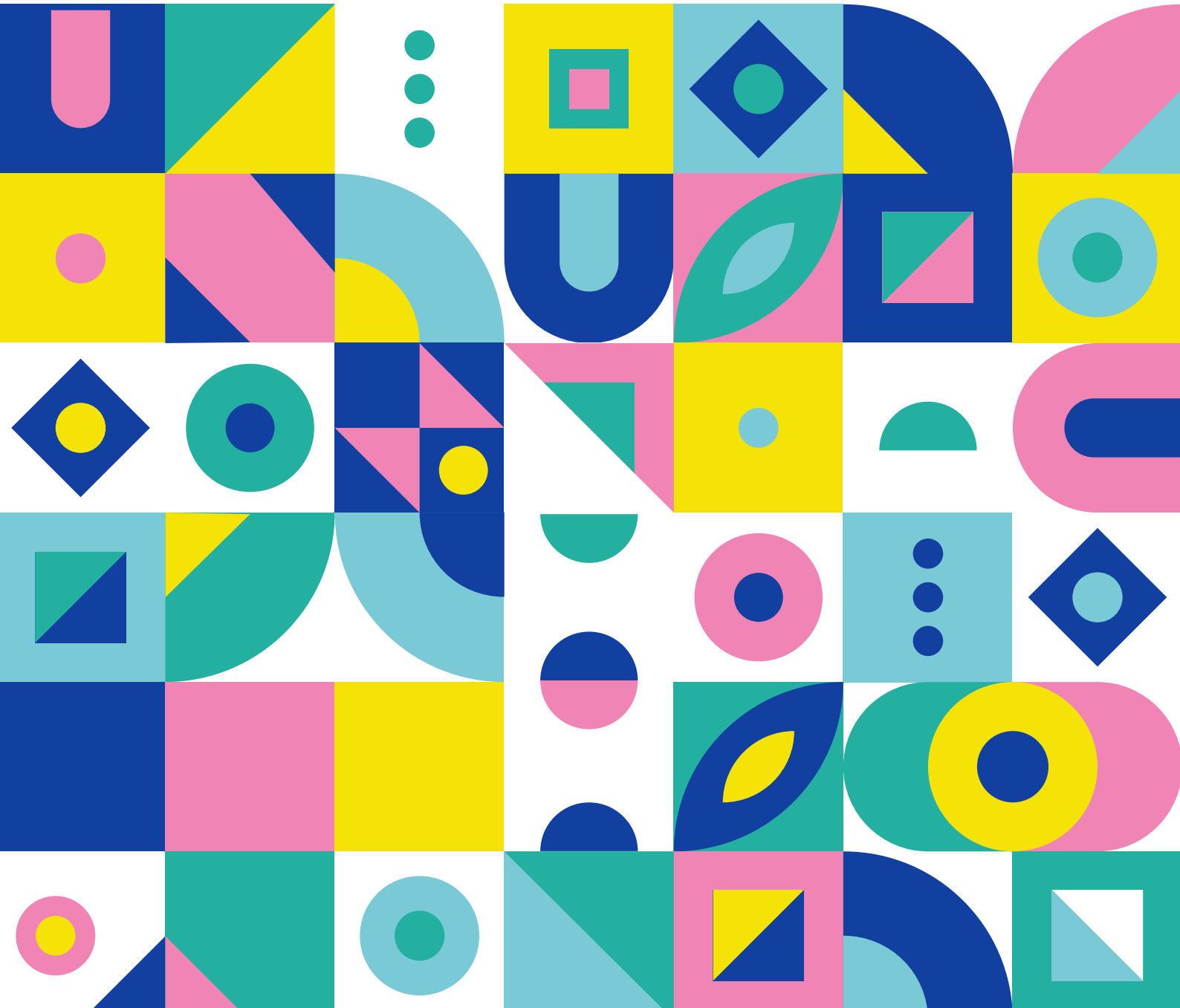


# NEURODIVERSITY

## (R)EVOLUTIONARY INCLUSION MODEL



# Project Information

<b>Project acronym</b>	<b>NEW</b>
<b>Project title</b>	<b>Neurodiversity at Work</b>
<b>Project number</b>	<b>2021-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000033362</b>
<b>Sub programme or KA</b>	<b>KA220-VET - Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training</b>
<b>Project website</b>	<b><a href="http://www.neurodiverseworkplaces.eu">www.neurodiverseworkplaces.eu</a></b>

## Executive Summary

The Neurodiversity at Work (r)evolutionary inclusion model seeks to empower leaders and staff in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to effectively promote neurodiversity in work environments. Through targeted training and mentoring action addressing neurodiversity awareness, recruitment, retention, work environment adaptation, and leadership, the model aims to overcome barriers such as a lack of awareness, support strategies, and data on neurodivergent workers.

The objective is to promote neurodiversity as a business asset, anticipating the needs of SMEs and society. By fostering an inclusive and productive work environment, the model endeavours to position neurodiversity as a key driver of success, ensuring the well-being of available staff and delivering tangible benefits to organizations.

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1#

# The NEW project in a nutshell

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**Neurodiversity at Work is a 36-months initiative that aims at supporting SMEs and microenterprises in creating work environments capable of enhancing strengths and talents of human resources.**

The main innovative element in the project is the **focus on respecting and valuing neurodiversity at workplaces.** Neurodiversity (neurological biodiversity) refers to the fact that every human being has a unique nervous system with a unique combination of abilities and needs.

Similar to biodiversity, the more neurodiversity is respected and encouraged within a culture, the more stable, adaptable and sustainable will be the social ecosystem that pertains to that culture.

Despite this neurodivergent employees, those differing in neurological development from what is considered typical (autism, dyslexia, ADHD etc.), are often marginalised and at risk of discrimination and/or exclusion. This can happen especially to employees who have not had the opportunity to have their neurodivergence formally diagnosed. Identification can help neurodivergent employees to be fully included and developed within the organisation, avoiding any stigmatisation and possible discrimination. According to this perspective, Neurodiversity at Work seeks to **value characteristics and strengths of people who think differently**, effectively leading to **reshaping workplaces as learning spaces**, where people are valued and their well-being pursued.

To appropriately address these issues, the NEW partnership sets as its objectives:

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## **AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE**

**Raising awareness and increasing knowledge**, especially among SMEs and micro companies' entrepreneurs, HR managers, companies' leaders, and reference stakeholders, about Neurodiversity as a key asset in contemporary business.

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## **DATA COLLECTION**

Championing specific and regular data collection on neurodiversity within the workplace, especially in SMEs;

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## **SET OF COMPETENCES**

Equipping business leaders and staff with an appropriate set of competences, strategies and tools to promote the value of neurodiversity in workplaces, with the aim to prevent discrimination, and to guarantee the wellbeing of their employees as well as benefits to their organizations.

According to these objectives, the NEW partnership is working to impact on the system of Vocational Education and Training (VET), mainly Continuous VET, and on SMEs and microenterprises at different levels in Europe, by developing:



### **AWARENESS RAISING STRATEGY**

An Awareness Raising Strategy<sup>1</sup> to increase knowledge among entrepreneurs, HR managers, SMEs and micro companies' leaders, Trade Unions and Employers;



### **(R)EVOLUTIONARY INCLUSION MODEL**

A (r)evolutionary inclusion model, to be piloted in SMEs in the 4 involved countries, with the final aim to equip business leaders and staff with an appropriate set of strategies and tools to make value out of neurodiversity in the workplace;



### **A EUROPEAN NETWORK**

A European Network, to build a multi-stakeholder long-lasting framework which sustains and further elaborates on NEW outcomes.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.neurodiverseworkplaces.eu/outputs/awareness-raising-strategy/>



These results will support the creation of inclusive workplaces by:

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**O1**      **Making employers/business leaders enablers of inclusion in the workplace;**

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**O2**      **Supporting challenges and recognising strengths of each person, by adopting the neurodiversity paradigm;**

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**O3**      **Co-creating concrete help and solutions in collaboration with neurodivergent employees;**

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**O4**      **Spreading the solutions' impact within the whole companies' organisation, by demonstrating the benefits for all employees.**

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As mentioned, the NEW project involves a collaboration between six partner organisations.



FORMA Azione *ist*

**FORMA.Azione (IT)**

Project lead partner, VET and Adult Education provider, working at national and EU level



ASSOCIAZIONE ITALIANA PER  
LA DIREZIONE DEL PERSONALE

**AIDP (IT)**

Italian Association for HR management



Association

**EDA (BE)**

European Dyslexia Association



Human Concern

**DIE BERATER (AT)**

Consulting company for training and development



**CATRO (BG)**

Company experienced in the field of organisational consulting and human resources management and development



Ireland  
SPECIALISTERNE

**Specialisterne Ireland (IE)**

Specialist consultancy that recruits and supports talented people on the autism spectrum and those with similar challenges in gaining employment

2#

# Why the Neurodiversity at Work (r)evolutionary inclusion model

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The **Neurodiversity at Work (r)evolutionary inclusion model** aims to equip business leaders and staff, especially those working in SMEs, with appropriate competences, skills and tools to promote the value of neurodiversity at the workplace. This is to **lead to a work environment more inclusive and able to enhance the talents of available personnel.**

The need for the model, based on training of SMEs management and staff and piloting of good practices in 5 different areas:

- AWARENESS RAISING
- RECRUITMENT AND ON-BOARDING
- RETENTION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- ADAPTATION OF WORK ENVIRONMENT
- LEADERSHIP

comes from the fact that many neurodivergent adults, already employed in SMEs, were never diagnosed during their educational path and so they did not receive appropriate support in the work environment to overcome potential **barriers to workplace inclusion.** These include:

- MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, CAREER DEVELOPMENT PATHS AS WELL AS WORK ENVIRONMENTS WHICH ARE DESIGNED WITH NEUROTYPICALS IN MIND
- LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT NEURODIVERSITY AND THE BENEFITS OF RESPECTING AND VALUING IT

- **LACK OF STRATEGIES AND METHODOLOGIES TO SUPPORT NEURODIVERGENT WORKERS, TO VALUE THEIR SKILLS AND CARRY OUT AN ASSESSMENT OF THEIR ACTUAL ABILITIES**
- **LACK OF DATA AND INFORMATION ABOUT NEURODIVERGENT WORKERS**

This can result in a lack of training, self-confidence, and an inability to leverage their strengths to increase their odds of success in the workplace. In fact, while neurodivergent people may face their own, specific challenges in the workplace environment, they can bring strengths to their work. The idea behind this project is to start thinking, as already is happening in many companies, that the **neurodiversity of enterprises' staff is a richness and has the potential to drive business towards a more equal and prosperous future.**

According to this perspective, the **Neurodiversity at Work (r)evolutionary inclusion model** contributes to innovation in Vocational Education and Training (VET) by allowing the development and provision of **continuing vocational training programmes**, as well as **specialised consultancy actions**, to European SMEs leaders and staff. This is aimed at making them “neurodiversity smart”, and better able to value neurodiversity as a key asset in their work environment and practices.

Specifically, these continuing vocational training programmes and consultancy actions are going to be designed for **promoting the relevance of the continuing VET (C-VET) offer to the current and future needs both of the economy and the society.** Promoting the value of neurodiversity is relatively new in Europe and is slowly moving up the SMEs organisation agenda. With the business case for diversity as a whole now accepted, organisations aiming to be truly inclusive employers cannot exclude such a significant demographic as neurodivergent workers. To continue doing so risks missing out on talent, and compromising on productivity and customer trust. The business case for diversity has highlighted the importance of ‘diversity of thought’ for innovation and creativity and, even if neurodiversity may be one of the most challenging areas within diversity and inclusion – complex, nuanced, and often invisible – yet it offers a business upside in this context, given that neurodivergent people literally think and process information differently.

The **Neurodiversity at Work (r)evolutionary inclusion model** allows VET key actors and stakeholders to anticipate SMEs and society's needs, by equipping both business leaders and staff with an appropriate set of competences, strategies and tools to introduce and promote the value of neurodiversity at the workplace, with the aim to guarantee the wellbeing of their employees as well as provide concrete benefits for their organisations.

## 2.1#

# How the (r)evolutionary inclusion model is structured

---

The **(r)evolutionary inclusion model** developed in the context of the Neurodiversity at Work project is based on two pillars:

## **TRAINING CURRICULA AND MODULES**

addressing SMEs and microenterprises trainers, management and staff to make them able to promote and enhance the value of neurodiversity in work environments with reference to 5 main areas. These are: awareness raising, recruitment and on-boarding, retention and professional development, adaptation of work environment, and leadership. The curricula were experimented and validated thanks to the realisation of a transnational training for trainers activity and of two courses at national level, focused on the acquisition of specific competences to effectively respect and taking advantage of neurodiversity in the workplace;

## **A COLLECTION OF METHODOLOGIES, PRACTICES AND TOOLS**

to be piloted in companies after the training to set inclusive approaches and practices in the 5 areas noted above. The results of the piloting are systematised in the Handbook of strategies and Tools to become a Neurodiversity Inclusive Company (see Annexes).

## 3#

# Actions and methodologies to develop the (r)evolutionary inclusion model

---

Both the training curricula and the collection of methodologies, practices and tools included in the model are co-created by project partners with the contribution of SMEs leaders' and staff's, as well as of neurodivergent workers sharing their experiences, needs and competences.

This revolutionary model indeed, is based on a thorough analysis of the current needs and challenges which SMEs and microenterprises meet with regard to neurodiversity, as well as trainers' feedback and best practices which inspire and show the benefits of valuing neurodiversity at individual and organisational level.

This information was gathered by all project partners:

- In the course of **national study circles, which were conducted with local representatives of managers, employees and stakeholders**. The study circles were implemented in the period June – July 2023, and the summary of the national results are used as the basis for the development of the model;
- during the **transnational training for trainers** addressing VET professionals, internal and external to partners' staff, systematically cooperating in delivering VET training with partner organisations, experienced in HR management, diversity and inclusion, and neurodiversity. The training was organised as a Peer Learning Activity (PLA), facilitated by project partners' experts, involving trainers with different profiles and backgrounds. The PLA was aimed at sharing their competences and experiences, so as to build a common methodology to be adapted to each national context for training SMEs and microenterprises leaders and staff to enable them to pilot the (r) evolutionary inclusion model in their companies.

Chapter 3.1. presents the summary and the main conclusions of the **study circles** carried out, whereas Chapter 3.2 presents the training methodology for the **transnational training for trainers**. As mentioned above, this serves as the foundation for developing the C-VET curricula for the trainings of leaders and staff in SMEs in the partner countries and piloting of the (r)evolutionary model.

## 3.1#

# National study circles

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## 3.1.1#

# Study Circle Methodology

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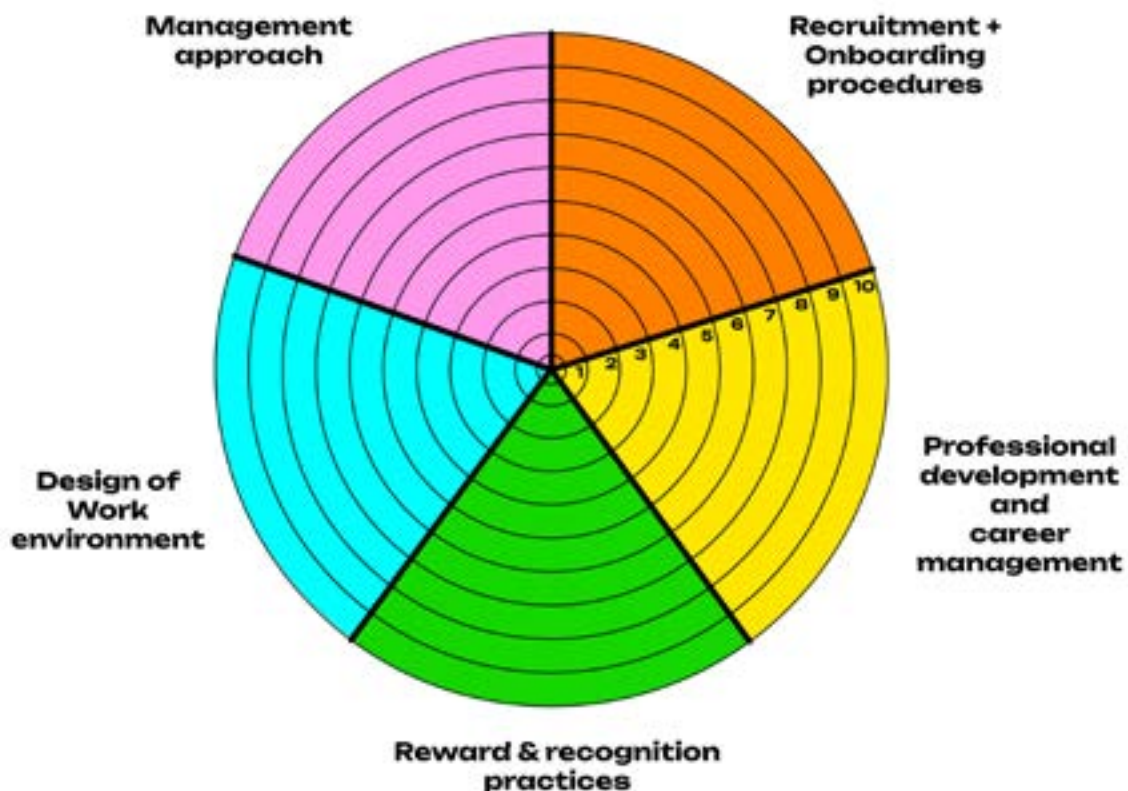
**The Study Circle is a participatory and dynamic process based on the experience of the participants, the skills of the study circle facilitator and the quality of the study material. As opposed to conventional education that is based on a hierarchical model, in which the teacher disseminates knowledge with a top-down approach, a study circle involves interaction in which all participants contribute. Participants analyse the issue from many points of view and identify areas of common ground. They emerge with recommendations for action that will benefit the group/ community. The study circle is led by a facilitator who supports participants in keeping the discussions focused, helps the group consider a variety of perspectives, and asks questions.**

Based on this knowledge, the concrete aims of the Neurodiversity at Work study circles were to

- 
- 01** **Gather feedback** from companies/stakeholders on their needs and experiences, practices and concerns regarding neurodiversity in the workplace (Survey, Awareness Raising strategy, Call to Action);
- 
- 02** Involve participants in the development of the model by **gathering their ideas for the following elements**: awareness raising, recruitment and onboarding, retention and professional development, adaptation of work environment, and leadership;
- 
- 03** **Raise awareness** about the increasing importance of the topic of neurodiversity in the workplace.

The study circle methodology was adapted to the specific aims and topics of the project, particularly by creating the so-called Neurodiversity Wheel which covers the whole employee lifecycle:

## Neurodiversity at work wheel





In the practical implementation of the study circles some partners have put particular focus on some of the abovementioned areas, depending on the profile and interests of the participants, as well as combined some areas, where appropriate.

## 3.1.2#

# Areas for development based on the study circles

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The challenges shared during the study circles served as the foundation for setting the training topics and modules in developing the (r)evolutionary inclusion model.

## RECRUITMENT AND ONBOARDING CHALLENGES

- **Candidates found it extremely difficult to disclose during the recruitment stage due to recruiters/interviewers vague understanding** of neurodiversity and reasonable accommodations. (Ireland)
- Candidates frequently **lack motivation to apply to employers who seem to lack an understanding or appreciation for neurodiversity**. As a result, highly qualified candidates can unintentionally face exclusion due to factors like **unconscious bias, hiring practices that prioritise personality and rapport, or discriminatory assessment tools and tests**. (Ireland)
- **Job specs are a major barrier to applications**. Neurodivergent individuals can often take the **specific language around requirements for the job quite literally**. **Applicants are supposed to be able to 'read between the lines' and decipher the unwritten rules of applications**. (Ireland)

- **Interviewers and recruiters need to be targeted to gain training around disclosure and reasonable accommodations** as they are often the ones making the hiring decisions. (Ireland, Bulgaria)
- **Language** can be a significant barrier throughout the interview process. **Questions can often be vague and difficult to understand.** (Ireland)
- Managers, on the other hand, may not feel they are equipped to hire a neurodivergent employee due to **lack of knowledge about the specific language.** (Ireland, Italy, Bulgaria)
- Lack of **specific training for recruiters and managers**, which can increase their level of knowledge, awareness and understanding about neurodivergent people, particularly on the use of language and relevant employment law. (all countries)
- **Not enough feedback given after interviews** which makes candidates feel very demotivated. Candidates worry there were **social cues they didn't pick up on** and then have no idea why they aren't getting hired or moving to the next stage. (Ireland)
- During onboarding, candidates outlined that an **unstructured induction process can be stressful for example "share fun facts"**. (Ireland)

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/REWARD & RECOGNITION CHALLENGES

- Organisations claim **to be inclusive and welcoming for everyone, but in practice, it is up to the individual managers to make a difference.** Apart from general inclusion statements or strategies, that refer to marginalised groups, **policies on inclusion are rarely applied in organisations.** (Austria, Bulgaria)

- Managers identified a **lack of self-advocacy from neurodivergent employees** which can potentially have an impact on career progression. **Employees need to be able to self-promote themselves which is something that could be uncomfortable for neurodivergent employees.** (Ireland)
- Neurodivergent employees on the other hand **identified that there are social elements that help people towards promotion.** (Ireland)
- **Social connections and shared personal interests can contribute to development or progression pathways.** Candidates would prefer to have a **clear outline/structure of what they are expected to do/achieve in order to move onto the next level.** “How can we make unwritten rules written”. (Ireland)
- **Lack of understanding and welcoming culture where neurodivergent individuals do not feel understood, accepted, or appreciated, and often feel compelled to “mask” their differences.** Unfortunately, this situation can lead to decreased productivity and higher turnover rates among these individuals which is a loss also for the companies. (all countries)
- **SMEs tend to live more in “survival mode”** and therefore have fewer resources or time to educate themselves on hiring and promoting neurodivergent people based on their strengths and talents. (all countries)
- **Lack of knowledge, time and resources to apply for government funding schemes** targeting neurodivergent people. (Ireland)

## DESIGN OF WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Adaptation of the work environment is often **considered to be a highly expensive measure which should be planned and justified in the budget**. However, the benefits on the other side, surely prevail over the costs (which are not high), as quiet work areas, noise reducing headphones, flexible working policies (including hybrid work) are proven to increase productivity and focus of all employees. (all countries)
- **Educating employers on the exact meaning of “reasonable accommodation”** and subsequent responsibilities. And, that generally accommodations are no or low cost (all countries)
- **Open floor planning can be difficult** as there may be a lot of additional stimuli coming from other employees. (Ireland)
- **Weekly fire alarm tests** may cause too much sensory stimulation. (Ireland)
- **Socialising at lunch can be very tiring and cause social exhaustion**. Some candidates would prefer to use lunches to decompress. (Ireland)
- The main issue that emerged from the design of the work environment was the **social element of a job**. Often work outings tend to be social gatherings in a pub/restaurant after work. This can sometimes be **overstimulating for some colleagues**. It is important to check in with colleagues to identify the level of comfort and interest in participating. (Ireland)

## LEADERSHIP APPROACH

- **Managers can see there is a genuine interest to improve things in the neurodiversity space however, they come up against barriers to change due to lack of knowledge and understanding** across the board. Managers advised that **more training is needed for all managers within the business to get buy-in within the organisation as a whole.** (all countries)
- Again, SMEs having **many constraints need to have simple access to training/briefings** as and when required from business-oriented employment experts. (all countries)
- **Availability of “plain language” guidance** perhaps via the internet on the how and what of neurodiverse inclusive employment. (Ireland)
- Applying an **inclusive strategy for all, a positive leadership in terms of supporting neurodiversity should also be focused on understanding and accordingly strengthening the aptitudes of the individual, giving them the tools and possibility to express themselves at their best.** (all countries)

## 3.1.3#

# Conclusions and recommendations

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Considering the abovementioned good practices and challenges met by all target groups – managers, employees and stakeholders in the broader sense, the NEW partnership chose to offer a **holistic training programme**, able to tackle all aspects of the employee journey, to a different extent, again depending on the needs and interests of the target groups. The training programme is modular, whereas there is the possibility for each partner (and for the participants) to select the modules that are mostly relevant for their national context or workplace.

It is also important to share that there was some **discrepancy between the perception of the managers about their engagement in promoting actions on diversity and inclusion at the workplace and the real experience of the employees**. This will be considered in the differentiation of the trainings towards managers and employees, and paying special attention to the communication of the measures, the involvement of employees in the decision making, and the transparency of the process.

A special focus should also be put on the **positive leadership approach** in terms of valuing neurodiversity. This should also be focused on understanding and accordingly strengthen the aptitudes of the individual, giving them the tools and possibility to express themselves at their best. This could also be supported by finding **ambassadors** amongst the staff that already have experience of neurodivergence themselves or in their personal environment (family, friends, etc.). That could enable sharing of both good practices and individual success stories.

Some further issues were raised, which could be taken in consideration:

- It would be essential to understand the difference between **neurodivergence and neurodiversity** and how the latter pertains to all people indiscriminately and in every context. For this purpose, it could be useful to have the involvement of scientific community/experts to boost knowledge about the topic through scientific dissemination.
- It would also be advisable not to focus only on neurodivergence and/or disability, but to have a more global and value-oriented view of neurodiversity in order to recognize and employ the talents of each person;
- In the absence of a Human Resource/Health Safety and Environment team within most SME companies, it may be important to have a reference point/expert to whom they can turn for training or support in relation to neurodivergent staff;
- The necessity to fill the gap between the level of awareness present in personal/family situations, also thanks to the involvement of the public school, and that of the work environment was noted. There is room for changing the narrative around neurodivergent workers so as not only to make workplaces more inclusive and diverse, but also to start impacting on policies, laws, and regulations at a wider societal level.

## 3.2#

# Transnational training for trainers

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## 3.2.1#

# Target group

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The target group for this C-VET training event were adult and VET trainers, who are

- internal to partners' staff or external ones;
- systematically cooperating in delivering VET training with partner organisations, and
- experienced in HR management, diversity and inclusion, and/or specific learning difficulties/differences.



## 3.2.2#

# Training for trainers' methodology

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The transnational training activity lasting 3-days was organised as a **Peer Learning Activity (PLA)**, facilitated by project partners' experts, involving trainers with different profiles and backgrounds. The PLA was aimed at sharing their competences and experiences, so as to **build a common methodology to be adapted to each national context for training SMEs' and microenterprises' leaders and staff and to enable them to pilot the (r)evolutionary inclusion model in their companies**. The training methodology has been developed in cooperation by CATRO, DIE BERATER and FORMA.Azione.

The training was mainly based on presentations of the theoretical and practical experience of the trainers in the relevant areas, as well interactive activities, bringing together input from the presentations with participants' own ideas and expertise. The common theme across all workshop activities was the practical implementation of the discussed activities in the trainings for SMEs' managers and staff. Participants provided real cases from their practice, but also hypothetical cases in companies they work with, which enriched the discussion with different points of views in different national contexts.

This approach with practical cases had several benefits:

- Increased engagement with the training.
- Ensured consistency of activities throughout the transnational training - the sessions were interlinked.
- Participants were encouraged to think about how learning experiences can be applied to real world business environments in SMEs.
- It helped the consortium to establish what needs to be included in the final training offering.

## 4#

# Training curricula

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**The partners who were appointed to design the training methodology and define the training modules on the basis of the study circles' analysis are CATRO Bulgaria and Die Berater, Austria, as experienced VET and adult training providers as well as Specialisterne Ireland due to their knowledge and expertise in bridging the gap between companies and neurodivergent candidates. Methodological support will also be provided by the coordinator FORMA.Azione as well as review by neurodiversity experts at EDA (European Dyslexia Association).**

The training curriculum was based on the analysis of the study circles and combined with the specific knowledge and know-how of the partners responsible for its development and review. Although it was developed in a relatively short time period, the content of the training modules impressed with high quality content and a variety of practical activities.

4.1#

# Training methodology

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The training methodology followed an established and structured way of creating training content, namely by defining concrete learning outcomes, with associated learning units and core materials. CATRO, as a leading partner in developing and implementing trainings, suggested the following grid to be used as a common methodological frame by all partners:

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE MODULE

<b>Module</b>	Write the title of the Module as allocated to the partners, don't rename or change the Modules' title, unless you wish a major change. However, this has to be proposed and agreed with the consortium.
<b>Short description of the module / abstract</b>	Provide a max. 150 words description of the module, its scope, aims, learning objectives and assessment methods.
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	Define 1 to 3 learning outcomes of this module. For defining Learning Outcomes please see the file "Methodology on Learning Outcomes"
<b>Learning Units</b>	Learning Units are in fact the main Chapters of your module. Just name in this field the Chapters (Learning Units) that structure your module. Structure your module in a reasonable and understandable way without a maximum number of Learning Units. Cohesion between the Chapters is required.

<p><b>Learning core material</b></p>	<p>For each chapter please mention the offered learning material, using the following table. Learning material may encompass texts, PPTs, videos, practical activities, articles, etc. For each chapter you can propose more than one learning material, if it is reasonable and consistent with the learning objects.</p> <p>Example:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="635 622 1406 1205"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="635 622 995 696">Chapter</th> <th data-bbox="995 622 1406 696">Learning Material</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="635 696 995 815">Introduction to the module</td> <td data-bbox="995 696 1406 815">Text</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="635 815 995 976">1 Neurodiversity awareness: concepts, types and benefits for companies</td> <td data-bbox="995 815 1406 976">Text, Articles, Videos</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="635 976 995 1205">2 Neurodiversity at work: challenges and strengths of neurodivergent employees</td> <td data-bbox="995 976 1406 1205">Text, Articles</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Chapter	Learning Material	Introduction to the module	Text	1 Neurodiversity awareness: concepts, types and benefits for companies	Text, Articles, Videos	2 Neurodiversity at work: challenges and strengths of neurodivergent employees	Text, Articles
Chapter	Learning Material								
Introduction to the module	Text								
1 Neurodiversity awareness: concepts, types and benefits for companies	Text, Articles, Videos								
2 Neurodiversity at work: challenges and strengths of neurodivergent employees	Text, Articles								
<p><b>Workload (Estimated study time) (min)</b></p>	<p>Workload means the total hours that a learner requires to complete this module. It includes all activities such as studying, watching videos, reading, assessment, etc. Define the workload in minutes. For example, 60 minutes</p>								
<p><b>Author(s)</b></p>	<p>Write the name(s) of the author(s) and your company name (partner)</p>								
<p><b>Sounding Board review by</b></p>									

In each training module there are some **practical activities and/or case studies** which are recommended to be included in the training with the managers and staff in SMEs. Both are interlinked so that the trainers know where and how to integrate them.

Furthermore, the authors had to **consider neurodiversity aspects in developing, presenting and defining guidelines for the future implementation of the training modules**, e.g. regarding using frequent and different visual and audio materials, and also practical activities which are preferred by some persons, as well as accessible colours, text/scripts and fonts, etc. Specialisterne and EDA, which consisted of experts in neurodiversity, played an important role as the Sounding Boards in reviewing these areas. This aims to ensure that the varied needs of neurodivergent people are considered at all stages of the training module development and delivery.

## 4.2#

# Training modules

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## Module 1

## Awareness Raising about Neurodiversity

(Specialisterne: Author, CATRO: Sounding Board)

### SUMMARY OF THE MODULE

<b>Module 1</b>	<b>Neurodiversity Awareness</b>
<b>Short description of the module / abstract</b>	<p>This module serves as an introduction into the topic of neurodiversity. It provides an overview of neurodiversity and some of the key concepts related to the topic such as types, language, benefits of neuro-inclusive teams etc. The key learning objectives from this module include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overview of neurodiversity</li><li>• Neurodiversity in the workplace</li><li>• Inclusive language</li><li>• Reasonable accommodations</li><li>• Disclosure</li><li>• Unconscious bias</li></ul> <p>Participants will learn about what each of these concepts mean and how they relate to neurodiversity in the workplace. This knowledge will give the learner a basic understanding before learning how to apply this knowledge into workplace practices. Participants will have the opportunity to apply their learning to real-world scenarios, through case studies, exercises and/or discussions, enabling them to practise their knowledge and skills.</p>

<p><b>Learning Outcomes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increased Awareness:</b> Participants will gain a deeper understanding of neurodiversity and recognise that it encompasses a range of neurological conditions, abilities, and differences.</li> <li>• <b>Bias Reduction:</b> Participants will learn to challenge and overcome biases associated with neurodivergent individuals, promoting a more inclusive and accepting environment.</li> <li>• <b>Workplace &amp; Ethical Considerations:</b> Participants will become familiar with workplace considerations related to accommodating and supporting neurodivergent individuals in the workplace.</li> </ul>										
<p><b>Learning Units</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of neurodiversity</li> <li>• Neurodiversity in the workplace</li> <li>• Inclusive language</li> <li>• Reasonable accommodations</li> <li>• Disclosure</li> <li>• Unconscious bias</li> </ul>										
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<b>Workload (Estimated study time) (min)</b>	90 minutes									
<b>Author(s)</b>	Sinéad O'Brien, Specialisterne Ireland									
<b>Sounding Board review by</b>	Anelia Miteva (Catro, Bulgaria) Liliya Georgieva (Catro, Bulgaria)									

## PRACTICAL ACTIVITY 1

<b>Title</b>	<b>Reasonable Accommodations: Meet Seán</b>
<b>Main aim</b>	Identify reasonable accommodations suitable for a neurodivergent employee
<b>Short Description</b>	This case study provides a background into the experience of an autistic employee who is struggling in the workplace. Explore this candidate with participants to see if they can identify suitable accommodations for Seán.
<b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an overview of the candidate to participants.</li> <li>• Ask participants to split up into small groups e.g. groups of 3, and reflect on their learning so far.</li> <li>• Ask groups to identify as many accommodations as they can to think of how an employer could support Seán.</li> <li>• Give participants 10 minutes to consider accommodations.</li> <li>• Ask participants to think of what they should consider from both the employee and employer perspective when implementing accommodations.</li> <li>• After 10 minutes bring the groups back together and ask each group to present their results.</li> <li>• The trainer will make a note of all suggestions on a poster/whiteboard/document for all to see.</li> <li>• Allow an opportunity for groups to share and discuss their thoughts and experiences.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration of the activity</b>	20 minutes

## PRACTICAL ACTIVITY 2

<b>Title</b>	<b>Unconscious Bias: Interview</b>
<b>Main aim</b>	Identify unconscious bias that can occur in interviews
<b>Short Description</b>	This activity presents two different types of interviewees that could present in an interview setting. This activity shows the types of differences that can occur in an interview and how our unconscious bias could determine how we perceive interviewees. This activity aims to show participants how unconscious bias can impact on decision making.
<b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present the two different interview scenarios to participants.</li> <li>• Ask participants to think about the various forms of bias they have learned and identify the different forms of bias that could happen when interviewing the two participants.</li> <li>• Split the group into small groups for 5-10 minutes.</li> <li>• Bring the group back together for a group discussion to summarise bias from each group.</li> <li>• Allow an opportunity for groups to share and discuss their thoughts and experiences.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration of the activity</b>	15-20 mins

## Module 2

# Recruiting/onboarding

(Specialisterne: Author, CATRO: Sounding Board)

### SUMMARY OF THE MODULE

<p><b>Module 2</b></p>	<p><b>Recruitment and Onboarding: Toolkit for SMEs</b></p>
<p><b>Short description of the module / abstract</b></p>	<p><b>Description:</b> The module outlines inclusive hiring practices for SMEs and provides practical guidance for onboarding Neurodivergent employees.</p> <p><b>Scope:</b> The module aims to deliver a practical toolkit that can be implemented by SMEs at low to no cost.</p> <p><b>Learning Objectives:</b> Creating inclusive job advertisements, conducting inclusive interviews, handling disclosures, managing the onboarding process for neurodivergent hires and completing the review process.</p> <p>Assessment is completed via two activities where active participation is expected. Participants will learn of two case studies to demonstrate real world application.</p>
<p><b>Learning Outcomes</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Greater understanding of inclusive hiring and onboarding practices.</li> <li>2. Greater confidence in conducting inclusive interviews and managing staff disclosures.</li> <li>3. Confidence in implementing inclusive hiring and onboarding practices in to their organisation.</li> </ol>

<p><b>Learning Units</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Neurodiversity at Work: Education and Awareness for SMEs</li> <li>2. Job advertisements</li> <li>3. Interviews</li> <li>4. Disclosure</li> <li>5. Accommodations in Action (Activity)</li> <li>6. Case Studies - Disclosure (Activity)</li> <li>7. Onboarding</li> <li>8. Review Process</li> <li>9. Case Studies - SAP Autism at Work &amp; Hewlett Packard</li> <li>10. Q&amp;A / Discussion</li> </ol>										
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	<p><b>7.</b> <b>Onboarding</b></p>	<p>Video: <i>Kerry's Story, National Autistic Society (UK)</i></p> <p><a href="#">LINK</a></p>
<p><b>9.</b> <b>Case Studies 1 &amp; 2</b></p>	<p><i>"SAP SE: Autism at Work."</i> <i>Harvard Business School Case 616-042, January 2016.</i></p> <p><a href="#">LINK</a></p> <p><i>"Hewlett Packard Enterprise: The Dandelion Program."</i> <i>Harvard Business School Case 617-016, September 2016.</i></p> <p><a href="#">LINK</a></p> <p><i>Krzeminska, A., Austin, R., Bruyère, S., &amp; Hedley, D. (2019). The advantages and challenges of neurodiversity employment in organizations. Journal of Management &amp; Organization, 25(4), 453-463. doi:10.1017/jmo.2019.58</i></p> <p><a href="#">LINK</a></p>	

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<p><b>Workload (Estimated study time) (min)</b></p>	<p>Workload estimate: Allow approximately 75 minutes to cover material on the slides and 45 minutes for activities/discussion. Total: 120 minutes.</p>				
<p><b>Author(s)</b></p>	<p>Claudia Walker (Specialisterne Ireland)</p>				
<p><b>Sounding Board review by</b></p>	<p>Anelia Miteva (Catro, Bulgaria) Liliya Georgieva (Catro, Bulgaria)</p>				

## PRACTICAL ACTIVITY 1

<b>Title</b>	<b>Accommodations in Action</b>
<b>Main aim</b>	Identify accommodations that would support the workplace anecdotes mentioned.
<b>Short Description</b>	Five anecdotal statements are included in the slide deck. Each statement details a real experience from neurodivergent people in the workplace. Participants can discuss what reasonable accommodation would support this person.
<b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline that these statements are taken from an online forum and detail real-life experience of workplace difficulties.</li> <li>• Ask participants to work with the person beside them and read the five statements.</li> <li>• In pairs, ask participants to discuss and agree on accommodations that would be suitable for each statement.</li> <li>• Request that participants take note of their answers and prepare to share their suggestions with the wider group.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration of the activity</b>	Allow 10 minute for pairs to read statements and note down accommodations Allow 10 minutes for group discussion. 20 minutes total duration.



## PRACTICAL ACTIVITY 2

<b>Title</b>	<b>Case study Skills &amp; Disclosure (Deloitte Neurodiversity Training)</b>
<b>Main aim</b>	<p>Identify issues that could potentially arise when an employee (James) discloses.</p> <p>This case study highlights the importance of selecting candidates based on the skills required for the role and not other factors.</p> <p>Provide practical solutions for ethical issues around disclosure and promote best practice.</p> <p>Actively apply knowledge learned from the module in their assessment of the situation.</p>
<b>Short Description</b>	<p>James is applying for a new role in his company. He appears very suited to the job but his CV contains mistakes. It is suspected that James is dyslexic but we do not know for sure.</p> <p>Participants are required to assess the information provided and make best practice judgements on how best to proceed.</p>
<b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the statement about James.</li> <li>• Present Deloitte YouTube video to participants</li> <li>• On the next slide read aloud the statement about James.</li> <li>• Ask the group what we think about James' suitability for the role.</li> <li>• Outline to the group that they should focus on what James is being employed for and how much his skills match the job.</li> <li>• Next ask what could be some potential strengths and challenges James may experience in the new role.</li> <li>• Note down responses on the whiteboard that arise from the discussion.</li> <li>• On the next slide, ask participants the questions listed. Ask the participants to note down yes or no to each question then ask participants to share their response and why.</li> <li>• Reveal answers on the next slide.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration of the activity</b>	Allow 20-25 minutes for the activity.

## Module 3

# Retention and Professional Development

(Die Berater: Author & Specialisterne: Sounding Board)

### SUMMARY OF THE MODULE

<b>Module 3</b>	<b>Retention and Professional Development</b>
<b>Short description of the module / abstract</b>	This module aims to provide an overview of the current situation for neurodivergent employees and to make recommendations for managers on how to onboard and effectively support their neurodivergent employees to grow and develop in their role. Recommendations around clear communication, feedback, the annual review, performance improvement etc. provide a step-by-step guide for the attendee on all aspects to support employee progress. The topic of ongoing training and professional development will also be covered.
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to set the scene for success for the employee during onboarding.</li> <li>• How to effectively support the employee to grow and develop in their roles through effective communication.</li> <li>• How to support the employee with challenges.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Units</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Current Situation</li> <li>2. Importance of Supporting Neurodivergent Employee Development</li> <li>3. Education and Awareness</li> <li>4. Onboarding - setting the scene for success</li> <li>5. Communication and Feedback</li> <li>6. Employee Progress and Development</li> <li>7. Environmental Considerations</li> <li>8. Psychological Safety</li> <li>9. Questions</li> </ol>

<p><b>Learning core material</b></p>	<p>This module consists of one chapter covering the topics mentioned above, with 1 case study and 3 opportunities to discuss as part of a group</p> <p><b>Full Case Study 1</b> Real life example</p> <p>Purpose of Case study: Providing an example showing how important clear communication is for neurodivergent employees and how manager discomfort providing this feedback can have lasting impact on an individual's career.</p> <p>John is a talented IT graduate with a great qualification who has been let go from 2 jobs but does not understand why.</p> <p>When John was interviewed for a new job, he mentioned that he has been let go from 2 jobs with no clear explanation why this had happened. After the interview, he was hired by an IT company, we advised that we would provide clear feedback on any issues that might be impacting his ability to progress in his career. During the first 2 weeks we connected with John's manager and received feedback that he had difficulties with time management, and he struggled with arriving to work on time and submitting work by deadlines.</p> <p>Once we had this information, we communicated it clearly with John and both John and his manager worked out a plan using the calendar to plan out timelines for completion of work which resolved the deadline issue. We had a brief chat about planning the morning routine and how to always leave time in the morning in case of any delays. With these 2 clear constructive conversations, John understood how to rectify the issue and he progressed very well in his career.</p>
<p><b>Workload (Estimated study time) (min)</b></p>	<p>2 hours</p>

<b>Author(s)</b>	Noreen Murphy Specialisterne Ireland
<b>Sounding Board review by</b>	Die Berater

## PRACTICAL ACTIVITY 1

<b>Title</b>	<b>Retention and Professional Development</b>
<b>Main aim</b>	To illustrate the importance of clear communication for companies communicating performance issues to neurodivergent employees
<b>Short Description</b>	John has been let go from 2 jobs with no clear explanation why. The reason was simple and identifiable in the first 2 weeks of his third placement and once he understood it he was able to pass probation and progress in his career.
<b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask people to communicate with the person next to them</li> <li>• Advise that this is a real-life example</li> <li>• Read the statement about John.</li> <li>• On the next slide read aloud the statement about John.</li> <li>• Ask the groups what we think about what could possibly be the reason that John was let go</li> <li>• Ask the groups to consider why John may not understand what had happened and why his contract was not extended. In many cases they will focus on John, however, prompt them to consider the manager as a factor in why John did not understand.</li> <li>• Note down responses on the whiteboard that arise from the discussion.</li> <li>• Read out the next slide with what happened and how the situation was approached with clear feedback and constructive guidance.</li> </ul>

<b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask the participants about their own comfort level providing clear feedback and why this is important for their neurodiverse employees.</li><li>• Ask the participants if there was ever a situation where they struggled to communicate clearly with an employee and ask what would have helped them. It is important to assure the participants that it is normal to find such conversations uncomfortable however if they approach the conversation clearly identifying what the issue is, how it can be improved and why it is important that it is completed in this way, it is clearly communicated and more likely to be acted on in a positive way.</li></ul>
<b>Duration of the activity</b>	15/20 min

## PRACTICAL ACTIVITY 2

<b>Title</b>	<b>Psychological Safety Checklist</b>
<b>Main aim</b>	The main aim of this tool is to make a practical anonymous measurement in the team, or across different teams in the organisations so that you can estimate which aspects of psychological safety are present in your team/organization and which ones you need to work on.
<b>Short Description</b>	Dr Amy Edmondson's developed different measurement tools in her book "The Fearless Organisation", and we suggest to use the more extensive Check-list on psychological safety, which includes 3 dimensions: individual safety, team respect and team learning. Each dimension includes several questions which are to be assessed on a scale from 1 to 5: <a href="#">LINK</a>
<b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First introduce the concept of psychological safety to the participants with some examples</li> <li>• You can open the discussion with 1-2 questions to check the pulse of the group such as:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is your team doing recently?</li> <li>• Would you be surprised if any employees in your team suddenly resigned?</li> <li>• If some of the participants are not quite sure about the answers, then there could be a problem in the team.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• After that every participant fills in the check list anonymously</li> <li>• You can form small groups of 2-3 participants to share their results and to discuss the possible implications.</li> <li>• After that all participants could share some insights in the bigger group</li> <li>• You wrap up the session with some recommendations of what can be done to build stronger and trustful relationships in the team</li> </ul>
<b>Duration of the activity</b>	Allow 20-25 minutes for the activity.

## Module 4

# Design of work environment

CATRO: Author & Specialisterne: Sounding Board

### SUMMARY OF THE MODULE

<b>Module 4</b>	<b>Design of work environment</b>
<p><b>Short description of the module / abstract</b></p>	<p>This module is for HR professionals and leaders/managers who want to learn more about neurodiversity, the benefits for their organisation, and how they can support neurodivergent people to be comfortable and successful at work.</p> <p>It has two main aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. first, to raise awareness for the needs of neurodivergent people in the workplace and the need for making the physical environment more inclusive;</li> <li>2. and second, to inspire more employers to action – to take steps to adjust the workplace environment and thus to support their staff to achieve their potential.</li> </ol> <p>Based on the NEW project preliminary study research and the results from study circles activities in each project country, it's clear that adjustments made to enable neurodivergent individuals to thrive at work frequently benefit everyone. Most adaptations are low-cost and easy to implement – and can make a significant difference to an individual's working life, their potential to contribute to the organisation and to build a lasting career.</p> <p>Research shows that when neurodivergent individuals are given the support and accommodations they need, they can bring the full extent of their talent to the workplace, which can include creative storytelling, coding, empathy and pattern recognition. The trouble is many traditional office environments are designed in ways that can be overwhelming or distracting for neurodivergent individuals, which can impede their ability to work effectively.</p>

<p><b>Learning Outcomes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Learning outcome 1:</b> Learners will be able to define the need for physical environment adjustments for neurodivergent employees and the difference between two response patterns/ sensitivity states of neurodivergent employee - hypersensitivity (exaggerated response to stimuli) and hyposensitivity (lack of response to stimuli);</li> <li>• <b>Learning outcome 2:</b> Learners will be able to apply knowledge about how to check the physical environment in the organisations and to adapt it in order to ensure a more inclusive environment for different neurodivergent employees;</li> <li>• <b>Learning outcome 3:</b> Learners will be able to define different assistive technologies that can support neurodivergent employees as their needs vary.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Learning Units</b></p>	<p>The Module presents four Learning units:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction: Why the physical environment is so important for different type of sensitivity?</li> <li>2. Physical environment adjustments.</li> <li>3. Sensory checklist for organisations.</li> <li>4. Assistive technologies.</li> </ol>				
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<b>Learning core material</b>		
	<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Learning Material</b>
	<b>2. Physical environment adjustments</b>	<p>Video: <i>Designing for Neurodiversity &amp; Workplace Inclusivity;</i> <a href="#">LINK</a></p> <p>Article: <i>The neurodiverse workplace: a space for all to thrive</i> <a href="#">LINK</a></p> <p>Article: <i>4 principles of autism-friendly workplace design</i> <a href="#">LINK</a></p> <p>Article: <i>Acoustic screens: a sound investment?</i> <a href="#">LINK</a></p> <p>Practical activity 2: <i>The missing "k" letter;</i></p>
	<b>3. Sensory checklist for organisations</b>	On-line sensory checklist: <a href="#">LINK</a>
	<b>4. Assistive technologies</b>	<p>Video: <i>Assistive Technology in the Workplace;</i> <a href="#">LINK</a></p> <p>Article: <i>Assistive technology for writing;</i> <a href="#">LINK</a></p>

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<b>Workload (Estimated study time) (min)</b>	120 minutes					
<b>Author(s)</b>	Liliya Georgieva, CATRO BULGARIA					
<b>Sounding Board review by</b>	Specialisterne					

## PRACTICAL ACTIVITY 1

<p><b>Title</b></p>	<p><b>Visualisation: Stress response and Windows of tolerance</b></p>
<p><b>Main aim</b></p>	<p>The goal is to put the participants in the training in the shoes of neurodivergent people.</p>
<p><b>Short Description</b></p>	<p>Neurodivergent employees may respond to environmental stimuli in everyday life much like neurotypical people when placed in highly stressful situations.</p> <p>After the activity the trainer can explain more about the Windows of tolerance (Daniel Siegel) – how our body is always releasing hormones to try to keep us as level as possible (homeostasis).</p>
<p><b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b></p>	<p>Instructions:</p> <p><b>1. Read the following text to the participants:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close your eyes, imagine:</li> <li>• You are in a restaurant with your friends. You ran a little too late and you had a few more drinks than usual.</li> <li>• Then you go home and the neighbours were making noise and you couldn't sleep well and finally fall asleep at 5 in the morning.</li> <li>• But in the next day you have an important presentation in front of the leadership.</li> <li>• You've worked for this presentation for several weeks, you are very passionate about it and even completed most of the work of your co-worker. It is important to you to do it really well.</li> <li>• And then you oversleep a little and have a pounding headache.</li> <li>• You have to get ready in a hurry.</li> <li>• You go outside and it is raining and you do not have an umbrella.</li> <li>• Then you hurry to the subway and found out you forgot your ticket.</li> </ul>

**Instructions/  
guidelines for the  
trainer**

- And you are fined 50 euro.
- As you rush out of the subway the phone rings.....
- It's your bank letting you know there is some issue and your bank account is blocked because of tax issues.
- Finally, you are in front of your office but the elevator is not working.
- And you are late...
- When you are about to open finally the door of the meeting room and take a final breath to pretend that you are OK
- A colleague tells you with a condescending tone "You look awful, are you OK?"
- You enter the meeting room, you see the co-worker with whom you've worked on the presentation sitting there calm, fresh and relaxed
- and your boss out of nowhere starts sharply asking you why you haven't completed tasks for a project that is not urgent now.

At this moment pause, see within yourself and explore what is your first reaction? Do you want to argue, do you want to hide, cry, do you need help, do you want to pretend everything is OK or something else? Explore this and how your reaction changes in time.

**2. Give the participants the following questions for reflection:**

Now think about two things:

- How do I see/perceive myself – I am ...
- How do I see/perceive the environment – The world/colleague/the other is...

**3. Discussion: Explanation about the Windows of tolerance (Daniel Siegel)**

Explore the different responses to stress that can lead to anxiety, feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, despair, hiding feelings, and more.

When our hormones are more level (within our window of tolerance), we feel more able to handle situations appropriately.

<p><b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b></p>	<p>Within this window, we are adaptable, able to emotionally self-regulate, and deal with triggers more harmoniously. However, we all have a limit of what we're able to tolerate at any given time. We can access both reason and emotions. We are mentally engaged.</p> <p>We are in THRIVING MODE to create, respond healthily to the world. When things become too much for us to tolerate, we are in a STRIVE MODE - our hormones respond in one of two ways out of our window:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We either shut down or drop into a <b>hypo-aroused state</b> (the parasympathetic nervous system is engaged, which is the freeze response to stress/danger). In this state, we may <b>feel overwhelmed with shame, numb to emotions, withdraw, feel depressed, or dissociate in order to cope with the situation or trigger.</b></li> <li>2. Or we shoot up into a <b>hyper-aroused state</b> (the sympathetic nervous system is ignited, which is the fight/flight response to stress or danger). In this state, we may <b>feel fizzy with intense hormonal activity; we may feel angry, chaotic, hypervigilant, or experience anxiety</b> and the accompanying symptoms</li> </ol> <p>Video about windows of tolerance: <a href="#">LINK</a></p>
<p><b>Duration of the activity</b></p>	<p>20 minutes</p>

## PRACTICAL ACTIVITY 2

<p><b>Title</b></p>	<p><b>Exercise:</b> <b>Missing letter “k”</b></p>
<p><b>Main aim</b></p>	<p>The main aim of the activity is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To make participants empathise with a neurodivergent persons experience when they have to follow social rules that they do not understand;</li> <li>• To make participants aware of the process of masking (how the neurodivergent persons may mask their differences)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Short Description</b></p>	<p>The exercise allows participants to put themselves in the shoes of neurodivergent people when they have to respond to rules that sometimes don't make much sense.</p> <p>Often, organisations set requirements that are not directly related to the specific requirements of the workplace and position. For example, not every job position requires the employee to be communicative or have teamwork skills.</p> <p>In trying to adapt to these rules, it leads to frustration, loss of a sense of spontaneity, an attempt to mask uncertainty and a sense of vulnerability. This can distance neurodivergent employees from their true potential and abilities to cope with work tasks.</p>
<p><b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b></p>	<p>Split the group in pairs - person A and person B</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Person A is going to talk for one minute about their summer holiday and the other is just going to listen.</b> [time 1 minute];</li> <li><b>2. Reflection questions</b> [time 4 minutes]. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did that feel for both A and B? Easy? Good?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. The other person is also going to talk about his/her holiday for one minute. BUT they are not allowed to use any words containing the letter 'k'.</b> [time 1 minute];</li> </ol>

<p><b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b></p>	<p><b>4. Reflection questions</b> [time 4 minutes].</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did that feel?</li> <li>• Towards speaking partner: Were you able to speak as fluently as your partner? How did that make you feel?</li> <li>• Towards listening partners: How did it feel listening as your partner was struggling to put their thoughts into words? Challenging? Frustrating? Annoying?</li> </ul> <p><b>5. Discussion</b> [time 10 minutes].</p> <p>You can stress out that everybody can experience stress and be overly sensory stimulated, though some neurodivergent people are more sensitive to this in their everyday work. We need to bear this in mind. You can use also the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological defences (behaviours based on limiting beliefs etc) are things our mind does unconsciously to help us deal with stress or anxiety. Everyone creates them throughout their lifespan as survival responses. However, some could be maladaptive. People can change them during their lifetime through awareness and can start transforming them into more adaptive positive coping mechanisms.</li> <li>• Neurodivergence means that a person's brain sometimes functions differently from a neurotypical brain. It is a lifelong condition. Neurodivergent people can often cover up/mask through compensatory strategies, and this can lead to exhaustion.</li> </ul> <p>We can create more inclusive environments that can facilitate neurodivergent employees.</p> <p><b>Additional resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video "Neurodiversity in the Workplace" - challenges: how neurodivergent people may experience an everyday work environment: <a href="#">LINK</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Duration of the activity</b></p>	<p>20 minutes</p>

## Module 5

# Leadership

Die Berater: Author & CATRO: Sounding Board

### SUMMARY OF THE MODULE

<b>Module 4</b>	<b>Leadership</b>
<b>Short description of the module / abstract</b>	<p>The scope of this module is business leadership in the context of a neurodiverse and inclusive workplace. Its aim is to create an understanding of the importance of leadership and how leaders can help create a work environment that is welcoming to all. With the help of input by the teacher, articles, videos, and classroom activities, participants will learn to define leadership, get to know leadership skills and different leadership styles (including empowerment leadership and servant leadership) and reflect on inclusive leadership. Assessment method: multiple choice quiz, individual reflection.</p>
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<p>Upon completion of this module, learners will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have gained knowledge about what leadership is.</li> <li>• have gained the ability to distinguish between different leadership styles.</li> <li>• have developed an understanding of how leadership can influence the inclusivity of a workplace.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Units</b>	<p>What is leadership and why is it important Competences of a leader Leadership styles Inclusive leadership Leadership and neurodiversity</p>



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<p><b>Workload (Estimated study time) (min)</b></p>	<p>180 minutes</p>												

<b>Author(s)</b>	Peter Marckhgott, die Berater
<b>Sounding Board review by</b>	Anelia Miteva, CATRO

## PRACTICAL ACTIVITY 1 - LEADERSHIP HEADSTAND

<p><b>Title</b></p>	<p><b>Activity:</b> <b>Leadership headstand</b></p>
<p><b>Main aim</b></p>	<p>The aim of the activity is to reflect on experiences with leadership and to prepare the ground for discussing leadership traits.</p>
<p><b>Short Description</b></p>	<p>What is a headstand? The headstand technique is a brainstorming method that encourages participants to find creative solutions to a problem. The method works by first reversing the question that needs to be answered. Instead of finding answers to a positively formulated question, the question is flipped into its negative, effectively prompting the participants to define how “not to do” a thing. The collected answers are then flipped again, resulting in the original question being answered.</p> <p>The technique encourages participants to think “outside the box” and takes advantage of the fact that often it is easier to look for problems than solutions.</p> <p>In the leadership headstand activity, the final goal is to define the traits and qualities that make a good leader. Thus, the participants are first asked to find traits and qualities that make the worst possible leader. The collected answers are then flipped into their opposite to answer the initial question.</p>
<p><b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b></p>	<p><b>1. Instructions</b> Materials: Flipchart and markers and/or digital flipchart, depending on group needs. The trainer introduces the headstand technique to the group, using the information above.</p>

<p><b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b></p>	<p><b>2. Group task: What makes a bad leader?</b> The trainer presents the participants with the first task. In groups (ideally 4-6 participants per group), the participants should discuss what traits and qualities make a bad leader. they should write down their answers as keywords in bullet point format. If using a physical flipchart, the trainer instructs the participants to write their answers on the left half of the flipchart sheet only. Duration of this task: 10-15 minutes.</p> <p><b>3. Discussion:</b> Each group shares the results of the first task. Duration: 5 minutes.</p> <p><b>4. Group task:</b> Flip the answers into their opposite! The trainer instructs the groups to write down the opposite of every negative trait and quality identified during the first task, thus creating a collection of traits and qualities of a good leader. Using a physical flipchart, the participants can write their answers on the right half of the flipchart sheet. Duration. 10 minutes.</p> <p><b>5. Discussion:</b> Each group shares the results of the second task. Guided by the trainer, the participants discuss what in their opinion are the most important traits of a good leader. Duration: 10 minutes.</p>
<p><b>Duration of the activity</b></p>	<p>45 minutes</p>

## PRACTICAL ACTIVITY 2 - INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP STYLE

<p><b>Title</b></p>	<p><b>Activity:</b> <b>Inclusive leadership style - discussion</b></p>
<p><b>Main aim</b></p>	<p>The aim of this activity is to reflect on the leadership traits discussed in the module, and find out which of these traits are especially useful to foster a work environment that is welcoming to everyone.</p>
<p><b>Short Description</b></p>	<p>This activity serves as a final reflection of the leadership module. On the basis of the contents of the module, particularly the presented leadership styles, participants should discuss what an “inclusive leadership style” would look like. The “inclusive leadership style” is a hypothetical new leadership style in analogy to the already defined leadership styles, and should be characterised by creating a work environment that is welcoming to everyone, including neurodivergent persons.</p>
<p><b>Instructions/ guidelines for the trainer</b></p>	<p><b>Introduction:</b> The trainer introduces the activity using the information provided above. The trainer shows the slide “leadership traits” provided in the module presentation, which contains a list of leadership traits extracted from the description of several leadership styles.</p> <p><b>Discussion:</b> The trainer invites the participants to choose traits from the list that would fit an “inclusive leadership style”, or come up with traits they deem important, but are missing from the list. The trainer marks the mentioned traits on the slide (leave presentation mode) and adds missing traits. The trainer invites the participants to explain why they chose the traits they chose, thus encouraging further discussion.</p> <p><b>Closing:</b> The trainer repeats the traits found and discussed, adding some explanation to each of them.</p>
<p><b>Duration of the activity</b></p>	<p>20 minutes</p>

To validate the modules, trainings are to be organised with 20 SMEs and micro companies' leaders and 30 employees in the same companies, possibly including the ones already participating in study circles at national level. They are to be delivered in the period December 2023 – February 2024.

Feedback will be gathered after each training session so that the training content could be improved and better adapted to the needs of the SMEs and neurodivergent people.

## Module 6

# Evaluation and practical guidelines

**Die Berater: Author & CATRO: Sounding Board**

**The main aim of this module is to give some practical guidelines to the trainers on how to adapt the training programme on neurodiversity models at work to the national context, as well as to the different needs of managers and employees.**

The main highlights are as follows:

- **Practical guidelines for the trainers for piloting (action plan companies)**
- **National specifics: Political, legal, economic environment**
- **Support offers (financial, institutional)**
- **Resources in each country**
- **National challenges**

## **GUIDELINES ON ADAPTING THE TRAINING TO A NATIONAL CONTEXT**

The training curriculum was designed by a transnational team with an European perspective. To ensure that the training is useful for participants acting in a national context, training providers should adapt the curriculum where necessary and localize the training including information relevant to the national context and needs. Naturally, only the training providers themselves can know exactly what changes are needed, and thus this curriculum can only contain general guidelines. National topics that might be relevant include: Understanding of neurodiversity and inclusion; legal environment; support offers; national challenges; localized research, literature, media.

## UNDERSTANDING OF NEURODIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Awareness about neurodiversity and inclusion policies and practices are different in every country. That means that in some contexts, the training will have to focus more on the awareness raising module, while in others, the focus will be more on the other modules. Also, the concrete contents of the modules, terms used, etc. may vary in accordance to the national context. To make sure the training corresponds to the state of understanding of neurodiversity and inclusion in a country, training providers should find answers to the following questions:

- **How well known is the concept of neurodiversity in my country?**
- **How is inclusion practiced in my country?**

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

Each country has different laws governing employment, disability, and discrimination. What can be legally mandated in one country, might be not regulated in another, and illegal in a third. Training providers must be aware of the legal environment of their country before delivering the training. Legal areas training providers must be familiar with include but are not limited to the following:

- **What laws are there regarding discrimination (at the workplace and in general)?**
- **Are there specific laws or provisions regarding neurodiversity?**
- **Are neurodivergent conditions qualified as disabilities?**
- **Are there legally mandated “reasonable accommodations”?**
- **Occupational health and safety norms**
- **Data protection laws**
- **Laws regarding the disclosure of health status**



### Important note:

**This curriculum includes inviting employees and candidates to disclose their neurodivergent profile as a way to foster inclusion. Such an invitation, especially when made during the hiring process, might be likely illegal in your country and will make an employer subject to legal action and fines for discrimination. Do not promote any actions unless you are absolutely certain they are not illegal!**

## SUPPORT OFFERS

Support offers addressing neurodiversity inclusion will differ from country to country. By including them in the training, training providers can make sure that learners can make use of them. Support offers may include financial or institutional support, and be provided by public or private entities.

## NATIONAL CHALLENGES

Each country has its own challenges regarding neurodiversity inclusion. By being aware of these challenges and addressing them in the training, training providers can make the training more meaningful.

## LOCALISED RESEARCH/LITERATURE/MEDIA

Most research, literature and media included in the English language training are from the English-speaking world, especially Ireland, the UK and the USA, which means not only that they are in English, but even more importantly they reflect the specific contexts of these countries. By complementing or replacing these resources with resources engaging with the context of the country where the training is delivered, and including sources in the language of this country, the training becomes more relevant and engaging

## 4.3#

# Training evaluation

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**Training evaluation is the process of collecting feedback information and using that information to improve future training. The evaluation will provide feedback to help identify if the training achieved the intended outcomes and will help to inform decisions or any changes in future training delivery.**

We recommend to conduct a training evaluation after each training session with the different target groups.

Useful questions to ask in an evaluation form include:

- **Please rate the quality of the training - excellent, good, fair, poor.**
- **Did the training meet your expectations? Yes or No, plus a comment box.**
- **Would you recommend this training to others? Yes or No, plus a comment box.**
- **Have you any suggestions for how the training could be improved? Yes or No, plus a comment box.**
- **Are there topics you would like more training on? Yes or No, plus a comment box.**
- **Is there anything we could have done to make the training more accessible for you? Yes or No, plus a comment box.**

Remember to keep the evaluation form or process accessible, with limited text/reading. A short online form which the participant can complete in their own time is a good option. If it is online, individuals can also use assistive technologies. Another option to consider is a small focus group. Providing different options in how people provide their feedback is optimum, as this will enable participants to choose a method that best suits their communication preferences.

It is worth noting that an anonymous survey may help some participants to be more honest with their responses.

It is also helpful for trainers to note their reflections after each training session has concluded. What training activities seemed to work well? What sections seemed most engaging to the participants? What activities needed more or less time than planned? How could sessions be adapted for future to be more tailored to the specifics of the company/workplace?

A follow-up survey a month or two after the training could also be helpful to assess if, and how, the participants applied their learning. What changes have they made in how they work or interact with colleagues or clients? Has the training made them more understanding of neurodiversity within the team?

If neurodivergent employees have participated, it could be very beneficial to gather their personal insights and feedback on training. Has the training made their workplace more neurodivergent inclusive? What more may need to be done?

Remember that evaluation needs to be feasible, proportionate and meaningful. The time and effort required should match with the scale of the training and fit within the available resources of the organisation. As already noted SMEs and microenterprises leaders and staff can be time and resource poor.

## 5#

# Methodologies, practices and tools for promoting and making value out of Neurodiversity in workplaces

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## 5.1#

# Introduction

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The aim of the revolutionary model as stated already is to promote and value neurodiversity in the workplace. The next step towards achieving this goal is putting in practice and validating the training curricula with our 2 main target groups: managers and employees.

To support this process effectively the trainers from the LTTA developed guidance for differentiating the training content and highlights considering the specific needs of both target groups. They also prepared additional case studies/ practical activities which will assist the local trainers in the implementation of the training modules at national level. These are linked to the training modules and are listed in the next section.

The trainings should be organised with 20 SMEs and micro companies' leaders and 30 employees in the same companies, possibly including the ones already participating in study circles at national level. They are to be delivered in the period December 2023 – February 2024.

Feedback will be gathered after each training session so that the training content could be improved and adapted even better to the needs of the SMEs and neurodivergent people.

## 5.2#

# Brief description of the good practices and case studies (per area)

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Based on the study circles and the training activities provided we identified the following good practices which could be beneficial for the mentoring activities with the companies.

## RECRUITMENT AND ONBOARDING

- **Technical tools for better readability, text-to-speech programmes and spellchecker** esp. for dyslexic people, as well as extra time for completing assessment tasks during the recruitment process (Bulgaria, Italy)
- **Opportunity to disclose their specific needs as neurodivergent people** as part of the JobAds and during the interview process (Ireland)
- **Buddy system for onboarding of all new employees**, which benefits of course the neurodivergent people too. (Ireland)
- **Partnering with an employment agency/organisation that assists neurodiversity at work** has been extremely beneficial for managers (Ireland)
- A best practice solution to relieve unnecessary stress was **to send out in advance the questions to be asked in the interview and to brief interviewees** on who will be on the interview panel (ideally pictorially). (Bulgaria)

- **Short-term contracts as a means to afford neurodivergent individuals a valuable opportunity to accumulate hands-on experience**, as well as enabling the manager to assess the compatibility of the role with the neurodivergent individual (Ireland, Bulgaria)
- **Shorter and customized onboarding sessions, including more visual materials, interactive discussions, hands-on practical sessions**, instead of reading of long onboarding procedures and extended daily training presentations which can lead to sensory overload and fatigue, affecting both neurodivergent individuals and neurotypicals alike (Ireland)
- **Mentorship Programme** to introduce the topic of neurodiversity and raise awareness and understanding around reasonable accommodations. (Ireland)
- **Having an agency which is training/preparing the interview panel** on how neurodivergent candidates might present or how their style of communication may differ from other applicants is very beneficial to counter unconscious bias (Ireland)

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/REWARD & RECOGNITION**

- Neurodiverse inclusive companies express **confidence in their ability to offer equal access to career advancement, opportunities, and recognition within the workplace**. Many of them believe they have objective and fair performance indicators which allow them to identify individual strengths but also areas for development in an open and fair performance evaluation process. (Ireland)
- **If someone gets promoted to a new level, clearly document the exact changes** and new responsibilities of that role. This ensures that everything is transparent and fair. Reasonable accommodations may also need to be reviewed in line with the nature of the new role (Ireland)

- **Overall candidates outlined that managers who recognise performance have given promotions to people.** However, there are many **social cues or unwritten rules** that participants identified as barriers to progression and recognition. (Ireland)
- **Trainings were usually based on preliminary analysis of the specific training needs of all employees,** taking in account the specific needs of neurodivergent people for structure, format (more informal type of training), sensory stimulations etc. Some neurodivergent individuals may prefer to do some of the learning by themselves, and not always in a group setting. (Bulgaria)
- **Open feedback culture, which stimulates both positive and constructive feedback, should be encouraged. Remember that some neurodivergent people tend to perfectionism and may be highly sensitive.** This means that feedback should be delivered in a careful and constructive manner, preferably in an informal way but with clear follow up on future expectations. (Bulgaria, Ireland)
- **Having a good support mentor/coach/learning tutor is often a key factor for success.** That is helpful, not only for onboarding a candidate but particularly for retention, career development, and promotion. Further, it was strongly agreed that **the mentor should have volunteered themselves rather than being selected and appointed to support a particular candidate.** The candidate also needs to feel comfortable with the style of the mentor. (Bulgaria, Ireland, Italy)
- **Project/initiative aimed at making the European classification of skills, competences, qualifications, and occupations accessible to neurodivergent individuals through the validation of prior learning** (Italy)

## DESIGN OF WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Various examples for adaptations of the work environment – **e.g. choosing the appropriate colours and materials in the offices considering that light levels, flickering lights, strong reflections, bright bold colours and busy patterns** are annoying not only for neurodivergent, but also for neurotypical individuals. (United Kingdom)
- **Flexible working arrangements have proved to be very beneficial**, and managers have provided resources for staff e.g. appropriate chair, table, monitor based on employee needs. (all countries)
- **Provide resources such as noise cancelling headphones** for staff (all countries)
- Provide access to and promote benefits of **assistive technology for all staff**, for example text to speech, speech to text can be helpful for all. This also normalises the use of assistive technology and neurodivergent staff then feel less stigmatised when they use such tools (all countries)
- Provide **additional breakout working rooms/areas for employees to work in a quiet space to improve focus and productivity** and allowing employees to decompress. This has proven to be beneficial for all staff, not just neurodivergent employees. Additionally, **identify areas of the office that may be more suitable for individuals, e.g. seats near natural lighting**. (Ireland)
- **Always invite all staff to social gatherings even if you know that the employee might not want to go**, as it is important that they feel welcome but also not pressured to attend. Provide information prior to social gatherings on the details of the location, type of activities, noise level etc. so that they are informed. Consider how inclusive social/team-building activities are, for example - a team quiz with lots of reading may not be fun for a dyslexic colleague. (Ireland)



- **Be as explicit as possible with information about change and seek feedback.** (Ireland)
- **Consult and take on the principles in the book “Buildings for All”.**

## LEADERSHIP

- **All companies agreed that inclusive and adaptive leadership, as well as servant leadership styles are accommodating of neurodivergent people,** however not many examples were shown for such leadership practices.
- **Leadership is not necessarily bound to specific hierarchical positions; there can be leaders at different levels within an organisation.** Some representatives of large international companies shared that most effective programmes **combined top down advocacy with grassroots participations,** so that **neurodivergent resource groups and champions** can emerge throughout the organisation.
- Overall, participants (in Ireland) have had good experiences with managers so far in their careers. Participants have seen managers taking part in training in the area of diversity and inclusion. Some candidates were **part of the disabilities steering committees** within their organisations which has **helped initiate change.** (particularly within the pharma industry)
- Managers felt it was really beneficial to **have buy- in from top level managers** so that the **importance of neurodiversity was recognised at all levels of the organisation.** (Ireland)
- **Use budget to hire speakers or organisations to come in and speak about neurodiversity,** provide training in diversity and inclusion and address any concerns that may be emerging.

## 5.3#

# Piloting methodology

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The final stage of piloting the (r)evolutionary model is to provide mentoring support to companies, SMEs and micro-companies, to assess, revise, and adapt certain practices and processes in order to create inclusive working environments.

This mentoring support could follow an Action Plan for companies and consists of several steps/meetings with the management to evaluate and map the desired activities in their organisations considering also the overall business context and business needs.

For that purpose, **as a first step we recommend** to organise an initial meeting with the HR team, management or other interested stakeholders which should explore the specific context and needs of the company in terms of building neurodiverse culture and inclusive environment.

In this meeting you can follow the main elements of the actions plan, listed below:

### **Define the core theme/s for the actions to be taken by the company with reference to Neurodiversity**

Please, report here the core areas selected as most important for actions in terms of building neurodiverse culture and environment in the company and why did you choose to focus on them, e.g.

- Recruitment and/or on-boarding
- Professional development and career management
- Reward and recognition practices
- Design of work environment
- Leadership approach

### **Set clear (SMART) objectives for the actions to be taken**

Please, report here the main objectives for your company in terms of building neurodiverse culture and environment in the company

## Define concrete actions and target groups

Please, describe here the activities you would like to implement as part of your Neurodiversity at Work action plan in your company, as well as the staff and the stakeholders involved in, e.g.: revision of job descriptions and career management plans, assessment of potential and performance through digital tools, performance assessment and reward system, organisational climate survey, re-organisation of offices layout, employee/employers branding, adaptation of the work environment, awareness raising actions about neurodiversity

## Set the Timeline for the proposed activities

Please include an indicative timing for developing the actions you detailed above

