



AKTILA-BS

Activation and integration of (long-term) unemployed blind and visually impaired persons

Project abstract

Starting situation

Recent reports show that the unemployment rate of severely disabled people has continued to rise since 2010, despite the overall fall in unemployment. This applies in particular to people aged over 55 who are severely disabled, even though severely handicapped unemployed persons are above-average qualified in comparison to non-disabled unemployed persons (static evidence is available). This also applies to blind and visually impaired people.

Research questions

Against this background, the project "Activation and integration of (long-term) unemployed blind and visually impaired people", was asked to pursue the following research questions:

- What are the reasons for the relatively low participation of people with disabilities in working life?
- Are the promotion and integration offers not sufficiently specific for disability?
- Is the disability-specific expertise of the service providers insufficient?
- Are employers blocking the recruitment of severely disabled unemployed people?
- Is the motivation of severely handicapped unemployed persons too low?
- What are the main barriers which lead to longterm unemployment of severely handicapped people?
- What barriers are specific to blind and visually impaired job seekers and how can they be overcome?

Project Goals

In the course of the project, the above-mentioned research questions are to be answered and on the basis of specific case-related integration efforts exemplary forms of intervention and case management strategies are to be developed which lead to a higher degree of employment among blind and visually impaired persons.



Subtasks

The following subprojects will be implemented to achieve the project goals:

■ **Analysis**

In a comprehensive analysis, suitable target persons (blind and partially sighted long-term unemployed) as well as employers and service providers are asked about the causes and circumstances of long-term unemployment among blind and visually impaired people. The aim is to identify the crucial barriers and to derive the necessary improvement measures from this.

■ **Conception and implementation of an integration measure**

In the further course of the project, an integration measure is developed, which is specifically tailored to the target group and, in a highly individual manner and in close cooperation with the service providers, elaborates deficits, updates existing knowledge and secures the professional competence of the participants. In doing so, special attention is paid to the employment obstacles (lack of mobility, demotivation, lack of self-confidence, obsolete knowledge, etc.) determined in the initial phase. After an intensive applicant training, the participants are supported in the search for a suitable internship, which in case of success leads to an employment relationship.

■ **Design and implementation of a mentoring system**

Involved in the activation process are project workers who, by their own concern and successful professional integration, are able to motivate the blind and visually impaired participants and accompany them through the integration process. These mentors could be successful graduates of the vocational rehabilitation centres or members of the self-help associations who are enabled by suitable training to pass on their experience in peer-to-peer counseling.

■ **Development of suitable support services for service providers**

In order to secure the integration, the responsible service providers (in the majority of cases the JobCenter of the employment agency) are supported by providing the necessary knowledge about eye diseases, workplace profiles and assistive technologies and, above all, by coordinating the efforts of all stakeholders. The result of this subproject is a "toolbox", which the service providers can use in future cases.

Project Structure

- The project has a three-year term. Project start is on 1 March 2017
- The project activities relate to the activation and integration of about 50 blind and visually impaired unemployed people.
- The clients to be activated and integrated are recruited from the fundus of graduates of the Berufsförderungswerke (BFW) Düren, Halle, Würzburg as well as from unemployed members of various self-help organisations.
- The project proposal is submitted by the Berufsförderungswerk (BFW) Würzburg, which also assumes responsibility for project management.
- BFW Würzburg is implementing the project together with suitable partners. In addition to the two BFWs Düren and Halle, the Nikolauspflge in Stuttgart as well as the blista in Marburg are project partners. Various job centers, the Federal Agency for Employment, and the Deutsche Rentenversicherung are cooperating in the project.

