

## Corporate Social Responsibility: a frame for supporting employment of People with Disabilities

29 October 2015

Vilnius, Lithuania



On 29th October, EPR and Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre co-organised a conference entitled “Corporate Social Responsibility: a frame for supporting employment of people with disabilities”. The event gathered together employers, vocational rehabilitation service providers, researchers and people with disabilities who shared experiences and exchanged visions on the topic.

The expert Guus van Beek, representing the European Platform for Rehabilitation, introduced the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from a European perspective and highlighted the win-win situation when companies employ

people with disabilities. He pointed out how in reality, certain businesses use corporate social responsibility to strengthen their public relations, while others translate this concept into concrete actions. *“To understand why companies invest to be truly socially responsible, it is important to reflect on the fact that the most successful and sustainable businesses are those who have not only monetary goals, but also social goals, such as creating jobs, providing services, working in and for the community”*, he said.

Different speakers then took turn in addressing the audience, the first of whom was a representative of Swedbank Public Affairs

Manager Guoda Lomanaite, who talked about the promotion of Social sustainability, and how it allowed the implementation of principles of the Global Compact.

Following the intervention of those speakers, the audience was given the chance to express their opinions and ask questions about CSR and the employment of people with disabilities during the “hot” microphone session.

Guus Van Beek then took the floor again to talk about CSR in practice, and more particularly about Inclusive Entrepreneurship, an employment strategy for persons with disability as well as Sustainable Job Creation as a win-win approach. He was followed by Minna Sild, project manager at the Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre in Estonia, who talked about how CSR is put in practice: their mentoring programme. Natalja Markovskaja, the Head of the Employment department at the

Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre then explained the added value of vocational rehabilitation services for employers.

The conference was also attended by RIMI supermarket chain representative Giedre Bielskyte who explained the RIMI approach on CRS and employment of people with disabilities. RIMI is a Swedish supermarket chain employing people with disabilities as cashiers and other supermarket related jobs. Giedre Bielskyte emphasised that employment of people with disabilities has influenced changes internally in the company – the employees are more tolerant, improved work atmosphere.

It was overall a very informative conference, where time was allotted to story-telling, sharing experience, giving new ideas and encouraging good practices.



*This event has received financial support from the European Union Programme for employment and Social Innovation “EaSI” (2014-2020). For further information please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>*