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**INCLUSIVE  
APPRENTICESHIPS**

# WP4/A5 BULGARIA CASE STUDY



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**FOSTERING INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS**

**through**

**EFFECTIVE TRAINING OF MENTORS IN WBL**

**CASE STUDY**

**BULGARIA**

## Introduction

### National Context

Work-based learning (WBL) in Bulgaria is increasingly recognised as a key component within vocational education and training (VET), especially as the country seeks stronger school-to-work transitions and closer alignment of skills with labour market needs<sup>1</sup>. Currently, WBL is considered formal part of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system, supported by a well-defined legal framework and ongoing government and EU-funded reforms.

Among all forms of WBL, Dual Training is among the most advanced ones at national level. The model was introduced in Bulgaria in 2016 and by 2022/23 encompassed about 12,000 students – roughly 7 % of initial VET students. Dual Training involves a structured alternation of practical training in a company and theoretical learning at a VET school. The current VET legal framework, updated in 2019, clearly defines the rights and obligations of all parties in the Dual Training, including employers and schools. Major improvements are underway in terms of governance, legislation and stakeholder engagement. For instance, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) notes financial support to employers who offer traineeships/apprenticeships, and a dedicated Ministry of Education project of EUR 9.2 million to support Dual VET: teacher and mentor training, equipment, employer/parent information campaigns. As of 2024, the state budget entirely covers mandatory social and health insurance for students enrolled in the Dual Training, a measure supporting employers who host apprentices for practical training.

Legal amendments in 2018 have also granted higher education institutions more flexibility to engage students in WBL, supported by EU funds for internships and competency-based programmes.

Regulatory amendments were entered into force in 2024 to update VET legislation, introduce modularisation of learning outcomes, recognition of prior learning (RPL) and more flexibility in the VET curriculum. As of 2023, 20 Sector Skills Councils have been established to strengthen links between VET providers and employers and a new Skills Policy Council is being developed (2024) to oversee the National Skills Strategy.

The system of WBL is actively expanding in Bulgaria, although significant challenges remain regarding employer involvement, quality assurance, and access across all regions and demographics. While WBL is estimated to form a “substantial part (50-70 % or more)” of upper-secondary VET programmes in Bulgaria, most of this exposure occurs in school-based settings rather than in actual employer premises. Employer engagement

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<sup>1</sup> OECD Reviews of Labour Market and Social Policies: Bulgaria 2025

remains low: less than 10 % of Bulgarian enterprises are involved in providing WBL in VET. Participation of adult learners in WBL-type or continuing training remains very weak: in 2022 fewer than 2 % of adults (25-64) took part in adult learning. Urban and economically developed regions offer far more WBL placements than rural and remote areas, limiting opportunities for many students. Concerns also exist regarding the quality of practical instruction, ensuring mentors are properly trained, and aligning outdated curricula with evolving labour market needs, including for digital and green skills.

## **The INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS Approach**

The **Inclusive Apprenticeships for Sustainable Jobs** project, funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ project **2023-1-R001-KA220-VET-000158142**, focuses on promoting social inclusion in the field of VET, raising VET's attractiveness and boosting innovation, by enhancing the outreach of and the support provided by the business involved in work-based learning (WBL) to apprentices with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds.

By equipping company mentors with the skills and knowledge to effectively support apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds, the project aims to increase employability, promote social inclusion, and address skills mismatches in the labour market.

The specific objectives of the INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS project are:

- ✓ to develop and apply in practice an innovative multilingual free of charge and open access training programme for VET company mentors across Europe on how to work with apprentices with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds, thus fostering social inclusion and improving the outreach of VET to people with disabilities, from ethnic minority, migrant or refugee background, those living in rural areas, facing socioeconomic difficulties or at risk of discrimination by changing the way work-based learning (WBL) is practiced and making it more relevant to the current and future needs of the society.
- ✓ to directly support the professional development of 120 VET company mentors from Romania, Austria and Bulgaria by equipping them with the knowledge and skills to effectively support apprentices with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds, which will have imminent impact on at least 240 such apprentices.
- ✓ to create evidential basis for the effectiveness of the INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS overall approach to raising the attractiveness of VET by making it more relevant to the needs of the whole society.
- ✓ to disseminate information about the project's progress and achievements and promote the importance and benefits from delivering apprenticeships in an inclusive and relevant manner.

To achieve the objective regarding the validation of the suitability of the INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIP approach, a comprehensive piloting process was carried out and documented through the development of a detailed piloting report. In order to capture and highlight the qualitative aspects of the piloting process, partners also developed case studies aimed at convincing other company mentors and businesses to benefit from the course developed by the project and made openly accessible. This activity further strengthened the potential for sustainability and future exploitation.

### **Training Programme and Platform**

One of the key results of the INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIP project are a bespoke innovative training programme for company mentors involved in WBL VET on how to address the specific needs of apprentices at risk of exclusion, as well as by training 120 company mentors in Romania, Bulgaria and Austria through an online open access platform.

The development and digitalisation of the INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS Training Programme for company mentors contributes to creating the basis for enhancing company mentors' competences and promoting inclusion of apprentices with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds. This approach is based on the notion that across the world, employers face the challenge of developing and retaining staff, while at the same time, more and more employers are recognising the benefits of employing persons from disadvantaged background. Workplaces that are inclusive give employers access to a wider pool of talent, leads to improvement in accessibility and workplaces for all staff, and creates a positive image of the organisation among staff and clients.

## Overview of the Training Programme

The target groups of the INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS training are company mentors in dual VET context involved in delivering the practical work experience at the workplace (referred to as "company mentors") and/or learners with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged background enrolled onto apprenticeship schemes through dual VET schemes in initial VET (referred to as "apprentices"). To ensure focus and align our approach to our specific needs and experience, the fewer opportunities and disadvantages that were targeted included:

- ✓ ethnic minority background - not limited to but with particular focus on Roma.
- ✓ refugee and/or migrant background.
- ✓ physical or mental disability.
- ✓ living in remote rural areas.
- ✓ low socioeconomic status.
- ✓ at risk of discrimination.

The Training Programme is organised in modules to cover specific themes, which are presented below.

Module #	Module title	Module topics	Learning objectives	Learning outcomes
<b>Module 1</b>	General principles of social inclusion and what the various forms of disadvantage and fewer opportunities are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is social exclusion</li> <li>• What is social inclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain social exclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe social exclusion</li> <li>• Provide examples of social exclusion</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain social inclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe social inclusion</li> <li>• Provide examples of social inclusion</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are forms of disadvantage</li> <li>• Who is a person with fewer opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explore various forms of disadvantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise disadvantage</li> <li>• Name forms of disadvantage</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain the scope of fewer opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define all forms of "fewer opportunities"</li> <li>• Describe a person who could be qualified as</li> </ul>

Module #	Module title	Module topics	Learning objectives	Learning outcomes
				“having fewer opportunities”
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General principles to ensure social inclusion when conducting apprenticeships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To introduce trainees to the general principles of social inclusion when conducting apprenticeships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss approaches to ensure inclusive apprenticeships</li> <li>• Recognise inclusive methods</li> </ul>
<b>Module 2</b>	Benefits and challenges of supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the benefits of supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged background</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain the benefits of creating a broader talent pool</li> <li>• To explain how inclusive apprenticeships could lead to increased retention rates and employee loyalty</li> <li>• To highlight the importance of applying an inclusive approach for maintaining a good company reputation and CSR</li> <li>• To show the effect of maintaining inclusive environment on the employees’ engagement and motivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine how supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged backgrounds can bring benefits to the company and the society</li> <li>• Provide examples of the benefits that supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged backgrounds could bring</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the challenges of supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged background</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain how limited access to and availability of training opportunities could impact people with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds</li> <li>• To discuss how communication barriers could affect workplace learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the challenges associated with supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged backgrounds</li> <li>• Provide examples of</li> </ul>

Module #	Module title	Module topics	Learning objectives	Learning outcomes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To highlight how the lack of networks and mentorship could challenge the apprenticeship</li> <li>• To cover the topic of stereotypes and bias in the workplace</li> <li>• To discuss how limited access to job opportunities and career progression could demotivate apprentices with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds</li> <li>• To discuss the implications of financial constraints and inadequate resources</li> <li>• To discuss the negative effect of insufficient awareness and understanding of inclusive apprenticeships</li> <li>• To describe what limited access to the workplace means for people with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds</li> <li>• To discuss legal and regulatory barriers</li> </ul>	<p>challenges and limitations associated with supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged backgrounds</p>
<p><b>Module 3</b></p>	<p>Methods and techniques to establish that an apprentice is with fewer opportunities or</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the methods and techniques for establishing if an apprentice is with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged background</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To present criteria that could be applied to establish if someone is with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged background, e.g., age, gender, background, family status, ethnic background,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify methods and techniques for establishing if an apprentice is with fewer opportunity</li> </ul>



Module #	Module title	Module topics	Learning objectives	Learning outcomes
	experiencing some form of disadvantage		physical/mental status, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To present an interview guide for face-to-face interviews/focus groups with potential apprentices</li> <li>• To present the method of grouping apprentices and employees for creating feedback loops</li> </ul>	
<b>Module 4</b>	How to develop and deliver induction programme that is tailored to apprentices with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to create a positive work environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain what positive work environment looks like</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe positive work environment</li> <li>• Compare positive and negative working environments</li> <li>• Define key aspects to be taken into consideration when planning an inclusive apprenticeship</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To introduce trainees to various methods and techniques to create positive work environment for their apprentices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define approaches for creating positive work environment</li> <li>• Plan tasks to be completed to ensure positive work environment</li> <li>• Analyse aspects that might negatively affect the apprentices' experience while in the company</li> </ul>

Module #	Module title	Module topics	Learning objectives	Learning outcomes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the role of management staff and in-company mentors during the induction phase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To clarify the different roles and responsibilities within a company hosting apprentices with regards apprentices' orientation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the roles and responsibilities of the relevant staff members during the orientation stage of the apprenticeship</li> <li>• Explain the tasks of each staff member with regards the implementation of an apprenticeship</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to develop an apprentice induction and information pack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide trainees with guidance on how to develop effective information and induction programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the components of an information programme</li> <li>• Describe the components of an induction plan</li> <li>• Conceptualise effective information and induction programme</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide trainees with useful templates and examples for developing information and induction packs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an example information and induction programme for apprentices with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged backgrounds</li> </ul>
<b>Module 5</b>	How to plan the necessary resources to support apprentices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the roles and responsibilities of different staff members during the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To introduce trainees to the roles and responsibilities of the company management, company mentor and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the roles and responsibilities of the company, company</li> </ul>

<b>Module #</b>	<b>Module title</b>	<b>Module topics</b>	<b>Learning objectives</b>	<b>Learning outcomes</b>
	with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage	apprenticeship	the apprentice during the apprenticeship	mentor and the apprentice during the apprenticeship
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to define and secure the required additional support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide guidance on how to define and secure additional support required for supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define additional support required for supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage</li> <li>• Explain effective mechanisms for securing additional support required for supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to develop an effective company training plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide trainees with guidance on how to develop an effective company training plan required for supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the key elements of an effective training plan required for supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage</li> </ul>
<b>Module 6</b>	How to establish the strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is it important to nurture the talents of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain the importance of nurturing the talents of disadvantaged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reason the importance to nurture talents</li> </ul>

<b>Module #</b>	<b>Module title</b>	<b>Module topics</b>	<b>Learning objectives</b>	<b>Learning outcomes</b>
	and nurture the talents of apprentices with fewer opportunities and disadvantaged apprentices	disadvantaged apprentices	apprentices	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to identify the strengths and talents of apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds or with fewer opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To define the steps to identify strengths and talents: understand diverse backgrounds and experience(s); assess individual potential and skills; recognize non-traditional/non-formal talent(s); create supportive environments; self-discovery and personal growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify potential strengths and talents of an apprentice with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged background</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to provide personalised support and guidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To present personalized support and guidance methods: individual learning styles and adapted training methods; how to offer mentorship and coaching; how to encourage collaboration and peer support; how to provide feedback and recognition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguish methods for providing personalized support and guidance</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to develop and enhance specific skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain how to foster self-awareness, encourage risk-taking and learning from failure, develop coping strategies, identify and create opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Propose approaches to enhance self-awareness, encourage risk-taking, develop coping strategies, identify and create opportunities</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to create networks and partnerships for inclusive apprenticeships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide guidance on how to connect apprentices with HR responsible/employers, facilitate access to job opportunities and career progression,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe how to create networks and partnerships for inclusive apprenticeships</li> </ul>

Module #	Module title	Module topics	Learning objectives	Learning outcomes
			engage with local communities and support organizations, promote diversity and inclusion initiatives within company surroundings	
<b>Module 7</b>	How to assess fewer opportunities and disadvantaged apprentices progress and results (learning outcomes) in a relevant to their background manner (taking into account the applicable standards for all but also through the perspective of their specific needs and capacity implied by their background )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to measure progress and results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To define assessment criteria and process for measuring progress and results of apprentices with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptualise effective assessment criteria and process for measuring progress and results of apprentices with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to conduct personalised assessment that is aligned to apprentices' specific needs and background</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain personalised assessment that is aligned to apprentices' specific needs and background</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe effective methods for conducting personalised assessment that is aligned to apprentices' specific needs and background</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to provide feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide trainees with guidance on how to provide feedback to apprentices with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe effective ways for providing feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Module 8</b>	On-the job support depending on the forms of disadvantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to develop specific on-the-job support plans depending on the type of disadvantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide guidance on how to develop customized on-the-job support plans (to consider the key forms of disadvantage, e.g., ethnic minority, low economic status,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the key elements of an effective on-the-job support plan</li> </ul>

<b>Module #</b>	<b>Module title</b>	<b>Module topics</b>	<b>Learning objectives</b>	<b>Learning outcomes</b>
			physical disability, language barriers, etc.)	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to implement an on-the-job support plan depending on the type of disadvantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide guidance on how to implement (incl. monitoring and follow-up) customized on-the-job support plans (to consider the key forms of disadvantage, e.g., ethnic minority, low economic status, physical disability, language barriers, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptualise a on-the-job support plan</li> </ul>
<b>Module 9</b>	Additional support to develop work-appropriate behaviour and life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to create and monitor a Wellness Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain the importance of nurturing wellbeing and life skills among apprentices with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged backgrounds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define approaches to boost apprentices' wellbeing and life skills</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to foster work-appropriate behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide trainees with guidelines on how to define what work-appropriate behaviour is and ensure that apprentices comply with the set norms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give examples of work-appropriate behaviour and define methods to achieve compliance</li> </ul>
<b>Module 10</b>	Measures and support to directly boost fewer opportunities and disadvantaged apprentices' employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to develop apprentices' soft skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To present methods for boosting apprentices' communication and interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence and empathy, leadership and decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest practices that will enhance apprentices' soft skills</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to develop apprentices' workplace skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To present methods for boosting apprentices' professionalism and work ethic, time management and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest practices that will enhance apprentices' workplace skills</li> </ul>

Module #	Module title	Module topics	Learning objectives	Learning outcomes
			organization, teamwork and collaboration, problem-solving and critical thinking	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to support apprentices in career planning and orientation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide trainees with guidelines on how to support apprentices with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage in their continuous professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give examples of career guidance practices that could be applied during the apprenticeship</li> </ul>
<b>Module 11</b>	Social enrichment activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are social enrichment activities and why are these important</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To explain the different types of social enrichment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the importance of conducting social enrichment activities at the workplace</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to create social enrichment activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To introduce trainees to social enrichment activities that can be performed during the apprenticeship, i.e., Cultural and Diversity Awareness (cultural events, diversity training and workshop, cultural exchange and dialogue); Community Engagement (volunteering opportunities in local organizations, community groups on social projects, community events and celebrations); Personal Development and Wellness (access to mental health resources and support, mindfulness)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give examples of social enrichment activities that can be performed within the workplace</li> </ul>

<b>Module #</b>	<b>Module title</b>	<b>Module topics</b>	<b>Learning objectives</b>	<b>Learning outcomes</b>
			and relaxation activities, personal growth workshops and seminars); Networking and Social Events (professional networking events, social gatherings, industry conferences and workshops)	
<b>Module 12</b>	Advocacy (promoting success stories, sharing experience with peers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to create case studies and success stories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide guidelines on how to create case studies and success stories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illustrate a good practice example</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to carry out peer learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain peer learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret peer learning</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to promote and disseminate good practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To outline effective promotion and dissemination strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify effective promotion and dissemination activities, methods and channels</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to target the right audiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide guidelines on how to identify and target the right audiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify relevant audiences</li> </ul>



## Overview of the Online Platform

The INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS project developed a training programme for company mentors involved in Work Based Learning (WBL) on how to work with apprentices with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The programme was developed to be undertaken as a distance learning self-paced course, openly accessible through a dedicated online platform <https://inclusive-apprenticeships.eu/inclusive-courses/>.

The course has a total duration of 24 hours with a completion time window of maximum 2 months.

The Inclusive Apprenticeships e-learning platform is multilingual and provides open access to the training programme. It allows for providing the course in an interactive manner.

The platform has functionalities for:

- registration
- progress monitoring
- redirection to tests
- activities
- additional reading list

The platform offers 12 modules covering social inclusion, learner support, and mentor skills development. The learning process involves watching videos, reading guides and downloading training materials as trainees progress.

Users can check their knowledge before they begin the course in order to see whether and where they have competence gaps, as well as evaluate their progress and reflect on what they have learned.

Upon completion, the platform generates a certificate to support users' professional development portfolio.

The platform also allows for trainees to revisit or refresh their knowledge any time after completion of the course.

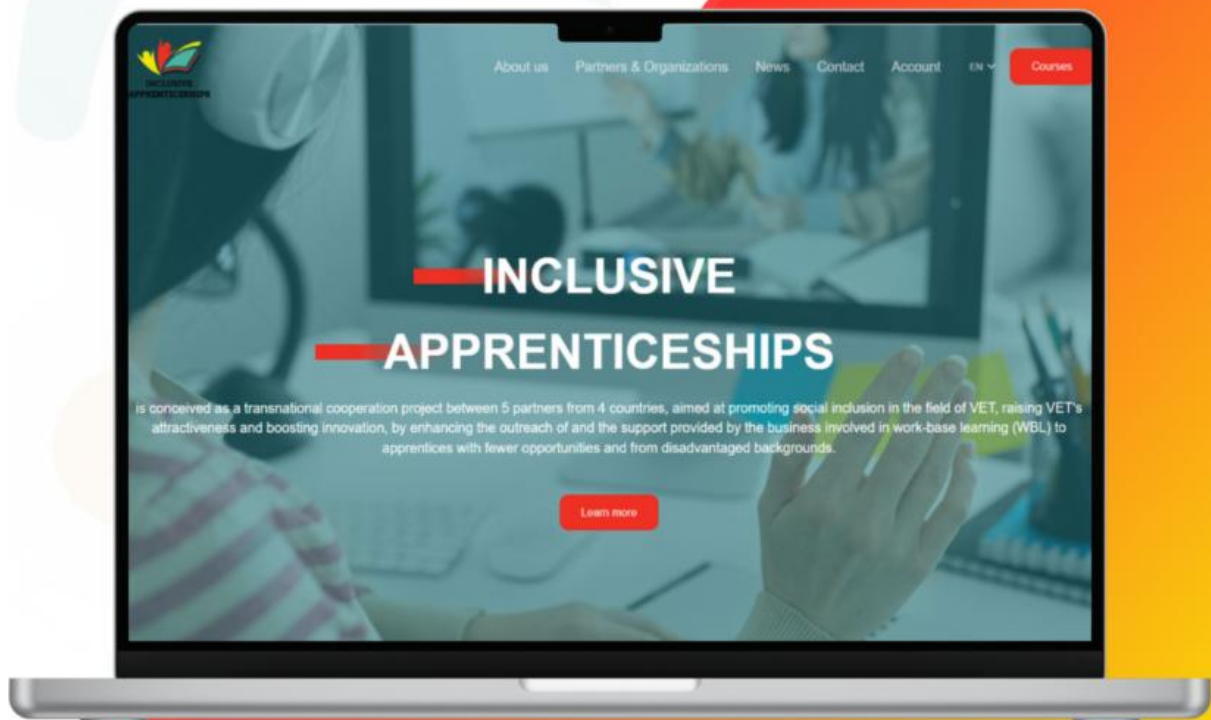


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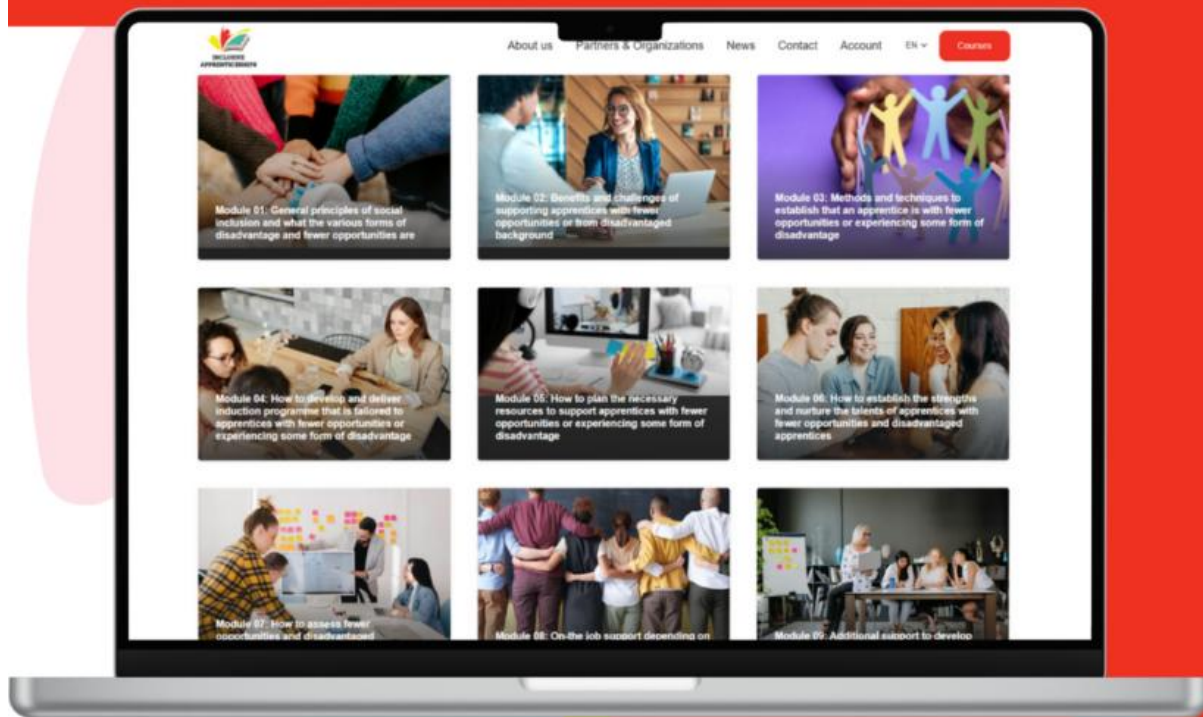
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## Overview of the Piloting Process

The current case study is developed based on the pilot sessions conducted in Bulgaria and highlights success stories from those who undertook the course. It presents the effectiveness of our overall approach to raising the attractiveness of VET by making it more relevant to the needs of the whole society.

Moreover, it summarises the piloting process in Bulgaria, emphasises key milestones during the training process and highlights the before and after competence levels of the mentors who undertook the course, by presenting the statistics from the self-evaluation questionnaires.

The piloting in Bulgaria was conducted in the period August and September 2025. The target was at least 30 trainees to register and undertake the Bulgarian version of the training course. However, the actual trainees that enrolled on the course were, as shown below, much higher:

Module	Views	Enrolments
1	62	76
2	155	69
3	124	65
4	169	65
5	141	63
6	173	69
7	120	70
8	113	70
9	129	68
10	120	68
11	107	68
12	112	72

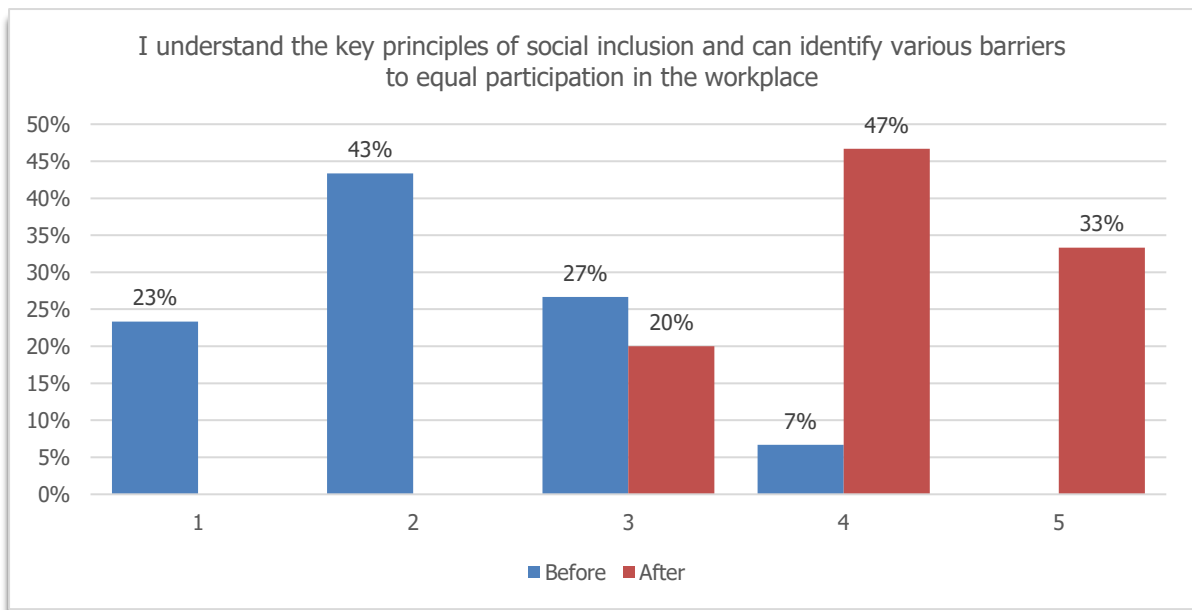
## Key Success Indicators & Impact

During the piloting of the training programme, trainees were asked to complete a questionnaire to assess their knowledge and skills to effectively support apprentices with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds prior and after undertaking the training course.

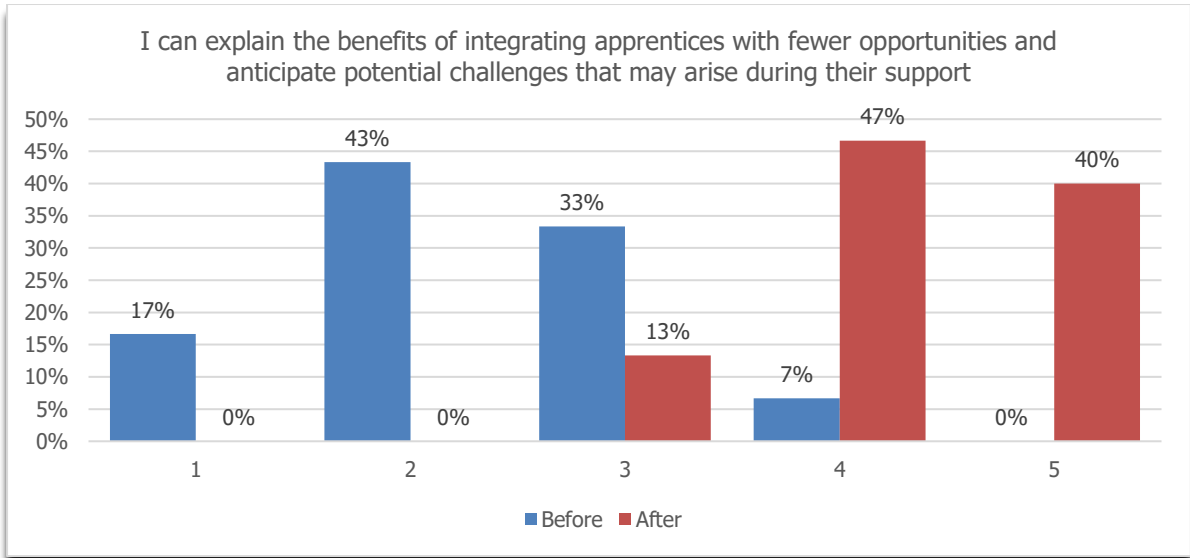
Each question was evaluated on the scale 1 to 5, where 1 = *Not confident at all*; 2 = *Somehow confident*; 3 = *Confident*, 4 = *More confident*; and 5 = *Fully confident*.

The results from the questionnaires are summarised below.

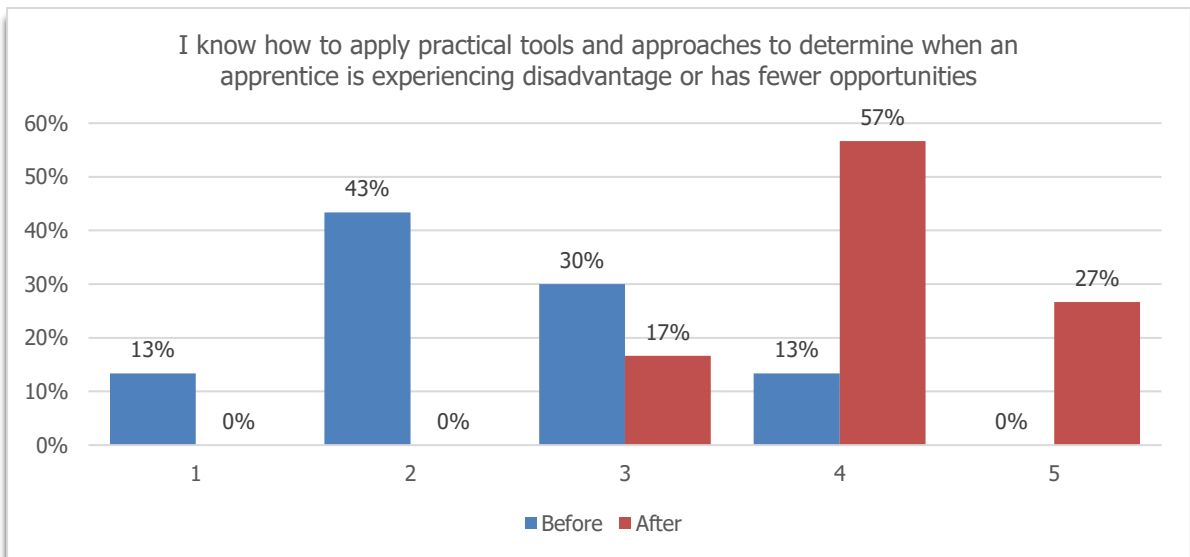
Regarding understanding the key principles of social inclusion and can identify various barriers to equal participation in the workplace, as shown in the graph below, prior to undertaking the training, the majority of the trainees (66%) stated that they are not confident or somehow confident. However, after undertaking the training, their confidence grew, as 47% of respondents stated that they are more confident and 33% stated that they are fully confident.



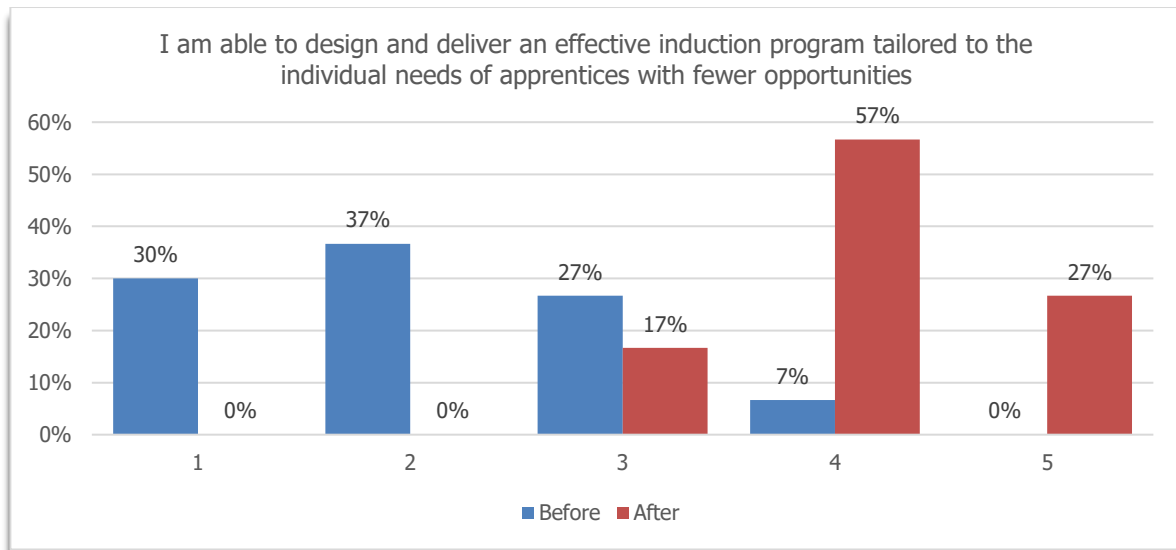
On the question, can they explain the benefits of integrating apprentices with fewer opportunities and anticipate potential challenges that may arise during their support, as shown in the graph below, prior to the training only 7% were more confident and majority of the trainees (43%) were somehow confident. After undertaking the training, 40% were fully confident in explaining the benefits of integrating apprentices with fewer opportunities and anticipate potential challenges that may arise during their support.



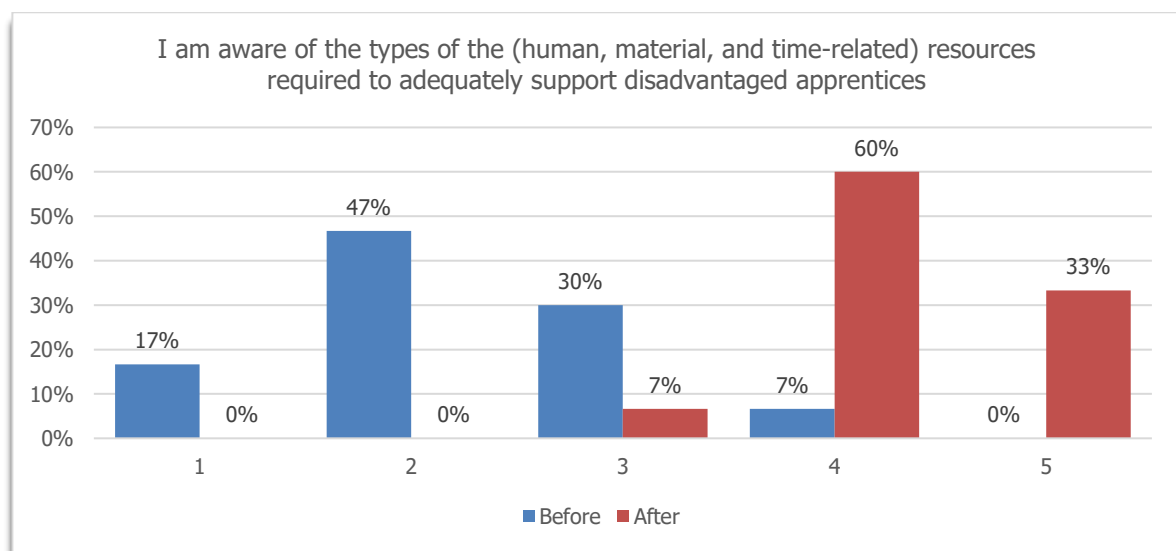
Prior to the training, most of the trainees (53%) were not very confident in applying practical tools and approaches to determine when an apprentice is experiencing disadvantage or has fewer opportunities. However, after the training, 57% were more confident and 27% fully confident.



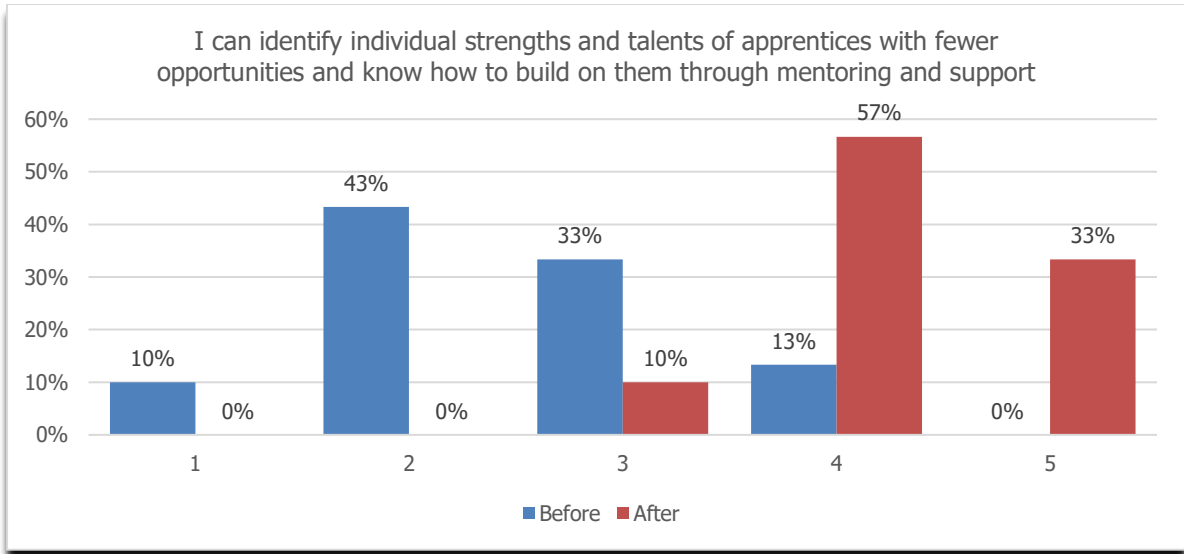
Following the training, as shown in the graph below, 84% of the trainees feel more confident or fully confident in being able to design and deliver an effective induction program tailored to the individual needs of apprentices with fewer opportunities.



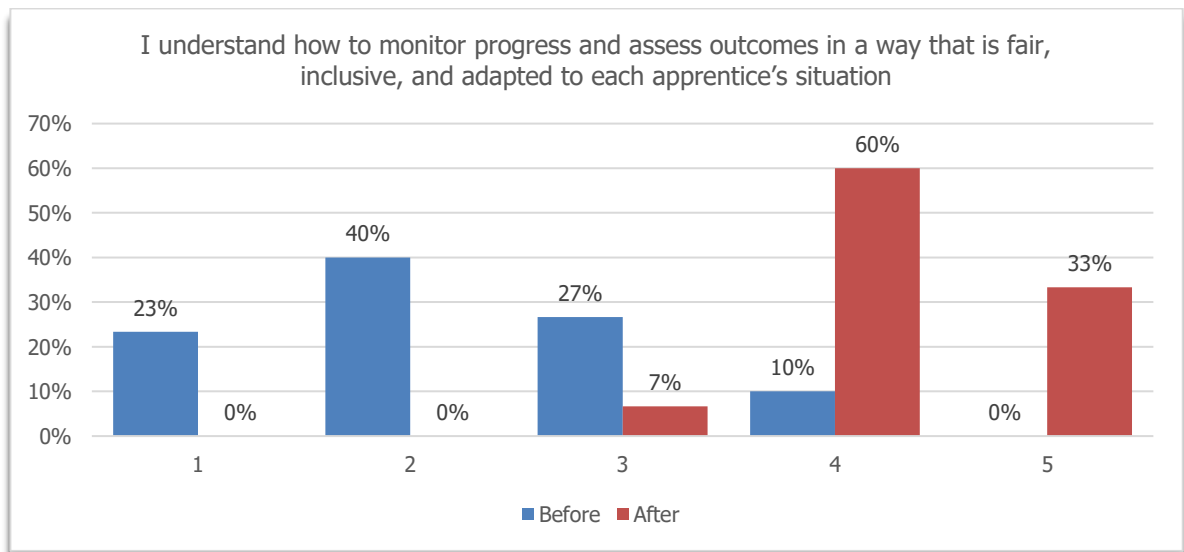
A positive change is also observed regarding the respondents' awareness of the types of the (human, material, and time-related) resources required to adequately support disadvantaged apprentices. As shown in the graph below, their confidence grew from 64% not been confident at all or somehow confident to 93% becoming more confident or fully confident in the types of the (human, material, and time-related) resources required to adequately support disadvantaged apprentices.



After undertaking the training, 90% of the trainees feel more confident or fully confident that they can identify individual strengths and talents of apprentices with fewer opportunities and know how to build on them through mentoring and support, which is significant improvement compared to their confidence prior to undertaking the training (see graph below).

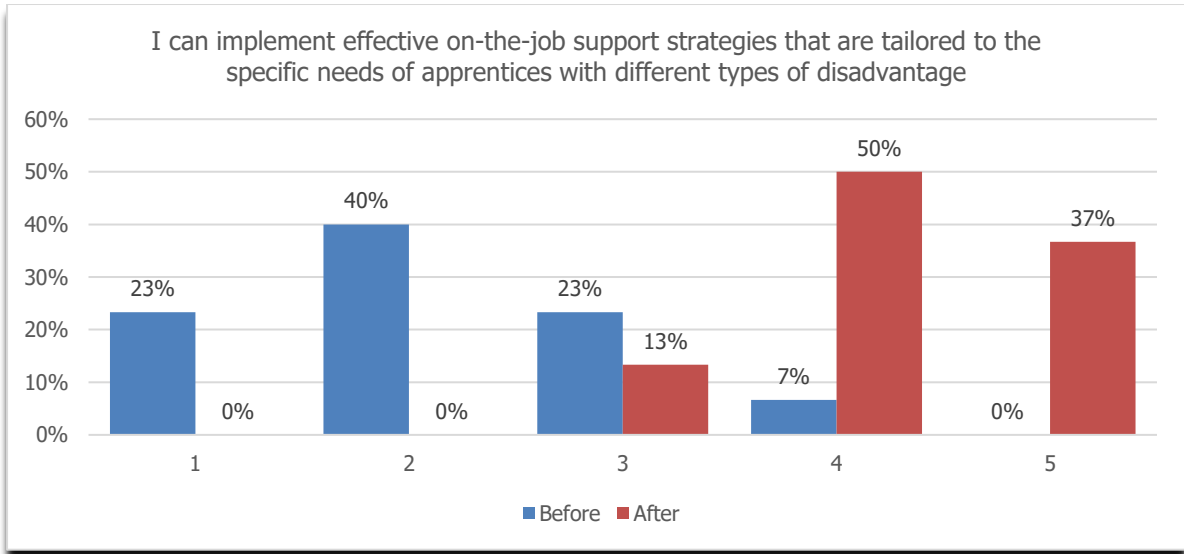


Significant progress is also demonstrated regarding participants' understanding how to monitor progress and assess outcomes in a way that is fair, inclusive, and adapted to each apprentice's situation. As shown in the graph below, 23% and 40% of the respondents stated that they were either not confident or somehow confident to monitor progress and assess outcomes in a way that is fair, inclusive, and adapted to each apprentice's situation. After the training they build strong confidence, as 60% and 33% were more confident and fully confident, which is a great achievement.

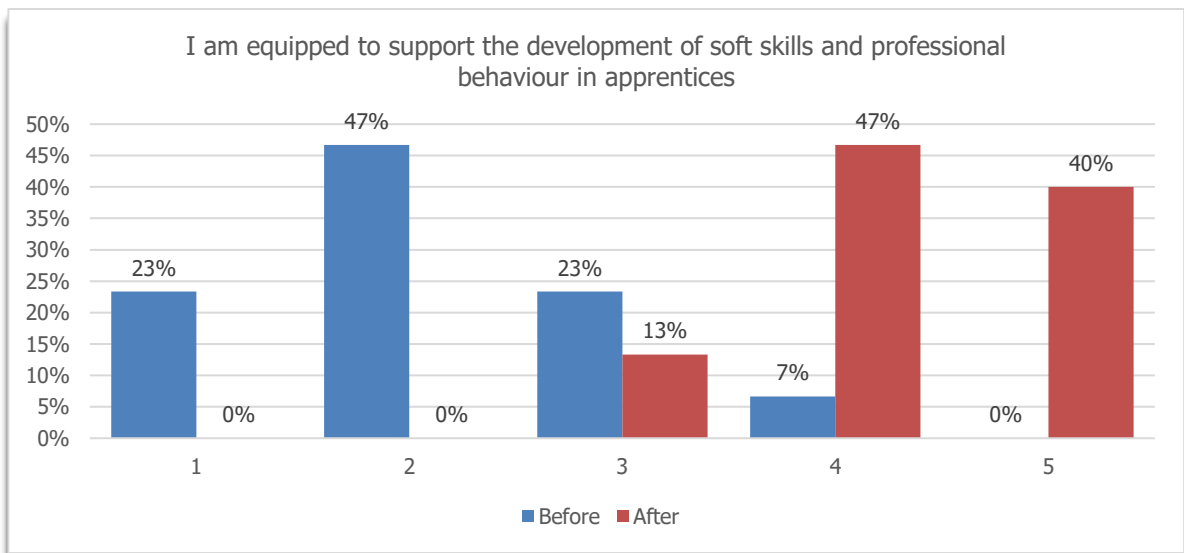


After the training 87% feel confident that they can implement effective on-the-job support strategies that are tailored to the specific needs of apprentices with different types of disadvantage due to the training received (see graph below).

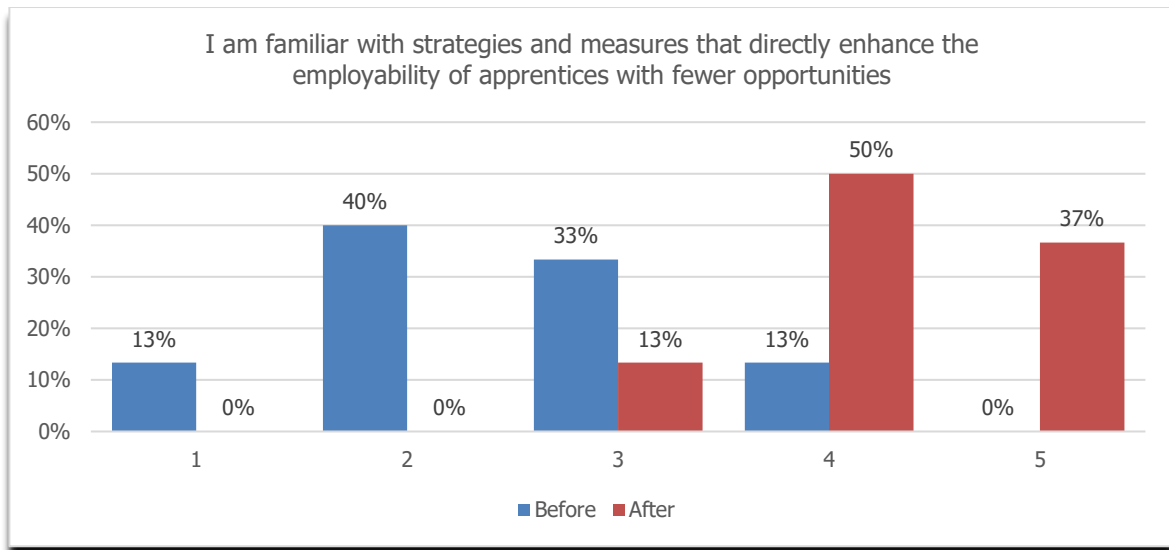




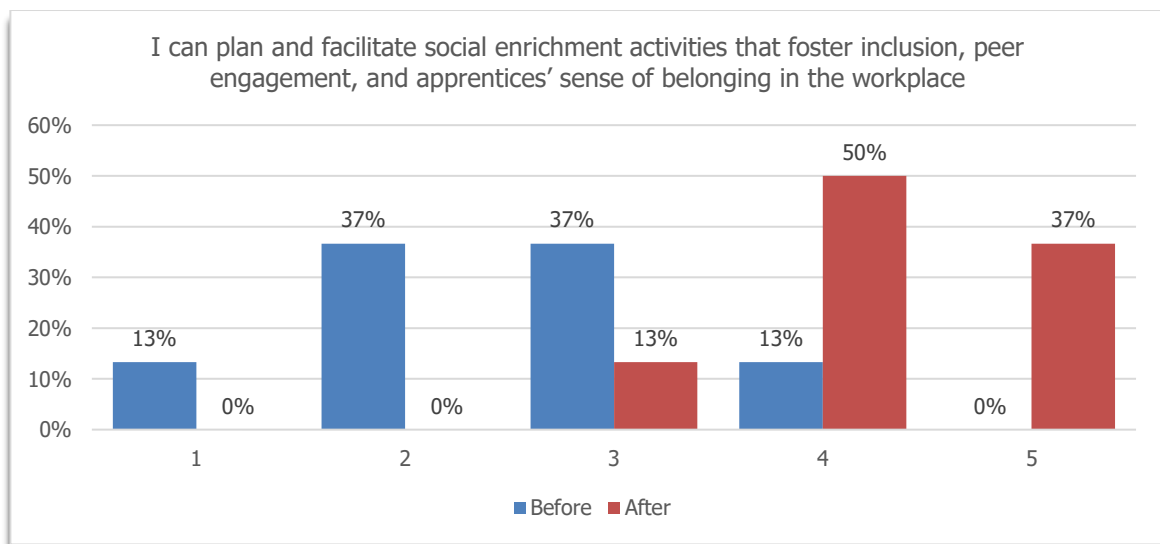
Prior to the training, trainees felt that they are not well equipped to support the development of soft skills and professional behaviour in apprentices. However, the online training gave them the required knowledge and skills to feel well equipped to support the development of soft skills and professional behaviour in apprentices (see graph below).



Trainees claimed that they become familiar with strategies and measures that directly enhance the employability of apprentices with fewer opportunities, as a result of the training. Prior to undertaking the training, no participant claimed to have full confidence in the matter. However, after the training, 37% become fully confident and 50% more confident (see graph below)

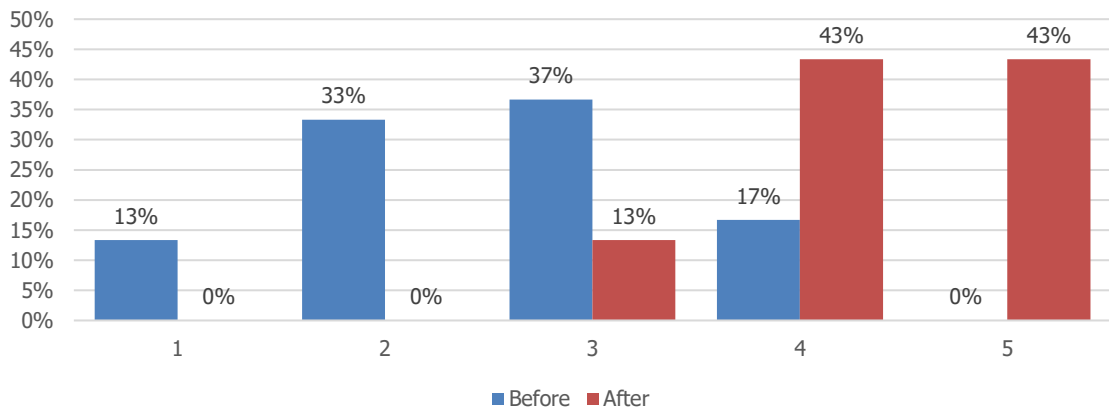


As illustrated in the graph below, 37% of the respondents feel fully confident that they can plan and facilitate social enrichment activities that foster inclusion, peer engagement, and apprentices' sense of belonging in the workplace, as a result of undertaking the training, whereas, no respondent claimed this before the training.



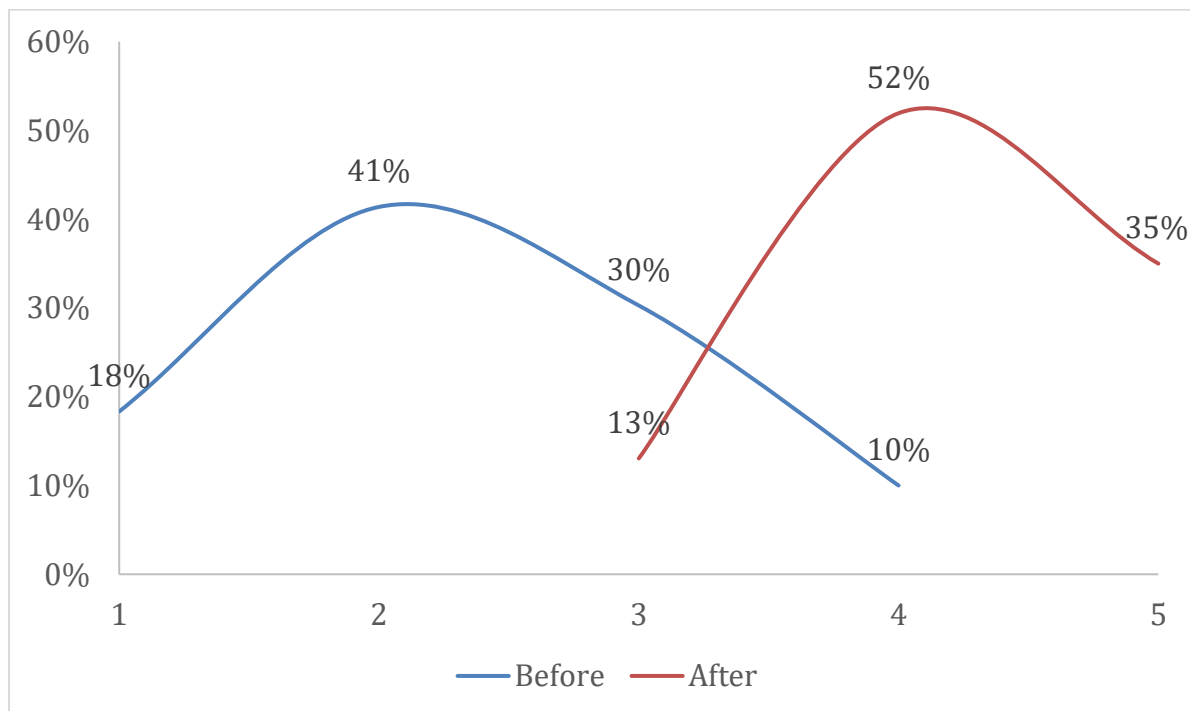
Following the online course, 83% of the respondents feel that they know how to advocate for inclusive practices by promoting success stories and exchanging experiences with colleagues and stakeholders, which is significant improvement to the 46% feeling not confident or somehow confident, prior to undertaking the course (see graph below).

I know how to advocate for inclusive practices by promoting success stories and exchanging experiences with colleagues and stakeholders



## Lessons Learned & Final Reflections

As shown in the graph below, overall, before the training, 18% of the trainees stated that they are not confident at all, 41% stated that they are somehow confident and 30% stated that they are confident about knowledge and skills to effectively support apprentices with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, after the training their confidence grew significantly, as 87% of the trainees stated that they are either more confident or fully confident in effectively supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities, which is extremely encouraging and positive.



To summarise, as a result of undertaking the training, trainees have the knowledge and skills to:

- ✓ Understand the key principles of social inclusion and can identify various barriers to equal participation in the workplace.
- ✓ Explain the benefits of integrating apprentices with fewer opportunities and anticipate potential challenges that may arise during their support.
- ✓ Know how to apply practical tools and approaches to determine when an apprentice is experiencing disadvantage or has fewer opportunities.
- ✓ Be able to design and deliver an effective induction program tailored to the individual needs of apprentices with fewer opportunities.

- ✓ Be aware of the types of the (human, material, and time-related) resources required to adequately support disadvantaged apprentices
- ✓ Identify individual strengths and talents of apprentices with fewer opportunities and know how to build on them through mentoring and support.
- ✓ Understand how to monitor progress and assess outcomes in a way that is fair, inclusive, and adapted to each apprentice's situation.
- ✓ Implement effective on-the-job support strategies that are tailored to the specific needs of apprentices with different types of disadvantage.
- ✓ Support the development of soft skills and professional behaviour in apprentices.
- ✓ Be familiar with strategies and measures that directly enhance the employability of apprentices with fewer opportunities.
- ✓ Plan and facilitate social enrichment activities that foster inclusion, peer engagement, and apprentices' sense of belonging in the workplace.
- ✓ Know how to advocate for inclusive practices by promoting success stories and exchanging experiences with colleagues and stakeholders.

The piloting of the Inclusive Apprenticeships training course has demonstrated that it increases employability, promotes social inclusion, and addresses skills mismatches in the labour market, as it equipped company mentors with the skills and knowledge to effectively support apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds, by promoting social inclusion in the field of VET, raising VET's attractiveness and boosting innovation through enhancing the outreach of and the support provided by the business involved in work-based learning (WBL) to apprentices with fewer opportunities and from disadvantaged backgrounds.



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## **INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS**

