

Theme 1

Success

Employability

The number of people on long-term sick leave is increasing and this negative trend must be reversed. Sparsely-populated rural areas currently lack work-oriented rehabilitation services in which the gender perspective is also taken into account. People often have to travel to another municipality for rehabilitation, which is a problem because the nearest place where such services are available may be a great distance away from home. This means that people in need of rehabilitation may have to live in a larger town for a while and be away from their families and their regular social life. Taken as a whole, this situation entails high costs for the individual and the municipality concerned and, more often than not, poor results.

"The members of the Success Development Partnership want to develop a model for how small municipalities in rural areas can run work-oriented rehabilitation with better results at a lower cost," says Göran Sjöberg, the co-ordinator of the project.

This model should be characterised by empowerment, co-ordinated efforts and active co-operation, teaching and training methods that use a healthy, positive environment for practical work training and a close link to companies and their needs. The measures will be carried out locally in order to pay consideration to the family and social situation of the clients involved.

The project will test new experimental forms in terms of both organisation and methodology/implementation. A broad sectoral co-operation in the field of work-oriented rehabilitation, and a strategy for national dissemination and implementation through various subprojects are therefore of central importance.

The various subprojects are designed to solve different parts of the problem. The following bodies are involved in the Development Partnership and are running subprojects: a local partnership in the Municipality of Arvidsjaur; the Activa foundation in the county of Örebro; the Department of Health Sciences at the Luleå University of Technology; the Federation of Private Enterprises and the Norrbotten Association of Local Authorities.

Other partners include the Labour Market Administration and the Social Insurance Office. It is a question of getting players in all sections of society to contribute.

Research and development will be an important part of the Development Partnership's activities. The work will aim, among other things, to clarify the differences regarding rehabilitation efforts for men and women. We expect that this will result in the improvement of rehabilitation for women and the elimination of inequalities. The equal opportunities perspective should be clearly highlighted in the proposed model, as well as the key factors for rehabilitation in small municipalities.

"It must be possible to carry out such rehabilitation locally. This is the point of the project – to find solutions in the respective municipalities," says Michael Åhman, who is the local co-ordinator in Arvidsjaur.

A transnational co-operation agreement has been signed with Development Partnerships in Finland, Ireland and Spain. The development of models and methods for the labour-market integration of groups who face different obstacles and difficulties is the central issue in this co-operation. The work of all these Partnerships is based on the specific conditions that apply in sparsely-populated rural areas.

"We have the opportunity to produce a model that can solve national problems of this type. The Government and Parliament often speak about the importance of rural communities being able to thrive and survive. But this also requires concrete input and investment," says Michael Åhman.

Facts

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- **Department of Health Sciences, Luleå University of Technology**
- **Federation of Private Enterprises, Arvidsjaur**
- **Labour Market Board, Norrbotten**
- **Council for the Disabled, Arvidsjaur**