



The Wasps - Employment Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities

Administrative and basic information

Name of Project	The Wasps - Employment Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities
Registration Number	TEMP1334
EPSA 2017 Administrative Category	Regional
Previous EPSA participation	
Previous EPSA number	
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Contact Details of Lead Applicant

Name of Organisation	The Municipality of Hafnarfjordur
Size of the Organisation	500-5000
Number of people directly involved in the project	>15
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Other Applicant(s)

Partner Organization(s)	
Project received EU funds (co-financing)	No
If yes, please specify which fund(s)	

Case Description

Executive Summary (2500 to 5000 characters)

The project's goal is to build a bridge for persons with disabilities in Iceland who have recently graduated from secondary or higher education studies and to provide them with employment opportunities and education that can help them prepare for a future in the labour market. The need for an initiative of this kind was clearly stated by the Icelandic Parliament that set the goal that by the end of 2016 at least 85% of persons with disabilities that fall within the scope of working ages had employment, access to daily activities, or were enrolled in appropriate studies. Furthermore, the Association of Municipalities in the capital area had published a report stating that all employment and daily activities that were available to persons with disabilities were being fully utilised and that there was an increased need for new measures for those graduating from secondary or higher level studies to secure a seamless transition from education to employment.

The project's objective is to create a bridge for people with disabilities who have recently graduated from secondary or higher education and provide them with employment opportunities

and education that can help them prepare for a future in the labour market. The project is in essence an employment opportunity for persons with disabilities consisting of two main features; going to a place of work 3-4 days a week for four hours a day with support; and innovation and education 1-2 days a week. The places of work were chosen with the interests and capabilities of the participants in mind and an emphasis was put on helping them nurture their entrepreneurial spirits through various projects where they would design, create, and sell their own products to the public. Communication to the public is conducted via press releases from the Municipality of Hafnarfjordur as well as via a Communications Manager, who was chosen from within the group, who writes updates for the groups' Facebook page as well as collaborating with a local newspaper on writing stories about their activities.

The project was initiated by the Municipality of Hafnarfjordur in collaboration with the Iceland Directorate of Labour who funded the pilot project (2015-2016). The budget for the pilot project was EUR 66,600 but has been increased to EUR 211,000 for 2017 and entirely moved to the Municipality of Hafnarfjordurs' budget. It has already become sustainable and has numerous transferability opportunities on a vertical, national, and international level. The project currently employs 7 persons with disabilities and 4 more joining the programme in the Autumn, that have the support of 5 abled employees as well as being led by a Project Manager.

The project directly empowers its participants to take part in society through employment while providing education regarding topics such as financial literacy, health literacy, future employment opportunities, and rights of persons with disabilities, thus strengthening their self image, enhancing their self confidence, and improving their quality of life.

A survey conducted at the end of the pilot year showed that the participants were happy with its outcomes in general and felt that the project was impactful. They said they were excited to go to work in the morning and that the education and support regarding future employment opportunities was an important part of the programme's success. Their families shared similar stories, saying that they were happy with the project and thought it would benefit the young persons in the future. These results, along with information gathered at staff meetings, were used to further develop the project towards a sustainable future.

Type(s) of sector - Education
- Employment and labour-related affairs
- Social protection

Other Sector

Key words of project social inclusion, persons with disabilities, innovation, employment, education, training

Main web address(es) of the project (if applicable) <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100010619940887>

Main content part

Background (e.g. grounds/reasons for the project idea, max. 5000 characters) In 2012 The Icelandic Parliament (Althingi) created a work plan regarding persons with disabilities that aimed at enhancing individual financial independency, supporting personal development and counteract poverty. The Parliament furthermore set the goal that by the end of 2016 at least 85% of persons with disabilities that fall within the scope of working ages have employment, access to daily activities, or are enrolled in appropriate studies. These goals were not met.

In 2014, the Association of Municipalities in the capital area published a report stating that all employment and daily activities that were available to persons with disabilities were being fully utilised with 175 users in the four municipalities at the end of 2013. It also reported that 25% of those using employment opportunities in the area were able and had requested to work more hours of the day as well as getting assignments that better aligned with their abilities and interests. The report also showed an increased need for new measures for persons with disabilities graduating from secondary or higher education to secure a seamless transition from education to employment. With 18-19 young persons with disabilities graduating from secondary or higher education every year in the four municipalities in the years 2014-2016, this called for new and innovative solutions to meet their needs.

The project was initiated by the Municipality of Hafnarfjordur in Iceland in 2014 in collaboration with The Directorate of Labour (Vinnumálastofnun) in relation to a project within the Directorate of Labour that aimed at empowering all talents in society by creating innovative employment opportunities for persons with disabilities that are aligned with their interests and work endurance. After the pilot project year, the project was transferred entirely to the Municipality of Hafnarfjordur.

General and Specific Objectives (max. 2500 characters) The general objectives of the project are the following: to increase innovative and entrepreneurial work for persons with disabilities by creating value adding social roles; to work towards changing attitudes in society towards persons with disabilities; to empower persons with disabilities by giving them more choices in terms of employment, to become more active, and to influence their own lives; to increase flexibility in services to persons with disabilities with regards to social and employment activity and give them a chance of full participation in the employment market on their own terms; to provide support to the participants while enhancing their social inclusion.

More specifically the objective is to create a bridge for people with disabilities who have recently graduated from secondary or higher education and provide them with employment opportunities and education that can help them prepare for a future in the labour market.

Input/resources utilized/allocated to the project [HR, budget, etc] (max. 2500 characters)

The budget for the pilot project was EUR 66,600 with over 90% of the budget being allocated to salaries and the rest to materials, food, telephone, and transportation costs. The project was coordinated by a Project Manager and required five abled employees for support with the seven users of the service during the pilot project year. The budget for 2017 is around EUR 211,000 and currently employs 7 persons with disabilities and 4 more joining the programme in the Autumn, that have the support of 5 abled employees as well as being led by a Project Manager. The goal this year is to grow the programme and employ more persons with disabilities as well as offering full-time positions.

Implementation (e.g. structure, processes, management, communication, max. 7500 characters)

After the Municipality of Hafnarfjordur had decided to initiate the project, project managers from the other three municipalities (Mosfellsbær, Kopavogur, and Gardabaer) were called to a meeting to discuss and decide on their participation. Kopavogur decided to take part in the pilot project by buying services from the Municipality of Hafnarfjordur but the services remain open to participants from all four municipalities.

An emphasis was put on designing the initiative to best suit the needs of its users. In that spirit, the initial group of participants chose the name for the initiative, Geitungarnir (e. The Wasps) and took part in forming the innovative projects they would be working on during the pilot year. Four participants initially started with two more joining a few weeks after the programme was launched. All participants had recently finished secondary education and their working hours were from 9am until 12pm, five days a week.

This employment opportunity consist of two main features; going to a place of work 3-4 days a week for four hours a day with support of an abled person; innovation and education 1-2 days a week. The places of work were chosen with the interests and capabilities of the participants in mind and included a super market, a building supply store, a gas station, a library, and a local sports club. In terms of innovation, an emphasis was put on helping the participants nurture their entrepreneurial spirits by empowering them to come up with ideas for projects that were more geared towards the public. For example, they created products to sell at a local Christmas bazaar and opened a café for a day. As for education, the participants hosted a variety of guests ranging from a local bank speaking about financial literacy to the Red Cross informing them on volunteer work. They also learned about health literacy, self image and self empowerment, as well as the rights of persons with disabilities.

The project was (and is) managed by a Project Manager while employing five abled employees. The group of employees meet regularly with the Project Manager, sometimes all together, other times the abled employees only or the disabled employees only, to discuss ideas and resolve any issues that arise. By the end of the pilot project, a report was sent to the Directorate of Labour as well as to a committee of Heads of Social Services in the capital area detailing the success of the project and future plans.

Communication to the public is conducted via press releases from the Municipality of Hafnarfjordur as well as via a Communications Manager, who was chosen from within the group, who writes updates for the groups' Facebook page as well as collaborating with local newspaper, Fjardarposturinn, by writing stories about the groups' activities.

Most important innovative features according to the applicant's point of view (max. 2000 characters)

The most innovative features of the project are in the structure of the employment opportunity which combines employment, entrepreneurship, and education. The entrepreneurial part of the project entails creating products for sale at open houses and at the local Christmas bazaar as well as opening a café for a day which, during the pilot year, around 60 guests visited. The communication of the project to the public is also unique as one of the users of the services acts as Communications Manager by writing Facebook updates as well as being the liaison to a local paper regarding the activities of the group. A further innovative feature is the opportunity for persons with disabilities to work alongside abled persons while receiving support as well as getting assigned to work that aligns with their interests.

Stakeholder Involvement (max 2000 characters)

The stakeholders are the users of the service, abled employees of the project, the Municipalities of Hafnarfjordur, Kopavogur, Gardabaer, and Mosfellsbær, the companies providing training and jobs to the participants, and the families of the participants.

The first users of this service took part in choosing the name of the group – The Wasps. They have also, along with their families, had a platform to share their experiences of the programme, discuss what has gone well and what areas need improvement via a quantitative survey that is conducted yearly. The users also attend staff meetings with the Project Manager where they have the chance to discuss their ideas as well as resolving any issues that come up. Furthermore, a representative from within the group of users was chosen to serve as Communications Manager reporting to the public about the activities of the group via their Facebook page as well as collaborating with local media.

Abled employees, who provide support to the service users, have a platform at staff meetings with the Project Manager, to discuss their concerns and ideas for improvement. As for the companies involved they are in active communication with the Project Manager regarding the outcome of their participation and can share ideas for changes or development.

Through the Association of Municipalities in the Capital Area, the municipalities that have access to this service have a platform to learn about the project's development and discuss their future participation.

Results (e.g. concrete quantitative performance measurement)

The Project Manager conducted a survey to assess the success of the pilot project by speaking to the users of the services as well as their closest family members. Success was measured by analysing what has gone well, which areas need improvement, and which solutions are available to meet some of the issues that have come up.

(max. 5000 characters)

The results of the survey conducted among the users of the services showed that they were happy with the projects' outcomes in general and felt that the project was impactful. They said they were excited to go to work in the morning and that the education and support regarding future employment opportunities was an important part of the programme's success. What they found could be improved was getting more businesses involved from different fields of the labour market as well as getting paid a salary for their work.

The results of the survey conducted among the families of the users of the service showed that they were generally happy or very happy with the project and thought it would benefit the young persons in the future. All of the families reported that uncertainty regarding the young persons future created anxiety.

These results show that the project has been successful but still has room for improvement and further development. It is highly important that the users have a say in how the project is further developed as this enhances their participation and can benefit them in the future in terms of feeling empowered and included in how their lives progress. The results also support the need for the project and have given it grounds for existence in the budget of the Municipality of Hafnarfjordur with a sustainable outlook.

Social inclusion of the project (max. 2000 characters)

The project's main goal is social inclusion for persons with disabilities who have recently graduated from secondary or higher education. It directly empowers its participants to take part in society through employment while providing education regarding topics such as financial literacy, health literacy, future employment opportunities, and rights of persons with disabilities, thus strengthening their self image, enhancing their self confidence, and improving their quality of life. The group has a Communications Manager from within the group that updates the groups' Facebook site as well as collaborating with the local paper, Fjardarposturinn, in reporting on the groups' activities to the public. This provided a public voice for the group and helps break down barriers and decrease stigma towards persons with disabilities in the labour market and society in general.

Sustainability (embedding in future activities) (max. 2000 characters)

The pilot project, originally an initiative of the Municipality of Hafnarfjordur in collaboration with the Directorate of Labour, concluded with positive results and has now entirely been transferred to the Municipality of Hafnarfjordur and included in the municipality's budget. The future goal is to make this an all-day activity as well as adding habilitation to the programme. The leaders of the project are currently looking for ways to create new projects for the group and have already secured a project with the Keilir Golfing Club where the group will work in exchange for access to the club. The dream is to open a little shop as well as an website to sell the products that the group creates as well as gaining access to or obtaining tools that will enable the group to design and create more products for sale. The goal this year is also to grow the programme and employ more persons with disabilities as well as offering full-time positions. The possibilities are endless and with the project already having secured future funding from the municipality it now has the chance to sustainably grow and develop.

Transferability

The project can be transferred to other municipalities on a national and international level. More importantly, it can be transferred to serve other groups of persons with disabilities, namely those who have more work skills or endurance than they are able to utilise due to lack of appropriate opportunities or lack of public financing. This employment initiative could also be transferred to other groups within the social services, such as immigrants, unemployed persons, under-active young persons, and persons with mental disabilities.

Reference Documents

Description of references: 1. Public Coverage of the project
2. Pictures from the field

Files

- [Geitungar pictures.pdf](#)
- [Public Coverage.pdf](#)

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