

ASSOCIATION
FOR SUPPORTED
EMPLOYMENT
EUROPE



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2025**

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

Karen Warson,
President
Association for Supported Employment Europe (ASEE)



“

2025 has been a pivotal year for the Association of Supported Employment Europe (ASEE), defined by consolidation, strategic progress, and positioning for future growth. We have strengthened our governance, advanced the Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF), and contributed to major European initiatives, such as the SUPPORT Project led by EASPD. At the same time, we secured significant operating funding from the European Commission (ESF+), which provides a stable foundation for the years ahead.

These achievements reflect the collective commitment of our members and partners to promoting high-quality Supported Employment across Europe. As we move into 2026, our focus will be on implementation, capacity building, and ensuring that our work translates into tangible outcomes for people with disabilities and all disadvantaged groups to be empowered to fully participate in the open labour market.

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Overview

In 2025 the Association for Supported Employment Europe (ASEE) was marked by organisational consolidation, project development, and a strengthening of its European collaborations. Key efforts focused on governance establishment, the advancement of the Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF), and preparation for large-scale EU-funded activities.

1. Governance and Organisational Development

ASEE operated throughout 2025 with five full-member board meetings while transitioning toward a formalised more efficient and effective governance structure. At the Annual General Meeting, members unanimously elected:

- Karen Warson (President)
- David Stenning (Treasurer)
- Edyth Dunlop (Secretary)
- Kaija Ray, Maria Cabré, Annette Jönnervik Holmblad (Vice-Presidents)

Recruitment planning for a new secretariat progressed, aligned with anticipated European Commission operating funding. Preparatory work included defining roles and organisational capacity, with recruitment expected primarily in Belgium.

A new mission statement was formally adopted:

ASEE is the lead organisation in promoting excellence in Supported Employment across Europe, providing expertise and supporting stakeholders to drive inclusive labour market participation.

2. Core Activities and Operations

Key operational activities included:

- Delivery of the SEQF workshop in Ghent (January 2025)
- Ongoing board coordination and working group engagement
- Submission of the CORE-ASEE proposal under ESF+ (DG Employment)
- Recruitment processes for organisational strengthening
- Transition planning toward new digital infrastructure (moving from SharePoint to European-based solutions such as OnlyOffice and Nextcloud)

3. SEQF Development and Implementation

The SEQF remained a central strategic priority. Progress in 2025 included:

- Development of manuals and supporting materials through the SEQF Working Group
- Successful delivery of a train-the-trainer programme
- Pilot implementation and first external audit (Synkroon, Belgium), with positive feedback
- Positive progress towards a potential agreement on a revised certification model combining:

Model Fidelity

Enablers

- Introduction of a star-based visual scoring system (design pending)
- Ongoing work addressed governance of certification processes, including division of roles between ASEE and national associations to mitigate conflicts of interest.
- Adoption and dissemination continued across countries, including translation and implementation work in Poland

4. Projects

SUPPORT Project

- Launched in July 2025, the SUPPORT project is a major three-year initiative involving 16 organisations across nine countries, led by EASPD.
- ASEE contributes to Work Packages 6 and 7 (ESF+, Social Innovation Initiative), focusing on the implementation of Supported Employment across eight countries (Croatia, Italy, Norway, Spain, Austria, Romania, Greece, Belgium). The aim of the SUPPORT Project is “Supported Employment for reducing long term unemployment among people with disabilities”.

Progress in 2025:

- Completion of the preparation and research phase
- Launch of an online survey across partner countries
- Planning of training activities for 2026
- A key policy concern relates to the inclusion of wage subsidies. ASEE has raised this with project leadership, emphasising the need to ensure alignment with Supported Employment principles while recognising potential use as employer incentives.

BEO Project

- The BEO (Business Engagement Odyssey) project reached its final phase in 2025, with a strong focus on consolidating learning and producing practical outputs for employers and Supported Employment providers. A key milestone was the [BEO World Café Event](#) held in Lisbon in May 2025, which brought together employers, persons with disabilities, and Supported Employment organisations from across Europe. Using a participatory methodology, the event facilitated the exchange of experiences and identification of effective practices in inclusive recruitment and employment.
- Insights from this event, alongside broader project activities, are feeding into the development of a [Good Practice Guide](#) and accompanying infographics, aimed at supporting employers in implementing inclusive workplace strategies. The Guide provides concrete examples and actionable approaches to disability inclusion, highlighting the benefits of a diverse workforce.
- Building on the outcomes of the BEO project, partners have initiated discussions on a follow-up project to further develop employer engagement and capacity-building activities. This next phase is expected to capitalise on the tools and learning generated, ensuring continuity and scaling of impact across Europe.



5. Strategic Partnerships and Policy Engagement

European Commission

- In 2025 ASEE secured its operating funding (ESF+) of approximately €500,000 annually starting January 2026, confirming its role as a recognised partner of the European Commission. This represents a significant milestone in organisational sustainability and influence.

Inclusive Labour Market Alliance (ILMA)

- As part of its partnership within the Inclusive Labour Market Alliance (ILMA), ASEE contributed to the organisation and promotion of the launch of the European Commission's study on alternative employment models for persons with disabilities. This online event, held on 21 May 2025, presented key findings from the study conducted by Empirica and Sozialhelden, highlighting definitions, regulatory frameworks, and practical applications of alternative employment models across Europe.
- The study forms part of the broader EU Disability Employment Package and addresses the persistent employment gap between persons with and without disabilities. It provides evidence-based analysis and policy recommendations aimed at improving access to quality employment within the open labour market. ASEE's involvement ensured that Supported Employment was appropriately positioned within this policy context, reinforcing its role as an effective, rights-based approach to labour market inclusion.
- Through ILMA, alongside partners, such as EASPD and European Disability Forum and the European Platform on Rehabilitation (EPR), ASEE continues to contribute to EU-level dialogue and policy development, strengthening the visibility and recognition of Supported Employment across Europe.

World Association for Supported Employment (WASE)

- The World Association for Supported Employment (WASE) is an international, UN-recognized non-profit established in 1995 to promote vocational integration for people with disabilities. WASE connects organizations globally to implement "Supported Employment" principles, fostering inclusive workplaces through vocational profiling, job matching, and ongoing support for both employees and employers.
- In 2025, ASEE played an active role within the governance structures of the WASE, contributing to strategic alignment at a global level. This included participation in an in-person board meeting held in Vienna in March, where ASEE representatives engaged in the review of key policy documents and organisational priorities. Discussions focused on strengthening WASE's international positioning, enhancing member engagement, and improving coordination between regional networks.
- A significant area of contribution was the exploration of digital tools to support a global community of practice. This included consideration of platforms to facilitate knowledge exchange, peer learning, and member interaction beyond formal events. ASEE contributed its European perspective, particularly in relation to structured quality frameworks, capacity building, and the role of networks in supporting implementation of Supported Employment.
- In addition, ASEE supported efforts to increase WASE's visibility and outreach, including contributions to the WASE newsletter and alignment with major international events such as the Zero Project Conference. Engagement also extended to identifying potential new board members from underrepresented regions, reinforcing WASE's objective of becoming a more globally representative and connected organisation.

Zero Project

- The Zero Project Conference 2025 (#ZeroCon25) took place from March 5–7, 2025, at the United Nations Office in Vienna, Austria, focusing on global innovations for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The conference highlighted 77 awarded solutions from 45 countries, focusing specifically on Inclusive Employment and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
- ASEE's participation in the Zero Project Conference enabled engagement with over 1,000 stakeholders globally. Key themes included Supported Employment, school-to-work transitions, employer engagement, and AI.

6. Community Initiatives

DUOday / Job Shadow Day

DuoDay/Job Shadow Day is a European-wide initiative pairing people with disabilities with professional employees for a day of job shadowing. It promotes inclusive employment by letting participants discover workplaces, observe tasks, and build confidence, while employers learn from diverse talents without hiring obligations. All kinds of employers, businesses and organisations can take part, big or small, in the private, public or non-profit sector.

ASEE continued to support DUOday initiatives across member countries. Key developments:

- Agreement on a shared European communication date
- Commitment to improved visibility and strategic positioning
- Integration as a standing agenda item for the Board
- Plans for joint training and coordination among national associations

7. Digital and Infrastructure Transition

ASEE initiated a strategic transition toward European-based digital solutions, with a clear emphasis on compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), enhanced data security, and the adoption of open-source infrastructure. This shift reflects a broader commitment to digital sovereignty and responsible data management. Following an internal review, a pilot solution combining OnlyOffice and Nextcloud was recommended to support secure collaboration, document management, and integration with existing systems. This pilot will be tested in 2026.



8. Outlook for 2026

ASEE enters 2026 with a significantly strengthened mandate, supported by European Commission operating funding and an expanded portfolio of activities. The organisation will shift from preparation and development toward implementation, delivery, and measurable impact.

Implementation phase of the SUPPORT project

The EASPD-led SUPPORT project will move into its operational phase. ASEE will play a central role in Work Packages 6 and 7, overseeing the implementation of Supported Employment across eight countries. This will include coordination with national partners, delivery of training for employers, Public Employment Services, and Supported Employment professionals, and ongoing technical support. Particular attention will be given to ensuring fidelity to the Supported Employment model, while addressing practical challenges such as the use of wage subsidies and varying levels of national experience.

ASEE Secretariat Establishment and European Commission Funding Operationalisation

Following the award of operating funding, ASEE will establish a dedicated secretariat to support its expanding activities, with recruitment of approximately four to five staff anticipated across operational management, project coordination, policy work, and communications. Building efficient internal structures, governance procedures, and financial management systems will be a priority from the outset, ensuring organisational sustainability and full compliance with EU requirements. 2026 will simultaneously mark the first full year of implementation of ASEE's partnership with the European Commission, with delivery focused on the CORE work programme submitted to DG Employment, spanning policy engagement, capacity building, and dissemination activities. Robust reporting, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms will underpin this work, ensuring accountability, demonstrating impact, and keeping ASEE's strategic objectives firmly aligned with EU priorities on inclusive employment.

Continued rollout and standardisation of SEQF

The Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF) will move into a broader implementation phase. Building on pilot experiences and training delivered in 2025, ASEE will support National Associations in conducting self-assessments, external audits, and certification processes. Further work will refine governance arrangements, clarify roles between European and national levels, and finalise tools such as scoring systems and visual identity. Expansion into additional countries, including translation and adaptation efforts, will contribute to greater standardisation of quality across Europe.

Strengthening partnerships and policy influence at EU level

ASEE will deepen its engagement with key European and International stakeholders, including the European Commission, the WASE, and networks such as the European Disability Forum. Active participation in European initiatives, studies, and events will support ASEE's role as a leading voice on Supported Employment. The organisation will also strengthen collaboration with national members to ensure coherent advocacy and increased visibility of Supported Employment as an effective model within the open labour market.

CONCLUSIONS

2025 marked a clear transition from development to consolidation for ASEE. Foundational elements, including governance structures, strategic direction, and key frameworks, have been established and validated. Entering 2026, ASEE is equipped with both the financial resources and organisational capacity to significantly scale its activities.

With stronger partnerships, secured EU funding, and active involvement in large-scale projects, ASEE is ready to increase its impact. In the coming period, the organisation will demonstrate its expertise by delivering concrete outcomes, supporting the expansion of high-quality Supported Employment practices and contributing to more inclusive labour markets across Europe.

ASSOCIATION FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT EUROPE



“ASEE is the lead organisation in promoting excellence in Supported Employment across Europe. We provide expertise, information and best practice and support stakeholders in driving policy and change to create more inclusive employment opportunities.”
(ASEE Mission Statement)

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An easy to read version of this Annual Report is also available.

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