

Be inclusive!



People with disabilities in the labour market: placement, inclusion and sustainable employment in SMEs

Akademie Klausenhof / Erasmus+: Cooperation Partnership (VET)



Imprint

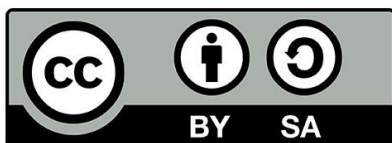
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Introduction

The current document is a brochure gathering information from all the EU partners involved in the project **BE INCLUSIVE - How Inclusion of people with disabilities works in SMEs – learning resources for job placement and employment**. Its main objective is to foster SMEs' motivation to employ people with disabilities, to deliver essential information, to support sustainable integration into the labour market. Thus, its use is aimed at mainstreaming necessary information for all the entrepreneurs, showing good practices that actually are proofs that the inclusive approach is possible also in the working contexts; at the same time, this document wants to facilitate the inclusion and recruitment of people with disabilities in the job market.

About the project

The project **Be inclusive! – How Inclusion of people with disabilities works in SMEs – learning resources for job placement and employment**, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, aims to develop and support approaches on how to improve the participation of people with disabilities in working life.

The project is aimed at:

- Motivating and raising awareness to employ and train people with disabilities.
- Providing basic information on the topic.
- Integrating people with disabilities better and more sustainably in to work processes
- Improving the placement success of people with disabilities.
- Developing and using digital, innovative learning material / exchange of experiences and examples of practice from different areas and countries.

During its 24-months duration, the project will have the following results:

- The development of the **Brochure “People with disabilities in the labour market: placement, inclusion and sustainable employment in SMEs”** with the goal to foster SMEs' motivation to employ people with disabilities, to deliver essential information, to support sustainable integration into the labour market.
- The creation of **Modular-designed learning Videos (Microlearning) for SMEs** to support the integration process of people with disabilities. They deliver concrete suggestions and practical tips.
- **Complementary Material** to the Learning Videos offering further learning possibilities for in-depth self-study and for use in practice. They are designed also for implementation in trainings in the field of Inclusion and labour market.

The partnership of the project is made by 8 partners from different European countries.

Partners



Akademie Klausenhof, Germany



Die Berater, Austria



Izobraževalni center Geoss, Slovenia



Centro per lo Sviluppo Creativo Danilo Dolci - Ente del Terzo Settore, Italy



Research Innovation and Development Lab, Greece



European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities, Belgium



SUSTENTO, Latvia



Travail.Suisse Formation, Switzerland

About this brochure

This document consists of four key parts:

1. **National Context introduction**, which allows to have an overview of each national context of the 8 countries involved.
2. **Policies**, identifying the main policy approach in each partner country.
3. **Needs**, specifying the different needs at national level both for people with disabilities and SMEs.
4. **Best Practices**: lessons learned coming from the involved partner countries on inclusion in SMEs

By gathering national researches from 8 countries provided by project partners from Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Italy, Greece, Belgium, Latvia and Switzerland, this document gives an overview of the current situation of persons with disabilities in the labour market at European level. As it will be shown in the following pages, the document will give insights and define national frameworks, thus being a good first step on that area where SMEs and people with disabilities meet each other.

Methodology

The current work is a development of several national data provided by each partner: all of them have received a template in order to gather information under specific topics as well as identifying local good practices which can be an inspiration for SMEs in recruiting and employing people with disabilities. In some cases, short interviews were carried out in order to understand the needs of the target groups and have a voice in the general landscape presented here. CSC Danilo Dolci took care of summarizing the information and presented the current result.

Disclaimer: EASPD is presenting a European perspective, not the Belgium national context.

Short Foreword - Employment and people with disabilities: rights and wellbeing to be guaranteed

According to the Article 27¹ of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities² the right to work and employment is a fundamental right.

Nevertheless, it is also far from being a reality for millions of people with disabilities who want to work.

Across the EU, people with disabilities are much less likely to be employed than people without disabilities. The latest available EU-wide data is from 2019 and shows that **people with disabilities in the EU are 24.4 percentage points less likely to be employed than people without disabilities**. Only 50.8 % of people with disabilities are employed, compared to 75 % of people without disabilities. **The situation is even worse for women with disabilities. On average, only 48.3% of them have a job**. The figures are even lower when considering full-time employment: only 20.6% of women with disabilities and 28.5% of men with disabilities work full-time. Among those most affected are people with psychosocial disabilities and those with intellectual disabilities.

Obstacles to quality employment add to the problem of poverty and social exclusion of people with disabilities. The latest Eurostat data at European level show that 29.7 % of all people with disabilities in the EU live in poverty. For sure, this is a very complex topic, which is furthermore complicated by the different policies at national level. However, good practices at all levels give hope in some specific initiative, where training and education are crucial in this process towards guaranteeing the rights for all.

Some coordinates

The topic of people with disabilities is a wide one, which is always necessary to be adapted to the different contexts and realities taken into consideration. Especially when we talk about the topic of employment, each national context is different and it has a variety of declinations. Thus, before going into details, it is better to have clear common definition and understanding on the main concepts at the basis.

At whom do we refer when we talk about people with disabilities?

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (CRPD, 2006, A/RES/61/106)³ defines persons with disabilities "those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others".

¹ Article 27 - Work and employment <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities#27>

² Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

³ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [A/RES/61/106] : Annex II Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/resources/handbook-for-parliamentarians/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with>

Starting from this definition, it is important also to understand what inclusion means, since it is a crucial feature on the topics of this current document.

Inclusion can be defined as “the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities and members of other minority groups”. The Be inclusive! project refers to people who have a congenital or acquired (through illness or accident) physical or mental limitation. Not included are all limitations that are not physically indicated (poverty, migration, family status, general age, etc.).

Last but not least, another key term which is at the core of this document is SME – that is an acronym for Small & medium-sized enterprises. The European Commission defines micro, small and medium-sized enterprises as “any entity engaged in an economic activity, irrespective of its legal form. This includes, in particular, self-employed persons and family businesses engaged in craft or other activities, and partnerships or associations regularly engaged in an economic activity⁴”. Specifically, for each defined type of enterprise, the following definitions are foreseen, based on staff headcount and financial ceilings:

1. The category of **micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)** is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.
2. Within the SME category, a **small enterprise** is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 50 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 10 million.
3. Within the SME category, a **microenterprise** is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 10 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 2 million.

After defining the key terms, in the following pages the topics of employment of people with disabilities in SMEs will be deepened, focusing on the differences among project partner countries.

Employment and inclusion in SMEs of people with disabilities in Europe

In recent years, the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market has become an important objective for the European Union (EU) and its Member States, with various measures introduced to support this aim. However, the actual labour market situation of people with disabilities has improved only slightly and the COVID-19 pandemic and its socioeconomic impact in the EU, disrupted the growth of labour demand in most countries but also presented new opportunities through the expansion of e-learning and telework.

⁴ Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (Text with EEA relevance) (notified under document number C (2003) 1422)

According to data and figures provided by Eurostat, it is estimated that in 2022, around 101 million people in the EU have some form of disability, representing 1 in 4 adults.⁵ The likelihood of people to develop some form of disability increases with age, and the potentiality of an increase in the number of persons with disabilities in the EU is significantly high due to the general trend of an ageing population.

Unemployment rates are consistently higher among people with disabilities, and many face long-term unemployment or inactivity, leading to higher risks of poverty. In 2019, 16% of the working-age population in the EU had a disability, with significant variations between Member States. Furthermore, 49.4% of those aged 20-64 with disabilities were not working, in comparison with the 25% of unemployed persons without disabilities.⁶

When comparing the figures from 2012 (45.5%) to 2020 (50.8%), there has been a significant change in the participation of people with disabilities in the workforce, but the difference is still very wide⁷. The slow growth in the last decade could be related to both the economic and financial crisis in 2008, which directly affected employment rates and resulted in public budgets cut with socio-political consequences, and of course the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted all the EU economies at multiple levels.

Although most people with disabilities can work, they require additional support, training, reasonable accommodation and welfare services to be able to enter, stay or return to the labour market. However, people with disabilities have traditionally suffered from discrimination in the labour market through multiple forms. Discrimination based on disability have been reported, primarily persons with severe intellectual disabilities tending not to work in the open labour market but rather in forms of protected employment, including sheltered employment. In the same vein, men with disabilities are also more less likely to be affected by employment rates than women with disabilities⁸. Additionally, persons with disabilities who are employed are still too often paid less or the equivalent of the minimum wage.

To work on these challenges, frameworks and initiatives have been adopted to improve the situation of employment for persons with disabilities and the transition to models in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD)⁹. Essentially, the European Union and its Member States are committed to the full realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities following the ratification of the UN CRPD. Inclusive and fair employment is essentially captured by Article 27 of the UN CRPD, which is not intended at coinciding new or exclusive rights for persons with disabilities, but rather reaffirm the existing rights and promote their opportunities to participate in all aspects of social and political life, including employment on an equal basis with others.

To this end, the European Commission adopted in 2022 the 'Employment Disability Package', one of the seven flagship initiatives of the 'Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030'. This adopted tool is specifically

⁵ Council of the European Union. (2022). Infographic - Disability in the EU: facts and figures. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/disability-eufacts-figures/>

⁶ European Parliament. (2020). Employment and Disability in the European Union. Retrieved: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/651932/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)651932_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/651932/EPRS_BRI(2020)651932_EN.pdf)

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ EASPD. (2021). *Supporting economically inactive persons with disabilities on to the labour market*. Brussels. Retrieved: <https://easpd.eu/resources-detail/study-on-supporting-economically-inactive-persons-with-disabilities-on-to-the-labour-market/>

⁹ EASPD. (2022) *Fostering Employment through Sheltered Workshops: Reality, Trends and Next Steps*. Brussels. Retrieved: <https://easpd.eu/publications-detail/fostering-employment-through-sheltered-workshops-reality-trends-and-next-steps/>

dedicated to improving the labour market outcomes of persons with disabilities. Additionally, it also contributes to the realisation of EU objectives, such as the European Pillars of Social Rights. More specifically, those targets related to reaching at least 78% of population in working age (20 to 64) in employment, will require increasing the employment rate of persons with disabilities and reducing the employment gap with persons without disabilities¹⁰.

In sum, the participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market remains a significant challenge in the EU, with persistent employment gaps, higher unemployment rates, and various barriers to inclusion. While progress has been made, further efforts are needed to fully implement the UN CRPD and ensure fair, open, and inclusive employment for all. The European Union and its Member States must continue to prioritise the rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities, as this not only contributes to their social and economic inclusion but also aligns with the broader objectives of the EU, such as reducing poverty, increasing employment rates and strengthening social cohesion and resilience.

Ensuring access to quality employment in the labour market is undoubtedly part of the full realisation of a person's identity and contribution to the community, as well as economic independence and social inclusion. Innovative practices are being implemented on a daily basis to ensure a disability-inclusive approach in all areas of life, including employment. Carefully designed policies can significantly increase the labour market inclusion of persons with disabilities, which is essential for fostering greater equity and accessibility in the workforce. By promoting access to quality employment, implementing innovative inclusive practices, and designing effective policies, it will be possible to advance the full economic and social inclusion of persons with disabilities in the community.

Overview on the employment of people with disabilities in all the partner countries

According to the data collected from national research there is no common approach at European level for the collection of data of people with disabilities and employment. In fact, in many countries there is no updated specific data on this type of information. For sure, their employment depends on the type or severity of the disability, but it can be seen that in many countries there are discriminating factors (gender, generation, type and degree of disability and geography) that affect this already vulnerable group. Although some countries have laws aimed at the employment of people with disabilities, statistics often show that despite the law the situation has not improved. Here below data from all the project countries are explained: a comparison by year wasn't possible to be done since each data per country follows a different timeline according to the national statistics needed. However, it can give a first overview of the national contexts involved by the project.

According to recent statistics, Germany has approximately 10.2 million people with disabilities, including 3.3 million of working age. According to the last trend, their employment is increasing and unemployment is falling. Though, they are looking for a job much longer than people without severe disabilities. 4.6% of all employees in Germany have severe disabilities. Most of them are persons with severe disabilities (86%) due to illness or an accident and are mostly older. The number of unemployed

¹⁰ European Commission. Disability Employment Package to improve labour market outcomes for persons with disabilities. Retrieved: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1597&langId=en>

people with severe disabilities has dropped to a record low of 160,000 in recent years. Though, the proportion of long-term unemployed at 43% is significantly higher than among people without disabilities (35 %) (Statistics, 2024). The situation – at least regarding the data – is different in **Austria**: in fact, the country faces challenges in gathering meaningful statistics on various aspects of the lives of people with disabilities. The Austrian Ombudsman Board has highlighted the lack of a political mandate for Statistics Austria to compile such data, indicating a gap in policy implementation (Sprajer et al., 2022, S. 134). Data from the Austrian Ministry of Social Services reveals disparities in the prevalence of disabilities across different segments of the Austrian population. While the overall impairment rate in 2015 stood at 18.4%, with an estimated 1.3 million individuals affected in private households, there were significant differences in the disability rate between employed and non-working individuals (Rubisch et al., 2017). Despite these challenges, there are signs of progress. Recent data indicates that 52.8% of people with disabilities in Austria are employed, reflecting efforts to promote workforce inclusion (Scheibengraf et al. Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, 2024). Based on a report by the Labor Market Service, in 2022, the average duration of unemployment for individuals with health-related employment barriers was 212 days, nearly double that of individuals without such limitations (AMS, 2023).

The situation in **Slovenia** can be challenging. The state often provides insufficient support, resulting in individuals living below the poverty line after they are no longer able to work. Additionally, over a third of individuals categorised as working people with disabilities struggle to secure employment opportunities. In total, there were slightly over **11,500 actively employed individuals** in enterprises (0.4% more than in the previous December), including approximately 6,000 persons with disabilities (55.8% of whom were male and 44.2% female). At the close of December 2021, a total of 155 businesses employed individuals with disabilities (SURS, 2022).

The available data from **Italy** are not similarly encouraging: out of 100 people aged 15-64 who, despite having limitations in the motor and/or sensory functions essential in daily life or intellectual or behavioural disorders, are nevertheless **able to work**, only **35.8** are employed (... , 2019). In some other reports, statistics are even worse (31.3% - Istat, 2019). To this figure there should be added **discrimination** (by gender, generation, type and degree of disability and geography): there is no data on the employment of people with disabilities in Italy that does not see women in a disadvantaged position compared to men. This is clear starting from the overall percentage of employed people: if **men** employed are **36.3%**, **women** in the same age group (15-64 years) drop to **26.7%**. In the Italian context, data suggests another discriminating element: the level of disability. It seems that the majority of the employed (61.9%) have a level of disability below 67%, 18.5% a medium level - between 67% and 79% - while only 14.2% (of the already very few employed disabled) have a severe disability, i.e. 80% or more. The Italian economic system employs fewer than 9,000 persons with disabilities of 80% or more (age group below 40 years) (FONTE).

Following our analysis, **Greece** doesn't have a positive context regarding employment data: despite the existence of legislation that defines equal rights for people with disabilities in all areas of their lives, in practice, discrimination takes place. From 2008 to 2023, unemployment rates fluctuated, with only a slight decline in 2020, reaching the 28.6% specifically for individuals with total disability. Those with partial disability faced a slightly lower rate of **19.9%**. According to the Disability Observatory in 2022, participation in the active labour force among individuals with disabilities aged 20-64 was dishearteningly low at 23.7%. Concurrently, the employment rate for individuals with severe disabilities in the same age group stood at 18.4%, marking a significant disparity of 50 points compared to the non-disabled population. These figures underscore persistent challenges in labour market inclusion and the urgent need for targeted interventions to address them (Labour Force Survey, 2022). Currently, the employment rate for disabled individuals aged 20 to 64 stands at 18.4%, with workforce participation

up to age 44 at 12.5%. In contrast, those without disabilities have a workforce participation rate of 58% (Felix, 2023). Moreover, skills deficiency is a significant barrier: an estimated 47% lacks technical or general skills, with 38% specifically lacking general skills although there's a positive trend in digital skill acquisition (52% in 2021). From a gender perspective, gender disparity persists, with men more likely to be employed than women.

As the other countries analysed up to now, **Latvia** has a defined framework to encourage the recruitment for people with disabilities. The statistics tell another story: according to data from the State Commission of Health and Work Capacity Experts in Latvia, there are currently **201,549 people with disabilities in Latvia**, constituting 10.6% of the total population. Among them, within the age group of working adults, **10.1% or 193,154 individuals** have disabilities (Social Integration State Agency of Latvia, 2021). In the last review of the year 2022 in Latvia, 52,950 people with disabilities are reported to be working, according to the official statistics provided by the Ministry of Welfare.

Finally, **Switzerland's** data are interesting: depending on the source and definition of disability, between **220,000** (disability - medical definition) and **1.8 million** (social definitions) people in Switzerland are considered disabled. Due to the various definitions of disability, these population groups differ depending on their size (number of people) and the profile (sociographic characteristics) of the people with disabilities. These groups only overlap to a limited extent. This data is based on the Federal Statistical Office, which works with the definition of the Disability Discrimination Act¹¹. According to this source, around **20 %** of the population in **Switzerland live with a disability**. Another interesting source which refers to the population taken into consideration here is the 2021 Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC), which covers people with disabilities living at home in accordance with the Gender Equality Act aged 16 and over who have a long-term health problem and are (severely or somewhat) restricted in their everyday lives¹². People with disabilities make up 22% of the total population. Almost three quarters of these people aged between 16 and 64 are in employment, often working part-time¹³.

73 % of 16 to 64-year-olds with disabilities were in the labour force (employed or looking for work) in 2021. They participate significantly less in the labour market than people without disabilities, where the labour market participation rate is **88%**. The proportion of people with **severe disabilities** in the labour force is **51%**. In terms of workload, **50%** of people with disabilities in employment work **part-time**, compared to **67%** of people with severe disabilities. In addition to participating in the primary labour market, many people with disabilities perform productive work within protected structures that are adapted to their abilities (secondary labour market).

As it is clear here, the data landscape is pretty different and sometimes the identification of the issue can change according to the “lens” - data, perspective and framework – which are used get an insight in the topic.

¹¹ In Switzerland, there 2 definitions of disability taken into consideration in the current research: according to the **Swiss Disability Insurance Act (DI)**, disability is defined as “**a total or partial inability to work that is likely to be permanent or long-lasting**” and is caused by an impairment of physical, mental or psychological health. The health impairment is either the result of a congenital defect, an illness or an accident. At the same time, according to the Disability Discrimination Act (BehiG), however, a disability is a restriction in participation in social life due to an impairment or a permanent health problem. This definition is based on a social understanding of disability, which differs from the individual/medical model. In a social understanding of disability, the social barriers that hinder a person's life are included.

¹² The SILC figures do not include children under the age of 16 or people in retirement and nursing homes or other collective households.

¹³ The data used here refers to the primary labour market. This is the regular labour market, in which the work and employment relationships of the free economy exist. In contrast, the second labour market offers sheltered jobs.

National legal provisions and SMEs obligations

When it comes to the legal provisions related to the SMEs, the context is more complex: each country has its own laws on targeted employment of people with disabilities, despite the fact that in some countries these laws sometimes are not implemented properly in the private sector.

In the following section, a short overview per country is provided. It has been decided to not proceed with a comparative approach in order to give the needed information in a easy way for future SMEs reading the document and looking for information for their own needs.

Germany

In Germany in 2016 the legislation was reformed and the Federal Participation Act (Bundesteilhabe-Gesetz) was passed. The main points are:

- Adaptation to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- A separate participation plan is created for everyone
- Establishment of advice centers
- Legal right to adequate integration support, e.g., eligible for an assistant
- Free choice of apartment (no longer the obligation to live in a dorm)
- The possibility of having your own assets (up to 50,000 euros)
- Employers get money when they hire people with disabilities

Another important legal provision was the Disability Equality Act (Gesetz zur Gleichstellung behinderter Menschen, 2002). The main points are:

- People with disabilities should be able to participate in public life on an equal footing and not be disadvantaged
- You should be able to live a self-determined life
- All public authorities and institutions should be barrier-free, use sign language, pay attention to intelligibility and easy language

The law does not include the private sector. I.e., in Germany, the accessibility obligation applies only to government agencies.

Many provisions are also regulated in the extensive Social Code (Sozialgesetzbuch SGB), which in turn consists of 15 individual books, e.g., social security, rehabilitation, child and youth welfare etc.

The situation in Germany is very diverse and complex, especially in the area of education, work and pensions for people with disabilities. The most important regulations that are laid down in various laws and funding programs are here below summarized:

- **Employers are required to employ a certain proportion of people with severe disabilities, but can pay a compensation levy (“Ausgleichsabgabe”) if they cannot or do not want to do so.** The fee is 125 euros to 320 euros per month per vacant job. The money flows into a funding program, with which e.g., aids for people with disabilities can be purchased at work. There are about 168,000 corresponding companies in Germany, of which 100,000 had to pay this compensation levy. In total, about 670 million euros are raised per year.

- Severely disabled workers have certain rights: special protection against dismissal, they can retire earlier and have their own employee representation in the company. They also have to pay less tax.
- You can get certain help to get or secure a job. This includes aids that are necessary to compensate for the disability, e.g., a car, a suitable desk etc. The employer can also get support to make the workplace barrier-free (building an elevator etc.).
- Unemployed severely disabled people receive special support: they are looked after and intensively supported by special advisors from the employment agency. Many purchases and training courses are possible so that they can start work. Employers receive money when they hire an unemployed person with a disability.

Finally, there are no special regulations in the area of people with disabilities for SMEs.

Austria

Austria has been a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities since October 2008, committing itself to the pursuit of policies promoting equality. In Austria, various institutions and regulatory bodies oversee the employment of people with disabilities. Notably, the Ministry of Social Services is responsible for implementing the Disability Employment Act (Bundesministerium für Soziales, 2024). The Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) offers support in placing people with disabilities in the labour market, providing special funding and training opportunities (Arbeitsmarkt Service Österreich, 2024). Additionally, [karriere.myAbility.jobs](https://www.karriere.myAbility.jobs) serves as an online job exchange specifically designed for jobseekers with disabilities and companies seeking skilled workers with disabilities ([karriere.myAbility.jobs](https://www.karriere.myAbility.jobs)). Additional support and assistance are also available to help individuals with disabilities integrate into the workforce. In addition to the measures mentioned above, there are programs such as Fit2work, which aim to reduce disability and prevent unemployment due to health issues at an early stage. By creating a healthy work environment, this program facilitates the reintegration of capable individuals who have been absent from work for extended periods due to illness (Arbeiterkammer, 2024).

The legal framework for disability law in Austria includes the Disability Equality Act, alongside the Federal Disability Discrimination Act and the Federal Disability Equality Act. These laws encompass crucial regulations concerning the obligation to employ people with disabilities, equalisation tax, “recognized disabilities”, disabled persons' representatives, and protection against discrimination (Bundesministerium für Soziales, 2024).

Under the Disability Employment Act, **companies with 25 or more employees in Austria are required to employ one person with a “recognized disability” for every 25 employees.** Individuals are considered to have “recognized disabilities” if their degree of disability is at least 50% (Bundesministerium für Soziales, 2024). The determination of the degree of disability follows the medical model [5]. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calls for a paradigm shift from the medical to the social model. The social model of disability calls for accessibility and an inclusive society, as disability arises from a failure to take into account the different abilities and conditions in society. The medical model, on the other hand, places responsibility for the impairment on the individual (Diversity Arts Culture).

Employers who hire “recognized disabled” individuals are exempt from certain wage contributions, including the employer's contribution, surcharge on the employer's contribution, local tax, and subway tax in Vienna (Atzenberger, Steininger).

Failure to meet the obligation to employ disabled persons results in the company paying a compensation tax per open mandatory position and month. The amount varies depending on the company's size, ranging from €320 to €477 per month and open mandatory position (Bundesministerium für Soziales, 2024). Employers can also fulfil this obligation by employing disabled workers part-time, even below the social insurance threshold (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, 2023).

For employing apprentices with “recognized disabilities” who are in training, companies receive an additional bonus equivalent to the current compensation tax from the Equalization Tax Fund (Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich, 2024 – Förderung für behinderte Menschen).

Individuals with “recognized disabilities” are entitled to special protection against dismissal after four years of employment. This includes a notice period of four weeks, with termination requiring approval from the Disabled Committee. They also receive support in their professional field, such as financial assistance, technical aids, and specialised training. Tax benefits can be claimed for disabilities with a degree of 25% or higher (Bundesministerium für Soziales, 2024).

Inclusion Promotion and Inclusion Promotion Plus schemes incentivise the employment of people with disabilities, providing financial support to companies. The wage subsidy compensates for disability-related performance limitations, while the Inclusion Promotion Plus scheme offers additional support for smaller companies (Wotke, 2023).

The Network for Vocational Assistance (NEBA – Netzwerk Berufliche Assistenz) offers a range of services for people with disabilities and companies, including vocational training assistance, personal assistance in the workplace, and job coaching (Arbeitsmarkt Service Österreich, 2024 – NEBA).

Despite these efforts, challenges persist for people with disabilities in Austria. Between 25,000 and 30,000 individuals classified as incapacitated work in workshops, where they receive pocket money instead of wages. Consequently, they lack access to certain benefits like pensions, health insurance, and labour law protection, remaining dependent on social benefits. Efforts to address these issues align with the principles outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Tritscher, Zarinfard, 2023).

Slovenia

In Slovenia, several legislative provisions are in place to guarantee the employment rights of people with disabilities. Some key laws and regulations include:

Zakon o zaposlitveni rehabilitaciji in zaposlovanju invalidov (ZZRZI) (Employment and Work of Persons with Disabilities Act): This law aims to promote the employment of people with disabilities by establishing quotas for the employment of people with disabilities in both public and private sector companies. Employers with 20 or more employees are required to ensure that at least 2% of their workforce consists of people with disabilities (Uradni list RS, št. 16/07, 87/11, 96/12 – ZPIZ-2, 98/14 in 18/21; 2021).

Anti-Discrimination Act (Zakon o varstvu pred diskriminacijo (ZVarD)): This act prohibits discrimination on various grounds, including disability, in the workplace. It ensures equal treatment and opportunities for people with disabilities in employment, training, and career advancement. (Uradni list RS, št. 33/16 in 21/18; 2018).

Social Security Act (**Zakon o socialnem varstvu - ZSV**): This legislation provides various social security benefits and support services for people with disabilities, including vocational rehabilitation, disability benefits, and other forms of assistance to facilitate their integration into the workforce. (Uradni list RS, št. 3/07, 23/07 – popr., 41/07 – popr., 61/10 – ZSVarPre, 62/10 – ZUPJS, 57/12, 39/16, 52/16 – ZPPreb-1, 15/17 – DZ, 29/17, 54/17, 21/18 – ZNOrg, 31/18 – ZOA-A, 28/19, 189/20 – ZFRO, 196/21 – ZDOsk, 82/23 in 84/23 – ZDOsk-1; 2023).

Employment Service of Slovenia Act (**Statut Zavoda Republike Slovenije za zaposlovanje**): The Employment Service of Slovenia (ZRSZ) provides employment services and support programs for job seekers, including people with disabilities. It offers vocational training, job placement assistance, and other services to help individuals find and retain employment. (Uradni list RS, št. 34/08, 58/11 in 50/12; 2012).

The **Zakon o izenačevanju možnosti invalidov (ZIMI)** discusses the importance of equalizing opportunities for people with disabilities, aiming to prevent and eliminate discrimination through various measures and ensuring their inclusion in society as full-fledged members. The field of equalizing opportunities for people with disabilities is governed by the Law on Equalizing Opportunities for People with Disabilities (ZIMI). Individuals with disabilities require more support for independent living and are often discriminated against in various aspects of life, such as dealings with different authorities and institutions, accessibility to goods and services, and public infrastructure. By prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities in various areas and implementing various measures, the goal is to create equal opportunities for them in all aspects of life, thereby contributing to the development of human potential beneficial to society as a whole. (Uradni list RS, št. 94/10, 50/14 in 32/17; 2017).

These legislative provisions play a crucial role in ensuring the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities in the Slovenian workforce. They aim to promote equal treatment, combat discrimination, and facilitate the integration of individuals with disabilities into meaningful and sustainable employment.

In Slovenia, several institutions and regulatory bodies are responsible for the regulation and supervision of the employment of people with disabilities. Some key entities include:

- Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (**Ministrstvo za delo, družino, socialne zadeve in enake možnosti**): the Ministry of Labour oversees labor policies and social affairs, including those related to the employment of people with disabilities. It formulates legislation, develops policies, and coordinates efforts to promote the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce (Uršič, 2015).
- Employment Service of Slovenia (**Zavod Republike Slovenije za zaposlovanje - ZRSZ**): the Employment Service of Slovenia is responsible for providing employment services, vocational rehabilitation, and job placement assistance to job seekers, including people with disabilities. It facilitates the integration of individuals with disabilities into the labor market and supports employers in meeting their obligations under disability employment quotas (Uršič, 2015).
- Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (**Inštitut Republike Slovenije za šolstvo - IRSVET**): the Institute for Vocational Education and Training is involved in developing vocational rehabilitation programs and training initiatives aimed at enhancing the employability of people with disabilities. It collaborates with educational institutions, employers, and other stakeholders to promote inclusive vocational education and training opportunities (Uršič, 2015).

- Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia (**Inšpektorat Republike Slovenije za delo**): the Labour Inspectorate monitors compliance with labour laws and regulations, including those related to the employment of people with disabilities. It investigates complaints of discrimination or violations of disability employment quotas and takes enforcement actions as necessary to ensure compliance (Uršič, 2015).
- **Zavod za pokojninsko in invalidsko zavarovanje Slovenije** (ZPIZ): the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia is responsible for administering disability benefits and pensions for individuals with disabilities. It provides financial support and assistance to individuals with disabilities, including those who are unable to work due to their disability, and ensures their access to social security benefits (Uršič, 2015).

These institutions and regulatory bodies work collaboratively to enforce disability employment laws, provide support services to individuals with disabilities, and promote inclusive employment practices in Slovenia. They play a vital role in ensuring the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities in the labor market and fostering greater inclusion in the workforce.

SMEs in Slovenia must adhere to specific laws and initiatives governing the employment of people with disabilities. The Employment and Work of Persons with Disabilities Act (ZIMDI) mandates that SMEs with 20 or more employees ensure that at least 2% of their workforce consists of people with disabilities. Additionally, the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities Act (ZRZI) encourages SME participation in vocational rehabilitation programs and employment initiatives for individuals with disabilities. The Employment Service of Slovenia (ZRSZ) offers support services and assistance to SMEs, including job placement and vocational training programs for individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the Anti-Discrimination Act (ZPDis) prohibits discrimination based on disability in the workplace and requires equal treatment and opportunities for employees with disabilities. By adhering to these regulations, SMEs contribute to creating inclusive workplaces and providing meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities (Uršič, 2015).

Italy

In Italy there are different laws that foresees employment of persons with disability. Their employment is governed by Law No 68 of 12 March 1999¹⁴ 'Rules for the right of persons with disabilities in the work place'.

Due to the challenges individuals with disabilities often face in accessing the labor market, Italian law mandates that employers hire a specific number of workers with disabilities. These workers must demonstrate some level of remaining work capacity, even if minimal.

The main **categories of workers with disabilities** involved in compulsory employment are:

- civil invalids of working age suffering from physical or mental impairments that lead to a reduction in working capacity of more than 45%;
- disabled persons of working age with a reduction in working capacity of more than 33%;
- persons who are blind or deafblind;

¹⁴ LEGGE 12 marzo 1999, n. 68 <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:1999-03-12;68!vig=>

- war invalids, civilian war invalids and service invalids with disabilities classified from the first to the eighth category.

Disability conditions are verified through medical examinations carried out by **medical commissions** established at the ASL(Local health authority).

Public and private employers are obliged to employ a certain number or quota of workers with disabilities (**reserve quotas**):

- for employers employing more than **50 employees**, **7%** of the workforce must be with disabilities;
- employers employing between **36 and 50 employees** must employ at least **2** persons with disabilities;
- employers employing between **15 and 35 employees** must employ **at least one** person with disabilities;
- Employers employing **less than 15 employees** are exempt from compulsory employment.

Legislative Decree No. 151 of 14 September 2015¹⁵ profoundly changed the regulations on incentives for hiring workers with disabilities and, therefore, the functioning of the relative Fund. The system that provided for the annual allocation from the State to the Regions and the subsequent disbursement from the Regions to the employers, on the basis of the hirings carried out the previous year, has been superseded.

The Financial fund's resources, as of 1 January 2016, the payment by INPS (National Institute of Social Security) of incentives to employers who hire workers with disabilities, as well as experimental projects for the employment inclusion of persons with disabilities by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

The incentive is paid by means of an adjustment in the monthly contribution statements, through a special telematic procedure implemented by INPS and is granted to private employers and economic public entities, for a period of 36 months at the rate of

- **70%** of the gross monthly salary taxable for social security purposes, for permanent hirings of persons with a reduction in working capacity of more than 79%, or with impairments ascribed from the first to the third category, as per the tables annexed to the consolidated text of the regulations on war pensions
- **35%** of the gross monthly salary taxable for social security purposes for open-ended recruitment of persons with reduced capacity to work of between 67% and 79%, or with impairments classified in the fourth to sixth category, referred to in the tables annexed to the consolidated text of the laws on war pensions.

The incentive is also granted to private employers and economic public bodies, to the extent of 70% of the gross monthly remuneration taxable for social security purposes, for the hiring of workers with intellectual and psychic disabilities resulting in a reduction in working capacity of more than 45%:

- for a period of 60 months, in the case of recruitment on a permanent basis;

¹⁵ DECRETO LEGISLATIVO 14 settembre 2015, n. 151 <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legislativo:2015-09-14;151!vig=>

- for the entire duration of the contract, in the case of fixed-term recruitment of not less than 12 months.

The incentive is also extended to private employers and economic public bodies that, although not subject to the obligations of Law No. 68 of 12 March 1999, proceed to hire disabled workers.

Greece

In Greece, a comprehensive legislative framework is in place to safeguard and guarantee employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. These laws and provisions represent a concerted effort by the government to promote inclusivity, equality, and social justice in the workforce. Here, we delve into the multifaceted components of this legislative framework:

- **Law 2646/1998:** This landmark legislation serves as a cornerstone in the protection of employment rights for individuals with disabilities. Notably, it mandates quotas for the employment of people with disabilities in both the public and private sectors. Employers with 50 or more employees are required to reserve a specific percentage of their workforce for individuals with disabilities. By enshrining these quotas into law, Greece demonstrates its commitment to creating an inclusive labor market that embraces diversity and provides equal opportunities for all (Geitonas, 1998).
- **Law 3699/2008:** Building upon the foundation laid by preceding legislation, Law 3699/2008 further strengthens the protection of the rights of individuals with disabilities, particularly in the realm of employment. This law emphasises the obligation of employers to hire individuals with disabilities and introduces incentives to facilitate their integration into the workforce. Through targeted measures and initiatives, Greece seeks to dismantle barriers to employment faced by individuals with disabilities and foster an environment conducive to their professional growth and development (Avramopoulos, 2008).
- **Law 4486/2017:** Recognizing the evolving needs and challenges encountered by individuals with disabilities in the labour market, Law 4486/2017 introduces progressive measures aimed at facilitating their employment. This includes the implementation of vocational training programs, subsidies for employers who hire individuals with disabilities, and the establishment of support structures to assist in their integration into the labour market. By investing in these initiatives, Greece endeavours to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic independence and contribute meaningfully to society (Xanthos, 2017).

These legislative provisions underscore the government's commitment to upholding the rights of individuals with disabilities and combating discrimination in the workplace. By enacting laws that mandate quotas, provide incentives, and offer support services, Greece endeavours to create an inclusive and accessible labour market where individuals with disabilities are afforded equal opportunities for employment and professional advancement. Moreover, these laws reflect a broader societal commitment to diversity, inclusion, and social cohesion, positioning Greece as a trailblazer in promoting the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities.

Regulatory oversight and enforcement of the provisions aimed at protecting and promoting the employment of individuals with disabilities are managed by key institutions and bodies entrusted with ensuring compliance and fostering inclusivity in the workforce:

- The **Ministry of Labour, Social Security, and Social Solidarity (MLSSS)** formulate and implement policies related to employment, including those for individuals with disabilities, ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

- The **Manpower Employment Organization (OAED)**, a public body under the MLSSS, supports employers and individuals with disabilities in employment and vocational training initiatives.
- The **Committee for the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled People (KEADAP)** focuses on the vocational rehabilitation and employment of individuals with disabilities, providing guidance, support, and program monitoring.

These institutions and bodies work collaboratively to ensure that the rights of individuals with disabilities are upheld, and proactive measures are taken to promote their integration into the workforce. Through robust regulatory oversight, strategic interventions, and targeted support programs, Greece aims to foster an inclusive and equitable labour market where individuals with disabilities are valued contributors to the economy and society at large.

Specific requirements for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) regarding the employment of individuals with disabilities are also outlined to ensure their integration into the workforce and compliance with relevant legislation:

- **Compliance with Quotas:** SMEs with 50 or more employees must adhere to the quota requirements outlined in Law 2646/1998, ensuring the employment of individuals with disabilities to avoid penalties.
- **Utilization of Support Programs:** SMEs can access government support programs offering subsidies for hiring individuals with disabilities and vocational training initiatives, promoting their integration into the workforce and providing incentives for employers.
- **Accessibility Requirements:** SMEs must ensure workplace accessibility for individuals with disabilities, meeting standards outlined in relevant laws and regulations, including providing reasonable accommodations and ensuring physical accessibility of facilities.

By adhering to these specific requirements, SMEs in Greece play a crucial role in promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion in the workforce while complying with legal obligations and contributing to the well-being of individuals with disabilities.

Latvia

The national legislative provisions in Latvia that guarantee the employment of people with disabilities are outlined in the Labour Law, adopted on 20.06.2001. The Labour Law provides protection against all forms of discrimination: direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, instruction to discrimination and victimisation in all aspects of employment relations in public and private sectors. Since 2006, non-discrimination provisions apply to state civil service. According to the Labour Law, everyone has an equal right to work, to fair, safe and healthy working conditions, as well as to fair work remuneration.

Specifically, it is stated that **an employer is obligated to take necessary measures, in accordance with the circumstances**. These measures aim to adjust the work environment, facilitate the potential for individuals with disabilities to establish an employment relationship, perform job duties, advance to higher positions, or undergo occupational training or further education. Such measures should be implemented without imposing an unreasonable burden on the employer.

People with disabilities in the open labour market receive the full amount of the disability pension. In addition, the Law on Personal Income Tax states that the non-taxable minimum for persons receiving disability pension in accordance with the Law on State Pensions is higher than the ordinary non-taxable

minimum. The duration of the provision of the financial support for the employment of unemployed persons with disabilities is 24 months. There is no quota system in Latvia¹⁶.

In Latvia, the **Ministry of Welfare** assumes one of the pivotal roles as the responsible institution for the regulation and supervision of the employment of people with disabilities. The Ministry of Welfare is tasked with formulating and implementing policies that promote inclusivity and equal opportunities in the workforce. It collaborates with various stakeholders, including employers, advocacy groups, and vocational training organizations, to create a conducive environment for individuals with disabilities.

The Ministry of Welfare plays a crucial role in developing and enforcing regulations that mandate accessible workplaces and reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities. It works towards fostering awareness and understanding among employers through educational initiatives and training programs, emphasizing the importance of integrating individuals with disabilities into the job sector.

State Employment Agency Republic of Latvia has the mission to ensure the implementation of unemployment reduction policy by providing efficient services and promoting employment in the public interests. State Employment Agency has special programs. One of them is Workplace adaptation grant: Preventive unemployment reduction measure "Measures for adaptation of workplaces for employed persons with disabilities at risk of unemployment". Is organised and implemented in cooperation with an occupational therapist service provider, providing an occupational therapist service to an employer - merchant or commercial company in order to adapt a workplace for an employed person with a disability, if necessary. Employers who can apply for the Measure: Individual merchants; Commercial companies (partnerships and limited companies)¹⁷.

State Agency supports for the labour market inclusion of unemployed people with disabilities included on their webpage different other kinds of grants (**Grant for the compensation of an unemployed person's work supervisor; Unemployment salary grant; Grant for training an employee; Services of a sign language interpreter, assistant, occupational therapist**¹⁸). Additionally, the state agency provides phone and in-person consultations for all kinds of questions from people with disabilities related to the workplace and employment.

In Latvia, **there are no specific national laws or initiatives that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) need to follow regarding the employment of people with disabilities.**

Switzerland

In Switzerland, the following legislation is related to guaranteeing work for people with disabilities:

Federal Constitution (BV)¹⁹

- **Article 8 paragraph 2 BV**

² No one shall be discriminated against, in particular on the grounds of [...] physical, mental or psychological disability.

Article 8, paragraph 2, expressly offers people with disabilities increased protection against discrimination by a state authority. It means that discrimination suffered by a person on the grounds of a physical, mental or psychological impairment is given special consideration.

¹⁶ Ministry of Finance. (2022). Personal Income Tax. Ministry of Finance. https://www.fm.gov.lv/en/personal-income-tax?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

¹⁷ State Employment Agency. (2020.). The mission of State Employment Agency (SEA). State Employment Agency. <https://www.nva.gov.lv/en/state-employment-agency-sea#:~:text=The%20mission%20of%20State%20Employment,employment%20in%20the%20public%20interests.>

¹⁸ National Employment Agency. (2020 March 15). Support for people with disabilities. National Employment Agency. <https://www.nva.gov.lv/en/print/pdf/node/327>

¹⁹ <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1999/404/de>

- **Article 8 paragraph 2 BV**

⁴ *The law provides for measures to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities.*

The prohibition of discrimination alone is not enough to guarantee persons with disabilities full participation in society. The Constitution therefore requires federal, cantonal and communal legislators to take measures to eliminate the disadvantages experienced by people with disabilities.

The Confederation, cantons and communes all have a duty within their sphere of competence to actively analyse deficits in current and existing legislation and improve it accordingly.

Federal Act on the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (BehiG)²⁰

The Disability Discrimination Act has been in force since 1 January 2004 and its purpose is to implement the constitutional mandate (in Art. 8 para. 4 of the Federal Constitution) and to eliminate or reduce discrimination against people with disabilities. It contains provisions on how the participation of people with disabilities in social life should be made possible. To this end, it provides for measures in the following areas: Buildings and facilities; public transport; services; schools; education and training; federal employment.

The lack of protection against discrimination for people with disabilities vis-à-vis private employers is particularly problematic. In the case of the Confederation, cantons and municipalities as employers, the prohibition of discrimination in the Federal Constitution, the increased duty of care of state employers and, for the Confederation, the Disability Discrimination Act (BehiG) can provide protection against discrimination in certain cases.

Many people with disabilities also work in the second labour market, in so-called “sheltered workshops”. There, however, they are usually among themselves and have little contact with people without disabilities, which runs counter to the idea of an inclusive society. However, this is precisely what Switzerland is calling for under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The Disability Equality Act is currently being revised and modifications in order for a better protection in the private employment sector are being discussed.

Federal Act on the Disability Insurance (IVG)²¹

- **Article 68^{quarter} IVG**

Disability Insurance is to be developed further in the direction of integration insurance rather than pension insurance. To this end, the Federal Social Insurance Office is looking for pilot projects with which innovative approaches to the (re)integration of disabled people into the economy can be trialled. Applications for support for specific projects can be submitted to the FSIO.

- **Article 68^{sexies} IVG**

Since 1 January 2022, disability insurance has provided for the possibility of concluding cooperation agreements with the umbrella organisations of the world of work in order to strengthen the professional integration of people with health impairments into the primary labour market. Within this framework, financial assistance can be granted to support specific measures tailored to the needs of the sectors and regional contexts.

Inclusion Initiative

²⁰ <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2003/667/de>

²¹ https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1959/827_857_845/de

In September 2024, the “inclusion initiative” has been submitted and is currently being processed by the federal council and then by parliament.²² This initiative seeks to strengthen the rights of people with disabilities by amending the Federal Constitution. On the one hand, the initiative calls for effective protection of people with disabilities against discrimination. It calls on the Confederation and cantons to take measures to ensure the legal and actual equality of people with disabilities in all areas of life. Furthermore, all people should be able to participate and have a say in society.

If the inclusion initiative is accepted, an amendment to the Federal Constitution could result in further legal improvements to the inclusion of people with disabilities in the world of work.

In Switzerland, there is no systematic review of the legal basis of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Disability Equality Act, nor is there a comprehensive national action plan for their implementation. In the public sector, the Federal Bureau for the Equality of Persons with Disabilities (EBGB) assumes certain tasks. In addition, various civil society organisations, such as Inclusion Handicap or AGILE, take on certain regulatory tasks, including providing legal advice, publishing legal case statistics, studies, etc. An overview can be found on the website of the Federal Office for the Equality of People with Disabilities (FOGE)²³.

At cantonal and communal level, there are some ombudsman's offices for people with disabilities, although these are usually not contact points for labour law issues.

The Disability Insurance (DI) can also be seen as an institution that assumes a certain regulatory function with regard to the employment of people with disabilities. For the DI, however, the focus is always on the professional integration of people with disabilities. It therefore provides extensive services in this area: Specialists from the DI offices themselves offer career counselling and job placement services; in addition, the DI covers the costs of vocational training or retraining or even aids in a professional context. The aim of job placement is to actively support people with disabilities in maintaining their job or finding a suitable job in the primary labour market. Job retention support primarily consists of adapting the existing job so that it can be retained. If this is not possible, the possibility of internal redeployment is examined. This is done through on-site clarifications, by informing the employer about the resources and limitations of the person concerned in relation to the job profile or through job coaching.

The job search also includes support with the preparation of application dossiers and the preparation of job applications.

There are no specific national laws or initiatives SMEs need to follow regarding the employment of people with disabilities.

SMEs, Job trainers & people with disabilities: needs and solutions

After the overview of the contexts and the legal framework around which SMEs and people with disabilities interact with each other, it is crucial to understand the needs from both sides. The legal provisions should allow to take into consideration the needs of all parties considered, but sometimes

²² <https://www.inklusions-initiative.ch/>

²³ <https://www.edi.admin.ch/edi/de/home/fachstellen/ebgb/anlaufstellen---adressen/rechtliche-beratung.html>

the situation changes, depending on the country. In order to better understand the topic, partners have not only looked for specific information based on national research, but in some cases carried out a survey to employers, job trainers and people with disabilities, thus allowing to have a clear and updated landscape of some of the contexts. Here below some highlights per country are reported. Specifically, in the following sections, main needs both in accessing and retaining jobs from both people with disabilities and SMEs are taken into consideration, thus providing a specific overview of the European and country-related context.

People with disabilities and stigma in the workplace

Does stigma against people with disabilities persist in the workplace? Unfortunately, it does. As widely known, stigmatisation mainly arises from a lacking knowledge, understanding and experience with people with disabilities and their needs, and this of course can reflect on multiple levels, not only in the daily life but also in the working one. If negative results of this stigmatisation are clear and evident (marginalisation and exclusion), sometimes there are more hidden or subtle effects of these stereotypes: for example, people with disabilities are only employed in order to satisfy law-mandated quotas, or in order to demonstrate the good will and inclusiveness of the company. This results in further exclusion and stigmatisation of people with disabilities, who - already facing challenges in everyday work - are made to feel as if they are merely "diversity hires" and would not get the job if they were not disabled. This is reflected also in the daily working routine: people tend to still remain slightly reserved towards people with disabilities, sometimes because of fear of saying the wrong thing or because of preconceived notions they have about people with disabilities. As the Slovenian research highlights, one prominent form of stigma faced by people with disabilities in the workplace is related to "invisible" disabilities. Despite the existence of legal frameworks and categories recognizing different types of disabilities, individuals with disabilities that are not immediately apparent may encounter skepticism regarding their abilities. Colleagues and employers may harbour misconceptions and doubts about their capabilities, leading to subtle forms of discrimination and exclusion. This can manifest in disbelief or skepticism regarding their need for accommodations or support, and an expectation that they should perform at the same level as their able-bodied counterparts without acknowledgment of their unique challenges.

As it is clear, it is a pretty difficult area to explore, especially in the already complex working environment. However, as the other following section will show, education and training are among the main solutions which can help the process in decreasing the stigma towards people with disability and improving their inclusion in the workplace.

Factors stopping access to jobs for people with disabilities

When talking about the needs of people with disabilities, it is important to understand the obstacles relating to their access in the job market. Similarly to the national data presented, each context has its own peculiarity or similarities, summarized here below.

In **Germany**, one of the main reasons barrier to job access to jobs for people with disabilities is related to **vocational qualifications and skills requirements**. In fact, those who can't manage to obtain these qualifications – and sometimes people with disabilities are those excluded – can't access specific types of jobs. Sometimes, there are also so-called "helper" occupations that are specially tailored for people

with disabilities. However, there are relatively few jobs for this group. Moreover, even if legal provision seems clear, at the same time there is confusion at communication level, which doesn't help the access of people with disabilities in the job market. Also in **Austria**, communication and information in the topic is one of the root of many obstacles for people with disabilities who want to access jobs: in fact, even if the law supposes and prescribes the obligation of employers to hire and proactively seek to hire people with disabilities, yet it offers no specific information on reasonable accommodation or best practices in the field of recruitment and hiring (Naue & Flieger, 2023). The lack of data, although perceived as a broad and abstract issue, trickles down to creating unfavourable conditions for the successful inclusion of people with disabilities into the labour market, as there is no comprehensive data on best practices or detailed, nation-wide plans on how to do so. Moreover, in a late research it is highlighted how "a main challenge for the employment of persons with intellectual disabilities is the noninclusive labour market in Austria. Businesses lack the willingness to employ persons with intellectual disabilities, this is often due to a lack of information and awareness" (Naue & Flieger, 2023). Finally, even if people with disabilities fundamentally have access to all measures of the general labour market "in practice, only if they are not classified as incapable of working" (NAP, 2023). In **Greece**, among other issues identified, an important obstacle to be taken into consideration is the lack of social network & connections: it seems that a significant majority, comprising 57%, attribute their job placements to personal connections such as acquaintances, friends, or family. Conversely, the proportion of individuals securing employment through formal job advertisements remains considerably lower, with negligible representation. **Slovenia** reports different obstacles in accessing jobs for people with disabilities: *a) limited job opportunities*: despite advancements in inclusivity and diversity initiatives, many industries and employers still lag behind in providing accessible work environments. Consequently, individuals with disabilities often find themselves excluded from the labour market or forced to compete for a limited number of positions (Uršič, 2015); *b) Difficulty in Finding Part-Time Jobs*: Part-time positions, which offer flexibility and reduced workloads, are often preferred by individuals with certain disabilities but these opportunities are scarce, exacerbating the unemployment rate among this demographic (Ibid., 2015); *c) Pre-existing Employment and Disability*: for those who acquire a disability while already employed, navigating the transition within the workforce presents unique challenges. The sudden onset of a disability can lead to uncertainty, loss of confidence, and fear of discrimination (Ibid., 2015). In **Latvia**, the barriers in the workplace for people with disabilities are multifaceted and encompass several key challenges. Many workplaces may lack proper infrastructure and facilities to accommodate individuals with disabilities (like steps, narrow doorways, and a lack of ramps or elevators), making it challenging for people with mobility impairments to access the workspace. Together with physical barriers, there are also negative attitudes and prejudices within companies, together with stigma, misconceptions, lack of understanding and working hour flexibility for those who need it which may lead to discrimination and exclusion, making it difficult for them to secure employment or thrive in the workplace. According to a 2020 report by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, many employers in Latvia believe that accommodating employees with disabilities is too expensive or difficult, and there is a lack of awareness and understanding about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. Regarding **Switzerland**, at 73 per cent, the labour market participation of people with disabilities is significantly lower than that of people without disabilities. *Pro Infirmis*²⁴ has commissioned a study on the inclusion of people with disabilities (Grünenfelder et al., 2023). To this end, people with disabilities aged between

²⁴ Pro Infirmis is the umbrella organisation for regional and local disability organisations in Switzerland.
<https://www.proinfirmis.ch/>

16 and 64 were²⁵ were asked directly about various aspects of inclusion. One key aspect is access to the labour market. According to the survey, one in two people with disabilities do not think they have a good chance of finding a job in the primary labour market. 26 per cent rate their chances as rather poor and a minority of 25 per cent consider their chances to be good or rather good. The survey also asked participants about the reasons why they consider their chances of finding a job in the primary labour market to be low. Among them, the majority of the answers were among the following statement: “Companies do not want to hire people with disabilities”(45%); “There are too few jobs for people with my disability”(36%); “Companies doubt my full ability to work”(32%); and “I don't have the necessary skills because of my disability”(32%). All of them reflect both the labour market job offer, stereotypes or lack of self-esteem among the perceived major obstacles. Finally, in **Italy**, similarly to other national contexts, people with disabilities have various needs with regard to their working life, with employers not knowing in details the law or applying it without taking into consideration the right needs; or, at the same time, the access to labour market sometimes is not allowed from a training perspective, as people with disabilities often lack the necessary skills to perform the role for which they could be hired.

Obstacles to job retainment

A successful onboarding process depends above all on how well colleagues and line managers are prepared for the new employee with a disability. That's the reason why it is really important to have training in the area of workplace inclusion, since it is really important as a job retainment action. However, similarly to the obstacles to access jobs, also retaining ones can have its own difficulties for people with disabilities, and the following overview gives a complex picture in all the countries involved by the project, with similarities among countries or country-specific issues and which are the results of needs coming from people with disabilities and SMEs.

In **Germany**, inclusive expertise is not widespread among SMEs as a whole, even if there are different initiatives. The general employment model refers to people who can and should develop their full potential. There are isolated concepts to better protect older employees from health problems. Company integration management is also provided if someone returns to work after a long period of sick leave. In view of the shortage of skilled labour, however, it is becoming increasingly interesting and important for employers to attract employees with disabilities and retain them in the company in the medium term. In **Austria**, flexibility at work seems to be a key aspect of how to retain jobs: there is a certain expectation of the amount of tasks that need to be completed within a given amount of time and there is less and less flexibility in achieving these expectations, even for people without disabilities. For people with disabilities this is proving to be a major hurdle in job retention, as more flexibility is needed in order to produce quality outputs. Another issue which emerged from the survey indicated that unsuitable working conditions (particularly in terms of work duration and break regulations) persist and significantly hinder work for people with disabilities. Moreover, the onboarding processes and instructions given to employees are inadequately flexible to cater to people with disabilities and successfully include them in all relevant processes. Spatial conditions are another prominent issue in job

²⁵ The decision to limit the study to the age range of 16 to 64 years is based on two different considerations. On the one hand, the question of equality for people with disabilities in certain areas of life, in particular access to education and the labour market, arises most clearly at this age. Secondly, the previous exploratory analysis showed that the Pro Infirmis register only includes very few pensioners and that the prospect of a balanced database in this age group for the planned study is therefore limited.

retention, as well as the general lack of resources (know-how and time) to respond to specific employee needs as well as inadequate provisions and securities for various health issues together with unfavourable working environments. **Greece** seems to have similar issues (physical difficulties, preparation and organizational culture on disability and so on). From the **Slovenian** context, workplace culture, accommodation maintenance, career advancement, and financial incentives are the obstacles which are highlighted. Moreover, the needs are also related to the specific type of disability as well as to the availability for multiple sick days for rehabilitation and inadequate access to necessary support services (since individuals with disabilities may require periodic time off from work for medical appointments, therapy sessions, or rehabilitation efforts aimed at managing their condition or improving their functional abilities). However, there is a growing emphasis on ensuring people with disabilities' rights and fostering respect for their working conditions within SMEs. This shift underscores a commitment to creating environments where all employees feel valued and supported. Secondly, SMEs are actively engaging with disability experts to gain insights and guidance on best practices for inclusion. By leveraging external expertise, businesses can enhance their understanding of disability-related issues and implement more effective strategies for accommodating diverse needs. Additionally, there is a notable trend towards assessing the suitability of job roles for individuals with disabilities and offering tailored support to facilitate job adaptation. In **Latvia**, the workplace lacks direct support from the country, leaving people with disabilities dependent solely on support from social programs. This absence of intrinsic assistance within professional settings can lead to challenges such as limited accommodations, insufficient resources for skill development, and a lack of initiatives promoting diversity and inclusion. Individuals find themselves relying on specific social programs tailored to their needs, but these may not always address the dynamic demands of the job market. Moreover, when a person acquires a disability, they often lose their employment opportunities and may not be able to return to their former job. This is because the previous workplace is not accessible, and people cannot accommodate the necessary job tasks. Therefore, it is crucial for employers to undergo trainings so that they understand the importance of making the workplace accessible for the individual's return. Sometimes the retainment is influenced by the size of SME's business: small businesses, with fewer resources, may struggle to accommodate individual needs or provide alternative assignments as health or abilities change, necessitating proactive efforts for inclusion. Additionally, inflexible workplace rules in larger offices may hinder individuals with disabilities from performing well in their jobs, exacerbated by difficulties in accessing healthcare and support services. As other national contexts seen above, lack of awareness and training about disabilities in the workplace further contributes to challenges, as not everyone may know how to provide necessary support. Regarding **Switzerland**, there are no general studies on the challenges of job retention for people with disabilities. However, a study on mental health in the workplace shows that 80% of all mentally impaired employees lose their jobs (Baer et al., 2017). The reasons for this are a lack of awareness on the part of employers and inadequate incentives and support measures. For example, managers are rarely trained in how to manage people with mental impairments (Ibid., 2017). Furthermore, case managers or DI offices are rarely or almost never involved in challenges (Ibid., 2017). Finally, in **Italy** the training in the workplace is seen as crucial to increase the job retainment: in fact, it is considered necessary from the very beginning, at the interview stage, in order to learn about the needs and limitations that generally the type of disabilities need so as to ensure employment inclusion and suitable placement as well as living conditions and team inclusion. An inclusive workspace and necessary funding to adapt it to the employees with disabilities is what is needed the most, from the perspective of SMEs and employees.

Analysis of the best practices identified

In this section of the Brochure, the most important best practices concerning the employment of people with disabilities identified in the countries involved will be presented. Each partner was asked to identify best practices on employment of people with disabilities, following specific criteria, thus providing a benchmark through which the partnership will be able to develop the project following steps. The examples provided here stand out for their innovations in terms of inclusion and promotion of employment persons with disabilities, and are initiatives implemented in recent years. For a more in-depth look at some of best practices for each country included in the partnership, will be at the end of this document. This part of the brochure can also be an inspiring section for all those SMEs and organizations which would like to implement a specific inclusive path and initiative to include or support the inclusion of people with disabilities. Sometimes, some good practices from other European countries were included in order to provide further examples to be taken into account.

List of the best practices from the partner countries

For the purpose of clarity and better usability of the current Brochure, the best practices are gathered by type, although it is difficult to categorise many initiatives. There are organised by following types:

- Vocational Training program
- Job placement
- Practice or methodology aiming at boosting employment of people with disabilities
- Policies
- Innovation
- SMEs training

Vocational Training program

Vocational training refers to instructional programs or courses that focus on the skills required for a particular job function or trade. *Vocational education and training prepares people for work and develops citizens skills to remain employable and respond to the needs of the economy*²⁶. Under these categories, multiple good practices were identified: in **Latvia**, since 2008 **The State Agency for Social Integration (SIVA)** promotes the social integration of people with disabilities and persons with functional impairments, to provide the opportunity to receive professional rehabilitation and to obtain professional secondary or first-level professional higher education. Four training programs were developed specifically for **persons with intellectual disabilities**, aimed at providing them with employable skills. These programs focus on fundamental tasks such as planting and gardening, dishwashing and setting

²⁶ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/vocational-education-and-training>

tables, as well as laundry and ironing. In **Greece** different vocational training programs have been implemented since 1990: **Athens School of Vocational Training for People with Disabilities** provides training for **high school graduated persons with disability** providing them with **digital skills** necessary for the digital transformation of the future economy. In 2020, The **Mytilineos group** in collaboration with the social enterprise "Knowl" designed the "mellonability" program free of charge, which lasted 6 months and aimed at developing the **professional skills** of people with disabilities. This project was inspired by the company in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals of zero poverty, decent work, economic growth and less inequality. In **Switzerland**, in 2024 **Blindspot** created the inclusive project in their own inclusive businesses in Bern. They offer **apprenticeships in kitchen and service** for both **people with and without impairments**, with trained coaches who accompany and support trainees, providing them support and knowledge. In **Italy**, **ANDEL (National Agency for Disability and Employment)** bases its activities on the principle of solidarity and therefore operates in a non-competitive or alternative spirit towards those already engaged in the system of employment inclusion of people with disabilities. Throughout promotion of cultural, training and service activities, signing collaboration agreements, conventions, protocols and joint ventures with any entity, both **public and private**, working in the field of **labour inclusion of people with disabilities** and active employment policies. In **Germany** as good practice was identified **Zukunft trotz Handicap e.V.**, which provides vocational training programmes for childcare and gastronomy. Through their qualification programme, **Zukunft trotz Handicap** extends an additional educational avenue to **young adults with intellectual disabilities**, many of whom have primarily experienced employment within sheltered workshops catering to individuals with disabilities. Since 2018, in the **Netherlands**, **the pilot MBO Praktijkleren** (practical learning) aims to offer workers with support needs the opportunity to learn professional skills at the workplace. Collaboration between vocational institutions (**MBO**), conventional companies, the **Municipality of Amsterdam**, **sheltered workshops** and the **Dutch Employee Insurance Agency (UWV)**. In **Austria, Germany and Switzerland**, in 2023 started **The myAbility Talent® Program**. It is an established career program for students, academics, and individuals with specific vocational training needs related to accessibility. Throughout the duration of a semester, myAbility Talent's benefit from comprehensive career coaching and diverse networking opportunities with companies pursuing inclusion strategies.

Job Placement

In **Latvia**, there were identified several practices regarding job placement: from 2004 the **State Employment Agency** has created "**Measures for adaptation of workplaces for employed persons with disabilities at risk of unemployment**". The measure is implemented within the framework of the ESF project "**Subsidised jobs for the unemployed**" No 9.1.1.1/15/I/001 and foresees **financial support** up to a maximum of EUR 1,000 per workplace adaptation. The Agency in cooperation with an occupational therapist service provider, providing an occupational therapist service to an employer - merchant or commercial company in order to adapt a workplace for an employed person with a disability. Another **State Employment Agency's** practice from 2020 that is still active is **Consultations to guide employers on the intricacies of employing individuals with disabilities** which provides consultations to employers. These consultations aim to guide employers on the intricacies of employing individuals with disabilities, offering insights into creating an inclusive and accommodating work environment. Since 2018 until 2020, **National Employment Agency** carried out the assistance program called **Motivation program for job search and social mentoring services for the long-term unemployed persons with disabilities**. The program eligibility required individuals with disabilities to have been unemployed for at least 12 consecutive months, during which they were not classified as employees or self-employed for more than two months without interruption. It Consisted with **job-search motivation program**, conducted in group

sessions, spans a maximum of three months and included 80 academic lessons comprising motivational activities, support, and consultations aimed at addressing individual social challenges. Also, **social mentor services**, delivered through individual consultations, extend for a maximum of seven months, encompassing 40 working hours per week. In 2020 it developed another practice, **Initiatives to promote social entrepreneurship** by offering discounts and grants to businesses that hire individuals with disabilities. This initiative was addressed to SMEs by offering discounts and grants to businesses that hire individuals with disabilities. In **Greece** from 2022 the **Employment Agency's** committed to subsidise 75% of both the salary and contributions to businesses when they hire individuals with disabilities. This represents a significant step toward addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by this demographic in accessing employment opportunities. In 2024 **OAED, the Greek Manpower Employment Organisation**, implemented **National Policy programmes** for promoting the employment of people with disabilities through funding. This foresees **creation of new jobs** for the employment of a person with a disability for a period of 4 years. In the first 3 years employers are financed (full-time: €25/working day, part-time: €15/working day) + 1 year that the company is required to maintain the employee in its workforce without funding). In **Slovenia**, two good practices regarding job placement were identified. From 2012 "**The Second Violin**" restaurant's successful model of **inclusive employment practices**, community engagement through creative workshops and events, commitment to culinary excellence, and emphasis on social responsibility serve as transferable best practices for other contexts. In 2017, **Skrbovin'ca store** was founded to meet the multiple needs of people with disabilities by providing **employment opportunities**, promoting **social inclusion**, **facilitating skills development** and garnering community support. Skrbovin'ca represents a **pioneering initiative**, uniting the resources and expertise of four prominent **Ljubljana-based sheltered workshops**: the Janez Levec Work and Employment Centre, the Association of Societies for Cerebral Palsy Sun, the Tončka Hočevar Work Centre, and the **company for training and employing individuals with disabilities** in Želva. Together and with the strong support of the Municipality of Ljubljana, these entities administer diverse employment programs tailored to individuals grappling with intellectual disabilities and other obstacles, facilitating skill development and fostering active societal participation. In **Switzerland**, in 2024 **the MyHandicap Foundation** created a platform for and by the community itself that is called "EnableMe". The platform is accessible and free of charge. The large pool of information and experience reports helps those affected and their relatives to (re)gain a foothold in life step by step. In addition to the community and the articles, all of the services supported by MyHandicap, such as the job portal or the peer programmes, are designed with the target group in mind. In **Germany** from 2019 the "**LAUT - Living, Working and Participating in an Inclusive Society**" project has set itself the goal of providing new, sustainably effective impetus to support and strengthen existing measures to **promote jobseekers with significant health restrictions**, including **severely people with disabilities with special placement needs**. The LAUT project is both a point of contact and coach for jobseekers, as well as a competent advisor and partner for employers to establish inclusive structures in companies. The project is also very active in the area of public relations: **it awards a prize for good inclusion** in the region, organises conferences and takes part in public debates. In 2021 project **G-A-L – Gesundheit - Arbeit – Leben** (Health - Work – Life) aimed to provide intensive support for the **professional reintegration of mentally impaired people** who are receiving inpatient or outpatient care. In **Italy** several practices were identified: one of them is - from 1992 - **Sistema Servizi Orso Blu (Blue Bear Service System)**, which works on inclusion of persons with disabilities in work life. The cooperative's story started in Biella when a group of people with **mental illness** was called to run a coffee break during a study day on psychiatric urgency organized by the Department of Mental Health, from then they are committed to providing a job for persons with disabilities. Today **more than 30%** of the working members are people from difficult situations, who thus have access to the world of work,

economic security and the possibility of a new integration into the social fabric. **Raggio di luce (Ray of Light)** is another good example of active involvement of persons with disabilities in work life with different locations in Italy. **Raggio di Luce** works to ensure the job placement of **Disadvantaged People** throughout the country, offering products and services, innovative and quality, thus promoting social cohesion and improving the quality of life, responding to the needs of inclusion of Companies and Society. In 2024 a supportive café became **Equo Cream aut café**, the first social catering reality in Sicily to have a focus on people with **autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities**. The social inclusion project was born on the initiative of the **Asp n.2 of Caltanissetta**, in collaboration with the **social cooperative Etnos**. Aut Cafè is a special place where the creams, croissants and above all Sicilian ice cream, the emblem of taste, sweetness and lightheartedness, have literally turned into a **symbol and instrument of inclusion**, contributing to the transformation of what had been Equo cream aut café, the solidarity ice cream shop into, precisely **Aut Cafè, the bistro of inclusion**. In **Spain**, was identified **Rodilla A LA PAR**, un Rodilla diferente. 'RODILLA' is a chain of 156 informal, artisan, healthy and quality restaurants throughout Spain that serve as a meeting point for all citizens and aim to guarantee the economic and social autonomy of the persons with **intellectual disabilities they** employ. In **Croatia**, in 2020, **Social Cooperative Humana Nova** established the felt packaging process which has allowed Humana Nova to increase opportunities for **marginalised groups and persons with disabilities**. **Social Cooperative Humana Nova** offers on the job training courses for sorting, reuse, recycling textile and felt packaging.

Practice or methodology aiming at boosting employment of people with disabilities

In **Slovenia**, from 2019 until 2021 "**Disability is an Opportunity**" project took place. The main objective of the "Disability is an Opportunity" project was to create **new employment opportunities** for people with disabilities in rural areas, **particularly on farms**, by developing new activities, training professionals, and promoting social inclusion within the agricultural sector. Another project called "**4ALL**" was active from 2019 till 2020. This project addressed various social challenges, including discrimination, unequal opportunities, and marginalization faced by vulnerable groups in Slovenian society, such as Roma, homosexuals, refugees, the socially disadvantaged, and **people with disabilities**. Key objectives included raising awareness among NGOs, improving understanding of discrimination, and advocating for the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups. The project encompasses a range of activities, including public events, education and training sessions, and workshops on relevant legislation and the experiences of different vulnerable groups. In **Italy** in 2024 was created the initiative "**Inclusive Work Model in Lombardy Enterprises**," whose aim is to implement the principles of disability inclusion 'in accordance with **UNI/PdR 159:2024 Reference Practice**' which contains operational guidelines for the inclusive work of people with disabilities. This is a call for proposals produced by the **Lombardy Region**, in collaboration with **Unioncamere Lombardia**, under which **2 million euros** will be allocated to **support businesses** in the region in implementing the principles of disability inclusion. In **Switzerland**, **Band-Genossenschaft** for more than 75 years has been committed to the integration of people with disabilities into the world of work. They are committed to ensure that talents can develop optimally in the right place. They **mediate between people** and **the market** in order to harmonise the opportunities and skills of their employees with the needs of their customers and partners. Another practice identified is **Impulse – A labour market for everyone**. Impulse promotes inclusion in the world of work and society and empowers **people with disabilities** and **jobseekers over the age of 50**. They support companies in realising equal opportunities and making their responsible HR policies visible. They support companies

in creating a working environment in which skilled workers with a physical or mental impairment can utilise their potential to create value. In **Austria** several practices were identified. In 2022 the project called **ZERO PROJECT 2022 - Unternehmensdialog - Dafür** (dafuer.at) took place. The main objective of the ZERO PROJECT 2022 Business Dialogue is to showcase "Good Practice" examples that demonstrate successful employment of people with disabilities in the retail sector. The strategies and examples presented at the ZERO PROJECT 2022 Business Dialogue can be transferred to other sectors and countries to promote inclusive employment practices. Another practice that is active from 2022 is „**Ich will arbeiten!**“ **21 Menschen mit Lernschwierigkeiten erzählen über ihre Arbeit** ("I want to work!" 21 Individuals with learning difficulties talk about their jobs.) It is a supplementary volume to the career information brochure for people with learning difficulties. It presents 21 individual stories from people with learning difficulties who talk about their work. The main aim of the project is to motivate and inspire people with learning difficulties by providing them with realistic and tangible examples of employment opportunities and career paths. It also aims to provide support and guidance to help them find jobs or apprenticeships. From 2020, Service for people with disabilities and businesses (initiative of the Ministry of Social Affairs) called **Netzwerk Berufliche Assistenz (NEBA)** is active. The service supports companies in all questions related to work and disability, company integration and age-appropriate work with competent advice and comprehensive service offers, and coordinates offers to maintain the ability to work.

Policies

Among all countries, under the Policies category, a good practice identified was in **Austria**: from 2020 till 2030 **Nationaler Aktionsplan Behinderung** (National Action Plan on Disability) will ensure the rights of people with disabilities through concrete measures and indicators. The process is coordinated by the **Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Long-Term Care, and Consumer Protection**. Civil society organisations such as the **Austrian Disability Council** can contribute to substantive proposals. The plan addresses the challenge of ensuring the full implementation of the rights of people with disabilities and enhancing their vocational participation by providing a comprehensive framework and coordinated approach across various sectors.

Innovation

In **Slovenia**, from 2017 **The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities** created **the award for good practice in the field of employment of persons with disabilities** (Invalidom prijazno podjetje). The main objective of the competition is to recognize and promote exemplary practices in the employment of persons with disabilities, fostering greater inclusivity in the workforce and encouraging other organizations to emulate successful models of disability-friendly employment. The project focus on promoting inclusive employment practices for persons with disabilities, addressing challenges such as limited job opportunities, economic marginalization, social exclusion, legal gaps, and attitudinal barriers. By recognizing and promoting exemplary initiatives, the project aims to foster a more inclusive and equitable society. In **Belgium**, **Lichtwerk** organisation carries on **Implementation of smart assistive Augmented Reality work and training stations**. Lichtwerk's goal is to create an inclusive labour market so that people with disabilities, and other individuals with a certain distance to the labour market have

access to **paid employment**. To achieve this, Lichtwerk provides **smart assistive Augmented Reality work and training stations**, powered by LightGuide AR software. This solution has so far been installed in social enterprises, manufacturing companies, schools, and training centres. In 2021 **the Arbeiten - wie ich es will!** (Work the way I want to!) was activated in **Germany**. The aim is to **identify skills** and integrate **people with a severe disability** into the labour market. By using participatory methods and digital technologies, individual participation needs are analysed and people can act in a self-determined way. Using many different methods, people with disabilities become experts in their own needs and wishes. The project is developing a type of **accessible tablet** that can be used to **analyse individual** needs and skills. **Artificial intelligence** is also being used in the process. This device will be developed to market maturity in the project and will be available **throughout Germany**, which can be used independently by any person with a disability. In **Greece**, in 2023 **VIRTUAL consulting services – EURES** were provided by **The Greek Public Employment Service (D.YP.A)**. Through the platform **MyOAEDlive** which offers professional consulting services of assistance to vulnerable unemployed, businesses and specialised staff. Advisers provide support councils on matters of professional mobility and advice to businesses on that platform, which also includes video, audio surround- scripts and color-coded information. Services for **people with disabilities** are available in Greek sign language and its size text can be increased to 200% without scrolling.

SMEs training

In 2021, **Innoklusio** project started in **Germany**. Innoklusio is a program based on the needs of the protagonists of inclusion, as it involves the **two main actors** of this process from the very beginning of the project: those **companies interested in including people with disabilities** in their workforce, and **people with disabilities** who participate as "inclusionists" in the workshops. **15 companies** from a wide range of sectors and company sizes are taking part in this project. The aim is to build inclusion expertise, promote people with disabilities and encourage cultural change.

Conclusions

The analysis of good practices shows that they are often time-limited projects which might also lead to the limited impact. Often the practices for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the work environment are often brought forward by the states. Although some of the best practices could cover different topics, from the analysis emerges that the largest number of practices identified concerns the topic of **job placement**, followed by **practice or methodology aiming at boosting employment of people with disabilities** and **Vocational Training program** and **Innovation**. Only a few practices identified under the topics of **Policies** and **SMEs training**, which is the area where interventions are more requested.

In the following section, you can take a more in-depth look on some of best practices previously mentioned:

Name of best practice	The social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities
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Country	Latvia
Type:	Vocational Training program
Year of implementation (from 2019)	from 2008 till now
<i>Description of the initial situation</i>	<p>In Latvia, it is particularly challenging to provide employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities. One of the primary reasons is the difficulty employers face in understanding the unique abilities and potential of this group. Misconceptions, lack of awareness, and societal biases contribute to a general misunderstanding of the capabilities of individuals with intellectual disabilities.</p> <p>Additionally, there is often a lack of specialized support and accommodations in the workplace to address the specific needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Employers may be uncertain about how to create an inclusive and supportive work environment, leading to hesitancy in hiring from this demographic.</p> <p>Moreover, there may be a prevailing stigma surrounding intellectual disabilities, creating barriers for individuals seeking employment. Negative stereotypes and preconceived notions about productivity and competence further hinder the job prospects for this group of people.</p> <p>As a result of these factors, providing employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities becomes a formidable challenge, making it either difficult or nearly impossible to secure meaningful work for this group.</p>
<i>Needs</i>	<p>To create an education program that is based on practical elements, specifically designed to be accessible without the need for prior education or complex skills. To be focused on practical, hands-on learning, allowing individuals to acquire valuable skills directly applicable to employment. By removing the barrier of needing prior education or intricate skills, the program aims to empower people with intellectual disabilities to gain the knowledge and abilities necessary for finding meaningful employment.</p> <p>This initiative not only addresses the educational gap but also contributes to fostering inclusivity and equal opportunities in the job market.</p>
<i>Main objective</i>	<p>The overarching goal is to dismantle existing barriers, shift societal perspectives, and cultivate an ideal inclusive environment that empowers persons with intellectual disabilities to lead enriching lives. This comprehensive vision encompasses not only access to quality education and employment opportunities but also aims to foster a broader societal acceptance, allowing these individuals to actively engage in every facet of community life.</p>
<i>Challenge addressed</i>	<p>1.Societal Prejudices and Discrimination: Individuals with intellectual disabilities often encounter societal biases and</p>

	<p>discrimination, leading to exclusion and limited social participation.</p> <p>2.Limited Access to training: People with intellectual disabilities may face difficulties in accessing educational opportunities.</p> <p>3.Inadequate Professional Rehabilitation Services: Individuals with disabilities often require specialized rehabilitation services to enhance their skills and capabilities.</p> <p>4.Employment Barriers: Discrimination in the workplace and a lack of accommodations often pose significant challenges for individuals with intellectual disabilities seeking employment.</p> <p>5.Limited Awareness and Advocacy: A lack of awareness about the challenges faced by persons with intellectual disabilities can contribute to societal indifference.</p>
<i>Contents</i>	<p>The State Agency for Social Integration (SIVA) is a direct administrative institution under the supervision of the Minister of Welfare. The minister supervises the agency through the Ministry of Welfare in Latvia.</p> <p>The purpose of SIVA is to promote the social integration of people with disabilities and persons with functional impairments, to provide the opportunity to receive professional rehabilitation and to obtain professional secondary or first-level professional higher education.</p> <p>Four training programs were developed specifically for persons with intellectual disabilities, aimed at providing them with employable skills. These programs focus on fundamental tasks such as planting and gardening, dishwashing and setting tables, as well as laundry and ironing. While these skills may seem simple, they are invaluable in the job market, offering participants the ability to secure employment.</p> <p>By focusing on straightforward yet essential skills, the goal is to facilitate their integration into the workforce, fostering independence and self-sufficiency. Ultimately, these programs aspire to create a more inclusive job market where persons with intellectual disabilities can contribute their abilities and lead fulfilling professional lives.</p>
<i>Innovation</i>	This provides an opportunity for persons with intellectual disability and without prior education in a very accessible format, offering them exactly what they need.
<i>What can be transferred to other contexts</i>	
Link	https://www.siva.gov.lv/lv/jpv-macibu-programmas

Name of best practice	Athens School of Vocational Training for People with Disabilities
Country	Greece
Type:	Vocational Training program

Year of implementation (from 2019)	1990 until today
<i>Description of the initial situation</i>	Nearly half of individuals with disabilities face a deficit in technical or general skills, hindering their ability to access employment opportunities and contribute effectively to the workforce.
<i>Needs</i>	Ensure equal access to employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, as well as to enable them to acquire the skills necessary to thrive in the workforce and contribute meaningfully to society.
<i>Main objective</i>	Improve the abilities of individuals with disabilities.
<i>Challenge addressed</i>	Address the lack of competences for individuals with disabilities.
<i>Contents</i>	Trainees are carefully selected for participation in the programs based on a variety of factors, including their skills, individual circumstances, and educational background. Specifically targeting high school graduates, the programs provide specialised training in areas such as: Computerised Accounting Officer Website Design and Construction Administrative and Financial Officer roles.
<i>Innovation</i>	The Digital skills developed are essential for the digital transformation of the future economy
<i>What can be transferred to other contexts</i>	Diversification into supplementary competencies, such as soft skills, may enrich other training programs and enhance other contexts
Link	http://sxoliamea.gr/athinon/home.html

Name of best practice	G-A-L – Gesundheit - Arbeit – Leben (Health - Work – Life)
Country	Germany
Type:	Job placement
Year of implementation (from 2019)	2021
<i>Description of the initial situation</i>	Unemployment is closely linked to the occurrence of mental illness and can be both a cause and a consequence. Unemployed people are disproportionately affected by mental health problems compared to employees
<i>Needs</i>	Integration into the labour market is particularly difficult for people with mental or psychological impairments. On the other hand, companies are struggling with the increase in older employees, high sickness rates and a lack of young talent, which ultimately leads to a continuous decline in the labour force potential.
<i>Main objective</i>	The aim of our project is to provide intensive support for the professional reintegration of mentally impaired people who are receiving inpatient or outpatient care.
<i>Challenge addressed</i>	Mental illnesses are becoming increasingly common, but at the same time there is a lack of knowledge and understanding of how to deal with them
Best Practice Description (max. 2000 characters per section)	

<i>Contents</i>	<p>The core of the project is the early cooperation between the job centre and the treating hospitals and outpatient clinics. Cooperation between the job centre and psychiatry was previously only sporadic. In individual cases, there were very good contacts with the social workers working there. There were no fixed structures of co-operation.</p> <p>As a rule, the job centre has no knowledge of the current status of therapy and the associated performance in terms of occupational integration. The use of an increasingly dynamic labour market as a stable basis for sustainable professional integration and direct access to companies are associated with great efforts and a high level of personal commitment for employees of therapeutic facilities.</p> <p>For this reason, vocational reintegration that is appropriate to the patient's condition should begin at the therapeutic centre. The treating psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers are involved in the occupational reintegration process at an early stage (joint conferences, joint planning of the reintegration strategy) because they are the experts for the mental resilience and performance of those affected and can therefore react professionally to possible crisis situations during the occupational reintegration process or counteract them at an early stage.</p> <p>The job centre supports and coordinates the entire professional reintegration process.</p>
<i>Innovation</i>	Cooperation between the areas of psychiatry and job placement in order to better place mentally ill people back in the labour market.
<i>What can be transferred to other contexts</i>	Expansion to other target groups with health restrictions (e.g. addiction, cancer, etc.)
Link	https://www.landkreis-oder-spree.de

Name of best practice	Skrbovin'ca store
Country	SLOVENIA
Type:	Job placement
Year of implementation (from 2019)	2017 till now
<i>Description of the initial situation</i>	<p>The initial situation encompassed a landscape where individuals with disabilities encountered significant barriers to employment, social integration, and skill development. Limited opportunities in the traditional job market often left them marginalized and economically disadvantaged. Additionally, there was a lack of platforms that recognized and utilized their talents and abilities. This context underscored the pressing need for initiatives like Skrbovin'ca, which aimed to address these challenges by providing inclusive employment opportunities, fostering social inclusion, and supporting skill development within the community.</p>
<i>Needs</i>	Skrbovin'ca was established to meet the multifaceted needs of individuals with disabilities, providing them with employment opportunities, fostering social inclusion, facilitating skill

	development, and garnering community support. Through its innovative approach, the store serves as a beacon of empowerment and advocacy, addressing the challenges faced by marginalized individuals and promoting a more inclusive society.
<i>Main objective</i>	The main goal of Skrbovin'ca was to provide individuals with disabilities meaningful employment opportunities, develop valuable skills, and foster social inclusion within the community.
<i>Challenge addressed</i>	Potential challenges for Skrbovin'ca include ensuring accessibility of the store, securing financial sustainability, meeting market demand for products, providing adequate training and support for employees with disabilities, addressing societal stigma, navigating regulatory compliance, and fostering collaboration with local partners to maximize impact within the community.
<i>Contents</i>	In the bustling city centre vibrant storefronts featuring charming fabric and woollen toys alongside meticulously crafted handmade goods catch the eye of passers-by. Skrbovin'ca stands as a testament to collaborative efforts in the realm of social enterprise. Skrbovin'ca represents a pioneering initiative, uniting the resources and expertise of four prominent Ljubljana-based sheltered workshops: the Janez Levec Work and Employment Centre, the Association of Societies for Cerebral Palsy Sun, the Tončka Hočevar Work Centre, and the company for training and employing individuals with disabilities in Želva. Together and with the strong support of the Municipality of Ljubljana, these entities administer diverse employment programs tailored to individuals grappling with intellectual disabilities and other obstacles, facilitating skill development and fostering active societal participation.
<i>Innovation</i>	The innovation in this initiative lies in its collaborative, inclusive, and fair trade approach to addressing social and economic challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. By bringing together multiple sheltered workshops and organizations under one roof to create Skrbovin'ca, the initiative fosters synergies and leverages resources to support employment opportunities and skill development for individuals with disabilities. This collaborative model not only promotes inclusivity in the workforce but also demonstrates the potential for social enterprises to drive positive change and foster economic empowerment within marginalized communities. Additionally, Skrbovin'ca's transformation from sporadic sales to a permanent fair trade establishment underscores its commitment to ethical business practices, ensuring that artisans receive fair compensation for their work. This approach emphasizes collaboration, inclusivity, sustainability, and fair trade principles, making Skrbovin'ca an innovative and impactful initiative in the realm of social entrepreneurship.
<i>What can be transferred to other contexts</i>	Several aspects of the Skrbovin'ca initiative can be transferred to other contexts to promote social inclusion and economic empowerment for individuals with disabilities. This includes adopting collaborative models to leverage resources effectively, implementing inclusive employment practices, prioritizing fair trade principles, engaging with the community through workshops and events, and ensuring sustainability and scalability in project design. By replicating these strategies, similar initiatives can maximize their

	impact and support the well-being of marginalized communities in various contexts.
Link	https://skupnost-vdc.si/2017/12/01/skrbovinca/

Name of best practice	Blindspot – Arbeitsmarkt Inklusiv
Country	Switzerland
Type	SMEs training
Year of implementation	2024
<i>Description of the initial situation</i>	People with disabilities trying to find employment
<i>Needs</i>	Support and knowledge transfer for organisations wanting to become more diverse and employ people with disabilities
<i>Main objective</i>	Employment of people with disabilities
<i>Challenge addressed</i>	Lacking support for organisations wanting to employ people with disabilities
<i>Contents</i>	<p>Within the framework of the project "Arbeitsmarkt Inklusiv" Blindspot carries out awareness-raising and counselling work for employers. They don't only want to show that inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market is possible and enriching, but also represents an important competitive advantage for companies. By following principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as the achievement of the goals "Less Inequalities" (#10 Reduced Inequalities) of the UN Agenda 2030 (UN Sustainable Development Goals) sustainable organizations engage in inclusive work structures.</p> <p>Blindspot has several years of experience in the inclusion of people with disabilities in the primary labour market. With this experience and the inclusion expertise they advise and accompany employers and organizations on their way to an inclusive corporate culture, an inclusive work environment and diverse teams. With the goal of jointly achieving long-term sustainable inclusion of people with disabilities in the primary labour market.</p> <p>As part of the project, they also organize public awareness-raising events, carry out educational missions at universities and conduct workshops or lectures.</p>
<i>Innovation</i>	In their consulting mandates, Blindspot focuses on holistic and long-term inclusion effects and conveys this natural cooperation at eye level with people with and without impairments. They are pioneers in inclusion with their real-life projects. To further advance this in our society, they pass on what they have learned and work strongly network based.
<i>What can be transferred to other contexts</i>	Blindspot has modular consulting offers that enables standardized and yet individualized consulting and support to customers. After an evaluation of the status quo of the company and the willingness and motivation to promote inclusion, they evaluate possible goals and procedures together – depending on the situation and the needs, these vary from raising awareness among employees, offering internships to hiring people with disabilities. Their

	<p>approach is based on an inclusion index adapted to the labour market with three phases and individually adapted measures. Blindspot further offers a toolbox with different guidelines and tools to further the inclusion of people with disabilities.</p>
Link	https://blindspot.ch/en/inclusion-projects/labor-market-for-inclusion

Name of best practice	Equo Cream Aut Cafè
Country	Italy
Type:	Job placement
Year of implementation (from 2019)	2024
<i>Description of the initial situation</i>	In Caltanissetta, a municipality in Sicily, the social inclusion project was born on the initiative of the Asp n.2 of Caltanissetta, in collaboration with the social cooperative Etnos. The bar is employing and train the persons with disability to promote social and work inclusion.
<i>Needs</i>	The need was to include persons with disabilities in social and work life.
<i>Main objective</i>	Create the work opportunity for the persons with disability, but also work on social inclusion as the work place is a local bar.
<i>Challenge addressed</i>	
<i>Contents</i>	The supportive café became Equo Cream aut cafè, the first social catering reality in Sicily to have a focus on people with autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities. Aut Cafè is a special place where the creams, croissants and above all Sicilian ice cream, the emblem of taste, sweetness and lightheartedness, have literally turned into a symbol and instrument of inclusion , contributing to the transformation of what had been Equo cream aut cafè, the solidarity ice cream shop into, precisely Aut Cafè, the bistro of inclusion, promoted by Etnos and with the participation of Fabbri 1905, which supports the Nissena reality both in the supply of ingredients and in staff training.
<i>Innovation</i>	It is the first social catering in Sicily that is provided by persons with disability, most of them on people with autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities.
<i>What can be transferred to other contexts</i>	This is a great example of job placement that can be replayed but also transferred in a different type of activity which services can be lead by persons with disability.
Link	https://www.facebook.com/autcafe

Name of best practice	Nationaler Aktionsplan Behinderung (engl.: National Action Plan on Disability)
Country	Austria
Type:	The long-term strategy of the federal government for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Year of implementation (from 2019)	2022-2030
Description of the initial situation	Discrimination and exclusion of people with disabilities.
Needs	The plan addresses the need for concrete measures and indicators to implement the rights of people with disabilities effectively. It aims to provide a framework for coordinating efforts across various sectors to promote inclusion and accessibility.
Main objective	<p>The National Action Plan on Disability is a comprehensive program aimed at promoting the implementation of human rights for people with disabilities and enhancing their vocational participation.</p> <p>The last NAP expired in 2021, and the current one is in effect from 2022 to 2030. Its objective is to implement the rights of people with disabilities through concrete measures and indicators. The process is coordinated by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Long-Term Care, and Consumer Protection. Civil society organisations such as the Austrian Disability Council can contribute substantive proposals. The development of the new plan was carried out through working groups focusing on various thematic areas. The new NAP will serve as a guiding framework for disability policy over the next eight years, advancing the implementation of the rights of people with disabilities.</p>
Challenge addressed	The plan addresses the challenge of ensuring the full implementation of the rights of people with disabilities and enhancing their vocational participation by providing a comprehensive framework and coordinated approach across various sectors.
Contents	The plan includes concrete measures and indicators for promoting the rights of people with disabilities and enhancing their vocational participation. It involves input from civil society organisations and thematic working groups to address various aspects of disability policy.
Innovation	The plan demonstrates innovation by providing a comprehensive and coordinated approach to promoting the rights of people with disabilities and enhancing their vocational participation. It involves collaboration between government agencies, civil society organisations, and thematic working groups to develop and implement the plan.

What can be transferred to each other contexts	Similar long-term strategies can be developed and implemented in other countries to promote the rights and vocational participation of people with disabilities effectively.
Link	Nationaler Aktionsplan Behinderung in Österreich (sozialministerium.at)

Name of best practice	Initiatives to promote social entrepreneurship by offering discounts and grants to businesses that hire individuals with disabilities
Country	Latvia
Type:	Job placement
Year of implementation (from 2019)	2020
<i>Description of the initial situation</i>	The initial challenging situation before recognizing the opportunity for social entrepreneurship could be a high unemployment rate, particularly for individuals facing difficulties in securing employment. Additionally, there might be a prevailing societal bias or lack of awareness regarding the capabilities of people with disabilities. In this scenario, businesses struggled to find suitable candidates for certain positions, and people with disabilities may face barriers in accessing employment opportunities.
<i>Needs</i>	Equal access to employment opportunities. SMEs often operate with limited resources. To encourage their participation in social entrepreneurship, SMEs may need financial support in the form of grants, subsidies, or tax incentives. These can offset the costs associated with making workplaces more accessible and accommodating for individuals with disabilities.
<i>Main objective</i>	To foster inclusivity and diversity in the workforce
<i>Challenge addressed</i>	The employment disparity and social exclusion
<i>Contents</i>	In Latvia there are implemented initiatives to promote social entrepreneurship by offering discounts and grants to businesses that hire individuals with disabilities. This progressive approach aims to address the employment challenges faced by people with disabilities and encourage inclusive practices in the workplace.
<i>Innovation</i>	SMEs in Latvia may receive financial incentives in the form of discounts when they hire individuals with disabilities. These discounts could potentially cover a range of expenses associated with creating accessible work environments and making

	<p>necessary accommodations. The specific details of these discounts may vary, but they are designed to alleviate some of the financial burdens that businesses may incur while fostering an inclusive work environment.</p> <p>Additionally, SMEs in Latvia may have access to grants specifically designated for hiring individuals with disabilities. These grants could provide financial support to cover various aspects of the employment process, including training, workplace modifications, and assistive technologies. The grants aim to incentivize businesses to actively engage in social entrepreneurship, recognizing the positive impact of a diverse and inclusive workforce.</p> <p>To qualify for these discounts and grants, SMEs need to meet specific criteria outlined by government or private agencies overseeing these programs. Criteria may include the percentage of individuals with disabilities in the workforce, the nature of accommodations provided, and the overall commitment to maintaining an inclusive workplace.</p>
<i>What can be transferred to other contexts</i>	
Link	https://sua.lv/

Name of best practice	Project Disability can be an opportunity
Country	Slovenia
Type:	Vocational Training program Practice or methodology aiming at boosting employment of people with disabilities
Year of implementation (from 2019)	2019–2021
<i>Description of the initial situation</i>	The initial situation of the "Disability is an Opportunity" project involved a lack of employment opportunities and social integration for people with disabilities, particularly in rural areas. Individuals with disabilities often faced barriers to accessing meaningful employment and skills development programs. Additionally, there was limited awareness and support within the agricultural sector for employing individuals with disabilities. This context highlighted the need for initiatives like "Disability is an Opportunity" to address these challenges and create inclusive employment opportunities within rural communities.
<i>Needs</i>	The "Disability is an Opportunity" project addressed several pressing needs within the community. Firstly, it aimed to tackle the lack of employment opportunities for people with disabilities, particularly in rural areas where job options were limited. Additionally, the project sought to provide access to training and skill development programs to enhance the employability of individuals with disabilities. Social inclusion was also a key focus, as the project aimed to combat social isolation and marginalization faced by many individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the project aimed to raise awareness and provide support within the agricultural sector for employing individuals with disabilities, fostering a more inclusive and supportive community environment.

	Ultimately, the project aimed to create sustainable job opportunities that consider the specific needs and abilities of people with disabilities, promoting long-term success and independence in the workforce.
<i>Main objective</i>	The main objective of the "Disability is an Opportunity" project was to create new employment opportunities for people with disabilities in rural areas, particularly on farms, by developing new activities, training professionals, and promoting social inclusion within the agricultural sector.
<i>Challenge addressed</i>	Project tackled various social challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. It aimed to combat employment discrimination and social isolation by creating new job opportunities on farms, promoting social inclusion, and challenging stereotypes surrounding disability. Additionally, the project addressed the lack of access to training and support services by providing tailored programs to enhance employability and independence. Overall, the project aimed to foster a more inclusive society by breaking down barriers and promoting equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
<i>Contents</i>	The "Disability is an Opportunity" project, led by the Papilot Employment Centre in Koper, aimed to create new employment opportunities for people with disabilities in rural areas, particularly on farms. Collaborating with Farm Prestranek, the project focused on integrating activities in agriculture, tourism, and education. Training courses were conducted for professionals to work with individuals with disabilities, resulting in the development of successful training models. Activities such as culinary arts, handicrafts, and recreational horsemanship were introduced, along with new activities like passenger transport by horse-drawn carriages and animal riding. The project also promoted employment opportunities for people with disabilities within the agricultural sector, sensitizing the local community on the importance of inclusion. Overall, the project's results not only benefited individuals by opening new employment avenues but also had broader social implications for the rural community, promoting skills acquisition and independence.
<i>Innovation</i>	The "Disability is an Opportunity" project introduced innovative approaches to address employment and social inclusion for people with disabilities in rural areas. It created tailored job opportunities within the agricultural sector and implemented practical training models for professionals. Collaboration among stakeholders fostered social inclusion and sustainable employment. Additionally, the project disseminated knowledge and best practices to encourage replication in other regions, emphasizing its innovative contributions to social and economic empowerment in rural communities.
<i>What can be transferred to other contexts</i>	Several aspects of the "Disability is an Opportunity" project offer transferable insights. Its tailored job opportunities and practical training models can be applied across industries to accommodate individuals with disabilities. Additionally, its collaborative approach and dissemination of knowledge can be replicated to foster social inclusion and create sustainable employment opportunities in various contexts.
Link	https://zelenisvet.com/oviranost-je-lahko-priloznost/

Conclusions & suggestions

Despite the fact that in the countries where research has been done and in general at the level of the European Union the right to work is guaranteed to persons with disabilities, through laws and various measures, statistics (where they are made) often show the situation to be far from their inclusion in employment. One possible solution would be to have more supervision over the employment of people with disabilities, ensuring that laws are enforced.

SMEs should be supported in their decision to employ people with disabilities, providing them with the appropriate support in terms of staff training, job trainers and support to ensure full inclusion not only on a personal level but also in terms of physical spaces. Seeing the number of SMEs increasing at the European level, they should be encouraged to hire people with disabilities, not only from a legislative standpoint (where it does not exist), but also from a motivational standpoint thus ensuring greater employability of people with the disability.

People with disabilities have the need to work to ensure inclusion for them at the social level as well. In order to secure jobs for them, it is necessary to take some regulations that will be able to guarantee them not only jobs, but also support to ensure a sustainable employment. Ensuring workspaces that are inclusive, providing them with the necessary training for carrying out the work for which they are hired, adapting the type of work and flexibility from the point of view of working hours and also the timings in carrying out the tasks and when it is necessary also support in carrying out.

Breaking stereotypes and motivating the employment of people with disabilities will lead to greater inclusion.

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