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**Impulse**  
**Supported Education for People with Psychiatric Disabilities**

Final Report

Public Part

## Project information

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of the Erasmus ImpulSE project was to develop and implement Supported Education services (Toolkit) in European countries and to establish a European Network of Supported Education (ENSEd). Supported Education (SEd) is defined as the provision of individualized, practical support and instruction to assist people with psychiatric disabilities to achieve their educational goals (Anthony et al., 2002). Supported Education is based on the choose-get-keep model of the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation of Boston University. The goal of choosing is to select an educational or training program compatible with the participant's values, skills and learning needs. The goal of getting is to secure admission to a preferred educational and vocational training program. The goal of keeping is to remain at school and increase student success and satisfaction through development of participant skills and support.

ImpulSE was an Erasmus Multilateral project (2013-2015) and was based in four countries: Czech Republic, Netherlands, Norway and Portugal. The partnership covered Europe well - North, West, East/Central and South - bringing variety in experience and good practices. As the organizations of the partners in Norway and the Netherlands are based at universities and the organizations of the partners in Czech Republic and Portugal are private organizations based in mental health care, the partnership brought diverse and complementary experience and expertise.

The eventual **toolkit** (which is freely available at [www.supportededucation.eu](http://www.supportededucation.eu)) is based upon needs- and resources assessments (interviews with students with psychiatric disabilities and professionals, and literature reviews) from the four participating countries, as well as good practices from these. The toolkit consists of three different sections:

- **Introduction to the toolkit.** In this section the myths, facts and figures about SEd; pillars, mission, principles, and target group of SEd, as well as psychiatric disabilities and related educational limitations and barriers and facilitators in choosing, getting and keeping a study are described.
- **Choose-Get-Keep interventions.** Several tools to support students with choosing, getting and keeping a study are presented, for example a career guidance course, peer support group and a brochure on Disclosure.
- **Implementation manual.** This manual includes e.g. information about how to involve stakeholders, how to communicate about your SEd program and also actual brochures about SEd for several stakeholders can be found in this section.

The toolkit is aimed at students counsellors, trainers, teachers and tutors, mental health managers and workers, and local authority officials involved in policymaking concerning people with psychiatric disabilities. It will enable field workers to improve guidance and counselling to students/young adults with psychiatric disabilities, supporting these in their educational careers. The ultimate beneficiaries are the young adults/students with psychiatric disabilities themselves. They will be better 'empowered' to be successful in their educational careers (improving access and/or preventing drop out). This will also improve their chances on the labour market and participation in society at large (social inclusion).

Besides the development of a toolkit, the ImpulSE partners also aimed at establishing a **European Network of Supported Education (ENSEd)**, starting with a first International Conference on Supported Education. Currently, ENSEd consists of 38 partners from 11 countries. The conference was held in November 2015 in Groningen, the Netherlands. In total, 166 participants from 17 countries joined the conference.

An advisory board (4 members) and panels of students with psychiatric disabilities (62) and professionals (50) gave feedback on the project outcomes in several stages of the ImpulSE project. Their feedback has been integrated in the toolkit.

In the future, the toolkit remains freely available on the website, and the ENSED network will continue to expand. Training sessions about the implementation of the toolkit will be offered to interested people and organizations. The project coordinator, Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen, will keep the website up to date and will coordinate the ENSEd- and training activities.

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## 1. Project Objectives

The onset of psychiatric disability generally occurs between the ages of 17 and 25—the years in which young adults follow higher education (including advanced vocational education), which is a major channel in our society to prepare for a career and enhance life goals. But for people with a psychiatric disability, this resource is largely unavailable.

Although people with psychiatric disabilities often attempt higher education, they are frequently unable to complete their studies because of the nature of their illness and its treatment (see Broenink & Gorter, 2001). They often meet with overwhelming obstacles, including stigmatization and discrimination. In an economy that requires (higher) education for upward occupational mobility, people who are unable to succeed in postsecondary/higher education or training may find themselves ultimately underemployed or unemployed. For other disability groups, such as people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities or acquired brain injury, student services are available on most campuses, while people with psychiatric disabilities have not been included in these services—also because student services staff have limited knowledge in this area.

Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for the social inclusion and future (labor) opportunities of young adults with psychiatric disabilities that they have better access to higher education, and are able to complete such study successfully. Supported Education is a means to reach these goals. Supported Education is defined as the provision of individualized, practical support and instruction to assist people with psychiatric disabilities to achieve their educational goals (Anthony, Cohen, Farkas, & Gagne, 2002; Sullivan, Nicozellis, Danley, & MacDonald-Wilson, 1993; Unger, Anthony, Sciarappa, & Rogers, 1991).

The main aim of the ImpulSE project was the development of a toolkit for Supported Education services for students with psychiatric disabilities. The toolkit is based upon needs and resources assessments from the four participating countries, as well as good practices from these. Secondly, a European network of Supported Education (ENSEd) is initiated, starting with a first International Conference on Supported Education, held in Groningen (The Netherlands), November 16-17, 2015. The aim of ENSEd is to raise awareness in the EU about the educational needs of young adults/students with psychiatric disabilities and for services that are in place to help to remove the barriers for this target group.

The toolkit is aimed at students' counsellors, trainers, teachers and tutors, mental health managers and workers, and local authority officials involved in policymaking concerning people with psychiatric disabilities. It will enable field workers to improve guidance and counseling to students/young adults with psychiatric disabilities, supporting these in their educational careers. These professionals were involved in several stages of the project, e.g. the assessment of barriers that people with a psychiatric disability face, the development of a social map of Supported Education, and of a description of good practices (through interviews, questionnaires etc.) in the countries involved. Also, the members of the Advisory Board included such professionals. A panel of professionals was also formed to give feed-back on the output of the project.

The ultimate beneficiaries of the project are the young adults/students with psychiatric disabilities themselves. In the Netherlands alone, it is estimated that five per cent of the total student population suffers from a psychiatric disability- that is, a total of 30,000 students. On a European scale, the number of students with a psychiatric disability is therefore considerably high. Through the project, these young adults/students will be better 'empowered' to be successful in their educational careers (improving access and/or preventing drop out). This will also improve their chances on the labour market and participation in society at large (social inclusion). These young adults/ students were also

involved in the project by forming panels of (present) students with psychiatric disabilities:  
what are their specific needs; how do they assess the toolkit?

## 2. Project Approach

### *Needs and resources assessment*

In order to develop an effective toolkit, the first step was to assess the barriers for students with psychiatric disabilities in the countries involved in the partnership (being the Czech Republic, Portugal, Norway and the Netherlands - see section 4 below), and then to develop a Social Map for Supported Education by assessing the available resources on a regional and national level, needed to remove the barriers. Identified stakeholders as potential resources for SEd were: Educational Organisations, Mental Health Organisations, Consumer & Family Organisations, Financial Aid & Social Security Organisations, and Reintegration Organisations.

Based on the barriers assessment, the available resources and methods/approaches, all partners described their own good practice(s). These had to be worth transferring and exploiting in different contexts and environments by new users.

### *Toolkit*

Based on the good practices, the partners jointly developed an Toolkit for Supported Education. First, during several discussions the table of contents of the toolkit was established. Then, each of the partners was made responsible for a number of items/instruments of the toolkit; the other partners giving feedback. Development and 'joint version' of the toolkit and user manual was in English. Subsequently, this English version was translated into the languages of the four partners.

### *Network*

In order to develop the European Network on Supported Education, each consortium partner involved another "Supported Education partner" in its own country and one in another EU country (outside the countries involved in the project itself). Potential ENSEd members were informed about the network through emails or personal contact. Also, on the website [www.supportededucation.eu](http://www.supportededucation.eu) information about ENSEd could be found, as well as an application form. Furthermore, a LinkedIn group on Supported Education was created to expand the network even further.

### *Evaluation*

An Advisory Board has been formed, consisting of four experts from the professional field from outside the partnership. They assessed and commented the (intermediate) results, and discussed its findings with the project coordinator and steering group (there were two joint meetings of the advisory board and steering group during the project). The steering group then decided which actions (adaptations) had to be taken, and divided the tasks.

Apart from the expert advisory board, panels of students with psychiatric disabilities (in total 62 students) and of professionals in students' counselling (in total 50 professionals) were formed at regional level (not at national level, as we advocate real face to face contact with members of the panels) by each partner. These panels indicated which services they needed/expected, and they gave feedback on the material. In this way, both target groups themselves had input in the project.

### *Dissemination*

Another aim of the project was (and still is) is to reach a broad audience. Therefore, a website ([www.supportededucation.eu](http://www.supportededucation.eu)) was developed that consists of a newsletter, the toolkit which is freely available, a drop box for ideas and links to related institutions and initiatives. The website includes pages in other languages than English (specific country

information). Also, an e-mail list of interested persons was created, in order to send them newsletters.

The impact of the toolkit will be widened by offering the toolkit in more languages than the ones of the partnership, so that the target groups can be reached in more countries. This will be organized/done via ENSEd. Also, the SocNet 98 network will play a role in this. This is a European network of about 20 Schools/faculties of Social Work spread over the whole of Europe, of which Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen is a leading member.

Furthermore, in November 2015, the first European Conference on Supported Education took place in Groningen. This conference was organized by the ImpulSE-partners. During the conference, the toolkit was presented in a key note presentation, 8 workshops and 5 posters to an audience actually involved in Supported Education.

The project outcomes were also presented during other national and international conferences of e.g. associations of teachers, mental health workers, and rehabilitation specialists. This will continue to happen after the project has finished.

Finally, the results will be disseminated/exploited by offering training (after the project period) in working with the toolkit to relevant professionals like student counsellors, mental health workers and (regional) policy makers. First by the partners in the countries directly involved in the project; when ENSEd expands to other ENSEd members and countries as well. The training will be given at normal fees for such training.

#### *Sustainability*

Now that the project has been finished, the professionals, and their organizations/agencies will continue to be reached via their (free) membership of ENSEd, the newsletter and the website. Improvements to the toolkit may continue to be made, within the ENSEd network. The Hanze UAS will continue to coordinate the activities of this network.

Experiences will be shared and reported/commented upon in special sessions dedicated to the toolkit at each conference. Also, professionals working with the toolkit will comment via the website/LinkedIn group.

The (prospective) students themselves will be reached by their study counsellors and tutors using the toolkit and possible other expertise gained within the ENSEd network.

Apart from that, the toolkit (including manual) will be placed on the internet as free source. This means that many more institutions of higher education may use it as well.

Also, the training sessions as described above will contribute to the sustainability of the project outcomes, financially supported by the participant fees.

### **3. Project Outcomes & Results**

#### *Needs and resources assessment*

The first step in the development process of the toolkit concerned the assessment of the barriers and facilitators that students with a psychiatric disorder face when going (back) to school. This information helped us to develop an effective toolkit. To identify these barriers and facilitators, in all four participating countries we used three types of research:

-focus group interviews: young adults with psychiatric disabilities were invited for a group interview about what hinders and what helps when going (back) to school

-interviews with professionals (from educational and mental health organizations): surveys were sent to professionals in the field of supported education with questions about what, to their opinion, hinders and helps young adults with psychiatric disabilities in going (back) to school

-review of literature (both peer reviewed papers and 'gray' publications) on barriers and effective adjustments in educational settings

All partners used the same guidelines when conducting the different types of research, in order to make the results comparable.

Furthermore, the four partners have developed a social map of existing adjustments and resources and current policies regarding educational opportunities for people with mental health disabilities in their region and or country. Based on this social map, each partner has described a good practice. To keep uniformity in our methods, we agreed to use the same procedure for the development of these two outcomes

#### *Toolkit*

The contents of the toolkit is based on the needs and resources assessments and the good practices from the four partner countries. The toolkit consists of three sections; an introduction; the actual tools; and an implementation manual. The table of contents is presented on the next pages. The toolkit can be downloaded freely from the website [www.supportededucation.eu](http://www.supportededucation.eu), where it is available in five languages (English, Norwegian, Portuguese, Czech and Dutch). A Swedish translation is expected shortly. The English toolkit is also available in book form (144 pages) and can be downloaded from the website or ordered at the Hanze UAS Groningen.

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The toolkit contains guidelines and procedures which skilled professionals are encouraged to adapt and modify to meet the unique needs of the individuals they serve. It also contains guidelines and procedures for administrators of educational and/or mental health organisations to implement a Supported Education programme in their own organisation or region.

### *Network*

The European Network Supported Education (ENSEd) is an international network of people (lecturers, teachers, tutors, mental health practitioners, students, clients, family members, reserachers and policy makers) and organizations dedicated to improve the support of people with psychiatric disabilities who want to return to or to remain at school

The aim of ENSEd is to raise awareness in the EU about the educational needs of young adults/students with psychiatric disabilities and for services that are in place to help to remove the barriers for this target group.

Members of ENSEd can be either individual members or organizational members. Organisations who wish to join will have to nominate an individual within their organisation to hold the membership. Also non-European citizens or organizations can join ENSEd.

Applicants to membership need to provide a statement of motivation and expertise. By signing up they agree that their name, organization, email address, website and expertise will be shared on our website so people can contact them with regards to SEd information.

Membership is for free and benefits include:

- Updated SEd information for anyone (students, consumers, professionals, family members, etc) who is interested in SEd
- Exchange of information, ideas and experiences for professionals who are involved in SEd activities
- Information and advice for organizations who want to start SEd activities
- Newsletters with information about Supported Education and related topics
- Every 2-3 years a conference on Supported Education
- Possibility to list SEd services, knowledge and products on the ENSEd-members page

Potential national and international partners have been approached by e-mail or personally by the partners. Also the SocNet '98 network, a European network of about 20 Schools/faculties of Social Work spread over the whole of Europe of which Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen is a leading member, has been informed about the ImpulSE-project. Currently, 38 members are registered for ENSEd and they come from 11 countries. The LinkedIn group that recently has been created, consists of 21 members.

### *Evaluation*

The Advisory board consisted of the following members: Ana Maria Bénard da Costa, Educational specialist and policy maker (retired) from Portugal; Camilla Bogarve, Rehabilitation specialist, Malmö university, from Sweden; and Jiří Podlipny, M.D, PhD Psychiatrist, Charles University Prague, from the Czech Republic.

At the partnership meetings in Plzen, Czech Republic (Jiri Podlipny); Bergen, Norway (all members); and Groningen, the Netherlands (all members) the Advisory Board gave feedback on the project and this feedback has been processed in the intermediate and final toolkit.

Panels of students (62) with psychiatric disabilities and of professionals (50) in students counselling have been formed in the four countries and in the first phase of the project they have given feedback on the assessment of barriers that students with psychiatric disabilities face when going (back) to school. Their feedback was assimilated into the final reports. Also the Disclosure has been evaluated by students from our target group. In the second phase of the project both of these panels have given feedback on the toolkit as a whole.

### *Dissemination*

An important goal of the project was to reach a broad audience. To that end, a **website** was launched ([www.supportededucation.eu](http://www.supportededucation.eu)) on which background information about the project and the partners is given and the toolkit is posted. In 2015, the website has been visited 36,762 times. The English toolkit is also published in **book form** (200 copies). Also, **posters** and **brochures** were made to enhance the awareness of our project among for instance students, colleagues and policy makers. Furthermore, several **presentations** about the ImpulSE-project have been given in the four countries at national and international conferences and symposia. For instance, in May 2014, Ledovec hosted an invitational conference in Plzen about the ImpulSE-project. Several organizations who are working in the field of Supported Education were present. In November 2014, AEIPS hosted such an invitational conference in Lisbon, Portugal; and the Dutch partners gave a presentation at a symposium about supported education in the Netherlands to disseminate the results of the first year of the ImpulSE project. SiB Norway organized a meeting about the ImpulSE project with students with psychiatric disabilities in May 2015 in Bergen. In June 2015, the Dutch ImpulSE partners visited colleagues at the Rutgers University, School of Health related Professions, Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Counseling Professions and three Supported Education projects in New Jersey where they presented the ImpulSE project at several meetings and at a seminar for Rehabilitation and SEd-specialists.

To complete the ImpulSE-project a **two-day international conference on Supported Education** was organized on November 16 and 17 in Groningen, the Netherlands. 166 participants from 17 countries attended the conference. The results of the ImpulSE project were presented in a key note speech, 8 workshops and 5 posters.

#### 4. Partnerships

As our consortium (Czech republic, Portugal, Norway and the Netherlands) covered all four 'corners' of Europe –East, South, North and West-, it brought diversity in experience and good practices, adding to the quality of the results. It also offered good opportunities for dissemination and valorization as all partners have a strong (regional and national) network of agencies and institutes, relevant for the project. The diverse and complementary experience and the opportunities for dissemination appear from the information about the four partners below.

The Research and Innovation Centre for Rehabilitation from Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen is the only specific centre in the field of psycho-social rehabilitation in the Netherlands. Together with a partner organization in Utrecht (Rehabilitation '92 Foundation) the centre has launched a National Supported Education Expertise centre for people with psychiatric disabilities. Both partners have more than 10 years of experience conducting Supported Education research and innovation projects. The Centre of Expertise also provides information about studying with psychiatric disabilities, and Supported Education presentations, workshops, courses and consultation. The research centre maintains contacts with many other institutions of Higher Education, Community Colleges and Mental Health Organizations in the region and nationally with regard to Supported Education programmes. Within the Netherlands, it is front runner in Supported Education in Higher Education.

Ledovec has got unique experience of introducing Supported Education as a new and totally unknown service to the Czech educational and social system. Starting in 2006, it runs projects now in several regions in the Czech Republic. It cooperates closely with, and offers services to, the University of West Bohemia and has supported dozens of students, gaining 'good practice' experience. Ledovec has established effective partnerships with the two regional mental health institutes in Plzen and institutes/foundations for psychosocial rehabilitation in Prague. Especially relevant for this project is its' close cooperation with the University of West Bohemia and student counselling centres.

The Student Welfare Organization of Bergen (SiB) works with and for several institutions of Higher Education in Norway. It includes the Student Mental Health Service (SMHS) which employs seven specialists in clinical psychology, and one psychiatrist. SiB is involved in The Supported Education Project (SMS) in Bergen, financed by the Norwegian National Welfare Services Directorate, and will play a central role in a nation wide project to be started. These projects are the first of its kind in Scandinavia. SiB collaborates with all higher education institutions affiliated with SiB, state-run mental health institutions, special schools and psychiatrists and psychologists in private practice. And also with student welfare organizations in Oslo, Trondheim and Tromso.

The AEIPS' Supported Education programme in Portugal provides specific support for people who experience mental illness and intend to go back to regular education, including Higher Education; support within and outside school or university. AEIPS works closely with educational agents (teachers, schools, universities and others). And for higher education with the Higher Education Institution ISPA.

Some members of the consortium already knew each other as they worked together on other projects. This made us an efficient team that was willing to work hard on the project, in a friendly and positive atmosphere.

## 5. Plans for the Future

### *Toolkit*

The toolkit on the website will be updated on a regular basis, based on feedback from the ENSEd network and new insights and developments in the field of Supported Education. The Dutch partners will continue to update the website [www.supportededucation.eu](http://www.supportededucation.eu).

All partners will continue to work with the toolkit in their daily practice.

### *Network*

Through the website, the LinkedIn group and newsletters, we will keep ENSEd an active network. Also, we will continue to expand the number of ENSEd members. We hope to be able to organize –together with the other ENSEd members- a seminar or another conference on SEd in the future.

### *Dissemination*

The English toolkit is published as a book (200 copies). These copies will be handed out by the ImpulSE partners to people/organizations interested in or relevant for Supported Education in their regional and national networks. Also, the book can be ordered at the Hanze UAS. Furthermore, presentations and workshops about the toolkit will be given at national and international symposia and conferences. Finally, we aim at publishing at least one article about the ImpulSE project in a relevant journal.

### *Training sessions*

Training sessions in working with the toolkit will be offered to relevant professionals like student counsellors, mental health workers and (regional) policy makers. First by the partners in the countries directly involved in the project; when ENSEd expands to other ENSEd members and countries as well. The training will be given at normal fees for such training.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

In 2010, the European Commission stated that: As full citizens, people with disabilities have equal rights and are entitled to dignity, equal treatment, independent living and full participation in society. Enabling people with disabilities to enjoy these rights is the main purpose of the EU's long-term strategy for their active inclusion (<http://ec.europa.eu/social>).

The project fits with the Disability Action Plan, adopted by the EU, fostering, e.g. equal access to quality education and lifelong learning enable disabled people to participate fully in society and improve their quality of life. And also fostering accessibility to the labour market.

It is also in line with the view held by the World Health Organization. In May 2005, the 58th World Health Assembly approved a Resolution on "Disability, including prevention, management and rehabilitation" that calls upon Member States to strengthen implementation of the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities; promote the rights and dignity of people with disabilities to ensure their full inclusion in society; promote and strengthen community-based rehabilitation programs; and include a disability component in their health policies and programs".

Recently, the Council of the European Union made reducing early school leaving from 14,4% (mean of all EU countries) to less than 10% by 2020 a headline target in the Europe 2020 strategy (Council of the European Union, 2011; Reducing early school leaving: Commission Staff Working Paper). People with psychiatric disabilities are one of the main 'risk groups' in early school leaving. Reducing this for this category of early school leavers will be quite helpful in this achieving the headline target.

In the Netherlands, there is a widespread debate in social and political circles, and among professional practitioners, about the steady growth in the number of young people with mental health problems. Recently (July, 2014), the Health Council of the Netherlands advised the State Secretaries for Health, Welfare and Sport and for Social Affairs and Employment about the community participation of young people with mental health problems. The Health Council describes the current situation on the labour market and in education. It identifies points of concern, and indicates what action employers, schools and the government can take to ensure that participation has every chance of succeeding. There have already been some important developments in this area. In the area of education, Supported Education is a rehabilitation approach that addresses the numerous questions that teachers and programme selection advisors face when dealing with pupils with mental health problems. The Health Council takes the view that permanent incentives should be set up for initiatives of this kind (Health Council of the Netherlands. Participation by young people with mental health problems. The Hague: Health Council of the Netherlands, 2014; publication no. 2014/18).

