# Press release

# Zero Project Selects 11 Innovative Policies and 57 Innovative Practices on Employment, Work and Vocational Education & Training

**The Zero Project has selected 11 Innovative Policies and 57 Innovative Practices from 36 countries in the field of employment, work and vocational education and training (VET). They will be published in January in the Zero Project Report 2017 and in February 2017 at the Zero Project Conference in Vienna. A preview of solutions that work and selected Innovative Practices and Innovative Policies will be presented at the Harkin Summit in Washington, DC on from Dec 7 to Dec 9.**

*Vienna/Geneva 7th December 2016:* The Zero Project researches the status of the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) around the world and, this year, is focusing on employment, work and vocational education and training.

The Zero Project’s Call for Nominations of Innovative Practices and Innovative Policies produced an astounding 260 nominations from 77 countries.

The Zero Project has now finished the selection process for this year´s research topic: employment, work and VET. In a multi-step selection process, close to 1,000 experts with and without disabilities have contributed their knowledge – by nominating, evaluating and voting – and have, finally, selected 11 Innovative Policies and 57 Innovative Practices that they see as the most innovative. The three criteria of the selection process are: Innovation, Impact and Scalability.

**Innovative Practices and Policies from 36 Countries**

The Call for Nominations for Innovative Practices resulted in 213 nominations from 71 countries, of which 57 from 31 countries were finally selected. Countries represented the most often are Germany, Austria, the U.S. and India (4).

The Call for Nominations of Innovative Policies resulted in 48 nominations from 29 countries, of which 11 were finally shortlisted. Two are from Ecuador, one originates in each of Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Chile, Egypt, Malaysia, Peru, Saudi Arabia and the U.S.

**18 Different Solutions Identified**

By analyzing and clustering the 2017 Innovative Practices and Innovative Policies, the Zero Project identified 18 different solutions that have proved themselves able to create decent employment for persons with disabilities.

Among those are, for example, match-making platforms that connect job-seekers with employers, always augmented by advocacy work and services on both sides. Another approach is the “trial period”: internships and summer camps make it easy for job seekers with disabilities, as well as for potential employers, to try and learn without obligation; an approach that can be scaled to huge numbers of jobs created.

Innovative Policies that are part of a quota system always connect this with smartly designed “supply-side” activities, such as cooperations with chambers of industries, or financial and non-financial support for employers.

In countries with low and medium development, a high percentage of Innovative Practices and Policies work with bottom-up approaches, supporting self-employment, social enterprise, and microfinancing. Another approach, often associated with this, is intensive skills training in ICT, handicrafts, or agriculture.

**Innovative Practices and Policies from the U.S. and Canada Presented at the Harkin Summit**

At the Harkin Summit, from Dec 7 to Dec 9, in Washington DC, initiated by former U.S. Senator Tom Harkin, the Zero Project announced the Innovative Policies and Practices that were developed in the U.S. and in Canada.

From the U.S., the Zero Project select the **Vermont Supported Employment Programme** as an Innovative Policy that facilitates the shift from sheltered employment settings to more inclusive employment. The other Innovative Policy developed in Northern America comes from Canada: The **“Ready, Willing and Able Initiative”** of 2014-2017 is a nationwide partnership between the government and NGOs that promotes awareness among employers as to the value of employees with intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorders.

Innovative Practices originating from North America consist of:

* Project **SEARCH**, developed by **Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center**, is a one-year school-to-work programme targeting students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In 2016, SEARCH operated 405 programmes in North America and several European countries.
* **Georgia's High School/High Tech** offers high school students with disabilities, 16 to 21 years old, comprehensive, community-based exposure to academic and career services.
* **Paths 2 the Future**, a project initiated by the University of Oregon, is a vocational education program that empowers young women with disabilities, teaching them self-advocacy and communication skills, and preparing them for the future. In 2016, more than 130 young women have been trained.
* **Catholic Relief Services (CRS)** has established an IT Training program in cooperation with three training institutions in Vietnam. CRS also created a network of alumni. By March 2016, 1,461 persons with disabilities across Vietnam received IT training, 70 per cent of whom have jobs within IT and non-IT industries.
* **Community Living Sarnia-Lambton**, an NGO registered in Ontario, operates a variety of programmes supporting employment for people with disabilities. With “Summer Employment Transitions”, young people (aged 16 to 29) with various disabilities are placed in companies for summer internships.
* **DRPI-Aware** is a project of York University focusing on job skill identification of employers. It cooperates with DPOs to train employers on the strengths and benefits of different staff and inclusive employment strategies.

All Innovative Practices and Innovative Policies will be announced and published by the end of January in the Zero Project Report and on the Zero Project website at [www.zeroproject.org](http://www.zeroproject.org). Representatives of all selected organisations are invited to present their models at the Zero Project Conference, Feb 22 to 24, 2017, in the United Nations Headquarters in Vienna, Austria.

**For further information, please contact:**

**Michael Fembek Ingrid Heindorf**

*Zero Project, Director Zero Project, Head of Innovative Policies Research*

Essl Foundation, Klosterneuburg/Austria World Future Council, Geneva/Switzerland

[m.fembek@esslfoundation.org](mailto:m.fembek@esslfoundation.org) [i.heindorf@zeroproject.org](mailto:i.heindorf@zeroproject.org)