

The purpose of the Supported Employment Standards

Standards are the key element of any quality assurance system. Without such standards, the compliance of actual services with specified requirements cannot be evaluated.

The Supported Employment Standards define the lowest service level that a supported employment service should maintain. The contents of the Standards reflect their primary aim – to ensure further development of supported employment in line with the main principles of the service. Implementation of the Standards should maintain high quality of supported employment in the environment of rapid service development, and increase the credit of supported employment within the employment services.

The defined Supported Employment Standards will serve as a benchmark for independent service quality assessment (i.e. audits) as well as a basis for creation of an internal quality assurance system (i.e. self-evaluation). However, the self-evaluation aspect of the Standards will require additional elements that are crucial for the development of the quality and user satisfaction, e.g. complaint procedure, availability (waiting time for the service provision), satisfaction, etc.

Development of the Standards

Drafting of the final version of the Standards took approximately twelve months (since spring 2003) and it was based on the Principles of Supported Employment. The Principles itself have been based on the most frequent characteristics mentioned by service providers from countries with long tradition of the supported employment service, i.e. U.S., Canada, Australia and Norway. The Principles' development process has been supported by representatives of providers, Employment Offices and Employment Service Administration.

Basically, the Supported Employment Standards are the Principles broken down to so called criteria. The intent was to make the criteria measurable in order to allow for assessment whether a provider achieves the required level in a given area. The Standards have been subject to several reviews and a practical test, i.e. pilot quality audits. It was only the practical test that differentiated unambiguously defined standards from those which tend to be interpreted ambiguously, which standards are achievable under the general conditions and which not, etc.

In the development phase, the viability of the Standards has been taken into consideration. The aim was to specify requirements that are feasible, i.e. achievable under the current conditions, and motivating. At the same time, the Standards compliance assessment needed to be reasonable in terms of cost (i.e. two-day audit carried out by two trained auditors). Therefore, the Standards have been reviewed and the number of criteria reduced. As result, certain Standards include only one measurable criterion.

Structure and characteristics of the Standards

Supported Employment Standards consist of a declaratory section and the measurable criteria.

The **declaratory section** includes the mission – the supported employment aim, purpose, objectives and target group. It establishes a basic framework for the following standards described by the measurable criteria. The level of compliance with the supported employment mission and aims will be assessed by comparison against the second part of the Standards. The declaratory part shall not serve for the assessment.

The **measurable criteria** focus on two of three basic quality elements: the process and results. The section related to processes includes criteria defining the supported employment procedures and processes. The section relating to results focuses on desirable changes in users' personality through the service provision. The third quality element, i.e. working conditions and education of supported employment workers, will be included in the separate methodology being developed by Czech Union for Supported Employment (CzUSE) in cooperation providers of SE.

Majority of the Standards are **soft, qualitative standards**. Their compliance cannot be measured using precisely defined values (e.g. number of months). As the pilot audit confirms, it is very difficult to assess the compliance with the soft standards. Therefore, the Standards have been completed with the explanatory statement and assessment procedure in order to ensure uniform interpretation and assessment.

It is expected that the Supported Employment Standards will be subject to further development and in line with that, their interpretation and assessment procedure will change. The following Standards are effective as of June 2004.

Supported Employment Quality Standards

Declaratory section

The purpose of supported employment is to equalize employment opportunities for people with impeded access to the open labor market whose social fulfillment is or might therefore be limited.

The main objective of supported employment is to enable the target group members to get and keep an appropriate employment on the [open labor market](#) as well as to increase applicant's/worker's self-sufficiency¹.

Supported employment shall be provided to people who need professional and individual [support](#) based on the personal aid in order to get or keep the employment. Any substantial disadvantage of a person shall not cause denial of the service.

The process of Supported Employment

1. The support is provided according to individual needs and priorities of applicants/workers. The support is time-limited.

- 1.1 A supported employment provider (hereinafter, the "provider") has developed and implemented a [system](#) for assessing the intensity of the necessary support².

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that the providers carry out assessment of what support is required by individual users in order to get and keep the employment.

Providers are required to develop and implement a predefined process for determining the areas where the user's skills are limited and where he/she needs the support. The deliverables of the process shall be the areas where a specific service user needs the support including the estimated intensity of that support.

The support intensity assessment process shall not result in determination or verification of a social or medical diagnosis (e.g. wheelchair user, homeless user, etc.) nor in a request for another service (e.g. K-centrum). The diagnosis does not reflect the required intensity of the support (not every person on a wheelchair needs supported employment, etc.).

- 1.2 The documentation concerning individual applicants/workers clearly shows that the support accommodates to individual needs and expectations of applicants/workers. Only such intensity of support is provided that is necessary to achieve the specified objective.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that the provided support corresponds with users' needs. While the Criterion 1.1 focuses on a key precondition (assessment of the users' needs intensity), the Criterion 1.2 addresses a result – the support shall be provided according to the

¹ In this document, two terms are used to describe a supported employment service user – „applicant“ means a user who searches a job and uses supported employment for that purpose; „worker“ means a user who has already found a job (concluded an employment contract) and uses supported employment in order to keep that job (i.e. to manage all occupational skills). However, the term „applicant“ does not necessarily coincide with the term „expectant“, as defined in the Employment Act: „any physical person who personally asks an Employment Office to mediate an employment...“.

² A provider means an organization or its part providing supported employment. Supported employment can be either sole service, or one of multiple services provided by such organization.

individual needs. In addition, the Criterion 1.2 contains the requirement that the support shall meet expectations and identified priorities of users.

Application of such approach results in provision of the support "that is necessary to achieve the specified objective". The objective means the ultimate goal to be achieved via supported employment.

- 1.3 The length of the support as declared in the provider's [public offer](#) does not exceed 24 months. Any prolongation of such term is provided on case-by-case basis and is reasonably justified.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that the service is as effective as possible. The time limit drives users and agencies to focus on the target, and hence makes the service more effective. Also, the criterion takes into account the fact that in some cases, the length of the service should be prolonged due to level or character of client's disadvantage.

The criterion is based on a concept that supported employment, as a pro-employment service, is a time-limited tool. The period of 24 months corresponds with length of traditional Employment Support Policy tools.

The prolongation of the service is reasonably justified, if there is an evidenced cause (e.g. in the user's file, there is a record of comparison of employer's requirements with user's skills showing that the user has not complied with the specified requirements within the 24-month service period).

2. The support is continuous, i.e. it covers the phase of getting as well as keeping the employment.

- 2.1 The provision of the support continues after the conclusion of an employment contract between an employer and user.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that the support is still available to users after they have concluded an employment contract. This is one of the key characteristics of supported employment. It is based on a concept that supported employment shall support the users in finding as well as keeping an employment which is a condition of success of people with substantial disadvantage.

- 2.2 Before the support termination, there are preconditions necessary for keeping the employment, especially [social inclusion](#), acquiring all necessary [direct and indirect occupation-related skills](#), ensuring [natural support](#) at the workplace, opportunity to repeatedly address the employer.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure efficiency of supported employment by checking that all preconditions of keeping the employment exist before the support termination. The criterion stipulates four mandatory areas.

On the other hand, the criterion is not intended to verify when the client has been firstly informed about the support termination, under what conditions the support is going to be terminated, whether the termination is negotiated at consultation sessions, who decides about the termination, etc.

- 2.3 The provider enables repeated utilization of the support, especially if the support is required in order to keep current employment or if the worker who used the support in the past has lost his or her employment or seeks more suitable job.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that the provider allows repeated provision of the support and hence helps former users with keeping their jobs and fosters their further professional development.

The repeated support must be provided in certain defined situations.

3. The merit of the support rests in the personal professional aid provided by workers of the provider. Workplace support is considered a common element of the support.

- 3.1 Provider's workers provide labor legal consultancy and [career advisory services](#), accompany the applicants/workers outside the facility (to the Employment Office, employers, etc.), negotiate with authorities on their behalf, support the applicants/employees in managing the work duties and occupation skills, as required.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that the supported employment provider provides the entire spectrum of support elements. The provider's offer shall contain all elements, however the users may use them as needed.

- 3.2 The provider's public offer includes provision of personal support at the workplace.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure one of the key characteristics of supported employment, i.e. provision of the support at the workplace. At the same time, it is respected that not all service users will need or want to use this form of the support. Therefore, it is stipulated that the workplace support must be included in the provider's offer but need not to be a part of the actually provided support.

4. The aim of the provided support is to enable applicants/workers to get and keep suitable employment on the open labor market and to increase the level of their self-sufficiency.

- 4.1 Applicants'/workers' [individual plans](#) focus on seeking and keeping an employment on the open labor market and on developing their relevant skills.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that the support provided via supported employment actually focuses on seeking and keeping a job, which requires efforts aimed at increasing the self-sufficiency and developing users' skills.

The evidence of such efforts shall be available in the individual plans of applicants/workers. The individual plan is any personal document clearly stating the objective of the provided support, the measures to be taken in order to achieve the objective, and who is responsible for taking such measures. The specified objectives must aim to finding a job on the open labor market and increasing self-sufficiency in the occupational area.

- 4.2 The provider supports development of applicants'/workers' skills, knowledge and habits necessary for getting and keeping a specific employment.

Explanation:

Comparing with the previous criterion, this criterion assesses the practice rather than document contents. The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that the support provided to individual clients actually leads to getting and keeping an employment. The criterion is closely related to the assessment of the required support intensity (Criterion 1.1) and individualization of the support

(Criterion 1.2). However, it aims at a different target: the support must be focused on work on the open market.

5. The provider is able to coordinate its services with family help and [follow-up services](#) that could affect getting and keeping the suitable employment.

- 5.1 The support of any applicant/worker is coordinated by a single worker responsible for provision of the services to the given applicant/worker.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure one of the fundamental preconditions of the provider's ability to coordinate various resources available to the users, i.e. the key workers system.

- 5.2 The provider has developed and implemented a [system](#) for obtaining a general view of services and [resources](#) available for occupational fulfillment of applicants/workers who are not able to ensure the coordination of the resources by themselves.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that the provider is aware of other resources available to the users in connection with getting and keeping an employment. These resources may complement the support that the provider is able to ensure by itself. Two types of the resources shall be considered: 1) Formal resources – authorities, other professionals, other services; 2) Informal resources – family, friends, etc. A method of the resource ascertainment must be in place for both types of the resources.

The provider shall not be required to apply specific processes to obtain information about services and other resources (e.g. by asking clients, etc.). To fulfill the criterion, the provider shall have a defined process of obtaining such information. However, the criterion stipulates no such specific process.

6. The worksite support is provided in a way that is deemed natural.

- 6.1 The provider has developed and implemented a [system for searching a form of support](#) that, to the maximum extent, corresponds with the worksite environment.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that the provider endeavors to minimize the stigmatizing effect of the support provided at a worksite or in presence of co-workers. The support should be as natural and discreet as possible. To this end, procedures to limit the negative impact of the support must be implemented by the provider. The procedures should be regularly applied.

- 6.2 The workplace support does not make the applicants/workers unnecessarily noticeable.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to evaluate the provider's efforts to minimize the support user stigmatization. Unlike the Criterion 6.1, this criterion focuses on the result.

The criterion does not evaluate whether the provider meets the clients' requests relating to the workplace support.

7. The support aims at development of natural support at the workplace.

- 7.1 The support includes seeking for co-employees who could help the disadvantaged workers to manage their tasks and related skills.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to enhance the social inclusion of the users and stability of their employment. This is based on an idea that having a close colleague who is able and willing to help would increase the probability of keeping a user's employment. In addition, it would enhance the relations between the worker (supported employment user) and the rest of the work team.

8. The support provides the applicants/workers with opportunities to actively participate in job search, employment contract negotiations, and determination of the support intensity.

- 8.1 The provider has developed and implemented a [system of applicants/workers' active participation support](#).

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure the participation of users in the job search and planning and providing the support required for acquiring skills and habits necessary to keep the employment. To this end, methods and procedures of the active participation support shall be defined.

The criterion is based on one of the key characteristics of the supported employment, i.e. active participation of users.

- 8.2 The applicants/workers actively participate in the development of their individual plans and take decisions concerning the searched position (type of work, place of work, working time, etc.).

Explanation:

Unlike Criterion 8.1, Criterion 8.2 focuses on the result, i.e. the level of users' participation in the support planning and decision-taking.

- 8.3 The form of the individual plan, service agreement and/or other documents available to the applicants/workers corresponds with their capabilities.

Explanation:

The criterion addresses other fundamental precondition of the active participation of the users, i.e. intelligibility of documents available to the users. On the other hand, the criterion does not require that the users must understand the documents (some users will never be able to understand due to their disability).

However, we cannot expect that the provider would accommodate all documentation to the level of reception and apprehension of all clients e.g. clients with severe mental disability. This requirement applies just to documents intended for the users (agreement and individual plan). It does not apply to e.g. comments of consultants, skill analysis reports etc.

9. If required, an employer is provided with professional aid during the enrolment and follow-up phases.

- 9.1 The provider has developed and implemented a [system to ascertain employers' needs](#) relating to the employment of applicants/workers.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that providers are able to accommodate the support to individual needs of employers. The criterion consists of two parts: 1) The provider has developed procedures to ascertain needs of individual employers; 2) The provider applies such system in the practice.

- 9.2 If required, the provider is able to assist employers with engaging the applicants, adapting the workplace and/or job description, creating suitable conditions for inclusion of the workers into the work team, etc. The support is adapted to the employers' needs.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to set a minimum level of the support offered to employers. The criterion requires the existence of the offer, however it does not stipulate that all its elements must necessarily be used. The offer should accommodate to the needs of individual employers.

Results

10. The provided positions are positions on the open labor market.

- 10.1 Workplaces are not the sheltered workshops, as defined in the applicable laws.

Explanation:

The criterion provides the only tool to verify that the positions intermediated by the provider are the open labor market positions. The referenced applicable laws shall mean the MLSA CR Decree No. 115/1992 Coll. and a new Law on Employment and related notices. The purpose is to fulfill one of the key principles of supported employment.

Rather than preferring one occupational rehabilitation method over another, the criterion intends to delimit them (what differentiates one form from the others – this is actually the general aim of the Supported Employment Standards).

11. The employment acquired by the workers is stable.

- 11.1 The employment contracts are in line with valid laws and regulations and are concluded between the applicants/workers and employers.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to address one of the key conditions of the supported employment success, i.e. employment contracts comply with the applicable laws. The issue of the employment contracts is governed by Act No. 65/1965 Coll., Labor Code, as the most recently amended by Act 47/2004 Coll.

The criterion addresses the concluded employment contracts only. Therefore, the provider cannot be required to take responsibility for any further steps of the employer (firing the client within the probation period that is not stipulated).

- 11.2 Employment contracts are concluded for an indefinite period of time or for a period common for the given region, employer, type of employment, etc.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to avoid discriminating the supported employment users by concluding less favorable contracts (shorter period than is common in the given region or sector). The criterion accounts for a situation when even workers with no disability have difficulties to conclude employment contracts for indefinite period in regions with high unemployment rate. Therefore, it is necessary to compare the users' employment contract terms with the terms of other local employees.

- 11.3 Contracts for work are accepted as a preliminary phase only followed by conclusion of stable employment contracts, except in reasonably justified cases.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to avoid exploiting the supported employment users for work for none or low remuneration, without paid leave, etc. (in relation to temporary employment contracts). However, the criterion accepts that this form of employment might be efficient in certain phases of the support provision. Such arrangement must be provisional and the provider must demonstrate that it leads to an employment under standard terms and conditions (proper remuneration, etc.).

12. The acquired positions correspond with needs, skills and abilities of the workers, and facilitate their [professional development](#).

- 12.1 The positions correspond with needs, skills and expectations of individual workers.

Explanation:

The criterion relates to Criterion 1.2 (fulfillment of needs, expectations and abilities of the clients) and Criterion 8.2 (support of clients' active participation in the decision-making concerning the searched positions). Criterion 12.1 addresses the results of their application, i.e. to what extent the positions meet the clients' requirements.

The criterion does not expressly require the position to correspond with the actual needs of the labor market. However, the criterion assessment shall also consider the actual opportunities of the local labor market.

- 12.2 The workers are able to develop their [direct and indirect occupation-related skills](#) and knowledge.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to address one of the key results of supported employment, i.e. professional development. The professional development includes not just career advancement, but also the skill and knowledge development. The mission of supported employment should be the professional development of the users rather than just plain employment intermediation. This requires occupational consultants to be aware of related opportunities offered by individual positions.

Supported employment is not about career advancement of a user. The aim is to foster personal development ensuring better fulfillment in general including the advancement in career.

13. The workers work under equal labor conditions.

- 13.1 For their work, the workers receive remuneration comparable with other workers of the same employer or with the average wage at the similar position in the given region.

Explanation:

The criterion focuses on the result, i.e. is the supported employment users' wage comparable with other workers working at the similar positions for the same employer? The purpose of the criterion is to avoid discrimination of the users.

At the same time, the criterion takes into account the differences in the wages in various regions and/or sectors.

- 13.2 The workers work in the same working environment and with the same tools and equipment as other workers of the employer.

Explanation:

The criterion addresses only the working environment and tools, not the remuneration (see the previous criterion). Its purpose is to avoid discriminating the supported employment users at their workplace (e.g. refusing to provide them with a cabinet for personal things, when the other workers at the same position have one, etc.).

Tools and equipment shall not mean the compensating aids.

14. The workplace enables the social inclusion of the workers.

- 14.1 The workers' opportunity to meet co-workers and/or customers is comparable with that of other workers of the employer.

Explanation:

The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that the employment fosters client's inclusion into the work team, with other employees and/or customers. It intends to avoid a situation when the supported employment users are physically present at the workplace without any factual opportunity for inclusion.

Since the chance of meeting people significantly varies position from position and job from job, it is not sufficient to focus on availability of the opportunity to meet people, but rather on the similarity of such opportunity with that of other employees. Other employees of the same employer shall be used as a benchmark. The comparison with other employees is necessary in order to assess the criterion correctly.

15. The provided support results in development of applicants/workers' skills and knowledge necessary for getting and keeping an employment.

- 15.1 Upon the termination of the support, the applicants/workers' skills and knowledge have increased comparing with the level at the beginning of the service.

Explanation:

The criterion is closely related to the professional development addressed in Criterion 12.2 (the workplace shall allow the personal development of users). Criterion 15.1 focuses on the result, i.e. whether the support and employment have increased skills and knowledge of the supported employment users.

Definitions of the used terms

Open labor market

Employment in positions and at workplaces that are not the sheltered workshops, as defined by applicable laws, and that do not concentrate employees based on their common feature (i.e. disadvantage on the labor market). Opposite to the "protected" labor market. This is different from categorizing the market as a primary market (jobs without subsidies) and secondary market (subsidized jobs on the open or protected market).

Natural support

Support provided directly by the co-workers and other persons at the workplaces. They help the disadvantaged workers to manage their tasks and related activities without the support of any external or special worker.

Public offer

Offer of the services distributed and published by the provider via various channels (flyers, web site, etc.).

Career advisory services

Support aimed at the development of the person's ability to ascertain, achieve, adapt or modify his/her aims in long-term and short-term horizon³. Includes vocational advisory, evaluation of the personal abilities, skills and qualifications.

Social inclusion

Inclusion into the mainstream society and provision of opportunity to educate, work and participate in the social life. In connection with supported employment, the social inclusion means integration into the work team via contacts with co-workers and/or customers.

Direct and indirect occupation-related skills

Direct occupation-related skills are the skills expected by the employer, however not related to the job description (e.g. ability to change the clothes, pick up the wage, etc.).

Indirect occupation-related skills are the skills enabling a user to attend the employment (e.g. to be on time at the workplace, to wear proper clothes considering the weather, to be able to use the public transport, etc.).

Support

Resources and strategies enforcing the interests of people, providing them with access to resources, information and relationship networks in general work and life environments, and fostering their independency, productivity and social inclusion⁴. In this document, the support shall mean the support provided within supported employment, unless stated otherwise.

Follow-up services

Services supporting the applicants/workers in various areas of their life, e.g. living, leisure time, etc. Types of the follow-up service include personal assistance, supported living, as well as other public services such as health care, education and other Employment Support Policy tools.

³ Based on the definition in Kariérové poradenství pro život (Carrier Advisory for Life). NVF 2002 Nilssona P., Akerblom, P.

⁴ Adapted from Mental Retardation: Definition, Classification and Systems of Support. 9th Ed. American Association on Mental Retardation)

Professional development

Lifelong development of direct and indirect occupation-related skills and knowledge that affect the importance of work for a person.

System

Elaborated and planned sequence of routine actions carried out in defined situations and leading to defined results. In the Standards: system for assessing the intensity of the necessary support (Criterion 1.1); system for obtaining a general view of services and other resources available (Criterion 5.2); system for searching a form of support that, to the maximum extent, corresponds with the worksite environment (Criterion 6.1); system of applicant/workers' active participation support (Criterion 8.1); and system to ascertain employers' needs (Criterion 9.1).

Resources

Institutions, persons, tools, etc. allowing a person to achieve defined aims. Resources can be divided into formal resources whose primary purpose is to provide services in the defined area (authorities, schools, consultancy services, etc.), and informal resources based on personal contacts (friends, colleagues, family, etc.).

Individual plans

One or more documents describing the aims of the support, necessary actions and deadlines, and responsible persons. The individual plan requires ascertainment of needs and expectations of a user.