

# Transfer of innovation, knowledge and competencies on the care service for people with acquired disabilities: the European project “Care for Work”

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## Abstract

**Background.** *The growing needs of people with disabilities require to integrate this issue into public health in order to improve political feasibility and to ensure that disability will not be left off from any strategic table. The main aim of the “Care for Work” project was to provide training contents to help workers and unemployed people to adapt their knowledge, skills and competencies to the care services sector in order to facilitate their insertion in a new employment source.*

**Methods.** *The partners participating in the project are Organizations from 5 European countries. The project has been divided into seven Work Packages (WPs): three transversal WPs and four specific WPs, each addressing specific activities necessary to achieve the final objectives of the project.*

**Results.** *The “Care for Work” learning environment contains specific information and training on the techniques for caring people with acquired physical disabilities, as text documents and short training films. The project combines e-learning (Web 2.0) and mobile learning providing a flexible training platform for workers of care services sector.*

**Conclusions.** *The “Care for Work” project offers specific training addressed to meet the new existing needs of workers of the care services sector and/or unemployed people. All the information and results of the project are available on the web page: [www.careforwork.eu](http://www.careforwork.eu), and the present article is part of the WP “Valorization”.*

## Introduction

More than one billion people in the world live with some form of disability, of which nearly 200 million experience significant difficulties in functioning. The prevalence of disability is growing, due to population ageing and increases in

chronic health conditions, among other causes (1). Employment is an absolute priority on the agenda for European governments and there is a need to develop innovative strategies to increase the affordable opportunities in relation to accessing employment (2). The project “Care for Work” – *Competence updating*

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*for Care Services Sector as New Employment Source through the use of innovative learning methodologies - is under Long Life Learning Program - Leonardo da Vinci, Transfer of Innovation* financed and approved in 2009 by European Committee through Italian “ISFOL” National Agency (*Project number: LLP-LDV-TOI-09-IT-0459*).

“Care for Work” is a transfer of innovation based on a previous project named “Qualified Care” LDV project (Professionalization of Family Care for People affected by Multiple Sclerosis), which was directed to the elaboration of training contents about the care of people affected by Multiple Sclerosis. “Care for Work” project aimed to develop knowledge about the competencies related to care and assistance activities for people with acquired physical disability and to promote continuous training in the care sector and to spread the “care assistance sector” as a new employment source. The main aim was to provide training contents to help workers and unemployed people to adapt their knowledge, skills and competencies to the care services sector in order to facilitate their insertion in a new employment source. The specific objectives were: i) to analyze the care services sector with a focus on competencies; ii) to analyze the “Qualified Care” training tool (LdV Multi “Qualified Care” project, number ES/04/B/F/PP-149.214); iii) to adapt and update the training contents to care services for people with acquired disability; iv) to provide specific knowledge on care services based on flexible learning methodologies (Web 2.0 Learning Environment); v) to elaborate a Guide on the adaptation of competencies to new employment sources.

The project is directed to everyone who wishes to improve care competencies related to physical acquired disability (care and assistance operators, people in

training, relatives of disabled people), and to gain new skills either for educational or for professional purposes. The main direct targets of the project were: i) workers of care services sector and/or unemployed people willing to improve and adapt their knowledge, competencies, skills and abilities to match the market needs, regardless his/her work situation; and ii) specific individuals related to the care sector interested in the project results, either by personal interest (care workers or relatives) or by organizational concern (trainers, managers, experts in care sector, etc.). Indirect target users of the project were: i) care organizations (hospitals, day centres, care houses, etc.); ii) care services companies (private companies that provide domiciliary care); iii) associations of people with disability; iv) professional carers associations; unpaid carers associations; v) training organizations; vi) universities; vii) labour insertion organizations; viii) relatives of disabled people; ix) disabled people; x) public authority; and xi) other kind of organizations.

## Methods

The “Care for Work” project started in October 2009 and ended in September 2011.

### *Partners*

The “Care for Work” partnership was composed by 8 subjects from 5 different EU countries encompassing all necessary skills and expertise for the successful development of the project. The consortium was composed by Organisations of different nature such as: a Public Local Health Service; a consultancy company specialized in social and market research and in carrying out national and European projects; an engineering company spe-

cialized in health assistance; a non-profit educational association; an association for the fight against multiple sclerosis; a charity training and education organization; a non-profit and non-governmental training organisation; a video production company and a university research center.

Particularly, the partners involved were: XXI INVESLAN S.L. (ES), ASL3-Azienda Sanitaria Locale N3 dell'Umbria (IT), PRAGMA Engineering Srl (IT), WSINF – Academy of Information Technology (PL), ABDEM- Asociación Balear de Esclerosis Multiple (ES), POINT EUROPA (UK), LaPoSS, University of Catania (IT), and EURO-Training (BG).

### *Work Packages*

In order to ensure the development of the project and the achievement of the objectives, the “Care for Work” project has been divided into seven Work Packages (WP) with specific objectives. Particularly, there were three transversal WPs carried out along the whole project implementation and four specific WPs each addressed to a specific activity necessary to achieve the final objectives of the project.

#### A) Transversal WP

WP1 – Project Management and Coordination: it requested continuous communication among partners (e-mail, phone, skype meeting). The management has been reinforced by the celebration of some trans-national meetings that allowed to check the degree of development of the activities, to make decisions, to show difficulties and problems arised along the project implementation.

WP6 – Valorisation: Exploitation and dissemination activities carried out in each partner country according to the methodologies established in the corresponding exploitation and dissemination

plans designed along the implementation of the project.

WP7 – Monitoring and Evaluation: The continuous evaluation of the project has been ensured by the celebration of trans-national meetings and by evaluation questionnaires, and externally by the involvement of experts along the different stages of the project.

#### B) Specific WP

WP2 – Analysis of care services sector with regards to the competencies of the workers: it consisted in the use of a qualitative methodology through secondary (bibliographical research, databases, Internet) and primary sources (interviews, questionnaires, discussion groups) with the direct involvement of the target group.

WP3 – Analysis of Qualified Care Training Tool: it consisted in a study in depth of the contents of “Qualified Care” LDV project in order to establish how they could be adapted to “Care for Work” project, taking into specific consideration the results obtained from the analysis.

WP4 – Development of the Web 2.0 Learning Environment: the learning environment has been designed taking specific consideration of the characteristics of care services sector in each partner country and of the competencies workers should have for taking care of people with acquired disabilities. Thus the training content has been elaborated with the collaboration of all project partners and the short training films have been done according to scripts elaborated at that effect.

WP 5 – Practical Experimentation: the practical experimentation has been carried out with the objective of allowing a first practical application of the Web 2.0 Learning Environment among the target groups. In this sense, the experimentation consisted of two main activities:

validation among experts group and pilot testing with users group. Thus, the aim of the practical experimentation has been twofold: to obtain useful information from users and experts to carry out the necessary changes/adaptation for elaborating the definitive version of the learning environment and to contribute to the exploitation of the learning environment by the direct involvement of the target group.

## Results

### *Products*

The activities and products of the “Care for Work” project are described in details in Table 1. The main products, each available in all partners’ languages, are summarized below.

**Report on the competencies of workers from care services sector:** the

Table 1 - Partner’s activities and main products of the “Care for Work” project

<b>Work package</b>	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Products</b>
1. Project Management and Coordination	Asl N. 3 dell’Umbria(IT) Inveslan (ES)	Administrative and financial management Communication among the partners and with the Agency Coordination of the implementation of the project Elaboration of the corresponding reports Celebration of Trans-national Meetings	<b>P1</b> Interim Report <b>P2</b> Final Report <b>P3</b> Trans-National Meetings Dossier
2. Analysis of care services sector with regards to the competencies of the workers	Inveslan (ES)	Definition of the guidelines and methodology for the analysis Bibliographical research, databases and Internet Realization of questionnaires, interviews and discussion groups Elaboration of National Reports on the results Elaboration of the Report on the needs of workers form Health and Care Sector	<b>P4</b> Methodological Tools Dossier <b>P5</b> Bibliographical references Dossier <b>P6</b> Report on the competencies of workers from care services sector
3. Analysis of the Qualified Care tool	Pragma (IT)	Qualified Care tool analysis Definition of the training contents	<b>P7</b> Training Contents Dossier
4. Design and Development of the Web 2.0 Learning Environment	Momint (PL) Abdem (ES)	Election of the working methodology for elaborating the learning environment Training contents elaboration Design of the scripts for the short training films Realization of the training films Translation of the contents into all partner languages	<b>P8</b> Methodological Dossier for the Elaboration of the Training Contents <b>P9</b> Prototype of the Web 2.0 learning environment

(Table 1 follows in next page)

*(Table 1 continued)*

5. Validation of the Learning Environment	Point europa (UK)	Elaboration of the Experimentation Plan (validation and test) Validation by experts Test with a group of users Analysis of the validation and test results Development of the final version of the learning environment	<b>P10</b> Experimentation application plan <b>P11</b> Report on Experimental application results <b>P12</b> Final version of the Web 2.0 learning environment
6. Valorisation	LaPoSS (IT)	Design of the Exploitation Strategy Design of the Dissemination Strategy Design and Management of the Project Website Elaboration of a guide on how to adapt competencies to new employment sources Organization of a dissemination final event	<b>P13</b> Exploitation Plan <b>P14</b> Dissemination Plan <b>P15</b> Dissemination Tools Dossier <b>P16</b> Project Website <b>P17</b> Guide on how to adapt competencies to new employment sources
7. Monitoring and Evaluation	Euro-training (BG)	Elaboration of the Quality Management Plan Elaboration of the Evaluation Tools Implementation of the Quality Plan Elaboration of a Final Evaluation Report	<b>P18</b> Quality Management Plan <b>P19</b> Evaluation tools Dossier <b>P20</b> Report on evaluation results

purpose of this report was to gather the results of the research activities carried out by “Care for Work” project partners in the framework of the WP2 “Analysis of care services sector with regards to the competencies of the workers”. This WP2 was aimed to analyze, by means of different research tools, the situation in each country with regards to the care services sector, focusing on the competencies that workers should have for caring people with acquired physical disabilities. Furthermore, in the report, some general conclusions on the comparison among the situation of the different partners’ countries, as well as the competencies of the workers, were described.

**On-line training platform, based on 2.0 technologies:** the Web 2.0 learn-

ing environment and the Mobile learning environment were created for direct and indirect target in order to provide specific knowledge and competencies related to the care and social sector for people with acquired disabilities and to support workers and unemployed people to match the Care Service Sector needs. The contents were developed in different formats such as pdf files, audio files and videos that can be downloaded on the project website ([www.careforwork.eu](http://www.careforwork.eu)) and in other specific websites. Finally, “YouTube” channels were created in all national languages, in order to add and disseminate audio files and videos of the project. Particularly, contents were organized in six modules and different didactic unities: 1. Practical abilities in daily life activities (dressing

and undressing, mobilizations and transferences, help in feeding, personal hygiene: practical abilities); 2. Physical activities (general rules, cooperation with the specialist, general exercises); 3. Psycho-social aspects of acquired disability (psycho-social problems analysis, the process of adaptation to a disability, to promote social integration in the context, communication and relation with people with disabilities); 4. Communication: producing and receiving messages (communication strategies, specific aids to enhance communication); 5. Self caring (stress management; burn-out syndrome); 6. Final recommendations (therapies, mental activities, organizing the environment, role of the carer at home, first aid advices, occupational risks prevention). Furthermore, in the framework of the WP5 a practical experimentation of the training materials was performed in order to test the practical application of the training materials, to evaluate the adequacy of the content, to consult experts and final users in the development of the final version, to adapt the training materials to the real requirements of the users and to elaborate the final version of the training materials. To achieve these aims, each participating partner conducted validation and testing activities at the national level. Particularly, a small number of experts and a number of participants from the target group validated the project materials to check if the platform and the contents met the training needs of the target groups and to identify further improvements to be introduced by the partners.

**Guide on how to adapt competencies to new employment sources:** the purpose of this Guide was to help workers of care services sector and/or unemployed people to identify and to learn or to adapt the knowledge and skills to provide quality care for disabled people. The Guide was composed by different section such us: carer profile, international and national

sources on disability – useful links and references in the different countries regarding the healthcare care sector focused on professional networks/associations, educational sources, supporting organizations that can help the carer in his/her daily life - and a brief list of training organizations for country as well as a brief description of practical aspects related to the care for people with acquired disabilities.

### *Valorization of the project*

The LaPoSS was the leader of the WP6 “Valorisation” that is a process for enhancing and optimizing the project outcomes through “Dissemination”. Dissemination and exploitation activities are the most important part of valorization that are conducted in order to reap the maximum yield from the “Care for Work” project, optimizing the value of the project, strengthening its impact, transferring it to other contexts, and integrating it in a sustainable manner into the broader European context, during the project and after its lifetime, by enabling others to apply it.

### *Dissemination of the project*

The dissemination of the project and its results were fundamental elements to ensure sustainability from the beginning of the “Care for Work” project. Dissemination activities have been intensified when results have become available and once again the project finished; in fact, it allows other users to take advantage of the obtained results.

The dissemination strategy of the “Care for Work” project embraced communication and information activities with regard to the target groups and the key actors of the project, the activities and the results have been disseminated through different channels and tools at the local, regional, national European and international level.

The dissemination strategy was both *internal* and *external*. The first one was addressed at ensuring a good diffusion and sharing of information and documentation within each partner.

The *External Dissemination* aimed at communicating and assuring the visibility and awareness of the results outside the partnership of the project. In particular, external dissemination activities were intended to: a) diffuse information and raise awareness about the “Care for Work” project to the user communities; b) promote participation and further strengthen ties with the user communities; c) establish links and encourage synergies with similar projects and initiatives, also by the means of an internet campaign; d) raise new synergies and collaboration opportunities among consortium members.

In order to be effective and to provide tangible results, the dissemination strategy adopted the following methodological steps:

- Defining the objectives of the dissemination actions
- Identifying the target groups for dissemination
- Defining the suitable dissemination actions and the appropriate sources

- Establishing the proper roles and responsibilities of the partners

- Raising public awareness on the project achievements through the most suitable means for communicating with the respective target groups.

The main aim guiding the dissemination activities was the provision of appropriate and reliable information to the interested parties about the project scope and expected results so as to enable exploitation after the project end. Ensuring the proper awareness towards the project motivation and the rationale behind producing the specific results is a principal step, which offers insight on what the “Care for Work” project is about, who would be benefit from it and how.

One main goal of the dissemination activities was to promote main results to different levels, aiming at the higher diffusion and ultimately exploitation of the underlying concepts and methodologies to all the stakeholders.

Finally, in order to support the dissemination activities and to ensure to all partners the proper information access and knowledge management tool, an internal website was used. It was periodically updated with all the necessary information. Results of the “Care for

Table 2 - Dissemination actions of the “Care for Work” project

Dissemination actions	Target	Partners involved	Outputs
<i>Reports</i>			
Reports, Dossiers and Plans and all the products from the Care for Work project’s activities	Partner of the project and direct and indirect targets	All partners	Partners produced 1 report/dossier/plan at the interim of the project, and 1 at the end of the project
On line Guidelines	Direct and Indirect	All partners	
<i>Website</i>			
Website publications	Direct and Indirect	All partners	The partners publish all the documents reported above during the whole project
Internet campaign	Direct and Indirect	INVESLAN, Pragma	1 campaign at the end of the project
Internal website	Partner of the project	All partners	All the necessary information during the whole project

(Table 2 follows in next page)

(Table 2 continued)

<i>Print materials</i>			
Leaflets	Direct and Indirect	All partners	200 leaflets for each partners, in the five languages of the project
Brochures	Direct and Indirect	All partners	100 brochures for each seminar/workshop/event in the five languages of the project
Newsletters	Direct and Indirect	All partners	1 article before each seminar/workshop/event
Press release, articles in journals	Direct and Indirect	All partners	2 press items per country; Nearly 6-8 articles in journals
<i>Conference, seminar, workshop and meetings</i>			
Skype meeting	Partner of the project	Between coordinator and the other partners and among all partners	Once a month skype meeting between the coordinator and the partners and one once every six months among all partners
Local seminars	Direct and Indirect	Each country in own territory	1 local seminar for each partner
Final dissemination conference	Direct and Indirect	All partners	One international conference has been organized in Perugia, Italy

Work” project have been disseminated using different tools adapted to the specific targets. The Table 2 summarizes the different dissemination actions.

#### *Exploitation of the project*

Two distinct categories of exploitation activities were addressed, as classified by the European Commission: mainstreaming and multiplication. Mainstreaming is “the planned process of transferring the successful results of programs and initiatives to appropriate decision-makers in regulated local, regional, national or European systems”. In contrast, multiplication is “the planned process of convincing individual end-users to adopt and/or apply the results of programs and initiatives” (3).

The exploitation strategy was also addressed to facilitate the integration of the learning environment and other “Care for Work” products and results within the target group at National and European level. Special attention was put in making products more attractive for users taking into consideration their real needs and

identifying products which could have practical application.

The project has both tangible and intangible results that should be considered. Particularly, tangible results, such as tools, documents, handbooks, e-learning packages, can be “easily” demonstrated. On the contrary “intangible results”, such as changes in attitude, the cultural awareness or the upgrading of skills of individuals, may require other exploitation methods (such as interviews, or analyses through questionnaires, etc.). Exploiting results means looking beyond generating publicity to actually encouraging stakeholders to use or further develop project results. The results of the project, if adopted, could lead changes both in the lives of individuals and groups and by influencing systems and policy. The key to success in exploitation mechanisms is to select activities that are appropriate to the type of result and the users. In any case, transfer, commercialization and sustainability could be appropriate mechanisms.

Each partner involved in the “Care for Work” project pursues individual goals and plans in the exploitation of the project, based on his activities context and the products and services he offers. In the Exploitation plan, designed by the LaPoSS team, a specific section “*Planned Activities by Partners*” was created in order to help partners to tailor their products and activities in such a way as to make them relevant beyond the time of the project.

## Discussion and conclusions

At the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, disability has taken its rightful place at the seat of public health in the most important and oldest public health organizations in the world, American Public Health Association (APHA) (4). An essential component for public health efforts is to improve training of health care professional in disability and health issues (5). In fact, education and training for health care workers is an important priority in order to increase awareness about the health care needs of people with disabilities and to improve access to services (1).

The main final output of the “Care for Work” project is an on-line training platform, based on 2.0 technologies, that provides specific knowledge and competencies on the care service for people with acquired disabilities and supports workers and unemployed people to match the care services sector needs. As a result, the project aims to contribute directly to the professional and personal development of the target users, improving and updating their skills. The project also promotes the use of new technologies as the training contents available in a Web 2.0 learning environment which contains materials on caring techniques making the learning process interactive and attractive for the users.

Furthermore, the care services sector is considered a new employment source in many EU countries, given the high demand of care assistance services and the low number of qualified workers. Thus, considering that workers and unemployed people have the opportunity to access to specific training on the subject, they will be able to adapt their competencies to the market needs, becoming professionals of care services sector. In fact, one of the main product resulting from “Care for Work” project was a Guide on the adaptation of competencies to new employment sources which, basing on the experience of the project, explains the steps to follow for helping workers to adapt their competencies and skills.

In conclusion, there are growing needs of people with disabilities and integrating this issue into public health will improve political feasibility and will ensure that disability will not be left off from any strategic table (4). In this context, the “Care for Work” project adds an important value in creating innovative educational models that may be of great assistance to workers, unemployed people, institutions and other users throughout Europe.

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## Riassunto

*Trasferimento dell’innovazione, di conoscenze e competenze specifiche sui servizi di assistenza alle persone con disabilità acquisita: il progetto europeo “Care for Work”*

**Introduzione.** I crescenti bisogni di salute delle persone con disabilità rendono necessario integrare

questo tema in Sanità Pubblica, al fine di migliorare la fattibilità politica e assicurare che la disabilità non venga lasciata fuori dai tavoli strategici. L'obiettivo principale del progetto "Care for Work" è stato di produrre formazione per i lavoratori o i disoccupati, per adattare le loro conoscenze, attitudini e competenze al settore dei servizi assistenziali, al fine di facilitarne il loro inserimento professionale.

**Metodi.** Al progetto "Care for Work" hanno partecipato in qualità di partner Organizzazioni di 5 Paesi europei. Il progetto è stato organizzato in sette Work Packages (WP). In particolare, tre WP trasversali e quattro WP specifici, ognuno indirizzato a specifiche attività necessarie per il raggiungimento degli obiettivi finali del progetto.

**Risultati.** Il Learning Environment contiene specifiche informazioni e formazione tecnica per l'assistenza ai soggetti con disabilità fisica acquisita, sia come documenti di testo che come brevi filmati formativi. Il progetto combina l'e-learning (Web 2.0) e il mobile learning per fornire una piattaforma flessibile per gli addetti al settore dei servizi di assistenza.

**Conclusioni.** Il progetto "Care for Work" offre gli strumenti per una formazione specifica indirizzata a rispondere alle nuove esigenze degli addetti al settore

dei servizi di assistenza e/o ai disoccupati. Tutte le informazioni ed i risultati del progetto sono disponibili sul sito web: [www.careforwork.eu](http://www.careforwork.eu) ed il presente articolo è parte del WP "Valorizzazione".

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