

TITLE

Comprehensive support and jobs for persons with epilepsy

Austria: Leben mit Epilepsie in der Arbeitswelt (LEA) – Institut für Epilepsie

PROJECT SUMMARY

A non-profit organization operating in the country state of Styria, Austria, Leben mit Epilepsie in der Arbeitswelt (LEA) provides a variety of services (training, advocacy campaigns, workplace adaptation, communication, and awareness raising) to people with epilepsy concerning their integration in the job market.

FACTS & FIGURES

- Jobs created in 2014: 17
- Jobs created in 2015: 19
- Beneficiaries in 2014: 32
- Beneficiaries in 2015: 24
- Beneficiaries in 2016 (to date): 18

PROBLEMS TARGETED

In Austria, there is no individual assessment of people with epilepsy concerning their ability to work and to be integrated into the labour market. Lack of knowledge and the resulting prejudice against people with epilepsy are further obstacles.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

Between 2011 and 2015, the organization supported 818 clients from the target group, helping them to solve their various problems in finding and maintaining work. In addition, 178 people with epilepsy were given further practical help and support. Of these, 63 persons found a proper job in the open labour market, and 28 kept their present job after identifying and removing various obstacles through cooperation with LEA and the employers. LEA has also helped to overcome the problem of possible indemnity claims as a result of seizures at the workplace by issuing “comfort letters” to employers concerning an employee’s capability to work. Further, the organization has developed a guideline called “Epilepsy in the Workplace,” in cooperation with various Austrian public institutions.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

Financed by the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs, LEA has an annual cost of EUR 106,000, and it is estimated that nationwide coverage would cost approximately €1 million per year. LEA provides evidence that savings in unemployment benefits would offset this cost several times, and going forward the organization intends to expand its work through the state of Styria.

QUOTE

“We have one person with epilepsy in one of our supermarkets. She is outstanding – not because of her epilepsy, but due to her friendliness, positive attitude, and hard work!”

— Klaus Pollhammer, Managing Director, MERKUR Warenhandels AG

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