

Introduction

The Rehabilitation Centre for Physically Disabled People (in Hungarian: Mozgássérült Emberek Rehabilitációs Központja, MEREK, www.merek.hu) is a national organisation active in the complex rehabilitation of people with physical disabilities, among them people with severe physical and multiple disabilities. MEREK launched its EU-funded national programme named Gurulo (“Rolling”, www.gurulo.hu) in September, 2008, with the main goal to enhance the social and labour market integration of people with physical disabilities through the establishment of a national network of regional workshops for the development of assistive technology and special sports equipment. The programme is carried out in the framework of the Social Renewal Operative Programme (TÁMOP 1.4.2) of the New Hungary Development Plan.

The potential of social and labour market integration for people with physical disabilities are highly effected by the usefulness and quality of assistive equipment. The maintenance and individual adaptation of these equipment are services hardly available in Hungary.

The goal of establishing a network of workshops is to ensure the local availability of such services for the users of assistive technology. We plan to create one workshop per region, thus realising seven new units altogether by 2011. We plan to hire previously unemployed people with physical disabilities, thus supporting their labour market and social integration.

Another goal of the programme is to create a network of civil and government organisations that is able to effectively support the social and labour market integration of people with disabilities. For this we are looking for partners that support the integration of people with disabilities on the local and national level.

1. Summary

The general level of employment in Hungary decreased dramatically in the 1990ies, and this had a severe effect on the labour market participation of people with disabilities. The difference in the employment of non-disabled people and people

with disabilities was considerable even in 1990 with 44% of the non-disabled population being employed compared with just 17% of people with disabilities. The changes in the labour market decreased even this small figure to the present 9%. The lowest level of employment is observed in the case of people with physical disabilities, 6,3%, while the percentage of inactive people looking for work is the highest at 79,1%. One of the factors resulting in such bad employment figures is the use of non-suitable assistive technology as well as the lack of complex rehabilitation services.

One of our main goals is to establish a national service that adapts assistive technology to the individual needs of users. This means the individual setup of the best suitable assistive equipment that requires the least energy from its user.

Our goal is that through the use of suitable assistive technology the chances of employment of people with disabilities and their capacity to keep their workplace increase.

Mass-produced products are just as not suitable to most people with physical disabilities as manufactured clothing to people without disabilities. There are workshops in several European countries that are able to adapt or even manufacture assistive equipment to individual needs based on professional personal analysis. These items are secure, comfortable and are used on their own while making the best contribution to the independence and working ability of people with physical disabilities.

Our professionals at MEREK encounter assistive technology adapted to personal needs by the people with physical disabilities themselves on a do-it-yourself basis. Fortunately there is a growing demand for personally adapted assistive equipment on behalf of both professionals and people with disabilities. These are produced in well-equipped workshops based on the previous survey and professional suggestion of rehabilitation experts.

Professionals at MEREK answered this challenge already in 2005 when they created the technical aids' and sports' equipment workshop with the help of a Phare grant. Experiences gained from the operation of the workshop show that there is a growing national demand for assistive technology and special sports equipment backed by rehabilitation services.

Our goal is that the services of our workshop become available nationwide.

In order to achieve this we plan to establish altogether six regional workshops as well as a methodological and development centre in Budapest. In the workshops we create new workplaces for people with disabilities.

It is very important that the adaptation and maintenance of assistive and sports equipment be based on a personal examination of the client by rehabilitation experts. The theoretical and practical training of rehabilitation experts as well as the dissemination of ICF (International Classification of Functions and Disability) methodology are natural components of the project. We hope that we can make effective relationships with similar organisations of other EU-member countries in order to further develop methodology and services.

Direct target groups of the project are people with disabilities using assistive aids as well as rehabilitation and social professionals and medical experts. We are also aiming to create an independent non-profit operational model through the complex use of sales income and the presently available government subsidies.

2. Project goals

Generally:

1. Making the service, rent and adaptation of assistive technology available people with physical disabilities living in the country.
2. Extending the scope of servicing to individual adaptation based on personal needs.
3. Training and change of approach of rehabilitation professionals and other experts working in the choosing, commerce and servicing of assistive technology.
4. Enhancing the independence of people with disabilities through the supply of suitable assistive technology in order to increase their potential on the labour market.
5. Increase the level of employment of people with modified working ability both directly and indirectly.

Practical goals:

1. Establishing an assistive technology and special sports equipment workshop in all regions of the country.
2. Ensuring the missing servicing background of assistive tools and special sports equipment.
3. Long-term employment of at least 30 people with disabilities after complex training.
4. Creation of partnerships with rehabilitation and sports organisations, interest groups of people with disabilities ensuring the dissemination and sustainability of services.
5. Dissemination of ICF methodology to rehabilitation experts through local training.
6. Raising awareness of people with disabilities to make use of the rehabilitation services of the workshops and the members of the network.
7. Increasing the labour market potential of people with disabilities through our services.
8. Creation of international partnerships in the field of development and commerce of assistive technology in order to ensure exchange of expertise and effective operation.
9. Dissemination of experiences and results gained from the project.

3. Aspects in the creation and choice of regional workshops

a) Human capacity

We plan to create one workshop in all regions of the country. As an important goal of the project is enhancing of employment of people with disabilities we are aiming to employ such people that are currently unemployed and live in the particular region.

In all workshops we plan to employ the following employees:

- One workshop leader (with at least medium level technical qualification, full-time),
- Three full-time mechanics,

- Physical therapist (half time),
- Orthopaedist (half time).

b) Physical environment

Aspects of choosing the particular places of services:

- Location: where the most potential clients live in a region.
- The availability of complex rehabilitation services and experts supporting the service.
- Accessible services and easy approach from all localities of the region.
- Necessity to create new workplaces (relatively high level of unemployment).

Find us on www.facebook.com/gurulomuhely

or

www.merek.hu, www.gurulo.hu, www.gurulokolcsonzes.hu

Contact with: ERIK Fuksz: fuksz.erik@merek.hu, +36205973620