).

The 2015 microcensus survey clearly shows that people with impairments³ are more likely to have lower educational attainment than people without impairments. 30.3% of impaired people (compared to 20.8% of people without impairments) have only a compulsory school leaving certificate. 54.9% of persons with impairments (compared to 46.7% of persons without impairments) have completed an apprenticeship or vocational secondary school. Only 14.8% of persons with impairments (compared to 32.4% of persons without impairments) have completed higher education. Men are much more likely than women in the same situation to have completed intermediate education, but there is no difference in the frequency with which they complete higher education. 65.0% of permanently impaired men had completed an apprenticeship or vocational intermediate school (45.7% of women), while 39.5% of

¹ for further results of the supplementary microcensus survey see Annex 5 of the respective document

² Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

³ all kinds of impairments, not only cognitive

women and 20.1% of men had only completed compulsory schooling. Both men and women with permanent impairments had completed secondary school or university (14.8%). (BMASK, 2017, p. 83)

In the summer semester of 2015, students at all public and (for the first time) private universities, universities of applied sciences and colleges of education were again surveyed using a completely barrier-free online questionnaire. Overall, 12% of the students surveyed stated one or more health impairments that have a restrictive effect on their studies. (BMASK, 2017, p. 85)

As of 1 January 2016, there were a total of 101,318 impaired persons benefiting from the "Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz" (BEinstG; Disability Employment Act), 62,693 of whom were employed or self-employed. The number of unemployed impaired persons in the narrower sense was 12,397 in 2016. (BMASK, 2017, p. 108)

Germany

The before mentioned participation report of the Federal Government on the living conditions of people with disabilities is based on data from the Microcensus and Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP). These surveys record the existence of an impairment but not the concrete form. This leads to a very unspecific statement regarding the proportion of people with disabilities. According to BMAS (2016, p. 41), a total of 12.77 million⁴ people with disabilities were living in Germany in 2013. The figures given here in the BMAS participation report are based on the statistics for severely disabled persons (only those cases with a GdB⁵ over 50 are included). They do not provide a differentiated picture of the respective proportion of the various forms of cognitive impairment in the German population as a whole since an official and differentiated presentation of the different forms of cognitive disorders and impairments for the German population is not possible due to the lack of data.

It has already been explained that cognitive impairment can be classified as a mental disability depending on the impairment it causes in everyday life. People with cognitive impairments (with a GdB of 50 and more) are listed in the participation report

⁴ This represents 15.8% of the German population

⁵ Grade of impairment

under "Mental disability, learning disability" (BMAS, 2016, pp. 45-46; see also Rathmann, 2018, p. 131). On the basis of the underlying statistics on severe disabilities, the number of people with cognitive impairments or learning difficulties (including GdB \geq 50) was around 299,000 in 2013.

With regard to the age structure of people with severe disabilities, the following can be stated. Mental and learning impairments are mainly noticeable at a younger age. Thus 59% of the people affected are younger than 45 years⁶. Furthermore, the statistics for severely disabled persons show a larger proportion of men (59%) with cognitive impairments/learning difficulties in 2013 than women (41%) (BMAS, 2016, pp. 46-47).

The GdS⁷ table of the Ordinance on Medical Care sets out the so-called "Principles of Medical Care", including "Principles for the assessment of the consequences of damage in the context of medical care, [...] principles for determining the degree of damage consequences (GdS) and criteria for determining the overall GdS" (BMAS, 2015, p. 4). The values and descriptions listed illustrate the enormous range of different forms of cognitive impairment and (albeit standardised) associated effects on everyday life. Furthermore, it is clear that, according to the GdS-value, integration into the regular labour market or vocational qualification is not always possible due to the severity of the cognitive impairment. It is therefore to be expected that the barrier-free ProfilPASS can only reach those people with less severe or mild cognitive impairment. At this point, the National Report further limits the target group relevant for the accessible ProfilPASS. Cognitive impairments are functional limitations in the area of thinking, perceiving and recognising (Rathmann, 2019, p. 131). In the medical context, mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is a chronic disease. Mild cognitive impairment is impairment of memory, attention and thinking, which often occurs in old age - it is to be distinguished from dementia, where the cognitive deficit is much more severe. Mild cognitive impairment is characterised by cognitive impairment significantly below the usual age and educational level (Albert et al., 2011, p. 272; Etgen et al., 2011, p. 743). In addition, progression of cognitive dysfunction including deterioration of

⁶ Of these, 26% are under the age of 25

⁷ Grade of damage consequences; the principles of medical care uniformly use the abbreviation GdS if the degree of damage and the degree of disability "refers to the extent to which participation in life in the community is impaired" (BMAS, 2015, p. 19), the German national report as well as this compilation of national reports follow this example

anterograde memory is frequently observed in MCI patients (Pollack, 2012, p. 48). Because the progression of the disease is often accompanied by a deterioration in cognitive functions and the cognitive state is therefore difficult to "grasp", it is questionable to what extent MCI patients represent a suitable target group for the barrier-free ProfilPASS.

Greece

In order to be able to break down the Greek reality on cognitive impairments, e.g. people with light cognitive/mental disabilities, psychological/emotional disorders (e.g. ADHD) or developmental disorders (e.g. autism), we need to actualize the existing taboo upon seeking diagnosis of these impairments, along with the limited access to mental health counsellors, organisations or doctors, especially for the lower economic and social classes. Furthermore we should mention that in the Greek literature there is no clear definition of cognitive impairments. The impairments are split in either mental health issues of mild nature, which could though indicate preconditions for the development of severe mental health disorders, such as dementia or schizophrenia, or developmental disorders and specifically ASD⁸. There exists also a significant research on learning difficulties that is though mainly based on children and students. Before evaluating the official demographic data on the point of reference we have to keep in mind that they are most probably to some extent deficient.

People with mild and severe mental disorders are excluded from the labour market, victims of prejudices that plague society and most vocational programs for mentally impaired people provide only occasional employment or fail completely, as they focus exclusively on developing key competences rather than on establishing competences suitable for professional competition.

The social exclusion of these people is multidimensional and does not only concern the economic sector but mainly the lack of opportunities for social inclusion, family formation and community integration (Papánis, 2007, p. 2).

An EESC hearing reveals that less than 10% of people with autism spectrum disorders are employed (EESC 2017). The figures can be explained by the fact that most autistic

⁸ Autism spectrum disorder

people in employment are not diagnosed or not even aware themselves. Autism covers a wide range of symptoms, skills and levels of disability and is therefore referred to as the autism spectrum disorder (ASD). A person can be diagnosed with severe or mild autism, depending on the level of their impairment. The disorder affects one out of every 150 children around the world and one out of 100 in Greece. There is an estimated 20-25% of adults with a learning impairment that fits around dyslectic symptoms.

Slovenia

In Slovenian legislation, people with cognitive impairments are defined as "people with disorder in mental development". To achieve greater transparency, the term "people with cognitive impairments" will be used onwards. People with cognitive impairments are seen as part of the group of disabled people. The criteria for being defined as disabled are: a lasting disease, or lasting physical or mental impairments; difficulties that affect employment; and integration problems in the mental environment. Some of the groups that fall within this definition are: blind and visually impaired persons; deaf and partially deaf persons; physically handicapped persons; and persons with cognitive impairments.

There is no specific data on employment rate of cognitive impaired people as they fall under the category of disabled people. The unemployment rate of disabled people is between 30-50% higher in comparison with the rest of population (current unemployment rate in Slovenia is 7,4%).

There is however data on the number of students with special needs included in secondary education, including data on those with learning disabilities, where we can see that the numbers are increasing each year. Comparing data to the number of pupils with learning disabilities in regular primary schools we can see that on average only 50% continue the education. The other half stays without formal vocational education.

Despite several initiatives the employment rate of people with disabilities including cognitive impairments is increasing due to the fact that there is lack of simple routine work due to technological progress and demands.

Spain

As of 31 December 2016, a database contained 4,228,043 records corresponding to people whose disability has been assessed. Of that total, 3,177,531 corresponded to those persons who, having obtained a degree of disability equal to or greater than 33%, have resulted in the consideration of persons with disabilities. Of these, 1,596,114 are men and 1,581,417 are women. The number of people between the ages of 16 and 64, residents in family homes and officially recognized disabilities in 2016, was 1,840,700. This figure represented 6.1% of the Spanish population of working age. 5.2% of officially recognized persons with disabilities were active, 1.3 points more than in 2015. This activity rate was 42.8 points lower than that of the population without disabilities.

The unemployment rate for the group was 28.6% in 2016, with a decrease of 2.4 points compared to the previous year. This rate was 9.1 points higher than that of the population without disabilities. The employment rate of persons with disabilities was 25.1%, with an increase of 1.7 points compared to 2015. Of the employees, 88.0% were salaried workers and, of these, 76.2% had an indefinite contract. Of the employed persons with disabilities, 28.9% who contributed to Social Security had some type of reduction/bonus in contributions, which was 0.1 points more than in 2015. The percentage of employees with the specific contract modality of disability was 28.7%.

In relation to cognitive impairments, *Full inclusion* (association) estimates that approximately 1% of the Spanish population has some kind of cognitive or developmental impairment. According to the data collected by *IMSERSO* in the Autonomous Communities, at the end of 2016 there were 268,633 people in Spain with a recognized cognitive impairment (equal or greater than 33%). This represents 9% of the total number of people with disabilities recognized in Spain.

Of all these people with cognitive impairments, 154,208 are men (57.4%) and 114,422 women (42.5%). The 35 to 64 years old belong to the age group that is most affected.

The data collected by public administrations is not entirely accurate, since it includes only those people who have a disability certificate (officially recognized as such, and do not consider other possible developmental disorders).

Sweden

The database of 2018 from the Swedish statistics body (Statistiska centralbyrån - SCB) shows that 2% of the Swedish population between 16-64 years-old has some kind of mental disability and the same amount has neuropsychiatric disabilities. Among the population considered to have some kind of disability, less people have completed upper secondary school when compared to the general population (34% against 45%) and the same is true for the amount of people who are employed (64% among people with disabilities against 80% in the general population). Of the employed population in the country, about 10% have some kind of disability, which amounts to about half a million people. It is important to note that around 90% of the people who have mental disabilities have expressed they believe to have reduced working capabilities. It is important to note that few national statistics illustrate the representation of persons with cognitive impairments in particular into the labour market.

Although information about the actual integration of young adults with cognitive impairments into the country's labour market is still scarce, the data collected has shown the largest proportion of the students categorized as having special education needs (SEN) or with cognitive impairments remain outside of the regular labour market (Luthra et al, 2018).

In fact, a study conducted by Jessica Arvidsson (2016) has concluded that only 22.4% of the students with cognitive impairments included in the research are employed, of which most receive some kind of wage subsidy. 47% of them still participate in daily activities, and 6.6% participated in education programs, while 24% of them did not participate in any of these occupations. Studies further show that for people with cognitive impairments, the educational background is the most important factor for their gainful employment in the regular labour market (Arvidsson et al, 2016). Finally, in regard to individuals who are not in employment, education or daily activities, the first years after finishing upper secondary school represent an important period for changing their situation (Luthra et al, 2018). As such, understanding the integration of cognitively impaired persons into the Swedish labour market and the tools to assess their competences must include an overview of both the working as well as the education context in the country.

Types of learning difficulties/cognitive impairments (with regards to the target group)

The German classification system determining the degree of damage consequences (GdS) when speaking about cognitive impairments will be further used in this chapter of the representational report.

ADHD

Schmidt et al. (2012, p. 16) summarize the appearance of (young) adults with ADHD as follows: While hyperactivity decreases in adolescence and adulthood, it is replaced by an inner restlessness. In school and education, performance deficits often occur as a result of limited sustained attention and increased distractibility. In adulthood, symptoms such as disorganization, emotional lability and control and a high stress intolerance are often observed.

Although there are very similar symptoms between MCI and attention ADHD in adults, they can be distinguished by the following symptoms: While the progression of cognitive dysfunction is more common in MCI patients, a dramatic worsening of long-term ADHD symptoms is rather atypical in middle-aged or older adults (Pollack, 2012, p. 48).

Aphasia (GdS⁹ up to 50)

According to the Bundesverband für die Rehabilitation der Aphasiker e.V. (Federal Association for the Rehabilitation of Aphasics e.V., 2019), aphasia is an acquired speech disorder that can occur after brain damage. In aphasia, all linguistic abilities such as speaking, understanding, reading and writing are affected. Inner thinking and personal knowledge are not affected.

Autism

There are different forms of autism. A distinction is made between early childhood autism, atypical autism and Asperger's syndrome. According to the Bundesverband Autismus Deutschland e.V. (Federal Association Autism Germany e.V., 2019), the characteristics of early childhood autism are clearly evident in social interaction with

⁹ Degree of damage consequences

fellow human beings, in communication and in repetitive and stereotypical behaviour. Thus, everyday tasks are performed rigidly and routinely. Those affected have great difficulty in perceiving environmental and sensory stimuli, and very quickly the sensory impressions can become overloaded. In addition, people with autism often find it difficult to make decisions about how to cope with tasks, even if they could be done cognitively. Another characteristic is the frequent lack of initiative and creativity. Although autistic disorders can be improved or compensated for, they cannot be cured.

According to the Bundesverband Autismus Deutschland e.V., the form of Asperger's autism is usually accompanied by a normal level of intelligence, which is even particularly high in some areas. Therefore, according to the Federal Association, it must be distinguished from other autism disorders. In relation to the different forms of autism, according to Baumgartner (2008, p. 1) it is above all people with Asperger syndrome who are able to undergo vocational training. The problems of people with Asperger's syndrome (as a form of autism) lie "mainly in social and contact behaviour and in the discrepancy in their cognitive abilities" (Baumgartner, 2008, p. 1).

Dyslexia (GdS up to 50)

According to the Bundesverband Legasthenie und Dyskalkulie e. V. (Federal Association of Dyslexia and Dyscalculia e.V., BVL), dyslexia is a reading and spelling disorder with the following symptoms in the area of reading: low reading speed; frequent stopping or loss of line in the text; omission, mixing up or adding of words, syllables or single letters; difficulty in reproducing the content of the text read; general knowledge is often used instead of the information from the text when answering questions about the content. In the area of writing, the following symptoms can be identified: high number of errors in dictations and also when copying texts (words are sometimes only misspelled in fragments and several times differently in the same text); often many errors in grammar and punctuation; illegible handwriting (BVL, 2019).

Intelligence gap (GdS up to 50)

The following (standardised) manifestations are associated with impaired mental performance and an intelligence deficit: minor disturbance of perception, retentiveness, mental resilience, social classification, speaking, language and other

cognitive sub-achievements; after leaving school, a further educational ability is shown and there is no significant personality disorder; a training occupation can be achieved by making use of the special provision for disabled persons. (BMAS, 2015, p. 39-41)

Conclusion

The different forms of cognitive impairment described show that in the case of cognitive impairment with a GdS of less than 50, integration into everyday social life is certainly possible. Integration into education and working life is also not excluded. The cognitive impairments described above are associated with impairments in the area of attention and in reading and writing skills, among other things. It can therefore be assumed that people with the forms of cognitive impairment described here represent a suitable target group for the barrier-free ProfilPASS.

Types of measures regarding the inclusion of cognitively impaired people to society and the labour market

Austria

In 2016, there were eight integrative enterprises with more than 20 establishments in Austria. As of 1 January 2016, a total of 2,197 jobs were provided by the integrative companies in the employment module, of which 1,638 were jobs for impaired people. In addition, a total of 92 training places for people with impairments were offered in the vocational preparation module. (BMASK, 2017, p. 98)

Austrian employment policy in the disabled sector is primarily based on the „BABE – Bundesweite arbeitsmarktpolitische Behindertenprogramme“ (nationwide labour market policy disability programmes) of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the "Längfristige Pläne des AMS Österreich" (long-term plans of AMS Austria) of the Public Employment Service Austria (Arbeitsmarktservice; AMS). (BMASK, 2017, p. 95)

In the implementation of equality law, people with disabilities are given equal access to the instruments and measures of Austrian labour market policy and thus to the services of the AMS which also has a basic responsibility for the (re)integration of people with impairments into working life and, in agreement with the social ministry service (SMS), makes use of its range of services. In order to implement the objective

of vocational integration, the SMS offers support and counselling structures for people with impairments and their employers – above all vocational assistance (Netzwerk Berufliche Assistenz; NEBA) and AusbildungsFIT (trainingFIT) as well as individual support – which are subject to ongoing needs-based further development. (BMASK, 2017, p. 96)

In autumn 2015, a new focus was set in the vocational preparation module with the launch of the "IBL – Integrative Betriebe Lehrausbildung" (Integrative Companies Apprenticeship Training). People with impairments are to be offered not only low-threshold qualification, but also access to high-quality vocational training with a formal qualification. (BMASK, 2017, p. 96)

According to the current legal situation and the case law of the Supreme Court, the activity of people with impairments in the day-structuring institutions is not focused on the purpose of employment law, but on therapy. Consequently, those people with impairments are not employees in the sense of labour law. They do not receive any remuneration but pocket money, some of which has a certain "performance component". It is precisely this fact of the low remuneration that is strongly criticized by representatives of the impaired people. (BMASK, 2017, pp. 110)

Germany

ISAR-WÜRM-LECH IWL workshops for people with impairments pursues the social mission of vocational qualification and participation in working life for impaired persons. For the determination of competences the consultants of IWL-ggmbh use among other things the ProfilPASS as an instrument of self-assessment¹⁰.

In addition, the *TalentPASS*¹¹ project (2019) should be mentioned here. Among other things, this project is concerned with developing and using procedures for recording competences in companies and enabling the most formal recognition of informal competences possible – the ProfilPASS works according to the same principle.

¹⁰ See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSZpc7ayEz8&list=PLOfkCcMEu4XkrFiL0-X62W2ebVz9faoM&index=3&t=0s> and <https://www.iwl-ggmbh.de/werkstaetten/lernen-und-arbeiten/profil-pass/>

¹¹ <http://www.talent-pass.de/>

The *SFZ CoWerk gGmbH* is also worth mentioning. They take an intermediary role between job-seeking impaired people and potential future employers. In doing so, they advise both sides on funding opportunities and offer support with applications to the authorities. They help people with impairments to identify and present their competences and link their individual competence profile with their current professional plans¹².

Greece

As provided by article 17 of Law 2646/1998 "Development of the National Social Care System and Other Provisions" (Government Gazette 236 / 20.10.1998), in the framework of the National Program prepared by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity (Art. 2 of the same Law) for people with impairments, specific programs for mental retardation, autism, severe psychosomatic and multiple impairments were designed to ensure the possibility of equal participation in social life, productive participation in the process of employment in the open labour market or in alternative forms of employment and creating conditions for independent or semi-independent living.

In addition, Law 2646/2008 states that under specific programs, Protected Production Laboratories (PPEs) can operate, whose organization, operation, conditions of employment, financing conditions, employment relationships and the method of calculating the remuneration of those who work for them as well as the process of promoting their products, will be set out in a future Presidential Decree. Given the fact that this decree was expected to be issued by 1998, the PPEs are an informal form of employment that function as departments/care units for people with impairments, overseen by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, Non-Governmental Organizations and Parents and Guardians Associations for people with severe and multiple impairments. Although the initiative of establishing the PPEs is a paradigm for the better, according to the interviews conducted and specifically I.K., a special needs sociologist and researcher, the PPEs can act "quite misinforming for the people that follow them as they are disconnected from the reality of the 'normalized' labour market thus creating a huge gap of expectation, while having a quite minimal sphere of access as they are not properly working due to funding deficits and organizational problems" and finally leading to an intensified "sense of not belonging".

¹² <https://www.cowerk.de/beratung-und-vermittlung.html>

Slovenia

In Slovenia, the legislation concerning employment of people with cognitive impairments is mainly regulated through "The Law on Occupational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities". The law generally regulates the right to vocational rehabilitation and some of the issues concerning employment of disabled, and it determines other forms, actions, and encouragements for their employment, and the methods of financing. The purpose of the law is to increase the employability of people with disabilities and create conditions for their equal participation in the labour market by removing barriers and creating equal opportunities. The law also includes anti-discriminative measures as well as a description of who is defined as disabled, and thus affected by the law. Persons with disabilities who are given the right to vocational rehabilitation are entitled to financial benefits depending on the nature, extent and duration of services; this includes free public transportation, partly payment of costs for accommodation, and financial benefits during the vocational rehabilitation in the amount of 30% of the minimum monthly wage. The law also defines that people with disabilities can be employed in normal working environments, in sheltered workshops, and in supported and sheltered jobs that match their skills. Employers must take into account the International Labour Organization Code of conducting with disabilities at the workplace to provide equal opportunities for 21 people with disabilities, including their recruitment and the retention of their employment. Part of the law is also the establishment of a quota system. Employers who employ at least 20 employees are obliged to employ people with disabilities in the context of a specified proportion of the total number of employees. The quota may vary depending on the employer's activity, but it cannot be less than 2% and not more than 6% of the total number of employees. Additionally, the legislation sets forth financial incentives for the companies when they employ people with disabilities. Among other things, these include: wage subsidies; pay of the costs of adapting job; exemption from payment of contributions to pension and disability insurance for employees with disabilities; bonuses for exceeding quotas; and annual awards to employers for good practice in the employment of people with disabilities. In Slovenia there is also a "Law of Organizations for Disabled".

There are several projects and initiatives to increase inclusion in the labour market and promote employability such as "PREHOD MLADIH" – transfer of youth, which aims to

support young people with special needs to either continue their education or find adequate employment. It focuses on employees with special needs by improving their competences and creating safe and supportive working environment.

In Slovenia, the association Zveza Sožitje¹³ provides valuable information regarding people with cognitive impairments. This association is an independent, non-profit, non-party, voluntary organisation with social and humanitarian objectives that strives for the improvement of both collective and individual care of cognitively impaired people and their families.

Spain

In Spain, there exists a Royal Decree (1971/1999) that regulates the procedure for the recognition, declaration and qualification of the disability (persons with disabilities whose possibilities for educational, labour or social integration are diminished as a result of a predictably permanent deficiency of a congenital nature or other). For the purposes of the inclusion in protective measures arising from the status of persons with disabilities, persons of working age (at least 16 years) affected by a decrease in physical or mental capacity of 33% are considered to be in such a situation, with the consequent difficulties in accessing the labour market, maintaining employment and the development of a full career.

In Spain, companies with 50 or more employees are required to reserve 2% of jobs for people with disabilities (Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013, of November 29, which approves the Consolidated Text of the Law General of rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion). The fulfilment of the reservation fee can be replaced by alternative actions (Royal Decree 364/2005).

There are grants for those ordinary companies that have hired or want to hire people with disabilities:

- Incentives aimed at financing the creation of indefinite employment of persons with disabilities in ordinary companies

¹³ <http://www.zveza-sozitie.si/?lang=en>

- Incentives to finance the adaptation of jobs, provision of personal protective equipment in order to avoid accidents at work or removal of barriers in ordinary companies that have people with disabilities
- Subsidies for employment with the support of persons with disabilities in Andalusia as a measure for their integration into the ordinary work system

The *PLENA INCLUSION* association aims for the full inclusion of people with cognitive or developmental impairments and their families. The association offers support in education, employment, citizenship, communication, information and legal representation.

The program *EMPLEO CON APOYO* (Supported Employment) helps people with disabilities who did not have the possibility of accessing the labour market in the traditional way to find integrated employment within standardized companies. The program provides the necessary support inside and outside of the workplace and throughout the working life, by creating conditions of employment, work and salary as similar as possible to those of other employees without disabilities.

Furthermore, there exist the models of labour integration called *Urbanita I* and *Urbanita II*. They include the generation of new jobs specifically defined for persons with cognitive impairments with a specific function in the municipal organization chart. The phases of the project are: evaluation, training, work with a tutor and autonomous work.

Sweden

In the Swedish welfare system, people with cognitive impairments receive support from the government through different initiatives. The official website of the Swedish Public Employment Service (PES) provides information about the support people with disabilities have access to, including financial support to adapt the tasks and working hours to the employee's needs; personal support to perform tasks or enrol in learning programs; support when looking for jobs and when starting a job; psychological adjustment support; and grants to facilitate the person's work performance through assistive technology for instance (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015a).

In order to help preparing a person to the work environment, pedagogical support (Individuellt pedagogiskt stöd vid utbildning) can be provided to persons with disabilities through educational programs that include labour market training (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015b). There is also development employment which intends at developing the skills of an individual through rehabilitation and trainings for example (Arvidsson, 2016).

When searching for or beginning a new job, persons who are regarded as needing additional support due to a disability or learning difficulty may receive support from the Special Introduction and Follow-Up Support (SIUS) provided by the PES. Through SIUS, individuals have access to a support person (SIUS-konsulent) who will support them to develop skills as well as to finding and maintaining a job. SIUS may provide financial support to the employer during a testing period of up to six months, and for at least 1 year after the start of the employment. This financial support is progressively reduced and terminated when the person is able to perform their work independently (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015c). The provision of support both to the employee and to the employer by SIUS is positively regarded, for It may make the difference in the employer's decision to employ people with disabilities (Murphy, 2014).

PES also provides the hjälpmedel på arbetsplatsen, which funds adaptations in the workplace or work tools to facilitate access to the employee, with the goal of facilitating the process of finding and retaining a job (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015d). When feeling uncomfortable in social situations at work, individuals may also receive psychosocial adjustment support (psykosocialt anpassningsstöd) for 1 year. This aims at helping the individual feeling safe and secure in order to thrive at work and may include support for the employer (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015e). Additionally, individuals who have reduced working capacity due to a disability can get personal assistance (bidrag för personligt biträde) which is a grant payed to the employer intending at making it easier for them to find and maintain a job (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015f).

Additionally, persons with cognitive impairments in Sweden have the support of programs such as the protected work with public employers (skyddat arbete hos offentlig arbetsgivare), which employs people with different degrees of disability for up to 12 months in the public sphere, seeking to rehabilitate them for the regular labor

market (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015g). Individuals with disabilities may also be employed in internships or trainee programs available in the governmental sector to improve their opportunities to be employed in the future (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015h). There is also the opportunity of being employed at Samhall (2015), a state-owned company which seeks to create development work opportunities for people with disabilities. Samhall currently has around 25,000 employees and offers employment in five areas: cleaning and laundry; warehousing and logistics; workplace and property services; elderly services; and manufacturing. The company has some targets, including that 6% (around 500) of its permanent employees leave the company each year to find positions at other places (Murphy, 2014).

In addition to these support programs, there are some measures made available by the state, such as the activity compensation (aktivitetsersättning), salary subsidies (lönebidrag), and daily activities (daglig verksamhet) which are relevant to analyzing their integration into the labour market.

The activity compensation can be granted to people who have their schooling period extended due to a disability and to people between 19-29 years-old who have reduced work ability due to a cognitive, physical or mental impairment (Försäkringskassan, [n.d.]). Its aim is both to provide financial security and an increased degree of independence to young people with disabilities, therefore prompting their participation in the society.

Salary subsidy or allowance is the most widespread support targeting people with disabilities in Sweden. It aims at increasing the opportunities for employment by offering to the employer a compensation for the working hours that a person may not be able to work due to the disability and it can be granted to employers who employ people who have reduced working capacity due to a disability. The salary allowance can take three forms: grants to support a person's professional development through education; grants to adapt the working place; and grants to support the employee's job security (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015i).

Finally, daily activities target people with developmental or cognitive impairments on working ages who are neither working nor studying. Representing the most common

intervention included under LSS efforts, daily activities aim at contributing to the personal development and inclusion of cognitively impaired persons into the society and, particularly, to develop their opportunities for work. Each municipality is responsible for organizing the activities undertaken at the centres and they can pay a small daily compensation for those who attend to the activities (Socialstyrelsen, 2019).

In addition to these public initiatives, a number of private companies and projects funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) for instance also support the professional inclusion of people with cognitive impairments. It is noteworthy that although these initiatives tend to have very positive results, individuals often tend to remain in the support system for long periods of time (Arvidsson, 2016).

Problem areas related to competence assessment for cognitively impaired people

In their final report on the "Preliminary study for a representative survey on the participation of persons with impairment(s)", Schröttle and Hornberg (2014, p. 89) state the following with regard to the difficulties and particularities of interviewing people with cognitive disabilities or impairments¹⁴: On the one hand, texts and questions should be formulated concretely and briefly. Also the possible answers should be clear. Schröttle/Hornberg et al. (2013) also point out the importance of specifically trained interview teams when interviewing cognitively impaired people. Transferred to the COOCOU project, this means that counsellors who use the accessible ProfilPASS with the target group of cognitively impaired people should also be trained accordingly. Furthermore, Schröttle/Hornberg et al. (2013) could not find any simplification by using open questions or guideline-based interviews when interviewing the target group. In contrast, they report that the use of fully structured interviews was easier for the target group in question.

On the other hand, there is a "danger of manipulation" (socially desirable response behaviour), as well as yes-no-saying tendencies (content-independent yes-saying tendency or acquisition) or the "'tendency towards the middle' [...] with this target

¹⁴ Under certain circumstances it might also make sense to include the special features described here into the design of the ProfilPASS

group to a particular extent" (Schröttle and Hornberg, 2014, p. 89). This can be counteracted by appropriate training of the interviewers and detailed preliminary discussions with the persons to be interviewed.

One of the main problems when assessing competences of people with learning difficulties or cognitive impairments could be that many of them have very negative experiences with being assessed. Those persons often received negative feedback. Very important is to avoid the term "assessment" or any other similar terms that could raise fears and recall negative experiences among the target group. It is essential to first empower the people and to give them self-confidence before assessing their competences. (Udl, 2019)

When assessing the competences of people with severe cognitive impairments, for example persons who suffer(d) from a brain tumour, it strongly depends on their emotional state and the overall situation in which they find themselves. They do not always have the same capacities and it is strongly related to their emotional life whether they are able deal with unknown matters. Also cognitive impairments such as orientation difficulties, short-term and long-term memory disturbances could be a challenge when assessing their competences. (Kremser, 2019)

Especially for the evaluation and (further) development of the barrier-free ProfilPASS a participation of the target group is indispensable, since the forms and characteristics of cognitive impairments are very diverse. Which problems occur in the competence assessment of the target group in question should therefore be observed in a focused manner during the practical phase and analysed by interviewing the target group.

Needs of cognitively impaired people regarding their competence assessment

Austrian findings

The support of the autonomy of people with cognitive impairments plays an important role. For example young patients with brain tumour are often entirely dependent on their medical personnel and families. They have learned to follow instructions of others because in life-threatening situations this is simply necessary. Unfortunately this often leads to the result that they lose their autonomy and do not know their own personality

anymore. It could be difficult for them to answer questions like “What am I good at” or “What do I like”, because questions like that haven’t been posed for a long time or were simply not important, since the only aim was to survive the cancer. They need to get to know themselves again, but it could be necessary to first include their families and medical personnel in this process, so that they are able to recall what strengths and preferences they had before the diagnosis of the disease. (Kremser, 2019)

German findings

As already mentioned, integration into social and professional life is quite possible for certain forms of cognitive impairment. To ensure such integration it is important to adapt instruments of competence assessment such as the ProfilPASS to the specifics of the target group in question. Indeed, as the (German) socio-demographic surveys have sometimes shown, the percentage of people with cognitive impairments who are competitively employed in the primary labour market is relatively low, at 5% (in the case of people with autism), despite the fact that a significant proportion of autistic people with intermediate and advanced school-leaving qualifications are in fact autistic.

Greek findings

People with learning disabilities of any kind that may be resulting from mental, cognitive or ASD impairments should be provided with a chance to realise their competences well before taking part in a training or professional process. A vocational education or a job that is not appropriate for a person with a learning difficulty may cause decrease in effectiveness and efficiency of his/her work performance, along with a major decrease in confidence and empowerment.

It was also perceived that people with learning difficulties need special testing and evaluation methods to measure their capacity, willingness, abilities, weaknesses, etc. This is something that the COOCOU consortium should take in mind when designing the barrier-free ProfilPASS. An evaluation method for people with learning difficulties is crucial as it is the step that will lead them to be orientated to more appropriate professional and other life paths.

Slovenian findings

The participants interviewed listed/emphasized the following needs:

- Adequate knowledge and experience of the counsellors with regards to cognitive impairments is crucial
- Clear instructions and simple examples to ensure they understand the purpose of each section and task
- Clear and simple language with images
- No time restrictions when it comes to counselling
- Safe and supportive environment where they feel comfortable and understood
- Individual approach supported by group activities; individual to group instead of vice-versa as used in other ProfilPASS tools
- A lot of supportive activities, where their skills/competences can be demonstrated (role play, ice-breakers)
- A certificate or something stating their competences/skills so they have something to prove/show

Spanish findings

Impaired people have in general an extra difficulty in the Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness. This make even more important to facilitate the process in the competence assessment. Of course this kind of difficulty it is not always the same for all impaired people as within this group of people we can find many different situations. The process of competence assessment should be very easy process, clear and understandable.

Swedish findings

The majority of the interviewees contacted for the purposes of the Swedish national report agreed that because the group is very diverse in terms of degrees and the character of the impairments, creating standardized materials is a hard task to accomplish. Thus, interviewees recommended the elaboration of materials that can be available not only in PDF, but in different formats, such as text-to-speech, having the information read to them, and resorting to images for instance. This is resourceful to making the access to information easier and more flexible, adaptable to every individual's particular needs.

In relation to that, interviewees have particularly emphasized the importance the counsellors will have in facilitating the process of assessing the competences of individuals with cognitive impairments. Especially because of the in-group differences that make the elaboration of standard materials more challenging, the counsellor's guidance and support is crucial for the toolkit to be successful in its purposes. Thus, the counsellors are key to help the individuals understanding the format and structure of the materials, as well as what is asked of them. In this regard, it was also emphasized that establishing a connection or having a personal relationship with the individual beforehand is also important to facilitating the process and making it easier for the counsellors to understand how to communicate with the individual they are supporting. Finally, the need for the counsellors to be flexible and to have skills to help transmitting information was also reinforced.

Other important advices from the education context which could be resourceful to consider for the development of COOCOU's goals were shared by two schoolteachers interviewed for the purposes of this report. Indeed, they highlighted that individuals who have cognitive impairments or learning difficulties often have difficulties to take in the information in a big group, and that it is required that the educator or counsellor ensures that they understood the information. Moreover, they indicated that having a clear structure with a few tasks is usually more effective in guaranteeing that they will manage the task in hand and succeed at it. Finally, sharing what is expected regarding how long it will take the person to manage a particular task and resorting to work on a laptop with particular programs tend to be useful in cases in which the person has problems reading and writing.

More importantly, both academic articles and the interviewees have stressed the need to recognizing people with cognitive impairments as individuals with capabilities, rather than individuals with impaired abilities.

Competence assessment or validation for cognitively impaired people – best practices

Austria

The Biv – Akademie für integrative Bildung (Academy for Integrative Education) has developed very useful material in order to assess the competences of people with learning difficulties and of cognitively impaired people:

- "FrauenLeben" – Practical book on the course "Biografiearbeit mit Frauen mit Lernschwierigkeiten" (Biography work with women with learning disabilities)¹⁵
- Instrument for competence assessment "Damit ich weiß, was ich kann" (So that I know what I can do)¹⁶
- Sets of cards for educational counselling and career guidance: activities¹⁷ and competences¹⁸

Germany

As already mentioned, the IWL-ggmbh uses the ProfilPASS as an instrument for the identification of competences. The target group of cognitively impaired people should be involved in the evaluation and further development of this tool. For example, the guidebook "Leichte Sprache" (easy language) published by the BMAS (2018, p. 76) points out that texts in light language should always be checked by people with learning difficulties to ensure that they are understandable.

Examples of good practices related to competence assessment for cognitively impaired people:

- Enabling young people with disabilities to complete a dual training programme – this is the aim of the "InkA - inklusive Ausbildung" (inclusive training) project, which was launched by the Business Forum in 2013: <https://www.inka-projekt.de/>
- IB Disability Assistance Project STELLA: <http://www.ella-ella.eu/stella/>

¹⁵ http://biv-integrativ.at/fileadmin/user_upload/pdfs/Inhalt_und_Beispiele_Praxisbuch_FrauenLeben.pdf

¹⁶ <http://biv-integrativ.at/index.php?id=118>; examples under http://biv-integrativ.at/fileadmin/user_upload/pdfs/Inhalte_und_Beispiele_Kompetenz-Mappe.pdf

¹⁷ http://biv-integrativ.at/fileadmin/user_upload/aktivitaeten_fotos_FINAL_gesamt_72dpi.pdf

¹⁸ http://biv-integrativ.at/fileadmin/user_upload/kompetenzkarten_FINAL_300dpi.pdf

- o The project "IRENE – Increase the empowerment of adults and migrants with specific learning disorders" aims at helping adults with learning a foreign language by using virtual technologies and realities

Greece

Discussions with critical persons and organisations on a local and national level came to the result that there has not been one universally acclaimed tool for the assessment of competence of cognitively impaired people in Greece. There are though multiple initiatives on creating such tools that are used mostly locally in several regions of Greece.

The first to mention is the one of the "Theomitor" Institution in the Island of Lesbos which provides extent counselling and skills assessment for the integration in the labour market for people with a variety of impairments, including physical and mental ones. Its success is based on the collaboration of psychologists, counsellors and social workers.

For dyslexic adults there are a few tests and assessments given during counselling that fall into the categories of tests of general and special abilities, interests and personality. Some of these are the Arithmetic Skills Test (TARI), the Engineering Test Competence (TEMI), Decision Making Test, Labour Values Test (TERGA), Excellent Test etc. The disadvantages of the tests are the way they are performed. Specifically, dyslexic individuals are tired of reading because of their over-visual comprehension and the high volume of questions they are asked to answer. The result of fatigue is that it takes more time to perform the test and this results in a deterioration of the results and the need to repeat them. However, the positive points are written questions where people are partially facilitated as oral speech is avoided. (Kyriakou et. al., 2018)

Finally, M.B. a counsellors that is working with young adults and professional guidance suggested the use of the instructions upon conducting a successful orientation of competences for autistic people by Skills for Care in the UK. Skills for Care and Skills for Health were asked by the Department of Health to work with people who suffer from autism and their families to co-produce a guide for people who carry out assessments, for example social workers, community care assessors, speech and language

therapists, occupational therapists and others, including those who assess people for benefit claims. The guide is intended for people who already know how to carry out professional assessments but want to know more about autism so they can make reasonable adjustments to their practice to ensure a client or patient with autism gets the best intervention possible. To accompany this guide they have produced two additional guides called “How to be a great personal assistant for someone with autism” and “How to be a great autistic individual employer”, as well as two videos called “Important things to remember as a personal assistant for someone with autism” and “Important things to remember when doing any type of assessment with someone with autism”. (Skills for Care, 2019)

Slovenia

There are no specifics related to cognitive impairment as it falls under intellectual disabilities in Slovenia. Professionals in Slovenia evaluate competences of people with cognitive impairments in several ways. The aim of the process is to establish if, to what degree and in what sector the person could be employed, also to establish the level of disability and support required. However, the focus is more on disabilities and limitations and less on skills and competences of the individual. Since Slovenia has been lacking a tool that would be adapted for competence assessment of people with cognitive impairment in the past, the ProfilPASS (blue version) was used in one of the pilots (in 2015) where people with cognitive impairments were included, but as it was quite comprehensive a lot of support and explanation was needed.

During the KISS (LDV, 2013-2015) project, 2 of 20 participants involved in the piloting had cognitive impairments. The idea was to demonstrate the broad spectrum of the tool usability; therefore, members of different target groups were involved. Both participants showed interest and were eager to participate. The process and assessment had positive impact on their self-confidence, perception of their skills and they expressed interest in taking part in different courses in order to improve their skills and employment chances.

Spain

There are different methods used for the assessment of competences of cognitively impaired persons in Spain. Some are traditional methods based on the determination

of the IQ of a person, such as the Wechsler scale (Wechsler, 2002) or the Raven Progressive Matrices Test (Raven et. Al., 1993).

Another, more individual method for assessing competences of cognitively impaired children, is the McCarthy scale of skills and psychomotor skills for children (MSCA). Its purpose is to evaluate the cognitive and psychomotor development of the child. The MSCA is composed of 6 scales: verbal, perceptual-manipulative, numerical, memory, general cognitive and motor skills. (McCarty, 1996)

Sweden

As a best practice, the Swedish company Activa (2019) is worth mentioning. Created in 1976, Activa was born from the perception that persons with disabilities often need more time, training, supplementary education, and support to finding a job. Thus, the company provides trainings, job coaching and support during the process of searching for jobs and after a person finds a job, both for the employer and the employee. Included in these efforts are vocational profiling and methods to assess the individual's competences. In this regard, a representative of the organization interviewed for this report (Interview 2019) has shared a few tools used by Activa, having highlighted first and foremost the need to make the person feel comfortable and to believe that they have skills and competences, even if they do not believe it themselves. He also mentioned the need to understand how to give information in other ways than only speaking and how people can use information in a different way: some people listen, others need pictures, or pictures and text together, phone apps, or even getting people to point out what they think instead of saying it. Other tools described were using forms with questions about the facts you want to find out about the person (considered very restrictive); using pictures instead of asking questions, which are good to help finding out what motivates people and what kind of work they want to have; tools to get people to think about their abilities, like pictures with which they can express their interests; and a tool described as "life-line", which uses a cord to resemble the life of the person in order to help them identifying what they have done and learned during their lives. These tools can be useful for the elaboration of the ProfilPASS.

Additionally, the tools used in the education context which are provided by the SPSM can contribute to the goals of COOCOU by serving as a base for the development of similar ones in the labour market. Among those, the wide resort to digital tools and the *Alternativ och kompletterande kommunikation* (alternative and complementary communication – AKK) must be emphasized. Whereas digital tools are regarded as important assets for enabling the adaptability of the assessment to meet the individual's needs, AKK is a collection of efforts that aim at allowing all people to communicate in their own terms (Infoteket om funktionshinder, 2019). AKK seeks to support individuals expressing themselves through complementary or alternative methods. It includes body language and gestures; objects; characters as alternative and supplementary communication (*Tecken som Alternativ och Kompletterande Kommunikation* - TAKK¹⁹); pictures, pictograms, photographs, and symbols (known as GAKK – Graphic AKK²⁰); and speaking aids and talking devices²¹. AKK thus offers different communication methods that complement each other which provide the conditions for communicating in different situations (SPSM, 2018).

Feedback on the existing ProfilPASS and suggestions for its further development

Austrian findings

The table of content on the first page is a very good example on how the visual representation of content should be adapted for people with learning difficulties. Tables like on page 6 and 7 should be avoided, they are not fulfilling the requirement for the target group (see rules for easier reading). What could be further used are all the biographical contents; for the other chapters (like studies or work) first the target group needs to be determined in order to know what is suitable for the users and what is not going to meet their needs. (Udl, 2019)

¹⁹ In this method, you write the most important words in sentences while speaking. The characters come from Swedish sign language and can both support language understanding and provide a way of expression (Infoteket om funktionshinder, 2019)

²⁰ These include PECS, image maps (bildkartor), pekprat, bliss and samtalsmattor (ibid.)

²¹ There are many different technical aids that read recorded messages or speak with synthetic speech. The talking devices are almost always combined with pictures/symbols and/or letters/text. It provides a wide range of opportunities, from simple buttons with a message to large vocabulary organized in so-called dynamic environments or apps (ibid.)

Regarding the ProfilPASS in Simple Language, some changes/improvements could be made. For instance the 4-step-system (Identify, Describe, Extract and Evaluate) might be too academic or school-like and the rating with the three competence levels A to C could be deterrent for people who have made negative experiences in the education system. Instead of the three levels there could be the two options "like" and "dislike". We might have competences or perform activities on a regular basis where we are good at and which we have to do, but this does not automatically mean that we like doing them. The aim should not only be to find out competences, but also to discover passions in order to have the chance to find a task/a job that one actually likes or wants to do. Regarding the visualization, more symbols and pictures should be used instead of large text blocks. What is useful and should remain as well in the new ProfilPASS are selection options and examples. Many people with learning difficulties have a low self-esteem and face difficulties in finding positive attributes which describe themselves. If they are given options and examples, they might think of qualities that would not have occurred to them otherwise. (Lattinger, 2019)

The different, almost independent chapters with a very nice visual realization are a good way how to design the new barrier-free ProfilPASS. Important is that the people who fill in the ProfilPASS know why they are doing it – that it's something they do for their own and not in order to be examined. (Kremser, 2019)

German findings

As already mentioned, the description of the project in the project application refers to the fact that similar to the ProfilPASS in Simple Language, extensive adaptations for people with cognitive disabilities have to be made for the barrier-free ProfilPASS. In order to meet the needs of this target group, after an initial research, adjustments of the language (1), the content (2) and the layout (3) have to be made.

Greek findings

The extent of the original ProfilPASS can be both a facilitator and a barrier, since working with the tool requires enough time (that is not always given) and large scope of the document might appear intimidating to the users. One option could be to create a tool from which parts can be completed or omitted, depending on the case of the individual.

The examples of the original ProfilPASS should change in notion and form quite significantly in order to fit with the profile of the new target group and take under consideration special needs and abilities.

Imagery is really important but should be quite clear and targeting the exact meaning of its presence or what one wishes to make the user understand, as abstract thinking patterns might not be suitable for the target group.

Slovenian findings

The existing ProfilPASS is quite comprehensive, but although modular, it does not allow to work on only one field independently from others – it's a comprehensive book. The use of the tool takes a lot of time and sometimes candidates lose interest. The new barrier-free ProfilPASS should allow the counsellor and candidate to work on only those modules relevant for the candidate. More flexibility is suggested. One important area is the terminology used. Both participants in the KISS project pilot done in 2015 had difficulties in understanding the terms, so a lot of explanation was needed. Simple and short explanations throughout the tool would be helpful for participants to be motivated to continue. The language should be simple and examples clear. Also setting different levels of competence should be considered as the 3 level A, B, C might not be enough due to smaller progress and differences.

Furthermore, the new ProfilPASS should include guidelines for counsellors regarding working with people with cognitive impairment.

Special attention needs to be paid to the language used describing/promoting the tool to avoid misinterpretations as the target group is sensitive in regard to classification of their "status".

Spanish findings

Only when age and type of cognitive impairment of the target group is clearly defined, the new barrier-free ProfilPASS can suit the needs of its users best. The simplification of the document and the increased use of drawings and graphics will make the process of competence assessment easier for counsellors and users.

Swedish findings

Interviewees agreed that the material they had access to (ProfilPASS in Simple Language) was a very good start to creating something useful and resourceful to the target group of COOCOU. Specifically, interviewees mentioned that there is a great need for a tool such as the ProfilPASS targeting persons with cognitive impairments in the Swedish context.

The feedbacks were particularly positive in regard to the potential the ProfilPASS has to open doors for this group by helping them identifying their interests, as well as realizing their competences, skills, and capacity to contribute to the work they choose to perform. In particular, because currently there are a few opportunities for these individuals to choose from when entering the labour market, having access to a tool that will enable them to participate and make their own decisions based on their interests is necessary.

Finally, the ProfilPASS' self-evaluative method and its potential to shedding light on the individual's passions and skills can be especially relevant for persons with cognitive impairments in Sweden, where their self-development is encouraged through several means. This report has shown that the country offers different tools to facilitating the inclusion of cognitively impaired persons into the labour market. Thus, finding out what they want to work with and believing in their capacities when looking for jobs can be key to prompting their shift from relying on the support of the welfare system to integrating into the labour market. Consequently, ProfilPASS can provide the means for them to profit in the best way possible from the tools available to them in Sweden, therefore supporting their inclusion into the Swedish society.

Importantly, the research conducted in the Swedish context has indicated that in regard to persons with cognitive impairments, the conception of a barrier-free toolkit is deeply connected to its ability to being flexible. Further, the idea of barrier-free also appears to be linked to the provision of a toolkit that can be used by the counsellors and adaptable to the different needs of this diverse group.

Requirements of the barrier-free ProfilPASS

The description of the project in the project application refers to the fact that similar to the ProfilPASS in Simple Language, extensive adaptations for people with cognitive disabilities have to be made for the barrier-free ProfilPASS. In order to meet the needs of this target group, according to the assessment of a first research, adjustments of the language (1), the content (2) and the layout (3) have to be made.

Language adjustments (easy language)

In order to make the competence assessment comprehensible for people with cognitive impairments, a translation of the ProfilPASS into easy language is necessary: "Easy language focuses on people with cognitive impairments and learning difficulties, located at language level A1" (LebensLanges Lernen, 2016). This makes easy language particularly suitable for the COOCO target group. In addition, easy language also helps people whose language knowledge is not yet very pronounced or people who cannot read very well (BMAS, 2018, p. 16). Therefore the barrier-free ProfilPASS could help people with cognitive impairments as well as immigrants who do not have the sufficient language level for the ProfilPASS in easy language.

There are some rules for easy language which are explained in various manuals. The following guidelines could serve as a guide:

- https://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/PDF-Publikationen/a752-ratgeber-leichte-sprache.pdf?__blob=publicationFile (from p. 20)
- http://easy-to-read.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/DE_Information_for_all.pdf (from p. 9)
- <https://www.leichte-sprache.org/> and http://www.leichtesprache.com/dokumente/upload/21dba_regeln_fuer_leichte_sprache.pdf
- https://lebenshilfe.at/wp-content/uploads/Infoblatt_Einfache-Sprache-1.pdf

It is also recommended to have the text proofread by an examiner, e.g. a person who needs to use easy language. This should ensure that the texts are really understood by the target group. If possible it would be recommended to have the (German) manuscript of the accessible ProfilPASS proofread by 1-2 persons from the target group.

Content adjustments

In order to also do justice to the situation of cognitively impaired persons in terms of content, the entire portfolio must be tightened up considerably, as processing is cognitively very demanding and the target group often has difficulty concentrating.

A focus on the areas of hobbies and interests²², working life as well as household and family may be advisable, as non-cognitive skills may also come to the fore. A combination of self- and external assessment can be realized similar to the ProfilPASS in Simple Language (list of characteristics, p. 6/7), but such a list of characteristics would have to be shortened considerably and reduced to a few central characteristics.

In addition, empowerment should be strongly weighted in order to particularly promote the self-determination and participation of the target group. Easy language and support in planning the future are mentioned as important milestones (Lebenshilfe Hannover, 2018, pp. 13, 14, 17, 20).

It should be considered whether one or two pages in the barrier-free ProfilPASS should be used to enable the users to reflect their wishes and needs at work. Not only the choice of occupation should be in the foreground, but it should also be about finding out how the workplace can be designed so that those seeking advice feel comfortable and can work accordingly successfully (e.g. clear routines, fixed contact persons or similar). This can not only be important for potential employers and make it easier for them to get started, but also helps those seeking advice to formulate clearly what they want and need.

The tool should not include words with double meaning or humour, as in such a case people may regard a topic with mixed feelings which can make them feel incompetent to follow the procedure. It would be advisable for the users to have a chance to write their thoughts as they might be more comfortable with that instead of abstract thinking or oral communication with a counsellor.

²² The career choice passport can be taken as a suggestion for the organization of the fields of activity, starting from p. 58 it concerns for example abilities which were acquired by hobbies: http://berufswahlpass.de/site/assets/files/1015/bwp_leichte_sprache_barrierefrei.pdf

Just like in the ProfilPASS in Simple Language, testimonials could be a very useful addition in the barrier-free ProfilPASS. Here for example the examiner(s) of the manuscript (see point 1) or other real persons could be asked about their experiences and competences (similar to the ProfilPASS for self-employment). Fictitious testimonials could also be created. It is also conceivable that in the barrier-free ProfilPASS there are again moderators who offer the users some help and explanations.

At the end of the Barrier-free ProfilPASS there should be a link list that interested people in search of further information can use (e.g. websites with information in easy language about vocational orientation, further education, etc.)²³.

Layout adjustments

Visualizations facilitate text comprehension for people with cognitive impairments. Therefore, similar to the ProfilPASS in Simple Language a lot of work should be done with pictures and symbols. Especially the structure and editing should be supported visually. For example, each field of activity could get its own colour or symbol. The symbols for the four steps from the ProfilPASS in Simple Language could also be used for the barrier-free ProfilPASS. Also the filling in should be facilitated by matrices/multiple choice etc.

Furthermore, for people with more severe cognitive impairments, steadily recurring repetitions could be useful (especially if they face memory difficulties). In terms of the motivation of the persons who are intended to work with the barrier-free ProfilPASS, it could be very useful to split the content into several independent chapters. It should not be a requirement to fill in the book from the first to the last page, the separation into several individual sections could help to avoid frustration and feelings of failure. The possibility to achieve several small successes after each chapter could be a strong incentive and motivation.

The barrier-free ProfilPASS should be developed as a pdf-version that can be filled in online, because people with cognitive impairments often have difficulties with handwritten filling in of forms etc. For a print version it should be noted that there are

²³ An example of such a link list can be found here from p. 20: https://www.biv-integrativ.at/fileadmin/user_upload/pdfs/onlineberatung_barrierefrei.pdf

recommendations for easy language for the appropriate paper and the design of visualizations (BMAS, 2018, pp. 65).

Important challenges that could arise during the COOCOU project implementation

It can be assumed that finding access to people with cognitive impairments could become a challenge. It is to be expected that institutions such as workshops for disabled people will also include people with cognitive impairments. However, the degree or form of cognitive impairment in an individual case is likely to play a not inconsiderable role in the (further) development of the barrier-free ProfilPASS – the question arises, however, of how such sensitive data can be collected and systematised for the further development of the ProfilPASS.

A major challenge in the project COOCOU will be the high degree of individuality in the work with cognitively impaired people. The situations of people are as unique as the personalities themselves, which makes it difficult to pursue standardized goals. What is important is to sensitize the trainers or counsellors who are going to work with the barrier-free ProfilPASS, to inform them and to create free spaces in which they can decide what is best for their participants/clients/patients. By taking the pressure off the trainers/consultants, the participants/clients/patients get the chance to really benefit from the results. (Kremser, 2019)

Another challenge could be the individualized and long-lasting support as a factor to creating good working conditions for people with disabilities and, therefore, to ensuring their permanence on the job. As such, it is important that the efforts to prompting the successful and abiding integration of people with disabilities into the labour market go beyond the stage of finding a job, also including support throughout their working life. This may be challenging because COOCOU focuses on competence assessment, which represents the first stage of the process to finding a job.

The main issue mentioned during the interviews was the experience and skills of counsellors when it comes to counselling people with cognitive impairment. It is important to raise awareness that people with cognitive impairments have skills and

competences that need to be recognised and made visible. These are often overlooked as the condition is put in front.

Useful material for the development of the COOCOU toolkit

In the following, different instruments for competence assessment are compiled. These are potentially suitable for cognitively impaired persons. The respective manual may contain instructions for (educational) counselling for the target group mentioned:

- Biv-integrativ:
 - Competence cards: http://biv-integrativ.at/fileadmin/user_upload/kompetenzkarten_FINAL_300dpi.pdf; Instructions: http://biv-integrativ.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Anleitung__Sammeln_von_Aktivitaeten_20160307_biv.pdf
 - Activity maps: http://biv-integrativ.at/fileadmin/user_upload/aktivitaeten_fotos_FINAL_gesamt_72dpi.pdf; Instructions: http://biv-integrativ.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Anleitung_Kompetenzkarten_Benehmen_von_Kompetenzen.pdf
 - "So that I know what I can do" – Instrument for recording competences; instructions and materials in easy language for competence-oriented guidance: "Instructions and materials for educational guidance counsellors as well as worksheets for guidance clients on the individual phases of the guidance process: recording careers, collecting skills, perceiving personal values, evaluating and deciding, setting goals, describing skills". http://biv-integrativ.at/fileadmin/user_upload/pdfs/Inhalte_und_Bispiele_Kompetenz-Mappe.pdf
 - "FrauenLeben" – Practical book on the course "'Biography work with women with learning disabilities": http://biv-integrativ.at/fileadmin/user_upload/pdfs/Inhalt_und_Bispiele_Praxisbuch_FrauenLeben.pdf
- The Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Education and Training publishes "biographies and interviews of and with people with disabilities in

which their occupations are described in order to set an example" (IBW, 2013) online (The complete folder contains 54 pages and is only available for a fee of 48€ plus shipping costs)

- Hamet2 (<https://hamet.diakonie-stetten.de/hamet-2.html>): "hamet2 is an action-oriented test procedure for recording and promoting vocational skills of young people with increased support needs". (no online instrument, based on work samples + observations as well as PC tasks; purchase of a license + training required)
- Career choice passport in easy language for young people: http://berufswahlpass.de/site/assets/files/1015/bwp_leichte_sprache_barrierefrei.pdf
- Potentially suitable tools from the SCOUT toolkit:
 - my-professional-experience.com
 - Bertelsmann Competence Cards

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Annex 1 – COOCOU National Report Template and Interview guideline

Demographic data related to the target group (Researcher instructions: *Please conduct desk research and deliver concrete data and specific information on the following topics: Specifications regarding the target group of cognitively impaired people (Maybe there are country specific differences when it comes to the classification and definition of cognitively impaired people); How many people are affected? Sociodemographic data of cognitively impaired people (e.g. unemployment rate, grade of education, data about income and other important factors);*

Types of cognitive impairment (Researcher instructions: *Please add your findings from desk research and summarize answers to question # of the interview or focus group guidelines.*)

Possible types of cognitive impairment e.g.:

- People with light cognitive/ mental disabilities
- People with difficulties in learning and processing information (e.g. people with ADHD, autism)

#. Please give us an overview about the different kinds of cognitive impairment that you know of. Are there cognitive impairments for which the work with the ProfilPASS could be more or less appropriate? Or more specific: As the ProfilPASS is an instrument for competence assessment which requires some level of cognitive performance to self-reflect ones one capabilities is there any specific cognitive impairment that's rather less suitable for this?

Types of measures regarding the inclusion of cognitively impaired people to society and the labour market (Researcher instructions: *Please add your findings from desk research and summarize answers to question # of the interview or focus group guidelines*)

Possible types of measures:

- Specific institutions and networks working and dealing with the specific target group (e.g. in Germany *Werkstatt für behinderte Menschen*)

- Integration in the labour market through counselling and/or coaching
 #. Please give us an overview of existing measures, initiatives or programs geared towards assisting and supporting cognitively impaired people in identifying and expressing their competences. Why do you think these are important? What institution(s) is/are responsible for those measures? Are they successful and in what way?

Requirements of the Barrier-free ProfilPASS (Researcher instructions: *Please add your findings from desk research and summarize answers to question # of the interview or focus group guidelines*) For example differences based on specific cultural features.

#. Which rules and requirements apply for the development of the Barrier-free ProfilPASS (e.g. translation of the ProfilPASS into plain and clear language). Are there country specific differences for "Barrier-free" outputs)? Could you imagine that special features of Barrier-free components (e.g. plain and clear language) have to be taken into account in the context of competence assessment of cognitively impaired people? Please name possible contact person and/or institution(s) that could be helpful when it comes to the development of the Barrier-free ProfilPASS.

Competence assessment or validation for cognitively impaired people

#. Please tell us if there is already a tool to assess and validate competences of cognitively impaired people. If there is, how would you evaluate it and why?

Examples of good practices related to competence assessment for cognitively impaired people

#. Could you give us some examples of good practices regarding this group's competence assessment?

Problem areas related to competence assessment for cognitively impaired people

#. What would you say are some problem areas related to the competence assessment of cognitively impaired people? If you were to assess their competencies, what possible problems, challenges or issues would you pay special attention to?

Needs of cognitively impaired people regarding their competence assessment

In your opinion, what are some specific needs of cognitively impaired people regarding their competence assessment? Why do you think they should have their competencies assessed?

Feedback on the existing ProfilPASS and suggestions for its further development

#. Please provide us with some feedback on the existing ProfilPASS. Which additional elements you think would be helpful? *(For interviewers: give a brief overview of the concept and the purpose of the ProfilPASS, as well as its benefits and limitations you know of. Show interviewees or participants a copy of the instrument if they have not seen it before.)*

Important challenges that could arise during the COOCOU project implementation

#. What is your opinion on the objectives of COOCOU? What challenges do you think we could face in its implementation, and how do you think we could overcome them?

Advice regarding the development of the COOCOU toolkit

#. What kind of a product or tools would you use when working with cognitively impaired people? Do you think that a toolbox of some kind would be useful?

ProfilPASS COOCOUCO

Project Coordinator:



Project Partners:



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