

## **Professional support of the disabled**

**Country:** Spain

**Project Name:** Employment support for the disabled

**Total budget:** 4 491 924 Euro

**ESF support:** 3 144 347 Euro

**Contact:** [www.carm.es](http://www.carm.es)

Providing the disabled with an opportunity to participate fully in the social and economic life is one of the priorities of the regional policy in the region of Murcia in Spain. A six-year plan, co-financed from the European Social Fund, allows the implementation of the plan.

There are ca. 3.5 million physically or mentally disabled persons in Spain. It is about 9% of the society. Murcia, apart from Castilla-Leon, Andalusia and Galicia, is a region of the highest percentage of the disabled in the society. Therefore, the government of Murcia assumes to provide the disabled and their families the same rights and liberties which are enjoyed by other citizens, including a full access to social and professional life.

The programme concentrates on “supported employment” for the disabled. “This approach does not only allow to achieve great results regarding the number of the disabled finding a job, but also ensures a more stable employment and reduces the number of problems encountered by new employees in their new workplace.” says Constantino Sotoca, a clerk at the Regional Employment and Training Office in the Autonomous Region of Murcia.

The programme develops a model of an intensive and personalized support for the participants. Non-profit organizations concluded contracts within which their workers work with a small group of the disabled – at least four in case of the mentally disabled, and at least six physically disabled. Their role is to prepare the client to the future employment and to assist them in finding a job. When a client finds a job, the supporting person assists him/her in learning new work duties.

Private companies employing the disabled are entitled to a financial support if they fulfil certain criteria. Employers undertake, *inter alia*, to sustain the employment for at least 3 years and submit annual reports.

Since the programme was started in 2000, it covered 3200 disabled persons. Ca. 410 of them found employment, including 150 women and all persons below thirty. In most cases the employment lasted from 6 to 12 months. It is anticipated that a total of 4 thousand persons will use the programme and ca. 700 will find a stable job.