



Good International Practices in Inclusive Vocational Education and Training

Lessons from Finland, Germany, the United
Kingdom and Slovenia

KEY INFORMATION

Commissioning organisation

Christoffel-Blindenmission Christian Blind Mission e.V. (CBM)

Assessment conducted by

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Design/layout:

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Assessment type

Desk review with key informant interviews

Geographic scope

Countries in Europe (focus on Finland, Germany, United Kingdom and Slovenia)

Assessment period

November 2025 – March 2026

Report release date

09.04.2026

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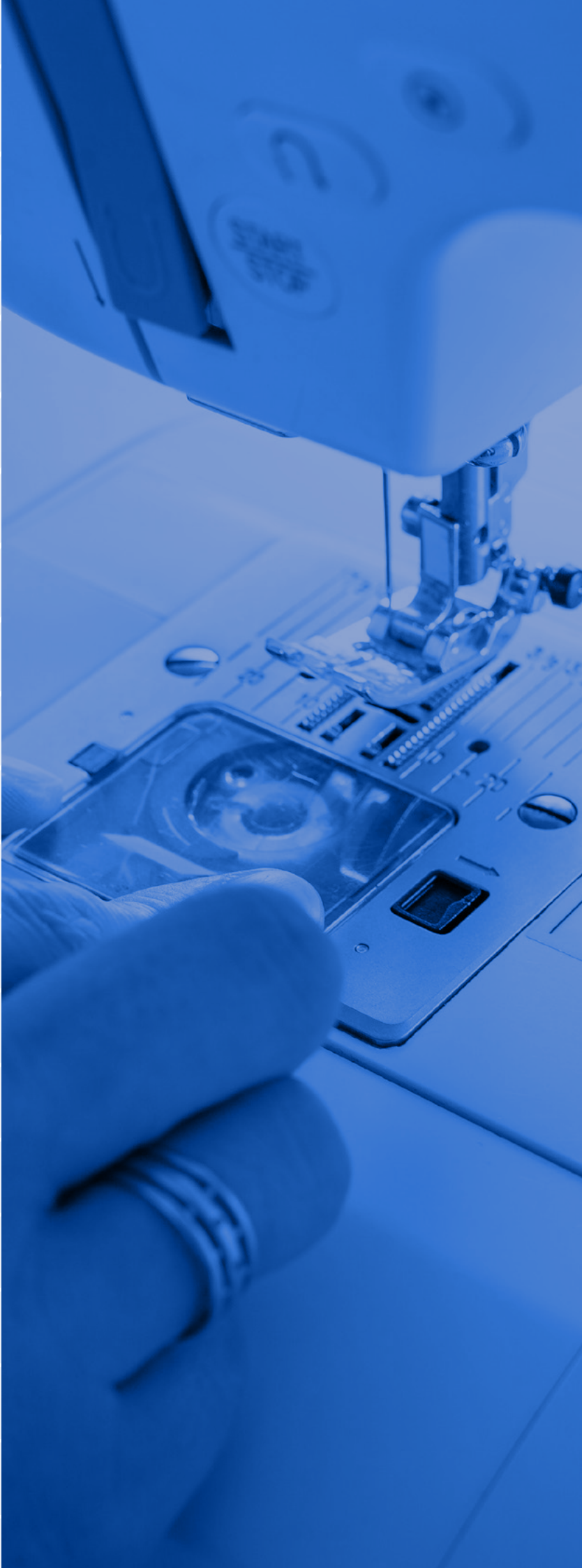
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Data collection methods

Desk review (online secondary research), website review, semi-structured key informant interviews (online and face-to-face), and analysis of policy documents and national datasets.

Tools used

AI translation tools, online resources/databases, video conferencing platforms, email communication, and a structured data collection template.



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Abbreviations and acronyms

AtW	Access to Work
ASD	Acute Stress Disorder
ASR	Acute Stress Reaction
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
ASN	Additional Support Needs
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
AVET	Act on Vocational Education and Training (Finland)
BFD	Bundeswehr Vocational Advancement Service
BaE	Berufsausbildung in außerbetrieblichen Einrichtungen
BFW	Vocational Rehabilitation Centre Berlin
BSL	British Sign Language
CBM	Christian Blind Mission
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CIRUS	Centre for Education and Rehabilitation for Persons with Disabilities
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPTSD	Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CQFW	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DSA	Disabled Students' Allowance
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care



EA	Education Authority (Northern Ireland)
EHC	Education Health and Care Plan
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
EASNIE	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
EDF	European Disability Forum
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training
EU	European Union
ESS	Employment Service of Slovenia
EDUFI	Finnish National Agency for Education
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
FQHEIS	Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland
FE	Further Education
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GIVE	Governance for Inclusive Vocational Excellence
GP	General Practitioner
HR	Human Resources
HRAG	Human Rights Advisory Group
ICD	International Classification of Diseases
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IP	Individual Plan
KII	Key Informant Interview
KMK	Kultusministerkonferenz (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs)
KELA	Social Insurance Institution of Finland
ALN	Learning Hub Additional Learning Needs Support
NAPD	National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities of Ukraine
NHS	National Health Service
NIVET	National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Slovenia)
NSLE	National School of Leadership in Education (Slovenia)
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OD	Osnabrück Declaration
PCDP	Personal Competence Development Plan
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulty
TSI	Technical Support Instrument
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TUVA	Preparatory Education for Upper Secondary Qualification (Finland)
TA	Teaching Assistant / Learning Assistant
UK	United Kingdom
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UN	United Nations
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VM	Vocational matura
WfbM	Workshops for Persons with Disabilities
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
ZRSŠ	National Education Institute of Slovenia



Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to several people who contributed to the contents of this desk review. Their personal experience and expertise helped to validate the online research. They were all busy people, and I am immensely grateful to them for giving their time so freely. We had some very interesting discussions in our exchanges. Their names are as follows: Borut Sever (Director of the Foundation for financing Organisations of persons with disabilities and humanitarian organizations in the Republic of Slovenia, and a Board member of the European Disability Forum (EDF)), Tetyana Dovbush (Vocational Education and Training in Ukraine, Skills4Recovery (GIZ)), Sophie Meinke (Skills4Recovery Implementation Team Lead (GIZ), Germany), National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities (Ukraine), Nataliia Sofii (Inclusive Education Consultant, Ukraine), Mel Davies (Head of Additional Needs (Bridgend College, Wales, UK), Siôn Douglas-Myre (Safeguarding, Bridgend College, Wales, UK), Gethin Williams (Learning Support, Bridgend College, Wales, UK), Abigail Warburton (Veteran Advice Service, Vale of Glamorgan, Wales, UK), Kaisa Rätty (JAMK University of Applied Sciences, Finland), Emma Mannerkivi Erityisopettaja (INKLU-hankekoordinaattori, Savon Vocational College, Finland), Riia Palmqvist (Counselor of Education, Ministry of Education, Finland), Kikku Anu (Training Manager, Live Vocational College, Finland), Pekka Pakkala (English Teacher, Live Vocational College, Finland), Hanna Autere (Counsellor of Education, Finnish National Agency for Education, Finland), Marjut Kuokkanen (Senior Adviser, Finnish National Agency for Education, Finland), Julia Schönborn, (CBM Programme Coordinator Ukraine), Maha Khochen-Bagshaw (CBM Global Inclusive Education Advisor), Ingrid Lewis (Managing Director, EENET, UK as copy editor).



Disclaimer

This report seeks to complement and support the ongoing development of Ukraine's vocational education and training (VET) system, recognising the significant progress already made. Some of the practices and approaches discussed herein may already be in place in Ukraine, reflecting the country's commitment to inclusive education and VET reform for 2024–2030. These commitments are evidenced in a range of policy documents, recommendations, and action plans. Therefore, rather than offering entirely new considerations, the report aims to **showcase considerations for good practice, drivers of positive change, key insights, and practical strategies that can further strengthen** ongoing reform efforts, building upon Ukraine's robust national strategies and policy frameworks.

USE OF THE EXAMPLES

Whilst the report is informed by international experiences and examples, the practices highlighted can be effectively adapted to suit national policy frameworks, institutional strengths and local contexts, offering flexible solutions that encourage positive development.

SELECTION OF COUNTRIES

Inclusive approaches to Vocational Education and Training (VET) in the European countries selected for this study, namely Finland, Germany, Slovenia and the United Kingdom demonstrate good practice in their legislation and practices which can offer approaches for considerations by Ukraine. These systems are distinguished by their provision of individualised support for learners, including learners with disabilities, with special educational needs and veterans, the establishment of robust partnerships between educational institutions and employers, and teacher training. Furthermore, they emphasise adaptability, the development of personalised learning plans, and the creation of accessible and effective pathways into employment for all participants.

Such practices demonstrate a commitment to flexibility and inclusivity, ensuring that vocational education responds to the diverse needs of learners and supports successful transitions into the workforce.



Executive summary

This report was developed as part of the project “Inclusive VET: Improving Training for Veterans and People with Disabilities”. The project is implemented by Christoffel-Blindenmission (CBM) in partnership with the National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities of Ukraine (NAPD). The project is co-financed by the European Union, Germany, Poland, Estonia and Denmark within the framework of the Multi Donor Initiative Skills4Recovery.

Skills4Recovery is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and Solidarity Fund PL (SFPL). Its purpose is to provide practical, evidence-based recommendations for strengthening inclusive vocational education and training (VET) in Ukraine, drawing on selected international country experiences.

The analysis focuses on **Finland, Germany, the United Kingdom (UK) and Slovenia**, which were selected for their relevant experience in inclusive VET and support mechanisms for learners with special educational needs, disabilities, and veterans. By examining how inclusive VET is organised and implemented in these contexts, the report identifies approaches that have demonstrated effectiveness in practice and that offer clear potential for adaptation. It does not aim to analyse or evaluate the Ukrainian vocational education and training system. That work is being researched separately by an inclusive education consultant in Ukraine. Ukraine has already developed several policy documents, implementation recommendations, and action plans related to inclusive education and VET reform for the period 2024–2030. For this reason, the elements presented in this report should be seen as ‘considerations’ rather than ‘recommendations’ for good practice. They may support and strengthen ongoing reform efforts while building on existing national strategies and policy frameworks.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The primary audience of this report includes:

- ✓ vocational education and training providers in Ukraine;
- ✓ teachers, trainers, and practitioners working in vocational education;
- ✓ administrators and institutional leaders;
- ✓ relevant ministries and public authorities responsible for education, labour, and social policy.

Beyond Ukraine, the report is also intended to serve as a resource for:

- ✓ policymakers and practitioners working on inclusive VET reforms in other countries;
- ✓ international organizations and development partners;
- ✓ non-governmental organizations working in the fields of vocational education, disability inclusion, and inclusive education.

The report references a few global experiences and case studies, but the considerations presented should be regarded as flexible options that are inter-linked. They can be tailored to suit the specific requirements of national policies, organisational strengths, and the nuances of local circumstances.

The report is divided into five sections as follows:

1. Introduction and general background to the study
2. Common challenges in the provision of inclusive practices in VET
3. Methodology (desk review, key informant interviews, data analysis and limitations)
4. Focus countries (background; challenges; Finland, Germany, UK and Slovenia)
5. Considerations for inclusive VET practice based on the countries studied

Readers are encouraged to consider points raised in relation to their own context. Readers might feel some of the considerations are not relevant or could be relevant if further adapted. The key considerations are divided as follows:

POLICY SUPPORT, FINANCING AND SYSTEM-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT

For inclusive lifelong learning, policy makers from education, health, and social care need to collaborate closely at both national and local levels to devise strategies and allocate budgets for human resources, accessibility, and technology. State funding needs to ensure accessible infrastructure, specialist services, and reasonable accommodations are available within VET. Flexible frameworks across the education sector are required to allow all learners to pursue pathways tailored to their needs. Ensuring a whole-institution approach guarantees that responsibility for inclusion is shared by everyone, not just specialist staff, thereby enhancing quality and sustainability.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND LEADERSHIP

At the VET level, it is important to appoint inclusion coordinators to oversee support for learners with special educational needs and disabilities, veterans and their families. They also ensure smooth transitions, tailored assessments, and access to appropriate resources and guidance. These coordinators work alongside specialist teaching and non-teaching staff with expertise in areas such as neurodiversity, safeguarding, mobility, and wellbeing, providing support both within the institution and during work placements.

Senior management play a pivotal role in fostering an inclusive culture and should be provided with relevant training and ongoing professional development. Leadership fostering a collaborative, whole-institution approach is key, with all staff sharing responsibility for inclusion and actively engaging in practices like team teaching, peer learning, and regular dialogue with learners and their families.



CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) AND FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT

CPD and ongoing support are essential for VET staff to develop, sustain and improve inclusive practices. Regular monitoring and access to further flexible training, including online and in-person learning, help staff maintain skills and confidence. Easy access to online resources enables educators and administrators to refresh their knowledge and support colleagues.

PARTICIPATION, ACCESSIBILITY AND LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACHES

Learner-centred provision relies on flexible teaching methods and differentiated opportunities, placing learners' perspectives including those with special educational needs and disabilities, veterans and their families at the core of service design.

Early and well-structured transition planning, starting from around ages 13-14, ensures appropriate support at entry and throughout progression through VET. Ensuring their reasonable accommodations are budgeted for is crucial to guarantee accessibility across learning environments and placements.

Collaboration between VET institutions and employers is central to successful inclusion in the workplace. Joint planning, training, mentorship, and funding workplace adaptations support inclusion during training and any subsequent employment.

The report concludes by highlighting key success factors gleaned from the country practices and research, which readers may wish to consider including in their own work on inclusive VET.

Success factors for the provision of quality inclusive VET: A list of indicators for practitioners, policymakers, international organisations and development partners to consider when designing inclusive VET programmes and services.

Section 1.

Introduction



1.1. Report's purpose and scope

The desk review leading to this report was commissioned by CBM in cooperation with the National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities of Ukraine (NAPD Ukraine), funded by GIZ. This report was researched and written within the activity 'Identifying and Documenting Best International Practices in Inclusive Vocational Education', implemented by CBM as part of its engagement under the Skills4Recovery programme.

The report analyses successful examples of inclusive vocational education and training (VET) methodologies, policies and practices from several European countries. It evaluates their relevance and adaptability to the Ukrainian context and offers practical, evidence-based recommendations for strengthening inclusive VET. Rather than providing an exhaustive mapping of national systems in the selected countries, the report identifies approaches that have proven effective in practice and that offer clear potential for adaptation to the Ukrainian context.

1.2. Programme context: Skills4Recovery

The Multi Donor Initiative Skills4Recovery supports initial and further training of skilled labour in five economic sectors relevant to the recovery process: construction, transport, agriculture, services, and manufacturing. The objective is achieved by strengthening the capacities of VET providers in delivering quality and market-oriented educational services, engaging vulnerable groups, and cooperating with employers in Ukraine. Skills4Recovery is co-financed by the European Union, Germany, Poland, Estonia, and Denmark. It is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the Solidarity Fund PL (SFPL). The programme runs until December 2026 and covers all regions of Ukraine.

1.3. Project background

The grant project, 'Inclusive VET: Improving Training for Veterans and Persons with Disabilities', is led by CBM's Inclusive Humanitarian Project Team (Bensheim, Germany) and implemented in Ukraine by the National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities of Ukraine (NAPD), ensuring strong local ownership. The project strengthens the capacity of VET providers to deliver inclusive education for students with disabilities, including veterans. Up to 100 teachers and administrators from at least 18 VET providers will be trained to implement inclusive practices for learners with physical,



sensory and psychosocial disabilities, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Through tailored training and resources, the project gives VET staff the practical tools to create accessible and supportive learning environments.

1.4. Report's analytical approach

This report examines international experiences in inclusive VET to inform both capacity-building and policy development. Particular attention focuses on frameworks, policies and practices related to inclusive VET provision for learners with special educational needs, disabilities and veterans. Key topics and findings are relevant to training VET educators (specialists and non-specialists, teaching and non-teaching) in inclusive practices. The report includes findings relating to the training of administrators, specialist and non-specialist staff; the situation with employers; and the challenges of implementing diversity and inclusion.

1.5. Country focus

The initial analyses looked at provision in several European countries. However, focusing on a small number of countries where good practice is demonstrated of Inclusive approaches in VET would provide a range of examples for consideration by Ukraine. The countries selected for further analyses are Finland, Germany, Slovenia and the United Kingdom for their relevant experience in inclusive education, VET system development, and support mechanisms for learners with disabilities, special educational needs and veterans. These systems are distinguished by their provision of individualised support for learners, the establishment of robust partnerships between educational institutions and employers, and teacher training. Furthermore, they emphasise adaptability, the development of personalised learning plans, and the creation of accessible and effective pathways into employment for all participants.

Such practices demonstrate a commitment to flexibility and inclusivity, ensuring that vocational education responds to the diverse needs of learners and supports successful transitions into the workforce. Each country chapter presents the national context, highlights selected examples of good practice, and identifies key lessons learned.

1.6. From country examples to actionable considerations

Building on these country analyses, the report formulates concrete, actionable considerations for policymakers, VET institutions and development partners. These considerations will guide future capacity-building initiatives, inform policy dialogue, and support the further development of inclusive VET provision in Ukraine in the context of recovery and reconstruction.

Key findings and considerations can be shared with relevant ministries, VET providers, partner organisations, and other relevant stakeholders in Ukraine. The report will be a reference document for ongoing capacity-strengthening initiatives and policy development and can inform factsheets on VET for persons with disabilities, including veterans.

Section 2.



Overview of inclusive VET

2.1. Definition of VET

For the purpose of this study, vocational education and training (VET) aligns with the UNESCO definition of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) which comprises education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods.

TVET, as part of **lifelong learning**, can take place at **secondary**, **post-secondary** and **tertiary** levels and includes **work-based learning** and **continuing training** and **professional development** which may lead to **qualifications**. TVET also includes a wide range of **skills development** opportunities attuned to national and of **literacy** and **numeracy** skills, **transversal skills** and **citizenship skills** are integral components of TVET.¹ This report uses the term vocational education and training (VET) which is widely used in European policies, frameworks and practices.

2.2. Common challenges with inclusive VET

A significant barrier highlighted globally to improving diversity and inclusion in VET is the lack of adequate teacher training (Sanchez et al 2009). Many educators are not sufficiently prepared to address the diverse needs of students, especially those from underrepresented or marginalized groups. This lack of preparation causes misunderstanding about the importance of diversity and inclusion, resulting in educational practices that fail to support all students effectively. Furthermore, some educators may believe that student diversity presents a problem to be managed rather than an opportunity to enrich the learning environment. When VET teachers do not possess adequate professional training to support students with disabilities, this leads to them being unable to deliver instructional support tailored to the specific needs of these learners. For instance, conventional teaching approaches frequently overlook the unique learning styles of students who are deaf, blind, or have intellectual disabilities (Nugroho & Hartanto 2025).² Some institutions may have rigid policies that prevent individuals with disabilities or veterans from enrolling. This perspective can lead to resistance against inclusive educational practices and hinder the development of supportive learning environments for all students.³

Physical and systemic obstacles also prevent the full participation of all students. In many educational settings, physical accessibility remains an issue, along with rigid



curricula that do not accommodate diverse learning needs. Additionally, the unequal allocation of educational resources makes inclusive education even more challenging. Many vocational institutions are without facilities such as wheelchair ramps, accessible classrooms, Braille materials, and speech-to-text systems, which creates considerable barriers for learners with disabilities both academically and in their everyday routines.⁴ Leaders and teachers who are unclear about inclusive practices can exacerbate these challenges, leaving educators without the necessary guidelines to foster an inclusive environment. The absence of clear and actionable policies often results in educational practices that are exclusive and discriminatory, further marginalising students who already face significant barriers to learning (Ebuenyi et al, 2018).⁵

Cultural misconceptions and negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities or mental health issues create profound barriers. These cultural barriers include stigma, stereotypes, and low expectations, which can influence educators' attitudes and the institutional culture of VET programmes. Such attitudes not only undermine the potential of students but also perpetuate a cycle of exclusion and marginalisation. Tackling these misconceptions requires a concerted effort to educate and train educators on the value of diversity and the capabilities of all students, regardless of their background or the challenges they may face (Juvonen et al., 2019).⁶

Section 3.

Methodology



3.1. Desk review

A comprehensive desk review was conducted to identify different practices and policies in European state-run, inclusive VET provision. Particular attention was given to highlighting good practice examples which can be modified or adapted to inclusive VET provision in Ukraine. After extensive online research, a decision was taken to explore best practices in Finland, Germany, Slovenia and the UK,

Of the four countries, the UK and Finland were selected for deeper investigation into their provision, focusing on policy, laws and implementation, funding, challenges, training for educators, teaching assistance, access, reasonable accommodation, and budget allocation. Finland and the UK's focus on flexible, individualized, and learner-centric approaches in their inclusive VET provision. Whilst there is evidence of this approach in Germany and Slovenia also, their approach focuses on occupation-specific systems. Finland uses individual competence plans and integrated support rather than separate special curricula, while the UK excels in diverse, tailored pathways.

Detailed internet-based secondary research was conducted in four countries on the national context, frameworks, policies and practices using a variety of national datasets. For a list of all sources reviewed see references.

A website review of inclusive VET provision for persons with disabilities and veterans was conducted through online secondary research in the four countries and online key informant interviews (KII). This included looking at / discussing the journey from pre-enrolment through to completion or employment, reasonable accommodations, access, and support.

3.2. Key informant interviews

For Finland and the UK, online and face-to-face KIIs were arranged. The KIIs sought to investigate further the experience of practitioners and learners. They also elicited deeper insights into practice around transition stages e.g., pre-assessment, enrolment, support, accessibility, progress and progression into employment or higher studies. KIIs were conducted with key personnel involved in organising / experience and knowledge of provision for learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and/or veterans.

A semi-structured questionnaire was developed to help record the lived experience of professionals implementing the services (e.g., department heads of resource centres,



specialist and support staff, and where possible, current and graduate learners with disabilities and/or veterans (see Appendix 2).

3.3. Data analysis and reporting

A template tool (Appendix 1) was developed to ensure consistent information collection and systematic analysis across all countries. This also acted as a template for consultants developing a similar report within Ukraine.

Key personnel from NAPD, CBM and GIZ were consulted throughout the data collection, analysis and reporting process to gain their insights, inputs and guidance. This should ensure that the findings and considerations are relevant and useful in the context of the major reforms being carried out by Ukraine's government to meet its economic and reconstruction needs focusing on a more flexible, accessible VET system.

The information for each country was analysed to elicit a general overview of practices and policies and draw out a brief country case study. For the two focus countries, additional work was done to compile details of the terminology being used within inclusive VET provision.

A presentation of key learnings from Ukraine and this study was delivered online with representatives from CBM, GIZ and NAPD. This final report outlining key findings and considerations for good practice will be published electronically and disseminated with relevant NAPD, CBM and GIZ stakeholders.

3.4. Study limitations

This desk review draws principally upon existing documentation, publicly available datasets, and published literature. While most information was sourced online in English, certain materials required translation using Artificial Intelligence tools, which may have impacted the reliability and accuracy of the data. As a desk-based review, the study did not involve site visits to inclusive VET institutions, meaning that direct observation of services and verification of practices was not possible.

The number of KIs conducted was restricted due to limited time and the busy schedules of potential participants, resulting in only one interview from Slovenia, one from Europe, one in Germany, five from Finland, and six from the UK. A significant gap in the research is the absence of first-hand accounts from individuals with disabilities regarding their experiences in VET settings. Despite efforts to obtain relevant contacts, none were forthcoming. While secondary sources reflecting learners' experiences were identified and incorporated, primary data would have provided more direct insights.

The scope for online interviews was also constrained, as English was the primary language used, potentially limiting participation from non-native English speakers and affecting the breadth of perspectives captured.

Section 4.



Focus countries

This section presents the focus countries selected for analysis: Finland, Germany, the UK and Slovenia. They were chosen for their relevant experience in inclusive VET, including established policy frameworks, institutional arrangements and practical approaches to supporting learners with disabilities, including veterans. The country profiles highlight selected practices and key lessons that inform the recommendations presented in this report.

4.1. Background to provision in European countries

The legal framework underpinning inclusive vocational education in the European Union is strongly guided by the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD, 2006\)](#).⁷ This convention imposes a legal obligation on EU Member States to provide access to inclusive vocational education, recognising it as a fundamental right. [Article 24](#)⁸ addresses education by mandating that all individuals have access to high-quality, lifelong, and inclusive vocational training, and explicitly requires that no one is excluded from general education opportunities. Furthermore, [Article 27](#)⁹ focuses on work, guaranteeing access to vocational guidance and placement as an essential means to facilitate integration into the open labour market. The article also advocates for a shift away from segregated, sheltered workshops and towards meaningful employment within the broader community.

Additional provisions, such as [Article 2](#)¹⁰ on reasonable accommodation, [Article 9](#)¹¹ concerning accessibility, and [Article 13](#)¹² addressing assistive technologies and devices, reinforce the commitment to removing barriers and promoting full participation for persons with disabilities.

Despite this comprehensive legal foundation, significant challenges remain. These include insufficiently trained staff, limited accessibility in VET settings, and the persistence of segregated, low-income employment models that hinder genuine inclusion. The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) has identified a pressing need to focus on reasonable accommodation and to drive cultural, policy, and practical changes.¹³ Such efforts are crucial to bridge the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that VET becomes truly inclusive and accessible for all individuals, irrespective of their abilities. The Agency promotes efforts to make VET systems more inclusive through strengthened legislative, financial, and governance frameworks.

The European landscape for VET is underpinned by a comprehensive framework of policies and initiatives designed to ensure that every individual has access to quality learning, upskilling, and reskilling opportunities. Central to this vision is the [European Pillar of Social Rights and Skills Agenda](#)¹⁴ which sets out concrete initiatives to turn targets into reality. It has country targets for promoting equal opportunities, fair working conditions, and universal access to training by 2030. It champions equal opportunities, fair working conditions, and lifelong learning for all. The Council Recommendation on VET (2020) [VET Strategy for 2026-2030](#)¹⁵ further reinforces this ambition by advocating for flexible and high-quality vocational pathways that are responsive to individual needs and changing labour market demands.

The [Osnabrück Declaration \(2020-2025\)](#),¹⁶ sets out strategic priorities for VET, focusing on resilience, adaptability, and supporting the digital and green transitions, ensuring that no learner is left behind. Looking ahead, the Commission's [VET Strategy for 2026-2030](#)¹⁷ (as endorsed by the [Herning Declaration \(2025\)](#))¹⁸ positions the sector to address emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, green technologies and sustainability, while prioritising adaptability to labour market shortages, inclusivity, and increased international mobility.

International collaboration is further fostered through [Erasmus](#)¹⁹ programmes, which provide opportunities for learners and educators to gain valuable experience abroad and share best practices.

Collectively, these policies and initiatives are shaping a VET environment that is dynamic, inclusive, and future-ready, equipping individuals with the skills and competencies needed for success in an evolving world.

The [European Quality Assurance Framework](#) (EQAVET)²⁰ was developed as an EU-wide tool in 2009 to help Member States improve and monitor the quality of VET systems. The framework covers the different phases of quality assurance: planning, implementation, evaluation and feedback. Each phase includes common quality requirements and indicative descriptors, which Member States and training providers can use to support them in implementing the framework when needed. Furthermore, the framework includes several indicators from which Member States can select those that best suit them to support assessment of VET systems and/or providers and improvement of quality.

The implementation of the 2020 Council Recommendation for EQAVET is supported by [National Quality Assurance Reference Points](#)²¹ which bring together relevant key stakeholders at the national and regional levels. The National Reference Points (NRP) play a key role in implementing the framework at the Member State level. Key actions include implementing and advancing the EQAVET Framework, engaging stakeholders such as [Centres of Vocational Excellence \(CoVEs\)](#),²² supporting self-evaluation to assess progress and digital readiness, actively participating in the EQAVET Network, providing updated national quality assurance descriptions, and taking part in EU peer reviews to foster transparency and trust among Member States. Each Member State is represented via an elected agency / stakeholder. For example, Finland is represented by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI).

CoVEs develop practices and resources to meet ongoing challenges. One of the challenges highlighted is that VET professionals often need additional skills to support learners with diverse needs, including disadvantaged learners or those with disabilities. Traditional training formats are not always flexible or inclusive enough to equip educators, employers and public sector staff with the tools to adapt teaching and learning to these groups. The GIVE [Governance for](#)



Inclusive Vocational Excellence (GIVE)²³ project (Malta) has integrated a set of practices aimed at promoting inclusive VET. The practices were developed to provide VET practitioners, managers and companies with practical and operational tools to help them acquire an inclusive mindset and facilitate the inclusion of learners facing specific disadvantages. See Box 1 for an example of the resources available:

Box 1:

GIVE resource Guidelines for Inclusive Excellence

Work and transition to work Unit 5: **Dedicated Units of Professionals**

1.1 Description of the practice

The Institution identifies the disadvantaged/at-risk groups amongst the student body to analyse their needs and issues in order to **create a specialised unit** to support their individual learning needs provide the necessary Human Resources (HR).

1.2 In-depth description of the main elements:

1.2.1 Subject

The **Department Heads (Directors/ Deputy Principals)** are responsible for identifying the HR needs that would add value to the students' learning experience and enhance inclusion.

1.2.2 End users

Learners classified as coming from a disadvantaged background or belonging to at-risk groups in the community include:

- ✓ Students with a migrant background
- ✓ Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- ✓ Students in a transitional phase
- ✓ Students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds
- ✓ Students with psycho-social issues
- ✓ Students with pastoral needs
- ✓ Mature Students
- ✓ Inmates from correctional facilities
- ✓ Young parents re-entering education
- ✓ Students who face discrimination based on gender and sexuality

1.2.3 Functions

Carrying out an in-depth analysis of the identified student groups to establish what services/facilities are required to better meet their needs (academic and non-academic).

1.2.4 Goals

Creating the HR structure required to support the different groups of the student body requiring further or dedicated assistance for inclusion. The main aim is to have dedicated units or roles that take care of some of the issues highlighted through the analysis exercise. Each role or unit deals with either one or several of the student groups identified above. ►



1.2.5 Output

The results of this practice consist of dedicated units/roles including:

- ✓ Integration Unit
- ✓ Learning Support Unit
- ✓ Inclusive Education Unit
- ✓ Career Advisory
- ✓ Wellbeing Hub
- ✓ Chaplaincy
- ✓ Student Liaison Office

CHALLENGES

The European landscape of VET provision is not unified, but rather a collection of distinct national systems. As such each country will have its own challenges and proposals for dealing with them. The challenges presented in this section are ones the author has identified as general barriers.

Key challenges include (see also [EASNIE](#)):²⁴

- ✓ inflexible funding;
- ✓ poor data available on individual learning needs leading to poor planning for support service provision (human resource, accessibility, reasonable accommodations, assistive technology);
- ✓ inadequate teacher education in inclusive pedagogy;
- ✓ negative attitudes towards inclusion;
- ✓ addressing the intersectional needs of learners;
- ✓ high dropout rates amongst learners with special educational needs and disabilities;
- ✓ bridging policy and practice gaps;
- ✓ reducing gender gaps in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM);
- ✓ Fostering collaborations between VET and employment (ensuring the provision of accessible working conditions and provision of reasonable accommodations in the workplace).

To address these challenges, EASNIE recommends personalised pedagogies, wider adoption of digital technologies, and a holistic approach that incorporates community engagement.

4.2. Finland

4.2.1. CONTEXT AND SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Finland ratified the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC, 1989\)](#)²⁵, [Optional Protocol signed 2012](#)²⁶ and the [CRPD](#)²⁷(Optional Protocol signed 2016)²⁸ in its legislation in 1991 and 2016, respectively. Ratifying and signing the Optional Protocols means

that Finland is legally bound to international standards in its provision for children and persons with disabilities as a right. This includes access to education.

As reported by [Eurostat 2024](#),²⁹ 34.9% of Finland's population are persons with disabilities.

[Education Statistics Finland \(2022\)](#)³⁰ indicates that a total of 566,600 pupils with special educational needs or disabilities were in pre-primary, basic and secondary education. Of these, 51% were boys and 49% girls. Intensified or special support was received by 21.3% of all learners. Whilst special schools still exist, most learners with SEND attend mainstream classes. Finland does not have official statistics on the number of persons with disabilities within the labour force or data on the main characteristics of unemployment among persons with disabilities. There are some estimates of how many persons with disabilities are in the labour market. For example, an estimate from 2013 indicated that 15-20% of Finnish persons with disabilities were employed.³¹ [The Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired](#)³² has estimated that 24% of persons with visual disabilities aged 15 to 64 are fully employed, 16% are partially employed, and 3% are unemployed.

In Finland, the national administration of education and training has a two-tier structure. The Ministry of Education and Culture is the highest authority and is responsible for all publicly funded education. The Ministry is responsible for preparing educational legislation, all necessary decisions, and its share of the state budget for the Government. It oversees the administration of education, research, culture, youth issues and sports. Under the Universities Act, which Parliament passed in June 2009,³³ Finnish universities are independent corporations under public law or foundations under private law.

[The Finnish National Agency for Education \(EDUFI\)](#)³⁴ is the national development agency responsible for early childhood education and care, pre-primary, basic, general and vocational upper secondary education as well as for adult education and training. It aligns its standards and quality for VET with the EQAVET Framework.³⁵

The framework for educational provision is articulated in Finland's Basic Education Act 628/1998³⁶ which establishes free, compulsory nine years of comprehensive schooling for learners aged 7–16. The act is revised regularly to reflect developments. A key was revision the extension of compulsory education to age 18 (Act on Compulsory Education (1214/2020))³⁷ extended compulsory schooling to 18 years. Other key revisions include enhanced student support tiers (2011),³⁸ updated National Core Curriculum (2014)³⁹ focusing on active learning and student-centred approach teaching. In 2025 Finnish education reform advanced inclusive education by updating the Act on Primary and Lower Secondary Education (1090/2024). The reform aims to make the support system clearer and more effective by emphasising early intervention and strengthening support provided in groups. It ensures that, wherever possible, all pupils receive their education in mainstream classrooms, further supporting an inclusive approach.⁴⁰ The focus is on having highly trained teachers in all classrooms with qualified specialist teachers to support in-class (co-teaching) or supporting individual / group-based support (separate support some of the time).

The inclusive education model recognises the diverse learning needs of learners in mainstream classrooms. Specialised support is provided while learning alongside their peers. With highly trained teachers (classroom and specialised), individualised learning plans, and a student-centred approach, Finland ensures that every child has the resources and encouragement they need to succeed.

In 2026, Finland will launch an eight-year pilot to test a more flexible licensing model for VET. The reform aims to make VET provision more responsive to labour market needs and strengthen collaboration between providers, public administration, and regional actors. In line with the European Green Deal Strategy⁴¹ for a green, digital, carbon neutral future, Finland is upgrading curriculum units to meet green and digital transitions, enhancing working-life relevance, and implementing AI guidelines. Key updates include updating common, optional units, strengthening work-based learning, and enhancing support for specialised skills, particularly in labour-shortage sectors. The Ministry of Education and Culture has prepared a programme to advocate for equity and non-discrimination in education. The measures will be carried out during 2025 to 2027.⁴² The programme will offer early childhood education and care providers (ECEC), schools, educational institutions and higher education institutions tools to help them combat all types of bullying, harassment and discrimination related to personal characteristics, such as gender, appearance, worldview, sexuality, ethnic background, disability or illness, or belonging to a national minority. Support services will be enhanced to follow the approach developed for primary and lower secondary. There are two systems to support pupils: *Support in learning and school attendance* and *pupil welfare system*. The approach will include continuous professional development (CPD) in equity and non-discrimination.

Another initiative for fostering inclusive quality education in Finland (and Ireland) is the **Technical Support Instrument** (TSI).⁴³ More specifically, the project supports Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture and Ireland's Department of Education to identify key objectives and plan actions to promote equitable learning opportunities, improve educational outcomes and increase access to mainstream education for all. The project runs from 2023 to 2026.

4.2.2. TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

Special educational needs (SEN): The Finnish education system takes inclusion seriously. The term special educational need does not appear in Finnish educational legislation because inclusion is the goal.⁴⁴ To meet each child's individual needs, Finland's education system provides individualised support through highly trained mainstream educators, specialised teachers through in-class and small-group support. From early childhood education, a child's need for support is assessed by considering observations from both parents/caregivers and educators or based on the child's earlier established need for special support. The child may need support in physical, cognitive, emotional and/or social areas of development or in skills development for varying periods of time. Assessment is on-going, with support adjusted throughout a child's education pathway.⁴⁵

Disability: According to the updated Act on Services and Support Measures Organised on the Basis of Disability, a person with disability is defined as "a person who, due to a disability or illness, has long-term special difficulties in carrying out normal life activities."⁴⁶ The Constitution of Finland states that the public authorities must guarantee basic and human rights for all, which includes protection for persons with disabilities.

As a member of the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), Finland is committed to creating a society that is open to all.⁴⁷ Legislation has a long commitment of support for a person with a disability. The **Disability Services and Support Act** (1987): "promote[s] the conditions of a person with a disability to live and work as an equal member of society and to prevent and eliminate the disadvantages and obstacles caused by the disability".⁴⁸

Private and public sectors are required to provide accessibility in line with the European Accessibility Act 2017.⁴⁹ The [Act on the Provision of Digital Services](#) (2019)⁵⁰ requires that websites and mobile applications be designed to be more accessible to users, including persons with disabilities.

Alignment with CRPD definition: With respect to education, all citizens have the right to basic free education. In 2010, amendments were made to the [Basic Education Act \(Perusopetuslaki 628/1998\)](#)⁵¹ establishing the principle of inclusion in mainstream education to ensure that all children can attend the local school. The Act states that a child who has difficulties in learning is entitled to part-time special-needs education and enhanced support in accordance with an individual learning plan.

Inclusive education: Inclusive education is the approach of compulsory basic education and most children with disabilities go to their local community school. [The Country Report on Finland for the Study of Member States' Policies for Children with Disabilities \(2013\)](#)⁵² states that all children, including those with disabilities, have the right to free basic education in their local school. Pupils with auditory impairments have the right to be taught in sign language. The law stipulates the right to receive special needs education and enhanced support, based on a plan for individual teaching arrangements, including interpretation and assistant services and other services. In general, children with disabilities in Finland attend mainstream schools with other children. **Special instruction may be arranged** in connection with other instruction in a mainstream class, a special classroom within a mainstream school, or in a special school. All teacher education courses include training in inclusive pedagogies. Also, the availability of trained personal assistants and school assistants is provided.

Special education: Children and young people with severe mental health problems, multiple or severe disabilities, developmental disabilities or autism spectrum disorders who need intensive and multi-disciplinary special support for their learning and rehabilitation are provided with special education and/or specialist support. Special school provision supports tailored, long-term, and multi-professional assistance to pupils who need it, while still aiming for inclusion in mainstream education. In addition, this may include children who are home-schooled (Finnish National Agency for Education).⁵³ According to [Eurydice 2025](#),⁵⁴ there are six state owned secondary special schools. They are intended for learners whose educational needs cannot be provided in their community school. The state-owned special schools are also national development and service centres that provide expert services for municipalities and other schools and VETs, e.g., [Live Vocational College](#).⁵⁵

Reasonable accommodation: Based on the [Non Discrimination Act \(2014\)](#),⁵⁶ educational institutions are legally required to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure students with disabilities or special needs have equal access to education. This can include the provision of assistive devices for classrooms, developing alternative options to complete studies, and adapting teaching practices. Authorities, education providers, employers and providers of goods and services must provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities as needed.

In employment, reasonable accommodations may mean adapting the workstation to suit the employee or implementing different working methods or IT solutions.

Assistive devices: Assistive devices are primarily provided for free through the public healthcare system via municipal health centres, wellbeing services counties, and hospital district assistive device units. KELA,⁵⁷ the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, can pay for learning devices such as computers and their accessories for children with different disabilities.

Veteran: In Finland, the term ‘veteran’ (*veteraani* or *sotaveteraani*) primarily refers to individuals who served in the Finnish Defence Forces during the wars between 1939 and 1945.⁵⁸ Finland has a universal male conscription system, requiring all male citizens to serve 165, 255, or 347 days upon turning 18. Approximately 80% complete their service. Conscription is a cornerstone of national defence, with options for unarmed service or non-military service. Women may volunteer to apply for conscription.⁵⁹ If an individual is injured during military service, for instance, in an accident, or if they develop a service-related illness, the Defence Forces will cover medical care during service. After service has ended or is interrupted due to the accident or illness, the State Treasury meets medical care expenses as well as other compensations under law (Act on Compensation for Military).⁶⁰ Those who have taken part in military service are eligible for rehabilitation compensation for the costs of their mental health support and care, during and after service.⁶¹

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): According to the Current Care Guidelines (2020) of the Finnish Medical Society Duodecim, the Finnish Psychiatric Association, and the Finnish Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, PTSD is defined according to international guidelines developed by the [International Classification of Disease \(ICD\)](#)⁶² and the [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders \(DSM\)](#).⁶³ It is defined as a severe, often disabling mental health condition, resulting from exposure to traumatic events (e.g., violence, accidents, war). It is characterised by persistent, intrusive memories, avoidance of triggers, and negative mood changes. It is addressed through assessment and treatment of acute stress reaction (ASR), acute stress disorder (ASD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in all age groups. Psychosocial support and active monitoring are recommended after a potentially traumatic event. If symptoms require, short, focused cognitive-behavioural psychotherapy can be used for ASD. Trauma-focused psychotherapeutic interventions are the first-line treatment for PTSD. Antidepressant medication is effective, but evidence on other pharmacological options and on treatment combinations is limited. Specific groups, such as first responders, military and peacekeeping personnel may require tailored interventions.⁶⁴

4.2.3. INCLUSIVE VET IN PRACTICE

Over the last few decades, the Finnish VET system has developed into a competence-based, customer-oriented educational programme with two overarching aims: to develop a skilled labour force and to promote social inclusion. Support and guidance have become increasingly important in promoting an inclusive approach to provision. According to Finnish VET policy documents, all students are entitled to support and guidance, with measures documented in a personal competence development plan (PCDPs)⁶⁵ that recognises their existing skills, identifies areas for further growth, and, upon successful completion, without the need for final exams, leads to a qualification. If students with special educational needs require extended support in their studies, they are entitled to special or intensified support (Act on Vocational Education and Training (AVET) 531/2017). Vocational education refers to school-based vocational upper secondary education and training provided by VET institutions and adult education centres as well as apprenticeship training and competence-based qualification. Technical education is a synonym for vocational education.⁶⁶ In VET about 50% of students come straight from compulsory education and are aged 15-19 and 50% are adults. They all study in the same institutions / classrooms. The school-based and work-based environments change during the education (Interview Kaisa Raty, 2026).

The most significant educational reform in Finland in recent years has been the extension of compulsory education to the age of 18 (Varjo, 2024, cited in Souto & Lonka, 2026). This change means that compulsory education now encompasses not only primary schooling but also part of

upper secondary education. As a result, schools are required to offer extra support and guidance to students in the final years of lower secondary school, particularly those whose progression to further education is uncertain or hindered by various challenges e.g. absenteeism. This mandated guidance, known as 'intensified personal guidance counselling' is designed to help young people navigate their transition to upper secondary education and foster stronger connections to both educational pathways and the labour market (Niemi, 2022, cited in Souto & Lonka, 2026). Support was revised to two systems to support pupils: *Support in learning and school attendance* and *pupil welfare system*.⁶⁷ The reform also seeks to enhance the coordination and continuity of guidance and collaboration within schools. The guiding principle is to make sure students receive the concrete support they need and that schools have sufficient resources to provide such support as follows:

All learners are entitled to support in group-specific support, including:

- ✓ general remedial teaching
- ✓ remedial teaching in the language of instruction
- ✓ teaching provided by a special educational needs teacher.

If group-specific support proves to be insufficient, students can receive individual support that is regular and based on individual needs for support. These include:

- ✓ teaching given partly in a small group
- ✓ teaching given entirely in a class for students with special educational needs, if necessary
- ✓ personal interpretation and assistant services.⁶⁸

To simplify record keeping for specialists, fewer pedagogical support documents are now required, and their preparation has been streamlined, making it easier to identify, assess and plan support needs. This system of support will come into practice at VET in August 2026. Transition practices are part of the process of moving between phases of education. They include the flow of information between the phases of education, in a coordinated, multi-professional, planned process. It involves the individual and their family. Decisions are made based on teacher observations, assessments and family input. Collaboration between the different phases of education is facilitated by organising teaching and other activities across the boundaries of educational levels.⁶⁹ Such transition planning into VET allows for institutions to plan for an individual's reasonable accommodations, assistive devices and/or additional support.

Transition from basic education to vocational upper-secondary education is regularly being reviewed, including legislation to secure access to a suitable study programme for every young person. The development of various forms and levels of support will be undertaken collaboratively by VET providers, vocational special education institutions, the Finnish National Agency for Education, and the Ministry of Education and Culture.⁷⁰

Guidance counsellors in basic education and VET support individuals to find a suitable place that matches their strengths and ambitions. Based on these discussions an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is drawn up for each student receiving special education in VET. However, any student can request support for their studies.

At VET level there is strong employer-education collaboration. This collaboration includes mentoring, tailoring tasks to suit an individual during training, with joint planning between VET providers and workplaces to support inclusion.



In Finland, approximately 9% of students formally receive special needs support. A student is entitled to special needs support if, due to learning difficulties, a disability, illness, or other reason, they require long-term or regular additional support for learning and studying to achieve the competence requirements or learning objectives set out in the qualification or training framework.⁷¹

Learners who require more intensive support at VET can attend one of the six specialised centres. One such centre is the [LiveVocational Centre](#).⁷² Learners with severe or profound disabilities can be educated at centres which provide individual specialised training routes for students. A wide range of courses can be followed, including becoming health care workers. Intensive special needs support is provided for all learners at these institutions, including special needs support, co-teaching, and mental health support. On completion, students gain qualifications ranging from full degrees to vocational qualification units. To increase social participation, these specialised institutions hold a 'skills competition' providing an opportunity for students to showcase their skills and strengths in the fields of vocational education and training. Competitors are supported in task according to their needs. The aims of the programme include: an increase in personal skills, networking, social participation, and strengthening a commitment to working life.

According to CEDEFOP, the proposed [Reform of the Funding System \(2026\)](#)⁷³ for VET aim to bring more uniformity to support provision across the institutions, including core funding, performance-based funding, and effectiveness-based funding. The Ministry of Education and Culture awards core funding to providers following their application process, while performance and effectiveness-based funding are determined by actual outcomes achieved, such as completion and employment rates. The Ministry makes annual decisions regarding performance and effectiveness. Additionally, separate strategic funding is allocated throughout the year to support specific VET education policy objectives. With respect to SEND, Finland allocates around 10–15% of its education budget to special education. Funding is decentralised, with central government providing approximately 25% and municipalities the remainder from tax revenue. Municipalities have considerable flexibility in allocating resources. Unlike categorical approaches based on diagnoses, Finland's funding is needs-driven, promoting equity and inclusion.⁷⁴

4.2.4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING PATHWAYS FOR EDUCATORS

Teacher preparation in Finland is a research-based, Master's-level process (five years) that embeds inclusive education and special needs training into the core curriculum for all teachers. Trainee teachers gain extensive pedagogical skills in differentiation, diagnostics, assessment, collaborative teaching, scaffolding, guidance and counselling.⁷⁵ This ensures regular classroom teachers can support diverse learners.⁷⁶ Specialised SEN teachers receive advanced training, approximately one year of additional study to enable them to work with complex, individual needs in mainstream or specialised schools. Training covers early childhood special education, school-age support, and VET. Finnish teacher preparation emphasizes collaboration skills, as regular teachers are expected to work closely with special education teachers, school psychologists, and other professionals. They learn consultation models and practice interdisciplinary teamwork during their training.

Another option for VET level teachers (who are required to hold an initial degree) is a one-year programme in the School of Professional Teacher Education e.g. [School of Professional Teacher Education | Jamk University of Applied Sciences](#)). In VET, most of the teacher students already work in an institution and generally also do their practical training within these institutions. Higher education institutions have autonomy regarding the length and scope of the teaching practice.

Admission requirements for vocational special needs teacher education include qualifications required of vocational institution teachers and at least one year of teaching experience at a vocational institution. The admission is generally based on the previous studies and experience of the candidates.⁷⁷ Another level of support are non-teaching staff instructors employed in apprenticeship training or in the workplace. Their qualifications are not regulated, and they do not have pedagogical training.⁷⁸

A 2024 report by EASNIE on [Teacher Professional Learning in Finland and Ireland](#)⁷⁹ suggests that differentiation and flexible teaching arrangements are key competences and should be promoted through teacher professional development, highlighting that:

- ✓ Teachers need practical training on how to support learners with different learning profiles and on how to plan differentiation, and this could be achieved by using the tutor activities or mentoring.
- ✓ Teacher professional development should provide more opportunities to practice co-teaching and multiprofessional working.
- ✓ Student teachers should receive adequate supervised teaching practice in different types of schools.
- ✓ Teacher assistants (TAs) should complete teaching assistant qualifications and should be given opportunities to constantly develop their competences (see [Finnish Evaluation Centre \(2024\)](#)).⁸⁰

CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Continuous professional development (CPD) is implemented by several higher education institutions funded by the FNAE. For example, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences organises a CPD programme entitled [Inclusion – joy of learning for all](#).⁸¹ The objective is to strengthen teachers' inclusive working methods and culture and thus support the well-being, completion of studies, and employment of all students. Training includes co-teaching within the framework of inclusion and offers everyday tools for guidance. Inclusion in Finnish VET focuses on individual support, removing barriers, and leveraging diversity for equal opportunities. Key strategies involve personalized learning paths, preparatory programmes, flexible entry, and supportive teaching that emphasizes student strengths, aiming to create equitable access for everyone, including immigrants and those with disabilities, through a rights-based, competency-focused system.

Box 2:

Example of good practice in CPD, Finland

Content of [Inclusion – joy of learning for all](#).

- ✓ **Inclusion—what is it?** Special support, individual support, differentiation of activities, personalisation, learning support, adaptation and deviation, or all of these.
- ✓ **Co-teaching and multi-professional cooperation – with whom?** Early childhood educators, colleagues, co-workers, teachers, nurses, work coaches, special counsellors, guidance counsellors, instructors, workplace instructors, school social workers, psychologists or with everyone?
- ✓ **Pedagogical communication – what is it like and with whom?** What is plain Finnish, inclusive language or communication produced by artificial intelligence, and how does it strengthen the inclusion of students, guardians, working life and colleagues?



4.2.5. VETERANS (INJURED DEFENCE FORCE PERSONNEL) ACCESSING VET

For Finnish injured or disabled veterans (generally referred to as defence force personnel) in mainstream VET, support includes tailored psychosocial support (family-oriented), specialized guidance, strong links between VET and veteran support organizations, flexible learning paths, job coaching, language support and mental health services, addressing unique trauma and reintegration challenges often missed by standard VET provisions, requiring better integration of services like student welfare, psychologist, and employment services and **KELA (the Social Insurance Institution of Finland)**.⁸² KELA is a government agency responsible for providing social security benefits to residents, covering various life stages from birth to retirement. Since August 2022, it has been possible to study in a new programme called **TUVA**⁸³ (see the case study in Box 3), a preparatory education for programmes leading to an upper secondary qualification. During service, all defence force personnel have free access to health support and education.⁸⁴

4.2.6. CHALLENGES

Whilst Finland makes a strong commitment to inclusive education, some challenges are noted. The **Country Report on Member States' Policies for Children with Disabilities (2013)**⁸⁵ states that whilst basic education reaches children with disabilities well, and schools provide the support measures required (such as assistance services and enhanced support), barriers have been identified in post-secondary education. These challenges contribute to unequal opportunities for learners across different regions, often resulting in gaps in educational attainment. These issues are targeted in the current reforms and increased investment to ensure inclusive and equitable access for all students. **The vocational education and training policy briefs 2024 (CEDEFOP, Finland)**⁸⁶ highlight challenges specific to the VET sector as follows:

- ✓ Some students do not have much choice in choosing their occupation.
- ✓ Support services are limited and cannot meet the needs of all students with special educational needs or disabilities.
- ✓ There is a lack of specialised personnel to provide support.
- ✓ Rapid demographic changes, regional inequalities, shifting labour market requirements, digitalisation, unequal education access, and low qualification completion rates all present challenges.
- ✓ Finland faces pressures from digitalisation, global crises, climate change, internationalisation, and the green transition. Although its digital skills are highly rated, Finland is not fully exploiting digitalisation in education and training, including VET. More research is needed into effective digital pedagogical solutions.
- ✓ Inequity issues persist in education, with significant gender segregation and challenges for students from immigrant backgrounds and those with special needs. Socio-economic status strongly influences educational choices.
- ✓ There is an increasing need for wellbeing support, language-aware teaching, personalised assistance, and better guidance for students, particularly those from diverse backgrounds.
- ✓ Demographic shifts mean that by 2040, some regions will have 30-40% fewer learners aged 16-18, requiring structural changes and improved cooperation across education levels.

4.2.7. KEY EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Box 3:

Case study: The Implementation of TUVA⁸⁷ in Finland

EXPANDING COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND ENHANCING PATHWAYS TO UPPER SECONDARY QUALIFICATIONS

In 2021, Finland enacted significant educational reforms by extending compulsory education to upper secondary level and raising the minimum school leaving age from 16 to 18. This change aimed to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to pursue further studies, thereby improving their prospects in the labour market. In August 2022, a new programme was launched: preparatory education for programmes leading to an upper secondary qualification, known as TUVA (*tutkintokoulutukseen valmistava koulutus*). Key aspects of the programme include:

- ✓ Availability to under-18s and adults without upper secondary education, emphasising accessibility by providing courses close to learners' homes to encourage inclusivity.
- ✓ Each participant creates an individual study plan with educators, including a compulsory unit on study and career planning, and at least two optional units covering areas like vocational training and workplace skills. TUVA also offers opportunities to improve basic education certificate grades.
- ✓ The programme generally lasts up to one year but allows learners to move into vocational or general upper secondary education as soon as they are ready, supporting flexible and efficient progression.
- ✓ The EDUFI has set the framework for TUVA, defining its objectives, content, and evaluation methods, and supporting education providers with tools for implementation to ensure consistent quality nationwide.

4.2.8. KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR ADAPTATION

- ✓ **Individualised support:** All learners can access support at the time of need. Support can be provided individually, in a small group or in class (co-teaching).
- ✓ **Personalised competence development plans (PCDP):** This is a flexible progress based on skill acquisition, recognising prior learning abilities, and with flexible modular learning available (advantageous for veterans).
- ✓ **Qualified personnel:** Highly trained special education teachers embedded within the VET system and specialist VET centres. All educators are highly trained in individualized, flexible, team-teaching approaches, with opportunities for on-going CPD;
- ✓ **Transition planning:** For learners who are identified as having ongoing special educational needs or disabilities, this process begins in school. Guidance counsellors regularly meet with individuals and institutions to discuss provision and support as part of a multi-professional approach to collaboration.
- ✓ **Accessible environments:** This includes the removal of barriers and provision of specialised aids for equal access.
- ✓ **Workplace integration:** Strong links with employers for practical, on-the-job learning is crucial for veterans.
- ✓ **Legal and financial backing:** Rights and support is guaranteed by the [Vocational Education Act \(531/2017\)](#)⁸⁸ and robust public funding.



4.3. Germany

4.3.1. CONTEXT AND SYSTEM OVERVIEW

German inclusive education is anchored in the Basic Law (Grundgesetz), with Article 3 prohibiting discrimination, and Article 7 stating that *the entire school system shall be under the supervision of the state*.⁸⁹ Germany is a Federal Republic of 16 Länder (States). Development in the different Länder of Germany is diverse. Each has its own responsibility, including individual legislation for education according to the guidelines of the Basic Law system. This overall responsibility both entitles and obliges them to co-operate with one another and to work together with the **Federal Government (Kultusministerkonferenz [KMK])**,⁹⁰ referred to in English as the *Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs*).

In its educational provision Germany is bound by its international commitments. Germany ratified the **UNCRC in 1992, and the Optional Protocol in 2004**.⁹¹ By doing so, it undertook to respect, protect and ensure the rights of children and young people. The CRC has the status of federal law in Germany and is therefore binding. The governing parties aim to enshrine children's rights in the Basic Law. The planned constitutional change requires a two-third majority in the Bundestag and Bundesrat.

Germany ratified the **UNCRPD and the Optional Protocol in 2009**.⁹² The **CRPD mandates for inclusive schooling (Article 24)**.⁹³ Whilst Germany supports inclusion, the system often maintains segregated, specialised schools. The rights of persons with disabilities to education and training appropriate to their needs is enshrined in the Basic Law in equality legislation, and in Book Nine of the Social Code (SGB IX, 2001)⁹⁴ implemented by the state-level (Länder) schools' laws. Book Nine of the Social Code summarises the legal basis for medical and vocational rehabilitation. It shifts the focus from welfare and care for persons with disabilities to participation and equal opportunities. Länder have in recent years focused on key areas for development of inclusion, including dovetailing early years to primary provision, vocational orientation, improving the transition from school to work and strengthening the link between vocational and higher education.

A child receives special educational support in either an inclusive school or a special school if they have undergone a '**determinative diagnostic assessment**' (KMK, 2019, p. 11))⁹⁵. Assessments are carried out by trained specialists who prepare professional reports recommending support priorities, placement, and justification using methods such as interviews, standardised tests, and classroom observations usually performed by a special education teacher. Following assessment, a child is given a special educational needs assessment report outlining the scope and type of support required. The basis for allocating additional resources and the underlying procedures are identified.⁹⁶

Once an assessment of needs is carried out, support structures can be accessed. Germany has a dual system of specialist support provision to mainstream education, i.e., support from special schools to mainstream schools or from regional resource hubs. Regional hubs generally provide expertise such as diagnostic services and special educational support to mainstream schools. 'Mobile services' involve special educators from these centres and special schools working in regular schools. They give advice to mainstream teachers on cooperative, individualised instruction and differentiated teaching practices, and often act as transition points. This approach enables mainstream teachers to develop confidence and expertise in inclusive practices. Extra help from therapists, nurses, and other support services outside of school can also be provided.

Centres and school authorities provide technical media, and special learning and assistive materials, based on learner needs. Multi-disciplinary support teams, including special needs

educators, social workers, and therapists, can be involved in providing support. Parents have the right to select educational placement, whether in a mainstream or special school.⁹⁷

This approach, and the support available in mainstream schools, has led to a reduction in the number of learners with disabilities attending special schools. Inclusion in mainstream schools for pupils with SEN is being extended both in general and vocational education. For example, the number of learners with SEN in mainstream primary and secondary schools doubled between 2005 and 2015, from 14% to 38%. The figure is rising constantly, although regional differences exist.

4.3.2. INCLUSIVE VET IN PRACTICE

Germany's inclusive VET system is designed to ensure that all individuals, including those with disabilities and young people requiring additional support, have access to recognised vocational qualifications and pathways into employment. The statutory framework for VET is established by the Vocational Training Act (BBiG, 2020) and the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code complemented by provisions in the German Social Security Codes, particularly SGB III, SGB II, and SGB VIII.⁹⁸

The national vision for the period 2021–2025 is presented in [Germany's Coalition Treaty 2021-2025](#)⁹⁹ entitled '*Dare more progress – an alliance for freedom, justice and sustainability*'. Future-oriented investments in climate protection, digitalisation, education and research are highlighted as pathways to strengthening the economy, society and a skilled workforce. There is an interface with European VET priorities, such as Centres of Vocational Excellence, in line with the recommendations of the Osnabruck Declaration (OD). Germany's national implementation plan addresses the following key themes:¹⁰⁰

6. Agile and resilient VET, adaptive to labour market needs;
7. Flexible VET, providing progression and lifelong learning opportunities;
8. Innovative and excellent VET;
9. Attractive VET, based on modern and digitalised provision;
10. Inclusive VET promoting equal opportunities;
11. VET underpinned by quality assurance.

A central objective of the system is the acquisition of labour-market-relevant skills, with a clear policy commitment to training persons with disabilities within recognised vocational programmes (SGB IX 2) and young people in need (SGB III 78). Provision is available at different levels and locations. The dual vocational provision is guided by Section 64-66 of the Vocational Training Act (revised 2020). There are three main pillars of provision at the Federal Level, namely:¹⁰¹

12. **Dual vocational training** is based on the Vocational Training Act and the Crafts Code. Training happens in two learning places: at workplace and in a vocational school.
13. **Supported employment** offers personalized support for individuals with disabilities to secure and maintain jobs in the open labour market.¹⁰²
14. **Vocational training in workshops for persons with disabilities** (*Werkstätten für Menschen mit Behinderung. Werkstätten (WfbM)*)¹⁰³ offering specialised VET provision and training for persons with disabilities.

Specialised facilities are designed to provide employment and vocational training for persons with disabilities who are unable, or not yet able, to work in the general labour market due to the severity



of their impairment. These facilities function as both social institutions and economic enterprises. Current debate questions whether these centres segregate persons with disabilities, breaching UN CRPD Article 27 which requires signatories to “promote the acquisition by persons with disabilities of work experience in the open labour market.”¹⁰⁴ The counter argument suggests that sheltered workshops allow persons with disabilities to achieve rehabilitation through work as required in Article 26 (Habilitation and Rehabilitation) and Article 27 (Work and employment) UNCRPD. The facilities provide flexible, person-tailored services and thus fulfil a variety of requirements of the UNCRPD.¹⁰⁵ This study focuses on inclusive vocational education and training facilities. The information on segregated provision is included to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current provision and discussions in Germany.

All provision of support measures for disadvantaged young people includes state-funded vocational training in non-company institutions (e.g., BaE, *Berufsausbildung in außerbetrieblichen Einrichtungen*),¹⁰⁶ **assisted training (AsA flex)**,¹⁰⁷ and **youth social work (Jugendsozialarbeit)**.¹⁰⁸ For persons with disabilities, support options include adapted dual vocational training, benefits for participation in working life, budgets for work and training, and accompanied company-based training. Companies also receive organisational and financial support to facilitate inclusive training. Individual support, counselling, funding and careers guidance are amongst the services provided.¹⁰⁹

Inclusive VET in Germany acknowledges the need for flexible and individualised provision, including extended training durations, adapted theoretical content, and reasonable accommodations. Training is predominantly delivered through vocational training centres, with comparatively limited company-based provision. The inclusive approach requires accessible, flexible educational structures and coordinated support mechanisms that are aligned with individual learner needs. This entails close cooperation among educational institutions, employers, social services, caregivers, and learners, as well as permeability between different training segments through credit recognition and partial qualifications.

The further development of established funding and support instruments is considered essential. Additional training may be combined with company-based training when support needs cannot be met by the company alone. Support measures such as assisted training and career entry support are intended to benefit both learners and training companies. However, the reliance on individual case assessments and measure-specific financing is identified as a structural tension within inclusive VET, as it risks labelling and stigmatisation. More universally accessible provision aligned with individual learning needs is therefore advocated.

4.3.3. VETERANS (INJURED DEFENCE FORCE PERSONNEL)

In Germany, all members of the armed forces are provided with a variety of physical and operational training in an environment with access to opportunities to acquire professional qualifications. For injured or disabled veterans attending mainstream VET, support includes specialised career counselling such as the **Bundeswehr’s – BFD**,¹¹⁰ bridging military-to-civilian skills, careers advice, psychosocial support for trauma (e.g., PTSD), mentorship, financial guidance and support, flexible learning (language, technical), and help navigating the German VET system’s specific entry requirements (specialist guidance counsellors). There is a focus on ensuring programmes address unique challenges like PTSD and/or related concerns through the provision of mentor/coaching networks. **Vocational Advancement Service Centres**¹¹¹ provide vocational rehabilitation of service personnel who have health impairments or were injured on operational deployment, including those with disabilities.

4.3.4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING PATHWAYS FOR EDUCATORS

Effective implementation of inclusive VET requires coordination across multiple system levels. This includes coordination amongst educational management, regional cooperation, and integrated transition management to support successful transitions into work. Models such as the [Hamburg Youth Employment Agencies](#)¹¹² demonstrate how coordinated governance and resource pooling can create comprehensive systems of education, training, and support. The agency employs specialised professionals for working with persons with SEND.

The professionalisation of staff in companies, vocational schools, and training providers is identified as a critical success factor. Beyond technical knowledge, inclusive VET depends on the personal, social, and emotional competencies of professionals, as well as an inclusive mindset that values diversity. Initial and continuing professional development should therefore emphasise self-reflection, networking, and collaboration with external partners, with particular attention to company-based trainers and practice-oriented training formats.

Mainstream educators require skills that enable them to deliver the flexible, individualised curriculum presented. This provision is supported by qualified special educators who monitor in-class inclusion, guide individualised support and cooperate with key providers. Educators are expected to provide individualised support and differentiated curricula, small group teaching, and varied presentation methods.¹¹³ Bylinski (2020)¹¹⁴ highlights that teachers working in inclusive VET settings need competencies in individual career guidance, how to present content to meet different learning styles, and teamwork and interdisciplinary collaboration inside the institution. VET educators in this study expressed the need for acquiring social and special education skills through further training. Germany encourages collaboration between mainstream VET schools and special needs schools to develop specific strategies for different occupations to support students with SEN to be included in vocational training and employment.

The Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität (WWU) Münster, has developed a project entitled 'Dealing with Diversity'¹¹⁵ which includes modules in the teacher training curriculum on how to respond to heterogeneity and inclusion. University courses include courses on the following topics:

- ✓ Disability as a social construct.
- ✓ Diversity as a resource and profit, legal framework of inclusive education, inclusive didactics, individual career planning, basic diagnostic methods, chances of teamwork and cooperation.

A key learning from this project is the use of filmed lessons from VET schools which help prepare students for their future teaching in inclusive settings. The videos focus on approaches to classroom management.¹¹⁶

Educators in VET institutions are obliged to undertake regular CPD to develop their skills and competencies. CPD is provided and determined by the Education Act (*Schulgesetz*) of the relevant State (Länder). In general, teachers must have continuous training to maintain and develop their skills and competences. The Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs underlines the importance of CPD to support inclusion, digitalisation and the growing heterogeneity of learners. It encourages teachers to build their personal professionalisation portfolio.¹¹⁷ Short courses and specialised courses are offered by [The Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family in Berlin](#)¹¹⁸ (a government agency) which supports initiatives for inclusive VET such as [SPI Fachschulen](#).¹¹⁹ This institution offers advanced training in **Integration and Inclusion** for childcare /youth workers and specialists working in special education, directly relevant to vocational settings.

4.3.5. KEY EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

An example of good practice in inclusive VET provision in Germany is **Vocational Rehabilitation Centre Berlin (BFW)**.¹²⁰ As a part of a national network, it plays a crucial role in providing professional rehabilitation to facilitate return to the workforce. Its methods align with the German framework for supporting youth in need of specific assistance, often involving customized training programmes. The approach emphasizes both practical skills and, when necessary, therapeutic, or social assistance.

BFW offers comprehensive information on vocational assessment, training and further education, social and psychological support, job placement assistance, and medical/therapeutic support for persons with disabilities, including those with psychosocial needs. Services focus on enabling individuals with disabilities or SEN to gain recognized qualifications through customized, medically supported programmes.

KEY GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENTS

Germany is making a shift from specialised provision to a greater emphasis on inclusive VET provision for learners with SEN or disabilities. Table 1 illustrates the emphasis on regional to individual VET / company-based provision in respect of inclusion:

Table 1: Structure of inclusive vocational education and training

Development of concepts for the professionalisation of (company-based) training staff for inclusive vocational education and training	Level I Development of inclusive educational structures (in a regional context)	e.g. - Inventory and analysis, educational monitoring aligned towards inclusion Networking of education, teaching and support and of control mechanisms (local government coordination) - Support structures (e.g. regional education offices, inclusion remit for the chambers)
	Level II Development of inclusive (company-based) organisational forms	e.g. - Inclusive cultures, inclusive structures and inclusive practices as reciprocal dimensions - Firm structural, organisational and cultural establishment of inclusive values in all VET institutions - New forms of cooperation between the stakeholders involved, e.g. companies, vocational schools, training service providers, vocational training centres
	Level III Development of inclusive training concepts	e.g. Flexibilisation of access and training routes - Shortening and extension of period of training and part-time vocational education and training - Recognition of (partial) qualifications - Abandonment of separated (special) training routes in favour of inclusive training settings in heterogeneous learning groups, giving priority to the company-based training
	Level IV Development of inclusive learning arrangements	e.g. "Pedagogy of diversity" (appreciation of difference) - Didactics of inner differentiation (PRENGEL 2014) - Inclusive methods in learning contexts (REICH 2014)

(Belinski, 2020)¹²¹

Other elements of good practice from Germany include:

- ✓ individualised support provision, including aptitude assessments, work preparation and specialised training;
- ✓ holistic provision including access to psychological, medical, and social support, ensuring young adults with disabilities are supported in all aspects of their daily lives;
- ✓ **use** of modern, sometimes AI-supported, training methods and assistive technologies to bridge gaps in vocational training e.g. [Inclusion 4.0](#); ¹²²
- ✓ strong partnerships between VET and companies in respect of training, support provision, workplace adaptations and apprenticeships.

Box 4:

Case study: Finding a path to employment (Jugendberufsagentur – Hamburg)¹²³

The agency supports young people under 25, especially those struggling to stay in education or find work. It offers guidance and counselling at school, vocational training centres, regional, and State levels, bringing various support services together in one centre to remove barriers such as distance and institutional challenges. It provides information for parents, teachers and relevant services.

It supports young people to study in a way that suits their strengths, interests and needs. Some young people will learn in a company and attend VET. Others will opt for school training which includes learning a profession in a vocational or technical school, with practical phases integrated into the training.

Regardless of the route a young person seeks, the centre will help guide them through the next steps. This will include support provision.

SUCCESS FACTORS:

- ✓ All vocational counselling actors are brought together, offering faster and more convenient support for young people.
- ✓ A single point of contact improves outreach and simplifies communication with young people.
- ✓ Stakeholders quickly adopt collaborative working, enabling quicker and more comprehensive assistance.
- ✓ Enhanced cooperation with companies leads to more apprenticeship opportunities for young people.
- ✓ Secured political backing ensures ongoing financial stability for the project.

Box 5:

Case study: Diversity and inclusion in the German engineering sector¹²⁴

PROACTIVE STRATEGIES AND LEADERSHIP IN PROMOTING DIVERSITY

The engineering sector in Germany has demonstrated a forward-thinking approach to diversity and inclusion, with several leading firms actively embracing the principles by committing to a Diversity Charter. These organisations have not only signed the Charter but woven its values into their corporate strategies, ensuring that diversity is a core element of their business ethos. ►



A notable example is Deutsche Telekom AG, which has established a dedicated Diversity Council. This council comprises representatives from different levels within the company and is tasked with overseeing and driving diversity initiatives. By implementing comprehensive training programmes for employees at all levels, Deutsche Telekom AG aims to raise awareness and deepen understanding of diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation.

The Diversity Council plays a crucial role in aligning diversity and inclusion efforts with business objectives, thereby fostering a culture of inclusivity. This leadership-driven approach has been instrumental in ensuring that diversity remains a priority, illustrating how such integration can enhance organisational performance and create a more supportive working environment.

Overall, the proactive stance adopted by German engineering firms underscores the significance of strong leadership and structured programmes in advancing the diversity agenda. Their commitment serves as a benchmark for other sectors, showcasing the tangible benefits of embedding diversity and inclusion into the fabric of corporate strategy.

4.3.6. KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR ADAPTATION

- ✓ **Legislation and frameworks** for implementation related to VET which are linked to employment and include a range of stakeholders (Federal, lander, employers and social partners). Provision is subject to continuous monitoring.
- ✓ **Focused support for transition** from school to employment, including guidance and apprenticeship placement.
- ✓ **Flexible learning pathways** tailored to individual or small group needs. Pedagogical approaches adapted for veterans and learners with disabilities and SEN, with attention to mental health and physical access, e.g., curriculum adaptations, accessibility.
- ✓ **Training programmes are regularly updated**, based on research and dialogue between social partners and ministries.
- ✓ **Adaptation to labour market changes** including digital and green technologies.
- ✓ **Upskilling VET educators and trainers** in inclusive practices. In the priority areas of flexible and inclusive VET, progress has been made by developing successive modular qualifications leading to a full qualification and by validating non-formally and informally acquired skills. In both cases, social partners (employers, examining / inspection boards known as *chambers*) are important actors, which is again the main success factor.
- ✓ **The dual system in VET** integrates strong cooperation between companies and vocational schools, providing personalised training pathways for students with disabilities.
- ✓ **Regional youth employment agencies** engage all local support services, and provide specialised guidance based on individual support needs.
- ✓ **Resource Centres** provide specialised support not only to individuals but alongside educators (team teaching). They provide diagnostic assessment, develop individual support plans and inclusive therapy (including counselling) or specialised training programmes.



4.4. United Kingdom (UK)

4.4.1. CONTEXT AND SYSTEM OVERVIEW

The move towards inclusive education has been embedded in the UK education system since 1970 ([Education, Handicapped Act](#)),¹²⁵ when legislation made local education authorities (LEAs) responsible for the education of all children and brought every child into the education system, regardless of impairment or learning difficulty. In 1978, the [Warnock Report](#)¹²⁶ significantly transformed special education provision in the UK. It introduced a shift from the medical model to a needs-based model, introducing the concept of special educational needs (SEN), promoting 'integration' in mainstream schools along with specialised provision to support integration. With the increased range of children expected in schools, the report recommended a review of the curriculum, changes to teacher training, the development of multi-agency support services, with a 'statement' of support and a focus on parents as partners in the education of their child. The [Education Act 1981](#)¹²⁷ introduced a statutory assessment process and, where necessary, a 'statement' of SEN and of the special education provision to be made to meet those needs.

Successive rounds of legislation brought in tighter accountability in relation to statutory assessments, statements, support, timescales, school selection, non-discrimination, tribunals etc.¹²⁸

The UK ratified the UNCRC (1989) in 1991,¹²⁹ with Optional Protocols (OPs) ratified over several years (OP Armed Conflict 2003 and OP child prostitution and child pornography 2009).¹³⁰ The UNCRPD (2006), with the Optional Protocol, was signed in 2009.¹³¹ Ratifying and signing these mean the UK is legally bound to international standards in its provision for children and persons with disabilities as a right, including access to education. It is a public sector equality duty, requiring all public bodies to identify and address inequalities in a planned way.

In 1998 Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales were granted devolved status. This means that while the UK Parliament in Westminster can pass laws for the entire UK, education is a devolved matter. As a result, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have their own legislative powers to create education laws.¹³² Hence not all the following information applies to each devolved nation equally.

The commitment to equality was further embedded in legislation in the [Equality Act 2010](#)¹³³ (which applies to England, Scotland and [Wales](#)¹³⁴). Northern Ireland uses the [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#).¹³⁵ The Equality Act unified legislation relating to different 'protected characteristics' (age, race, sex, disability, etc.) and established a public sector duty to address inequalities. The [Children and Families Act 2014](#)¹³⁶ in England introduced Education Health and Care (EHC)¹³⁷ plans. This mandated collaboration between education, health, and care services, and expanded decision-making rights for young people aged 16–24 and young offenders with SEN.

One of the challenges faced in the UK in providing inclusive education is that provision varies across schools and regions. Provision, support service and outcomes are often influenced by factors such as funding and changes in legislation. In England, the Equality Act presents a set of goals setting out a more inclusive, sustainable support for children and young people with SEND with a financially sustainable framework.¹³⁸ The Welsh Senedd (Government) published a [Learning Needs Code for Wales \(2021\)](#)¹³⁹ issued under the [Learning Needs and Education](#)



Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.¹⁴⁰ This Additional Learning Needs Code provides the statutory system for meeting the additional learning needs (ALN) of children and young people. It places the learners' views, wishes and feelings at the heart of the process of planning the support required to enable them to learn effectively and achieve their full potential.

According to **Special educational needs statistics in England** 2024/25,¹⁴¹ there were 1.7 million learners registered as having SEN. The number of learners with an EHC increased by 5.3% and learners with SEN receiving support but without an EHC plan increased by 14% compared to the previous year. Data varies between the devolved nations.

4.4.2. TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

Special educational needs (SEN): In brief, the **Children and Families Act 2014** (England and Wales)¹⁴² defines the term as a child or young person with a learning difficulty or disability requiring special provision. They face or may face significantly greater challenges in learning compared to peers, or their disability limits access to facilities normally available to others of their age in mainstream education. Variations in definition occur in the devolved nations. In Wales the term Additional Learning Need (ALN)¹⁴³ is used for SEN, which also defines Additional Learning Need Provision. In Scotland the term Additional Support Needs (ASN) is used (see **Legal Reference: Section 1(1), Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004**).¹⁴⁴ In Scotland no formal diagnosis is required. ASN is provided for a range of circumstances that may lead to a child or young person requiring additional support services including a range of factors such as health, social and emotional, family circumstances and learning environment related to factors. In Northern Ireland the term SEN is used. The law governing children with SEN is contained in **Part II of the Education (NI) Order 1996 and Parts II and III of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SENDO) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (NI) 2016**.¹⁴⁵

Disability: In England, Wales, and Scotland, the definition of disability is governed by the Equality Act 2010 while in Northern Ireland, it is based on the **Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)**.¹⁴⁶ Although the legislation differs, the definition of a disabled person is similar across the four nations. Under the Equality Act, a person is defined as having a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term (over 12 months) negative effect on the ability to do normal daily activities.¹⁴⁷ There are rules related to fluctuating conditions such as arthritis and progressive conditions. People with cancer, HIV or multiple sclerosis are automatically defined as having a disability. The Equality Act 2010 further defines 'impairment' and conditions that are **not** defined as being a disability, e.g., addiction to non-prescribed drugs and alcoholism. The right to access reasonable accommodations (public and private providers) and accessibility are also embedded in the Equality Act 2010. Additionally, the **Public Sector Bodies (Website and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018**¹⁴⁸ mandate that public sector digital services must meet the web content accessibility guideline requirements (internationally recognised set of recommendations for improving web accessibility).

Alignment with CRPD definition: The UK (Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland) ratified the UNCRPD in 2009, committing the UK to protecting the rights of persons with a disability, including establishing inclusive education systems, implemented through the Equality Act 2010 with devolved governments responsible for implementation. Specific devolved educational frameworks are designed to remove barriers to learning. All four nations are obligated

to promote an inclusive education system where persons with a disability enjoy the same rights and opportunities as others. This includes, in principle, reducing reliance on segregated settings in favour of mainstream, supported education. However, each nation may focus on different aspects of implementation of inclusive education through its own Department of Education (DoE) as follows:

- **England:** Addresses school culture, policy, and practice to remove barriers.
 - **Scotland:** Has developed comprehensive strategies to support persons with disabilities, including educational access, under [A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People](#).¹⁴⁹
 - **Wales:** Has committed to incorporating the UNCRPD into Welsh law and uses an integrated impact assessment for policies, including a human rights impact assessment for educational changes. Monitoring is the responsibility of the Human Rights Advisory Group. The [Strategic Equality and Human Rights Plan 2025-2029](#)¹⁵⁰ brings together National Equality Objectives to promote human rights.
 - **Northern Ireland:** The Education Authority (EA) implements a disability action plan to ensure a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment with monitoring by the [Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission](#)¹⁵¹ and [Equality Commission for Northern Ireland](#).¹⁵²
- ✓ **Monitoring and implementation:** The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Scottish Human Rights Commission, (SHRC), Wales Human Rights Advisory Group and Northern Ireland human rights bodies work together as the UK Independent Mechanism (UKIM) to monitor, protect, and promote UNCRPD rights. Despite ratification, the UNCRPD Committee has raised concerns regarding the consistency of inclusive education implementation across the UK.
- ✓ **Special education:** In the UK, the term is no longer used to define a person. A child or young person is defined as having **special educational needs (SEN) / additional learning needs** if they have a learning difficulty or disability requiring special educational provision (meaning support additional to or different from that generally provided for peers). Under the Children and Families Act 2014 and [SEND Code of Practice 2015](#),¹⁵³ special education applies to those with significantly greater difficulty in learning than most others their age, or disabilities hindering their use of standard educational facilities. Special schools are defined in the [Education Act 1993](#).¹⁵⁴ Special schools are often referred to as SEN Schools (there are local authority and independent, not for profit charitable institutions/ schools) providing tailored specialised education for children and young people with severe, profound, or complex SEND.
- ✓ **Reasonable accommodation:** Referred to as 'reasonable adjustments' in the UK, these are mandatory provisions required under the Equality Act 2010 (with related legislation in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) to prevent individuals with a disability from being substantially disadvantaged in employment, services, or public functions. Employers and service providers have a legal duty to make changes to workplaces/schools, policies, or physical environments to prevent persons with a disability from being placed at a substantial disadvantage. Adjustments in education are determined on an individual basis. Examples include providing assistive technology, quiet spaces for sensory overload, modified assignments, extra time for exams, in-class support, interpreters and flexible, tailored support. Funding comes from the institution's own budget, sometimes supplemented by local authorities or specific grants in further and higher education, e.g., Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).



- ✓ **Assistive devices:** Assistive devices in the UK are primarily provided free of charge through the [National Health Service \(NHS\)](#),¹⁵⁵ local authority social services, and specialised charities for persons with disabilities. Private retailers specialising in independent living aids and other assistive technologies also exist. See below for processes and provision:
 - **NHS:** An initial assessment is made with a referral from a General Practitioner (GP), hospital team, or community occupational therapist. Following assessment, assistive devices are provided, e.g. amplification and mobility devices. For children, a multidisciplinary team will monitor provision with regular follow up meetings of all team members, including the individual and care providers.
 - **Local authorities (social services):** The local council may request an assessment from the council's social services department. Social services usually provide for independent living.
 - **Charities and voluntary organisations:** Organisations may provide short-term loans of assistive devices.
 - **Joint funding from education, NHS and social services:** Assistive devices are sometimes provided through a combination of education, health and social services, (e.g., **joint funding of high-tech augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices** such as specialized tablets with eye-gaze technology for children with severe speech and physical impairments). Social services may fund systems that allow a child to control lights and doors at home, while education provides similar technology to allow them to operate classroom equipment.
- ✓ **Veterans:** Veterans are defined as anyone who has served for at least one day in His Majesty's Armed Forces (regular or reserve) or merchant mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations. A veteran can be of any gender, sexuality, ethnicity and nationality and over 16 years of age. The UK Ministry of Defence (a UK wide ministry) oversees provision for all Armed Forces personnel and veterans. According to the UK 2021 [Census, there were 1.85 million veterans registered in England and Wales](#).¹⁵⁶ The UK has an [Armed Forces Covenant](#) (2011)¹⁵⁷. This ensures that members of the Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged because of their service when accessing government and commercial services. Special consideration is given in some cases, such as those injured and the bereaved (e.g., partial or full payment to access education for the individual as well as children of school age). Personalised care is in place for veterans with complex and enduring physical, neurological and mental health conditions resulting from injury whilst in service. The key aim is to ensure that veterans are effectively supported as they transition to civilian life and beyond. Additionally, support is provided for housing and employment. Veteran support is available within all local authorities throughout the UK as part of their [statutory duty](#).¹⁵⁸ The Covenant Fund provides financial support to local authorities. Several charities exist to support veterans, such as [The Royal British Legion](#).¹⁵⁹
- ✓ **Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):** While PTSD has no single, legal definition enshrined in an Act of Parliament, the legal definition used in court cases and personal injury claims is based on medical classification systems like the [ICD-10/ ICD-11 \(World Health Organisation\) \(PTSD\)](#),¹⁶⁰ [\(Complex PTSD – CPTSD\)](#)¹⁶¹ and [DSM-5 \(American Psychiatric Association\)](#).¹⁶² According to the [NHS, PTSD](#)¹⁶³ is defined as a mental health condition caused by very stressful, frightening or

distressing events. Someone with PTSD often relives the traumatic event through nightmares and flashbacks, and may experience feelings of isolation, irritability and guilt. A person is defined as having Complex PTSD (C-PTSD) when they repeatedly experience traumatic situations, such as severe neglect, abuse or violence. C-PTSD can cause similar symptoms to PTSD and may not develop until years after the event. C-PTSD is addressed through assessment and treatment by GPs and/or mental health specialists. Generally, talking therapies (counselling) are recommended first. For severe cases a combination of talking therapies and medication is used, if the condition is persistent. People in education, such as VET and higher education, may access 'talking therapies' through the institutions' well-being services (free of charge).

4.4.3. INCLUSIVE VET IN PRACTICE

Across the four nations of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), skills are delivered through a range of organisations within the TVET sector. The main organisations delivering skills are:

- ✓ **colleges** (often link with schools (for learners from 14 years) and support employers, apprenticeships, and employability skills training);
- ✓ **employers** (provide on- and off-the-job training and apprenticeships);
- ✓ **independent training providers** (deliver a range of skills but usually with a focus on the vocationally specific elements, and deliver broader employability skills training, including apprenticeships);
- ✓ **schools** (deliver a range of core skills and some vocational courses, particularly for learners aged 14-18);
- ✓ **universities** (offer technical and vocational degrees).

Learners have access to careers services and well-being services. Under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice provision is made for statutory services from 0-15 years old.¹⁶⁴

Educators in VET have full- and part-time opportunities to become registered teachers. CPD varies across the nations from 15 hours per year (England and Northern Ireland, voluntary) to 30 hours (Wales, compulsory), to 6 days (Scotland, compulsory).¹⁶⁵

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act in England, Scotland and Wales and the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 give persons with disabilities rights not to be discriminated against in education and training.

Included in those rights is access to personalised support which is the responsibility of the education provider or employer. Reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that students with disabilities are not disadvantaged in accessing training, education, learning and employment. These changes could include providing extra support and aids (like specialist teachers and computer software).

Examples of reasonable adjustments in VET include provision of job coaches, supporters, buddies, accessible information and adjustments to recruitment procedures. Whilst the onus is on the employer to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace, there is an Access to Work¹⁶⁶



grant available that can help a person with a physical or mental health condition or disability get or stay in work. Support is based on assessed individual needs. The grant is available to:

- ✓ help pay for practical support with work;
- ✓ support with managing mental health at work;
- ✓ pay for communication support at job interviews.

Examples of Access to Work include specialist equipment and assistive software, support workers, sign language interpreters, a job coach or a travel buddy, costs of travelling to work and/or adaptations to a personal vehicle, and physical changes to the workplace.

Support provision:

- ✓ raises the aspirations and expectations of young people, their families and everyone who works with them, from birth, by showing that it is possible for persons with disabilities to work;
- ✓ provides person-centred transition planning, including a focus on employment from approximately 13 years old (early secondary). This is proven to make the move from school to further/higher education, training, employment or self-employment more successful;¹⁶⁷
- ✓ addresses the fears and concerns of families and provides good welfare advice;
- ✓ plans for the vocational curriculum that supports young people's work aspirations.

Schools and colleges generally have supported work experience opportunities that offer a young person the opportunity to explore and develop their own skills and access meaningful employer/employee relationships. This requires a multiagency approach to management and coordination (e.g., employer, education/agency support, specialist support, careers). Young people with SEND are significantly more likely to be employed after school when they have had some form of work experience. To be effective, work experience should involve mentoring or individual job coaching in the workplace (skills training), have a clear, individualised/ personalised training plan for the individuals with SEND, and include reinforcement of work-based learning outside of work.¹⁶⁸

Under the UK Equality Act 2010, colleges must be involved in transition planning, and provide specialist support (internally and externally, e.g., psychologist services) and support for participation (e.g., in-class discussion). Transition planning involves VET Coordinators liaising with learners with SEND from the age of 13/14 years. At each stage accessibility, support needs, and reasonable accommodations will be discussed.

SPECIALISED SUPPORT WITHIN AN INCLUSIVE SETTING IN FURTHER EDUCATION/VET

In order that young people with SEND achieve independence, participation, good health and their aspirations, colleges need to:

- ✓ work with students and their caregivers to put in place arrangements or structures for how they will regularly engage and discuss progress;
- ✓ explore how they will monitor and track the progress and development of young people and identify and deliver any training needed by staff;
- ✓ provide support and guidance of specialist staff and learning support assistants and ensure that resources are in place to support inclusion.

4.4.4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING PATHWAYS FOR EDUCATORS

There are several qualification frameworks for training in the UK that govern teacher education: the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (FHEQ);¹⁶⁹ the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)¹⁷⁰ of which the Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland (FQHEIS) is a constituent part; and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) of which the FHEQ is a constituent part.

Qualifications for specialist educators (SEND/ASN) in the UK vary between England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. However, they all require initial teacher training followed by specialist qualifications, and teachers must agree to an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)¹⁷¹ background check, renewed regularly. A mandatory qualification is required for specialist teachers of pupils with hearing impairment, vision impairment or multi-sensory impairment,¹⁷² and SEND teachers require a specialist qualification.¹⁷³ SEN Coordinators (SENCOs), teachers of learners with dyslexia and dyscalculia require Level 5 or 7 accredited courses.¹⁷⁴ For each role a commitment to gain specialised qualifications is expected if not qualified when accepting a post.

Learning Needs Coordinators in VET and Further Education (FE) across the UK are responsible for identifying, assessing, and coordinating support for students with additional needs (SEND/ALN). While they often hold similar roles, the mandatory qualifications and terminology differ by devolved nation, with a strong focus on specialized, postgraduate-level training in England and Wales.¹⁷⁵

CPD and non-formal training are generally conducted on a voluntary basis unless there are specific requirements for training in professionally licensed trades. In recent years, CPD has focused on SEN, digital competency, mental health, and reducing attainment gaps.

Teaching/Learning Assistants (T/LA) are recognised as an essential support provision for SEND inclusion. This cadre of the education workforce have equal opportunities to access CPD and other related professional training opportunities.

In 2026 the UK Government has announced a £200 million landmark SEND teacher training programme which requires all teacher and teacher assistants in schools and colleges to receive training to support pupils. The Government is making good on its promise to deliver reforms that families have been demanding. The training will have flexible online self-study and in-person sessions. Teachers will learn about practical strategies to help children access education, using assistive technology like speech-to-text dictation tools, developing an inclusive culture, and building awareness of additional needs amongst all pupils, so every child can succeed.¹⁷⁶

Key areas for in-service training for mainstream staff in VET in the UK include:

- ✓ Awareness of learner needs identified through:
 - school/college link;
 - pre-application assessment;
 - enrolment process.
- ✓ Discussing accessibility, support needs, and reasonable accommodations at every stage.
- ✓ Inclusive practice & legislation:
 - Equality Act 2010: Understanding legal duties, making reasonable adjustments, removing barriers for disabled students;
 - Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Designing universally accessible lessons from the outset;



- Identification and assessment: Recognising emerging needs, the referral process, transition planning (school to college);
 - Support strategies: Differentiating instruction, scaffolding, visual aids, assistive technology (text-to-speech, scribes), note-taking, mentoring.
- ✓ Key skills and approaches:
- Collaboration: Working effectively with TAs, SENCOs, parents, and external specialists;
 - Person-centred planning: Involving students in their support (IEPs/EHC Plans);
 - Safeguarding: Empowering students, online safety, healthy relationships;
 - Positive behaviour: Proactive, supportive approaches rather than punitive measures;
 - Transitions: Supporting movement between stages (e.g., school to FE, FE to employment/higher education).

Box 6:

Online training example

This is an example of a free online training module to support Further Education (FE/VET) educators and leaders in equity, diversity, and inclusion as a personal priority. It equips participants with the necessary skills to implement impactful changes within organisations for both staff and learners. This example is from the University of Portsmouth.¹⁷⁷

CORE MODULE

15. Introducing inclusive leadership.

OPTIONAL MODULES

16. Barriers to and mechanisms for facilitating inclusion in your organisation.
17. Identifying and implementing positive and productive change, creating a culture of inclusivity within non-academic teams.
18. Leading inclusive curriculum.
19. The digital age: cause or cure.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this programme participants will be better placed to:

- ✓ understand their place, purpose and influence as a leader on inclusivity in their organisation;
- ✓ identify different techniques and skills for effecting change within an organisation;
- ✓ learn to analyse issues relating to inclusion using a systems approach in their organisation;
- ✓ build a knowledge base of effective inclusive leadership practices relating to a variety of topics based on evidence and case studies;
- ✓ learn to plan effectively for interventions to increase inclusivity within their organisation.

This programme will help FE and Skills leaders clarify the change they want to effect, develop the skills they need to affect that change and model the behaviour that is needed to create meaningful and effective impact in their organisations.

Each module is designed to account for seven hours of learning. This incorporates:

- ✓ 2.5 hours of self-directed learning;
- ✓ 2 hours live online workshop;
- ✓ 2.5 hours of post-workshop workplace activity.

4.4.5. CHALLENGES

- ✓ Recently, the UK education sector has experienced a significant shift driven by policy reforms, technological advancements, and the evolving needs of students and educators. [The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) Review](#) (2025, England)¹⁷⁸ led to an increasing number of learners being identified as requiring SEND support. This has led to local authorities being under pressure to deliver high-quality, tailored education in both mainstream and specialist settings. Whilst the government has pledged an additional £2.6 billion to improve SEND provision over three years, some challenges remain including:
 - **Staffing challenges:** This includes the difficulty of attracting and retaining teachers and a lack of specialist training for diverse needs (e.g., Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), language challenges). Many teachers feel unprepared to deliver inclusive education despite receiving training. There are also shortages amongst allied health professionals, including speech and language therapists.¹⁷⁹
 - **Local authorities have little control over this spending** as it is determined by the statutory provision set out in individual plans (in England). Since the cost of provision has exceeded funding provided by central government, local authorities have faced large annual shortfalls.¹⁸⁰
 - **Young people with SEND frequently experience a sharp decline in support after the age of 16**, despite the extension of SEND support up to age 25 under the 2014 reforms.¹⁸¹ Unclear guidance on the grants and support available for older learners have been reported.
 - **Veterans' needs:** Complex transitions require tailored, person-centred approaches. Injured or disabled armed forces personnel express the need for long-term support, particularly with mental health.

4.4.6. KEY EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Box 7:

Case study: Developing a culture that embraces and celebrates diversity and fosters inclusion

"Our college works on the premise that inclusion is everybody's business."
(staff member)

In 2024, over 7,500 learners were enrolled on full- and part-time courses across three campuses in Bridgend, Pencoed, and Queens Road. There were about 700 members of staff (teaching and non-teaching), of whom 14.39% declared a disability. A 'Learning Hub' had 73 members of staff to support learners; 46% of full-time learners (864) recorded ALN. The college serves a region with pockets of high social deprivation.

The Learning Hub (resource centre) provides support services in one place, including: ALN support (a transition team, small group, in-class and one to one support, assistive technologies and reasonable accommodations), well-being, student voice, safeguarding, careers guidance, Armed Forces Community (veterans), and informal social clubs where students meet to socialise and play games.

The attainment rates for students with ALN is often better than for peers without a recorded ALN; a result attributed to the extra support provided, in addition to the universal support for all students. Students with ALN have a personal tutor who helps them set and work towards personal and academic goals. ▶



Specialist support services include: Autism Spectrum Conditions Lead; Communication Support Workers, British Sign Language interpretation; Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) Assessor, and Inclusive Learning Facilitators. They all use a person-centred approach to work with students and families to identify individual needs. Support provision is reviewed annually by course tutors, key support staff, family and the student.

Transition planning: There is strong collaboration between VET and feeder schools. Relevant college staff connect with learners with ALN in school to help plan for VET enrolment.

Enrolment: Learning Hub staff are available during enrolment to meet with students identifying as needing ALN support.

Referrals: When a staff member identifies a young person needing additional support, they are referred to the Learning Hub.

Well-being: Students are supported in small groups or on a one-to-one level to promote healthy, balanced lifestyle choices to support their physical and mental health.

Professional learning development: Starting in 2023-2024 a new online learning system enables staff to complete their mandatory training. In 2024, 92% of staff completed this training and regular reminders are sent to managers and staff to complete the training.

(Information from: [Bridgend College](#),¹⁸² [Bridgend College Annual Equality Report \(2025\)](#)¹⁸³ online interview, and [Estyn](#)¹⁸⁴ reports of the Education and Training Inspectorate of Wales.

4.4.7. KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR ADAPTATION

- ✓ **Policy focus on skills and productivity:** Strong legislation and commitment to inclusion, non-discrimination and equity in education, and recognition of the importance of high-quality inclusive VET. Government initiatives, such as the *Skills for Jobs*¹⁸⁵ agenda, focus on boosting national productivity through targeted, high-quality training.
- ✓ **Employer-led design:** The system emphasizes close collaboration with industry leaders to ensure training meets current market needs.
- ✓ **National standards and quality frameworks:** The development of occupational standards defines necessary skills, while inspectorates (e.g., Ofsted/Estyn) and other bodies ensure high-quality training delivery.
- ✓ **Highly qualified staff:** Instructors often possess both academic qualifications and industry experience, complemented by CPD to keep skills updated.
- ✓ **'Learning by doing' approach:** A focus on practical skills, apprenticeships, and hands-on experience ensures learners gain immediately applicable, industry-relevant competence.
- ✓ **Strategic partnerships:** Strong links between VET colleges, training providers, and businesses facilitate work-based learning and employment opportunities.
- ✓ **Dedicated provision for armed forces personnel:** Regional VET centres are selected for partnership with the armed forces to provide training and support services. In Wales, each region also has an Armed Forces Liaison Officer to guide links between Armed Forces Communities and education.

4.5. Slovenia

4.5.1. CONTEXT AND SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Slovenia ratified the [UNCRC \(1992\) and the Optional Protocol in 2004 and 2018](#).¹⁸⁶ This legally commits Slovenia as a Member State to implement CRC provisions by updating domestic laws, and to protect children according to the new standards and obligations beyond the main treaty, such as child trafficking, armed conflict, or enabling individual complaints. The [UNCRPD and Optional Protocol was ratified and signed in 2008](#),¹⁸⁷ legally binding Slovenia to its provision for persons with disabilities.

In Slovenia, children can attend preschool from the age of 11 months up to 6 years. Public kindergartens are established and funded by local municipalities. Private kindergartens, staffed by qualified pre-school teachers and their assistants, are also available and operate under concession. All kindergartens adhere to the national kindergarten curriculum, which serves as the core programme document for preschool education in the country. Attendance is voluntary, and parents or carers are free to choose whether their child attends a public or private kindergarten.¹⁸⁸ Primary education (6-15 years) is compulsory, secondary education is not. Students aged 15–19 can attend either general or vocational technical upper secondary education. Tertiary education encompasses higher education and post-secondary vocational education, providing diverse academic and professional training opportunities for between one and four years of study.¹⁸⁹ According to Eurydice 2024, almost half of all 19-24-year-olds are enrolled in tertiary education.¹⁹⁰ Slovenia is committed to the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030).¹⁹¹ Its aims are:

- 20.** Improving quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training.
- 21.** Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all.
- 22.** Enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession.
- 23.** Reinforcing European higher education.
- 24.** Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training.

Slovenia's schools have a diverse student population, including children from ethnic minorities, migrant backgrounds, socio-economically disadvantaged families, and those with SEN.¹⁹² Several laws, along with other legislation and regulations, define the rights of these student groups within education. One is the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (2013) which outlines the education of children with SEN.¹⁹³ All learners are directly or indirectly mentioned in the Basic School Act (1996) and the Organization and Financing of Education Act (1996).¹⁹⁴

Learners with SEN form the largest group of learners requiring additional provision. Most attend mainstream education where adapted programmes and additional professional support are provided.¹⁹⁵ In the 2023/24 school year, the number of learners with SEN attending mainstream education was 16,426 out of total of 19,418 those registered as having SEN.¹⁹⁶ Special considerations include modifying assessment methods, adapting lesson schedules, and providing specialized equipment and facilities.

School leaders are recognised as being vital in turning inclusive goals into practice. They oversee the organisation, management, and legal adherence of the school, ensuring alignment with the system's overarching educational ambitions. Promoting inclusivity becomes an integral part



of a school leader's responsibilities. CPD is provided through the programmes offered by the National School of Leadership in Education (NSLE). These programmes are appreciated for their depth and relevance. They often include advanced modules that provide school leaders with tools to support vulnerable children and immigrant populations. One such programme is 'The Illusion of Equality – Addressing Diversity for Inclusive Educational Institutions' (Iluzija enakosti – obravnavanje raznolikosti za uresničevanje inkluzivnega vzgojno-izobraževalnega zavoda).¹⁹⁷

Stakeholders recognise the importance of collaboration between schools, government agencies, and community organizations to create a supportive environment for inclusive education. In a survey of school leaders, it was recommended that collaboration is included in in-service training programmes for creating effective partnerships.

4.5.2. INCLUSIVE VET IN PRACTICE

In 2006 the Slovenian government adopted a framework for economic and social reforms to increase welfare in Slovenia,¹⁹⁸ within which effective development of new knowledge, lifelong learning, two-way flow of knowledge for economic development and social inclusion, and quality jobs all have a central role.

The governance of VET is shaped by several key institutions, including the Institute for Adult Education and the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training. At the local level, school councils (*sveti šol*) operate autonomously, playing a pivotal role in the process of administrative decentralisation. These councils contribute significantly to the management and development of educational policies within their respective schools.¹⁹⁹

The certification process for VET is regulated by several main legislative acts. The main ones are: the Organization and Financing of Education Act, the Vocational and Technical Education Act, the Post-secondary Vocational Education Act, and the Adult Education Act.²⁰⁰

Vocational and technical upper secondary education offers a variety of programmes, ranging from one to four years in length, designed to provide occupational qualifications for entering the workforce or pursuing further studies. These programmes are developed according to labour market needs and include general subjects, technical modules, and practical training. Final assessments include the vocational *matura* for technical tracks and an internal examination for vocational courses.

In Slovenia, the VET system plays a crucial role in supporting lifelong learning for individuals. The nation is dedicated to creating sustainable learning environments with a strong emphasis on green and digital resources, developing innovative learning methods, meeting the demands of the open labour market, and enhancing the recognition of both non-formal and informal learning. At the local level, the school centres with their wide range of educational options and resources are attractive for young people, who have at their disposal modern company-based training to acquire basic professional skills. The openness of educational programmes enables training in the fields that are prioritised by local companies. Approximately 65% of the population enrolls annually in initial VET programmes. Upper secondary schools are open to all students, embracing both those who want to continue education and those who struggle to acquire a qualification. There are well developed careers guidance services available in schools. Due to the system's openness and flexibility, and to well-designed counselling services, the dropout rate is among the lowest in the EU, at 5%.²⁰¹ Adults can join VET courses, although there are adult education centres offering non-formal and formal continuing VET training, e.g., management and planning.

Adult education is within the remit of the education ministry regulated by the Adult Education Act (2018),²⁰² which also defines different vulnerable adult groups.

Slovenia is a country that does not maintain a registry of persons with disabilities. According to research carried out by the European Disability Forum (EDF), there are an estimated 115,000 registered persons with disabilities, accounting for 5.43% of the total population. Among them are 35,640 working-age persons with disabilities who are part of the employed workforce, making them a 3.83% of the workforce.²⁰³ Most employed persons with disabilities have attained a high school qualification (61.20%), with a noticeable rise in those holding higher education degrees (3.80%).

The annual increase in the number of students with special needs in Slovenia highlights a growing demand for inclusive educational measures. In accordance with the [EU Strategy for People with Disabilities 2021-2023](#),²⁰⁴ Slovenia has pledged to enhance the participation of adults with disabilities in education, promote inclusive and accessible vocational education and training, and reinforce guidance services aimed at bridging knowledge and skills gaps, particularly in the digital sector.²⁰⁵

The employment system supporting persons with disabilities is characterised by its stability and the favourable attitudes of employers. Employers are reported to be well-informed about available support mechanisms and are not burdened by additional costs for workplace accommodations, enabling them to offer effective job placements and meaningful support. This environment fosters positive employment outcomes and encourages the integration of persons with disabilities into the workforce.

KEY SUPPORT STRUCTURES IN VET

According to the Vocational Education Act which regulates VET, Slovenia has several types of education programmes in vocational and specialised schooling (aimed at gaining a profession for entering the job market) and continuing schooling in programmes of tertiary education.²⁰⁶

Slovenia has a multi-track inclusive approach for learners with SEND. A committee at the National Education Institute of Slovenia (ZRSŠ) which grants learners SEN status, guided by the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (2011, amended in 2012).²⁰⁷ As such, most services are included in mainstream VET provision. Support includes developing individualised education plans, adapted programmes, assistant staff, mobile support services, careers counselling, and provision at a small number of specialised centres (e.g., CIRUS, Kamnik/Vipava)²⁰⁸ for learners with severe disabilities. Since 2021 services have developed a cross-sectoral approach and offer holistic support for young people and their families.²⁰⁹ All support provision is free, funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport Science which is responsible for the development of pre-higher education policies, inspection procedures, the allocation of funds, the implementation of laws, and administrative decisions relating to pre-primary, compulsory and upper-secondary education institutions. Specialist technical aids can be rented from the state. For example, The National Education Institute makes the formal assessment for diagnosis, placement, assistive devices, reasonable accommodations and support required by an individual. These are formalised in an Individual Plan (IP). Specialised support can be provided from specialised centres such as the Special Education Centre Janez Levec Ljubljana.²¹⁰ Education staff adhere to adapted guidelines to support students, including changes to space, teaching aids, equipment, lesson timetables and assessments. Learners with mild learning and developmental disorders who finish basic school on a lower standard programme may progress to short upper secondary



vocational education. Additional support is also available for talented pupils, migrants, and those whose first language is not Slovenian.

4.5.3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING PATHWAYS FOR EDUCATORS

The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training is responsible for preparing proposals for systemic solutions and measures as well as supporting various education providers and other stakeholders in the field of VET. Slovenia is a member of the Erasmus+ programme, entitled: **Stakeholders Together Adapting Ideas to Readjust Local Systems to Promote Inclusive Education) (STAIRS)**.²¹¹ The project aims to support national, regional and local stakeholders in meeting the challenges of social inclusion in education and training and to build on national efforts for good practices in social inclusion in education. Since the academic year 2011/2012, the principle that all teachers should obtain some knowledge of how to work with learners with special needs has been incorporated, irrespective of the subject they are studying. In addition, the **Faculty of Education in Ljubljana** ²¹² offers two programmes of in-service teacher training. One is for teachers working with a selected group of learners with special needs, and the other for teachers supporting learners and young people with learning and psycho-social impediments. These programmes enable teachers to upgrade their professional education with practical specialised education knowledge.

In-service for mainstream educators, includes educators from VET. Training for inclusive mainstream VET is often delivered by specialist support centres.

Training generally includes:

- ✓ an understanding of national policies supporting inclusion;
- ✓ information on support from specialist support centres (like consultation/rehabilitation centres and institutions for the deaf/blind/physically disabled);
- ✓ providing teacher training and multidisciplinary support;
- ✓ projects (like "ACT INCLUSIVE")²¹³ which disseminates best practices and resources, (The ACT INCLUSIVE project is supported by the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities);
- ✓ universal design for learning – curricula adaptations, flexible teaching and learning opportunities, multi-sensory teaching practices, differentiation and individualised learning, technologies;
- ✓ technical aids for students with special needs through collaboration between educational, social, and employment services.

4.5.4. PROVISION FOR VETERANS

Slovenian Law No. 5309 Governing Military Duties (2002)²¹⁴ defines obligations, rights, and duties towards armed forces personnel. Support for disabled or injured Slovenian armed forces personnel includes specialised medical, financial, and psychological care managed by the Ministries of Defence, Health, and Social Affairs. Key services involve long-term rehabilitation, pension/disability insurance through the Pensions and Disability Insurance²¹⁵ and personal assistance for independent living. Chaplains and pastoral assistants provide spiritual and mental health support, including PTSD counselling (Primc).²¹⁶



Training or retraining is available through public vocational schools, intercompany training centres, higher vocational colleges, and adult education centres (see above). Veterans may follow pathways such as apprenticeships, which involve workplace training or retraining, or obtain National Vocational Qualifications by validating existing skills. For veterans following VET or similar courses, support includes tailored career guidance, psychological support (addressing trauma and reintegration), strong links with veteran organisations, and accommodations for disabilities and special needs, financial support leveraging existing structures like the Employment Agency (ESS), strengthening areas like digital skills, and personalized support for a smooth transition back to civilian work and life.²¹⁷

In brief, provision for armed forces veterans in Slovenia is structured around a mix of state-supported, specialised organisations, and legislative measures focused on social care, with a particular emphasis on those from the independence war period.

4.5.5. KEY EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

This is an example of the importance of taking a holistic approach to inclusive VET. That means ensuring that we don't just have inclusive VET provision during training, but that employers are brought into the inclusion process to ensure that there are opportunities for all VET graduates.

Box 9:

Case study: Promoting employment for persons with disabilities in Slovenia^{218,219}

In Slovenia, the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities Act (2007) provides a robust framework to encourage the employment of persons with disabilities. This case study explores how one medium-sized manufacturing company leveraged available incentives and followed legal obligations to foster an inclusive workplace.

BACKGROUND

The company employs 120 staff and is legally required to ensure that at least 2% of its workforce consists of employees with disabilities. The management recognised the legal requirements and social value of creating a diverse and supportive working environment.

Implementing incentive measures

- ✓ **Wage subsidies:** The company received government subsidies to help cover wages for employees with disabilities, making it financially viable to support their employment.
- ✓ **Workplace adaptation:** Up to 70% of costs for adapting workstations and premises were reimbursed, enabling the purchase of specialised equipment and modifications to ensure accessibility.
- ✓ **Training and support:** Employees participated in vocational training tailored to their needs, with ongoing support provided through the Employment Service of Slovenia and partner organisations.
- ✓ **Insurance exemptions:** The company benefited from exemptions from pension and disability insurance contributions for these employees, reducing overhead costs.
- ✓ **Rewards and recognition:** By exceeding the statutory quota, the company qualified for additional financial bonuses and annual awards for good practice. ▶



Outcomes

Through these measures, the company successfully integrated workers with various disabilities, including those with visual impairments. Support services and adapted training ensured all employees could contribute effectively. The company's commitment was recognised with an annual award for exemplary inclusion practices.

Lessons learned

- ✓ Government incentives and legal obligations work best when combined with a genuine commitment to inclusion.
- ✓ Tailored support and workplace adaptation are crucial for enabling persons with disabilities to thrive.
- ✓ Recognition and rewards motivate employers to exceed minimum requirements and foster good practices.

4.5.6. KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR ADAPTATION

- ✓ **Collaborative support** is fostered through strong partnerships between special and mainstream schools, as well as employers, helping to facilitate integration and practical training opportunities.
- ✓ **Individualised approaches** ensure that teaching methods and curricula are tailored to meet the diverse needs of all learners.
- ✓ **Ongoing professional development** for teachers supports effective psychosocial care and classroom management, with inclusive education incorporated into all training programmes.
- ✓ **Reasonable accommodations** are systematically applied to guarantee equal access to education for every student.
- ✓ **Employment-focused programmes** prioritise the development of digital, green, and vocational skills to prepare learners for entry into the labour market.
- ✓ **Robust national qualifications frameworks** offer standardised and flexible pathways for training and development.
- ✓ **Inclusive policies and public funding** ensure that broad programmes support special educational needs in both mainstream and dedicated settings.
- ✓ **Regional rehabilitation centres** provide valuable support for retraining, rehabilitation, and careers guidance.
- ✓ **Holistic educational provision** recognises the importance of learning as a central part of personal development.

4.6. Key findings from all countries

This study focused on inclusive VET systems in Finland, Germany, the UK and Slovenia. While each country has a significantly different education system overall, there are commonalities in their approaches to enabling equity and inclusion in VET. Broadly, their practices reflect a common European approach to placing significant emphasis on work-based learning and the integration of digital and environmental (green) transitions within VET programmes.

The countries share a commitment to legislative and policy foundations for inclusion in education and employment. They have prioritised the development of flexible, modular, and personalised learning pathways to enhance accessibility for diverse learners. Support for initial and ongoing capacity building for inclusive educators and their institutional leaders is provided, usually through a whole-school approach that holds everyone in the setting accountable for improving inclusivity. While the nature of provision and how it is organised and managed varies, these countries all provide learners with access to specialist services and advice where needed. They have also all focused on building connections between VET and the employment sector and on supporting learners during their various educational transitions.

The country findings have informed the key considerations, summarised in Section 5.

Table 2 provides a snapshot of the main approaches and challenges in the four countries.

Table 2: Focus countries indicating main approaches and primary challenges:

Country	Main approach to inclusion	Primary challenge
UK	Flexible, individualized pathways, retraining opportunities, accommodating a diverse, non-traditional student body	Lower prestige for VET inconsistent service provision.
Germany	Dual System, school based VET, supported VET, digitalisation and new skills development.	Matching apprenticeship vacancies with learner need early contract termination.
Finland	Highly personal plans, skilled special needs teachers. Flexible learning pathways	Balancing efficiency with individualized care.
Slovenia	Modularization, work based learning, mentorship.	Resource management for special support.

Note: The results are adapted from and based on 2024-2026 data, reflecting the most recent developments in CEDEFOP and national reporting.²²⁰



Section 5.

Considerations for inclusive VET

This section presents a summary of the important steps or actions for a country to consider when developing or revising its approach to inclusive VET. The suggestions are presented as 'considerations' rather than 'recommendations'. We are not directly recommending that another country should do exactly what is listed here. Rather, we encourage readers to consider these points in relation to their own context. Readers might feel some of the considerations are not relevant or could be relevant if further adapted.

5.1. Policy support, financing and system-level engagement

- ✓ **Close collaboration of policy makers** from education, health, and social care sectors should happen at national and local levels. Together they should develop policies and strategies for human resources and capacity development; accessibility, accommodations and technologies; and dedicated budgets and financing for an interdisciplinary approach to inclusive lifelong learning.
- ✓ **State-level financial support** should be available for accessible infrastructure, human resources (teaching and non-teaching), and all required reasonable accommodations and assistive technologies relevant for VET provision.
- ✓ **Flexible provision frameworks** should be developed and supported across the education sector, including VET. This enables diverse learners to choose appropriate and accessible learning pathways suited to their interests, needs, abilities and ambitions.
- ✓ **Dedicated resources for specialist services** within VET provision should be integral to education policies and funding. This ensures funding for support/resource departments and staff to support learners with SEND and/or veterans.
- ✓ **The 'whole-institution approach'** should be embedded into all policies and funding strategies. This will ensure that accountability for inclusion rests with everyone involved with education delivery and not just with a few specialist personnel, improving both the quality and sustainability of efforts.

5.2. Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Leadership for Inclusion

- ✓ **Inclusion coordinators at VET level** should be appointed. Their responsibility is to coordinate services and support for learners with SEND and veterans and their families across the VET institution. They help coordinate periods of transition, assessments, individual and class-based support needs, reasonable accommodations, careers and wellbeing advice, and more.
- ✓ **Teaching and non-teaching specialists** with skills and qualifications complementary to the coordinator should work in VET institutions. For instance, they might specialise in neurodiversity, learners with specific impairments, safeguarding and wellbeing, mobility and self-care needs, or working with veterans. They will support learners with SEND and/or veterans both at the VET institution and during any work placements.
- ✓ **Leaders** play a vital role in promoting and supporting inclusive practice and culture in VET institutions, so they should receive relevant inclusion training and CPD.
- ✓ **Collaboration** through a whole-institution approach should be encouraged. This includes ensuring that all staff, regardless of their role, recognise their responsibilities for inclusion. It also means promoting approaches like team teaching, peer learning and critical reflection among staff, and engaging consistently and effectively with learners and families.

5.3. Continuous Professional Development and Follow-up Support

- ✓ **Ongoing monitoring and CPD** after inclusion training are essential to help VET staff maintain the skills and confidence to use, develop, innovate and share inclusive practices.
- ✓ **Flexible CPD** on inclusion and diversity, for instance using a blended approach of online and in-person formats, will maximise accessibility and reach, enabling more staff to keep boosting their skills and confidence.
- ✓ **Online resources and training materials** should be developed and shared so that educators and administrators can easily access new ideas, revise previous learning, or work out how to support their colleagues.

5.4. Participation, Accessibility and Learner-Centred Approaches

- ✓ **Learner-centred VET provision** is essential. The teaching and learning process must be flexible and offer differentiated learning opportunities.
- ✓ **Learners' voices** should be at the heart of all inclusive VET work. This means ensuring that the perspectives of persons with disabilities, war veterans and their families inform inclusive practices and service design.



- ✓ **Transition planning** should start early and be well structured so that appropriate services and support systems are in place at the point of entry into VET and/or when moving from VET to other studies or work. Good practice is to begin transition planning and processes from about 13-14 years of age.
- ✓ **Reasonable accommodations** must be made where needed to guarantee accessibility across learning environments, support services and work-based placements. They must also be budgeted for, to ensure resources are in place to support the provision when required.
- ✓ **Collaboration between VET institutions and employers** is vital for supporting inclusion. This often includes providing and/or funding training, support, mentorship, and skills development for employers, and helping to fund workplace adaptations. There should also be joint planning between VET institutions and workplaces to support inclusion during training workplaces (and any subsequent employment).

Section 6.



Success factors for the provision of quality inclusive VET

This study highlighted examples of good practice in delivering high-quality, inclusive VET. This section provides a summary list of indicators that a policymaker, practitioner, international organisation or development partner, may want to check are in place when designing or improving inclusive VET programmes and services.

- ✓ **The legislation framework supports inclusive VET.** This ensures institutions receive the necessary resources and assistance and that VET institutions can offer varied programmes and flexible, individually tailored curricula and qualifications.
- ✓ **Senior management and staff are motivated, committed and have a positive attitude.** Their enthusiasm for equal opportunities and a belief in learners' potential fosters an inclusive environment.
- ✓ **Leaders are effective and demonstrate that they value inclusion.**
- ✓ **Specialist staff and support personnel are well qualified.** They have university degrees, relevant vocational qualifications and/or industry experience.
- ✓ **All educational and support staff have access to ongoing training and support.** This helps them maintain quality education and promote a learner-centred approach.
- ✓ **Multi-disciplinary teams work collaboratively.** VET personnel have defined roles and maintain strong cooperation with other services.
- ✓ **Partnerships are established and formalised among stakeholders, services, and local companies.** This supports practical training and employment. VET institutions also maintain strong, formal cooperation and dialogue with parents as equal partners.
- ✓ **There is an adequate support staff to learner ratio.** Maintaining support staff levels ensures the necessary range of assistance is available for one-to-one and in-class support.
- ✓ **Learners are assessed before joining the VET programme.** This ensures they are placed in courses that best suit their abilities and preferences.



- ✓ **Learner-centred approaches are used throughout the VET programmes.** Learner-centred approaches, and adapted teaching and learning approaches, curricula, and assessments ensure programmes meet each learner's abilities and needs.
- ✓ **Individual, personalised plans are created and used.** This enables the development of a tailored curriculum for each learner, including transition planning.
- ✓ **VET programmes are flexible.** This allows for adjustments to course length and structure to suit individual learner needs.
- ✓ **Learners can choose their own pathways.** They have the option to improve a qualification or grade, switch to a different programme, choose between different professions and gain an academic and/or professional certificate.
- ✓ **Learners records are well kept.** Maintaining accurate records on each learner's skills, achievements, and workplace support needs helps to ensure they get the pathways and support they need/want.
- ✓ **Quality assurance and improvement strategies are actively supported by all stakeholders.** Programmes are delivered and certified to strengthen VET quality and better equip learners for the workforce.
- ✓ **There is an effective drop-out reduction strategy.** Effective strategies to prevent dropouts and offer alternative educational options for students at risk of disengagement are a vital part of inclusive education.
- ✓ **The VET institution aligns learners' skills with labour market needs.** VET programmes are regularly reviewed to ensure relevance to current and future skill requirements, and teachers adapt their methods to suit employers.
- ✓ **Learners receive accurate and timely careers guidance.** Advising learners about job and training opportunities, facilitating employer connections and supporting job applications support them in the transition to work and during employment.
- ✓ **Employers are aware of their obligations and available support services.** This ensures that workplace adaptations are in place, including access to finance for adaptation, if required.
- ✓ **Skilled staff offer ongoing support for employers and recent graduates.** This helps to sustain the graduates' employment within companies.

The above are further developed in [20 Key factors for successful Vocational Education and Training \(EASNIE \(2012\)\)](#)²²¹

Section 7.

Next steps



The next phase will involve disseminating this report and developing fact sheets for the consideration of responsible bodies in Ukraine, tracking progress, and updating stakeholders as appropriate. Further details will be provided in subsequent reports.



Section 8.

Conclusion

Inclusion is emphasized in all country frameworks. VET leadership is seen as critical in fostering an educational environment where every student, regardless of their background, is given the opportunity to succeed. Specialist support for learners with SEN / disabilities or veterans are recognised as crucial members of learning support and the provision of quality inclusive practices within VET. A whole institution commitment to diversity and inclusion requires all educators to be trained in inclusive practices and pedagogy.

Appendix 1.

VET project country information template



Template for standard data collection of good practice in inclusive VET provision for each country example:

- 25.** Country frameworks for VET provision: policy, laws, implementation plans
- 26.** Country frameworks for inclusion
- 27. Focus Countries: (UK and Finland):** Country definition of Special Educational Needs, definition of inclusion (if available), within policies / frameworks / implementation strategies, including definition for: (where available):
 - a. Disability (is this in line with CRPD).
 - b. Inclusion
 - c. Disability inclusion
 - d. Inclusive education
 - e. Special Educational Needs
 - f. Special education
 - g. Reasonable accommodations
 - h. Assistive devices / technology
 - i. Veteran
 - j. PTSD
 - k. Mental Health (definition, services available and how accessed)
- 28.** Country provision / commitment towards rehabilitation/retraining for veterans, with a focus on the Vocational Education and Training sector.
 - a. Support options available (benefits, rehabilitation, support for individual and carer(s))
 - b. Psychosocial / Mental Health support
 - c. Education, Training and Employment options
- 29.** VET Teacher preparation for inclusion
- 30.** Entry requirements to VET in general, including learners with disabilities (any considerations taken into account e.g. reasonable adjustments; financial support)



- 31.** Definition for Resource Centres / Additional Learning Needs Centre (or country equivalent):
 - a. What criteria are available in each country to identify suitable centres to house a Resource Centre
 - b. Is the Resource Centre a Hub for one institution or several institutions?
 - c. What services do Resource Centres provide (general)?
 - d. Are there Resource Centres which provide specialist support e.g. sign language interpreter services / provision of accessible print formats
 - e. What capacity building provision does the RC provide to educators / staff and/ or employers linked with the institution
 - f. How are services financed? A certain allowance per registered learner with a disability / veteran
- 1.** Head of Resource Centre (or similar) for supporting learners with disabilities / learning needs / veterans (qualifications, experience)
 - a. Qualifications needed (if any)
 - b. Selection criteria for specialist / support staff
 - c. Conditions of service / career path (same as other VET staff)
- 2.** Guiding principles:
 - a. Disability data and how this is collected
 - b. Pre-assessment
 - c. Enrolment process
 - d. Support provision
 - e. Accessibility Provision
 - f. Reasonable accommodation provision
 - g. Teacher / Support Assistance – or similar
 - h. Pre-enrolment assessment of needs
 - i. Budget (institution / individual)
 - j. Participation
 - k. Career counselling
 - l. Progression and employment
 - m. Where available data related to the employment of persons with disabilities / veterans (consider gender, age and types of disabilities – where possible)
- 3.** Current practice
- 4.** Challenges

Based on the above further research into the following:

- 5.** Opportunities
- 6.** KII: Head of Resource Centre; individuals (triangulated case studies involving learners with disabilities / learning needs, veterans, graduates of courses, educators, and support staff)
- 7.** Case studies of good practice



Appendix 2.

Semi-structured interviews

OUTLINE OF DISCUSSION POINTS

PURPOSE, DESIGN AND PERSONS INTERVIEWED IN THE STUDY

The purpose of the discussions was to:

- ✓ Verify online research findings related to inclusive VET provision
- ✓ Gain insight into day-to-day practices in vocational education and training institutions (VET) for learners with SEN / disabilities / veterans;
- ✓ identify support provision and experiences from pre/enrolment to completion and beyond actual
- ✓ identify good practice and barriers/ gaps (infrastructural, human resource, regulatory, and attitudinal, access, reasonable accommodation);
- ✓ determine needs for support, training, and resources;
- ✓ outline gaps between different levels: education policy – governance – practice – teacher training – learners' experience.

INTERVIEW FORMAT

Online, informal discussion, or face to face. These were structured to explore knowledge of the vocational education system. This design made it possible to:

- ✓ verify information gathered through online research;
- ✓ identify good practice in the field, challenges / barriers and solutions;

INFORMAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Target group: Coordinators / Staff of Inclusive Resource Centres / Education experts / representatives of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities / representatives of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities / Armed Forces.

- ✓ Date:
- ✓ Country:

FOCUS AREAS FOR DISCUSSIONS

- ✓ General information about role, experience of inclusive VET



- ✓ Key roles undertaken to support inclusion of learners with SEN, Disabilities and / or veterans.
- ✓ Discussion related to the following topics:
 - country frameworks for VET provision: policy Laws, implementation plans
 - country frameworks for inclusion
 - Country definition of Special Educational Needs, definition of inclusion
 - VET Teacher preparation for inclusion national and within the institution
 - Resources and services for people with SEN, disabilities / veterans
- ✓ Entry requirements to VET
- ✓ Engagement of Inclusive Resource Centre director / staff in:
 - Pre-assessment
 - Enrolment process
 - Support provision (in class)
 - Support provision (technical, specialist)
 - Accessibility Provision
 - Reasonable accommodation provision (funding)
 - Teacher Assistance – or similar
 - Pre-enrolment assessment of needs
 - Budget (institution / individual)
 - Participation
 - Career counselling
 - Progression and employment
- ✓ General discussion:
 - How is the service funded?
 - Salaries
 - Transport
 - Accessibility
 - Reasonable accommodation
 - What engagement do you have with other stakeholders e.g. schools, employers, armed forces services
 - What provision is available for veterans?
 - Are there mental health / well-being services available in the institution
 - Is there provision for people living with PTSD
 - What examples can you share of adaptations in the educational and practical training process;
 - Do you see a need for additional support (training, resources);
 - Request for interaction with learners with disabilities and special educational needs.
- ✓ Current practice
 - Challenges
 - Opportunities
- ✓ Anything else to add:



INFORMAL INTERVIEW 2 – LEARNERS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

- ✓ Date:
- ✓ Country:

FOCUS AREAS (SEE LIST FROM GROUP 1):

- ✓ experience of admission and adaptation;
- ✓ accessibility of the learning process and workplace-based training;
- ✓ wellbeing and support (in class, technical, specialist);
- ✓ awareness of their own rights
- ✓ identification of gaps, suggestions for improvement and good practice

INFORMAL INTERVIEW 3 – REPRESENTATIVES OF ORGANISATIONS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (WHERE APPLICABLE FOR INFORMATION GATHERING)

- ✓ Date:
- ✓ Country

Focus areas for discussion (adapt list in section 1):

- ✓ assessment of the level of inclusivity in VET institutions;
- ✓ barriers to accessibility, reasonable accommodation and employment;
- ✓ the role of civil society organisations in improving inclusion in VET;
- ✓ need for policy and practice changes.

INFORMAL INTERVIEW 4 – LIAISON OFFICER FOR THE ARMED FORCES

- ✓ Date:
- ✓ Country

FOCUS AREAS FOR DISCUSSION (ADAPT LIST IN SECTION 1):

- ✓ Overview of services offered to armed forces personnel and their families
- ✓ assessment of the level of inclusivity in VET institutions;
- ✓ barriers to accessibility , reasonable accommodation and employment;
- ✓ the role of civil society organisations in improving inclusion in VET;
- ✓ need for policy and practice changes.



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Accepted:01/2025 UDK/UDC: 27-184.3-584:355/359(497.4) DOI: 10.34291/BV2025/01 <https://www.teof.uni-lj.si/uploads/File/BV/BV2025/01/Primc.pdf> (accessed 22.02.2026)

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