



## Baseline study

# **“Exploration of the Existing Situation in Zemgale region and Identification of the Gaps in the Support System for the Integration of Young People with Mental Disabilities into the Labor Market / Society”**

## SUMMARY

Central Baltic Program Project No. CB 802 RETHINK

Project Customer: Zemgale Planning Region

Executor: Anita Baltace, researcher (sociologist – research study manager)

2019



The project “RETHINK” (hereinafter referred to as the Project or RETHINK) is being implemented within the framework of the Central Baltic Program 2014-2020, in cooperation between two partners – the Zemgale Planning Region (hereinafter – ZPR) in Latvia and the Research and Development Center, the municipality of Linköping in Sweden.

**The project aims** to develop and test an innovative and usable training / support program to help young people aged between 18 and 30 with mental health problems not involved in education, training or employment, access support services, personal development, skills and employment opportunities to address their social and economic exclusion.

This is a **summary of the Baseline study** “Exploration of the Existing Situation in Zemgale region and Identification of the Gaps in the Support System for the Integration of Young People with Mental Disabilities into the Labor Market / Society” (hereinafter referred to as the Study), which provides a concise summary of the key issues analyzed in the Study.

**The following methods were used** for the development of the Study:

- compilation and analysis of legislation, research studies, planning documents, publications, statistics and other sources of information on the services available to the target group in Latvia and in the ZPR;
- interviews with the service providers and other project promoters supporting the target group of this Project (two interviews altogether);
- interviews with the target group representatives in the ZPR (24 in total, of which – 8 women, 16 men) conducted by a social worker.

Through the planned training program and mentoring services for the target group, the Project is intended to promote the observance of human rights of these people and social inclusion principles, as laid down in the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** – the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live independently and to be included in society with the same freedom of choice as other people (Article 19); the right to inclusive education (Article 24) and the right to work, including the right to the provision of reasonable adjustments for work (Article 27).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, available at:  
<https://www.un.org › disabilities › convention › convoptprot-e>

## Characteristics of the Project target group

**Only 26.6% of adult persons with disabilities in Latvia are engaged in employment.** Out of the ~ 23.7 thousand **disabled persons due to mental and behavioral disorders** (data of 2017), **~ 11% or 2.7 thousand was employed** (80% of who belong to disability group 2)<sup>2</sup>.

According to the information provided by the Ministry of Welfare (hereinafter – MW), in December 2016, there were a total of 3,043 adult persons with mental disorders in the ZPR, 52% of whom were men and 48% - women<sup>3</sup>. **The adult population with mental disorders in the ZPR accounts for ~13-14% of the total number in the country.** The age structure of adults with mental disorders in the ZPR is as follows: 45.0% over the age of 50, 37.7% between the ages of 31 and 50, and only **17.4% of those aged between 18 and 30 (~ 529 people).**

It should be noted that the target group is very heterogeneous, with each young person in this target group being different in terms of health, social and economic well-being, family status and place of residence.

The young people interviewed within the Project from the ZPR municipalities are between 17 and 30 years old, on average 24 years old, mainly of disability Group 2, or mentally retarded, as well as some of the disability Groups 1 and 3, or without a certain diagnosis. The young people to be involved in the Project live in society and one of the main features is their exposure to the risk of social exclusion, also because of the fact that the young people are not engaged in employment or education, have low incomes, lack skills and knowledge for more independent life.

All young people interviewed have acquired education, but vary in its level and subsequent use of the acquired education. Ten of the young people interviewed were involved in employment (including volunteer, informal or occasional, seasonal work, helping neighbours or relatives). The others – but more often their parents or guardians – said they were not educated, qualified, experienced, capable, motivated or confident enough to engage in employment or any social activities.

The following summarizes the **possible causes and aspects affecting the situation of the target group and hindering the involvement of young people with mental health problems in education and employment.**

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<sup>2</sup> Data of Welfare Information Systems (Labklājības informācijas sistēmas), see for further information: “Psihiskās veselības aprūpes pieejamības uzlabošanas plāns 2019.-2020. gadam”

(Plan for the Improvement of Availability of Psychiatric Health Care for 2019-2020), available at:

<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/307701-psihiskas-veselibas-aprupes-pieejamibas-uzlabosanas-plans-2019-2020-gadam>

<sup>3</sup> Statistics about the ZPR obtained from the Report on the ZPR Deinstitutionalization plan 2017-2020 (“Zemgales plānošanas reģiona deinstitutionalizācijas plāns 2017.-2020. gadam”) (hereinafter – DI Plan) DI Plan available at:

<https://www.zemgale.lv/attistibas-planosana/planosanas-dokumenti/category/41-zemgales-planosanas-regiona-deinstitutionalizācijas-plans-2017-2020>

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- ✓ Surrounding people (from close relatives to support providers, employers, society as a whole) do not go deep into the individual situation of each young person, into the specific health condition and its inherent disorders, and do not ask for and take into account the young person's wishes, skills, interests and motivations.
  - ✓ The family and parents play an important role in involving young people with mental health problems into society and the labour market; they often demonstrate over-caring, custody, thus preventing the child from making independent choices, not motivating and providing everything that is necessary, thereby preventing the young person from even thinking of employment and independent living. Only in separate cases the support from family was aimed to involve their children into society and labour market.
  - ✓ Using benefits and available social assistance instead of earning one's own living. Considering that not all young people with mental disorders are able to work full time or high paid jobs, so called "welfare trap" arises – it is more profitable for a person or his / her relatives to receive benefits than to work, there is no motivation and no reason to look for a paid, formal job.
  - ✓ Accessibility to services, education and training facilities and workplaces, distance and access to them from the place of residence – especially in small municipalities, rural areas, and settlements located away from development centers – if the young person does not have access to public transport or a car (and ability to obtain driving license), then the job opportunities are limited.
  - ✓ Lack of information, lack of awareness – generally, young people with mental health problems are unaware of the opportunities and available support for their better engagement in society, education and employment (ignorance as a cause of social exclusion); society members (incl. entrepreneurs, employers) are also not informed and educated about the opportunities of persons with intellectual disabilities or mental health disorders to be integrated into society and the labour market, communication and other everyday issues; and the impact of various prejudices and stereotypes on the employer side is still prevalent.
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## **Support measures available to the target group – education, employment, social inclusion measures**

The following table summarizes the available support measures with a focus on those providing support for persons with mental health problems in the fields of education, skill development or employment, indicating whether the specific measure is relevant, i.e.,

appropriate for the target group of the Project – young people aged 18-30 with mental health problems.

Table 1. *Support measures available to the target group to promotion their education, employment and social inclusion*

| Support measure  | Assessment of the support measure relevance to the Project target group   |
|--|---|
| <b>Municipal Social Services – support provided by a social worker / case manager</b>  | Relevant<br>(provided that the target group member is a client of the Social Service)   |
| <b>Determination of professional suitability</b><br><b>Professional rehabilitation services and vocational education programs</b>                      | Relevant<br>(limitations – basic education required; eligible education for each individual should be improved)   |
| <b>Employment support measures for unemployed and jobseekers with disabilities</b><br><b>(including subsidized jobs for persons with disabilities)</b> | Relevant<br>(limitations – the young person must be registered in the State Employment Agency; the suitability of services for persons with mental disorders should be improved)  |
| <b>Job search motivation program and social mentoring services for the long-term unemployed persons with disabilities</b>                              | There is no information on whether this measure is individually adapted to persons with mental disorders. Could be suitable for the Project target group in case its specific needs were met. Only available to young people who have been unemployed for at least 12 months. |
| <b>Service of a support person</b>   | Relevant<br>(if the person itself is motivated and cooperative)   |
| <b>Day Care Centres (DCCs)</b>   | Partially relevant<br>(in case an individual needs to switch to a more independent life and acquire basic skills, engage in out-of-home and family (or care institution) activities.  |
| <b>Group homes or apartments</b>   | Partially relevant<br>(as a place of residence for young people who have no other opportunities to live independently; should be combined with other support measures to promote the inclusion of the target group in society and employment)                                 |
| <b>Halfway houses</b>  | Slightly relevant<br>(for the persons leaving long-term care institutions and needing to develop the basic skills in order to be able to live in society)   |
| <b>Specialized workshops</b>   | Relevant<br>(limitations – only one specialized workshop is currently available in  |

| Support measure   | Assessment of the support measure relevance to the Project target group  |
|---|--|
|   | the ZPR)   |
| <b>Support groups and group activities</b>  | Relevant   |
| <b>Specialist consultations and individual support</b>  | Relevant   |
| <b>Deinstitutionalization (DI) projects and activities, incl. in the ZPR</b>  | Partially relevant<br>(each young person's situation should be considered; the main target group of the services should not be young people already living in society unless there is a risk of them to be placed in a care institution) |
| <b>Project “Mind and Do”</b>  | Partially relevant<br>(young people with mental disorders are not the main target group for the project, but the mentoring approach can be taken over from this experience)  |
| <b>Social enterprises and Companies and institutions employing persons with disabilities, incl. those with mental disorders</b> | Relevant<br>(if the company engages employees with mental disorders)   |

Summing up the information compiled in Table 1, it can be concluded that currently there are various services and support measures available in Latvia, and to the ZPR target group, which also include, in different ways, promotion of education, skill development and employment in the target group. Although several of the activities involve the target group of the RETHINK project, they are not always accessible or specific enough to deliver the expected results: inclusion of young people in society and employment.

The most essential drawbacks identified in assessing the appropriateness of the support measures for the target group are summarized below:

- ✓ Insufficient evaluation of each person of the target group and lack of personal approach in offering support measures – for various reasons (incl. lack of human resources, funding and capacity) the measures are often not provided in the interests of each person with mental disorders and not considering their own desires, motivation and capabilities; therefore they do not produce the desired effect in the long run.
- ✓ Limitations of the target group of the measures, in some cases, are also a disadvantage for the target group of the RETHINK Project – since some of them are aimed at people with a specific disability group (mostly Group1 and 2) and severe



mental disorders, therefore they are not accessible for young people with slight mental disorders or those without disability.

- ✓ Unsuitability of employment measures and training for the target group. The situation is particularly acute for people with intellectual disabilities. They are forced to learn according to a ready-made program that is not adapted to the needs and perceptions of the individual. Thus, the availability of courses is formal and does not provide any practical benefit to the individual. The unavailability of courses also limits individuals' abilities to choose a job.
  - ✓ Additional limitations are caused by the unavailability of jobs that do not require specific skills and competences (low-skilled work). Such jobs are hardly ever available at the State Employment Agency. Despite the fact that subsidized jobs are provided, they are all associated with skilled jobs requiring special skills and knowledge. Therefore, people with intellectual disabilities are practically excluded from the labor market.
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Examples of good practice from the analyzed support measures, which are to be assessed as best suited to the target group, and with the greatest potential to facilitate their engagement in employment, are: the **support person service**, the **Social Integration State Agency and State Employment Agency services** (provided they are personalized and taking into account each person's individual motivation and situation), **specialized workshops** (ensuring greater integration with the labor market, including people with slight mental disorders), **subsidized jobs** and **social enterprises**. The combination or sequential use of several support measures (since the support provided to people in this target group should be permanent, long-lasting rather than campaign-type), as well as work with the relatives and guardians of the young people to promote greater independence and autonomy can be most effective. There is also a need for informative and educational work with employers, as well as support in the form of consulting and funding for the employment and workplace adjustments for people with mental disorders.

## Analysis of the adequacy of the available support measures and the needs of the target group

The evaluation has been carried out exclusively in a generalized way, with the aim of assessing the relative ability of the available support measures to address the potential needs of the young people of the Project target group. The following designations are used in the table:

- *X* – the cell is marked, if the support measure (according to its description, objectives) has to meet the respective needs, they are included in the range of services and are available for the project target group.
- *n/r* – denotes cases when the support measure is not intended to address the specific needs or the Project target group.

The assessment of the support measures is based on the opinions of professionals and young people of the target group, as well as on the information obtained from other similar research studies. The assessment is expressed in the following categories, marking the cells of the table in different colours:

- **Relevant** (or is able to address the specific need, also indirectly).
- **Partially relevant** (some aspect of the measure addresses the particular need or the measure partially enhances the solution).
- **Not relevant** (unable or insufficient to address the particular need).

Table 2. Assessment of the relevance of the available support measures to the target group needs

| Needs   | The relevance of the available support measures to the needs of the target group |      |     |                               |                |                  |                           |               |                       |                |                          |                 |                    |  |
|---|--|------|-----|-------------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--|
|   | Social worker  | SISA | SEA | Motivation program of the SEA | Support person | Day care centres | Group homes or apartments | Halfway homes | Specialized workshops | Support groups | Specialist consultations | ” Mind and Do!” | Social enterprises |  |
| Desire to work, earn and live independently                             | X  | X    | X   | X                             | X              | X                | X                         | X             | X                     | X              | X                        | X               | X                  |  |
| Need to acquire a profession, continue education                        | X  | X    | X   | X                             | n/r            | X                | n/r                       | n/r           | X                     | n/r            | X                        | X               | X                  |  |
| Desire to improve living conditions, incl. financial situation          | X  | ?    | ?   | X                             | X              | X                | X                         | X             | X                     | X              | X                        | X               | X                  |  |
| Need to increase self-confidence, self-realization, desire to be useful | X  | X    | ?   | X                             | X              | X                | X                         | X             | X                     | X              | X                        | X               | X                  |  |
| Facilitate taking responsibility for oneself and others                 | X  | X    | ?   | X                             | X              | X                | X                         | X             | X                     | X              | X                        | X               | X                  |  |
| Motivating, engaging, finding a personal approach                       | X  | X    | X   | X                             | X              | X                | X                         | X             | X                     | X              | X                        | X               | X                  |  |



| Needs   | The relevance of the available support measures to the needs of the target group |      |     |                               |                |                  |                           |               |                       |                |                          |                |                    |
|---|--|------|-----|-------------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
|   | Social worker  | SISA | SEA | Motivation program of the SEA | Support person | Day care centres | Group homes or apartments | Halfway homes | Specialized workshops | Support groups | Specialist consultations | "Mind and Do!" | Social enterprises |
| Support in completing documents, communication with institutions  | x  | n/r  | ?   | x                             | x              | n/r              | n/r                       | n/r           | n/r                   | n/r            | n/r                      | x              | ?                  |
| Support for combining studies, work and childcare                 | x  | ?    | x   | n/r                           | ?              | x                | x                         | x             | x                     | n/r            | n/r                      | x              | x                  |
| Driving license, providing transport                              | n/r  | x    | x   | n/r                           | n/r            | n/r              | n/r                       | n/r           | n/r                   | n/r            | n/r                      | x              | n/r                |
| Acquiring self-care, hygiene skills                               | x  | x    | ?   | ?                             | ?              | x                | x                         | x             | x                     | n/r            | x                        | x              | n/r                |
| Ability to deal with money and to plan expenses                   | x  | x    | ?   | x                             | x              | x                | x                         | x             | x                     | x              | x                        | x              | x                  |
| Assistant, workplace support (including adjustments)              | n/r  | n/r  | x   | x                             | x              | n/r              | n/r                       | n/r           | x                     | n/r            | n/r                      | x              | x                  |
| Informative support, identification and offering of opportunities | x  | x    | x   | x                             | x              | x                | x                         | x             | x                     | x              | x                        | x              | n/r                |

The accomplished evaluation makes it possible to conclude that the **areas where the existing support measures are relatively less able to reach the target group or address the specific needs** are:

- improvement of living conditions and financial situation of persons with mental disorders;
- facilitating to take responsibility for oneself and others;
- support for combining studies, work and childcare;
- ability to deal with money and to plan expenses;
- informative support, identification and offering of opportunities.

Close attention should be paid to these areas by developing a training program within the RETHINK Project and by involving mentors.

In contrast, the largest range of needs can be met by the **service of the support person** and the "Mind and Do!" project, which involves **mentoring the young person and developing an individual support plan** (taking into consideration the fact mentioned above that this

project does not reach the target group, but potentially could be appropriate in case relevant professionals are involved), as well as **specialist consultations and individual support**, which show that individual approach and personalized peer support are services that can ensure results for the inclusion of the target group in society and employment. Support of the **social service – social worker** – to the person by providing case management is also important; moreover, it is important to increase the awareness of the social service clients about all types of support and measures available to them.

## Recommendations for mitigation of drawbacks and implementation of new approaches within the framework of the Project

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- ✓ Each young person in the target group needs an individual approach, a deep-going analysis of the situation and the involvement of the young person him-/herself in both the process of assessment and the selection and implementation of support measures, identifying individual needs, abilities, health condition and desires, which can ensure both greater motivation for the young to engage and an appropriate application of support measures, as well as a better understanding of what goals and results a young man wants to achieve, what skills or profession to acquire, what job to work in.
- ✓ It is recommended to encourage the involvement of young people in skill training and career choices already at primary school, in order to inform as early as possible about opportunities, to make them get to know the working environment and different professions, which will give them an idea and opportunities to develop their skills and choose the right direction for the future.
- ✓ One of the skills that most young people in the target group still lack is dealing with money, planning their own budget and expenses. Work should be done both with the young person's family to promote greater independence and the capacity of the young person to act on property matters, as well as through the acquisition of these skills, for example through Day Care Centres, support persons, mentors or within other services.
- ✓ More involvement of employers and awareness-raising measures are needed to facilitate the involvement of the target group in employment. It is recommended to invite regional employers, including those with successful experience in employing people with mental disorders, to collect good practice stories, to identify these experiences and to share them with other regional entrepreneurs and authorities, to raise awareness of the available support measures from the SEA, NGOs, social enterprises in the region, etc.
- ✓ For some young people in the target group, the availability of support at the workplace would be important (especially if there are other functional disorders). It would also be useful to provide employers with a supporting person, or at least advice on how to handle a

variety of situations where there is a need for professional advice on how to deal with the employment of individuals with mental disorders and with day-to-day issues.

- ✓ For additional support of young people in the target group and engagement of employers, a great deal of work should be done with parents and guardians of the young people, who have been caring much for their children and doing everything for them. The project should facilitate the involvement of various professionals, especially social workers (including doctors, teachers, society as a whole), in order to raise awareness and reduce the over-custodial and negative attitudes of family members and parents towards children with mental disorders.
  - ✓ One of the most important aspects that can improve the situation of the target group, reduce social exclusion and mitigate the drawbacks of the existing system is: raising awareness among the young people. The young people's families, municipalities, social workers and other professionals with whom the young people are in contact, as well as the activities within the Project, should work to improve young people's awareness on what kind of support and where is available and to whom and how to express their needs and desires.
-