



Equality Future in Europe - Guidebook of Inclusion - Good Practices



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AUTHOR



ACTA European Center – ROMANIA
www.actacenter.ro

CONTRIBUTORS



ACTION SYNERGY - GREECE

www.action.gr



CO-LABORY – ITALY

www.co-labory.com



EUROSUCCESS CONSULTING – CYPRUS

<https://www.eurosc.eu/en/>



Polska Fundacja Ośrodków
Wspomagania Rozwoju Gospodarczego
„OIC Poland” w Lublinie

OIC - POLAND

<https://www.oic.lublin.pl/>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Equality Future in Europe” Guidebook of Inclusion - Good Practices is realized by performing extended research on best practices and initiatives regarding strategies promoted within the companies, in order to change the characteristics of the work environment through the recruitment, inclusion and promotion of workers who are an expression of the diversity present in society. The Guidebook is a practical result that can be used by workers, host organizations, companies, experts working with the disabled, engaged in finding solutions to integrate disabled people into social and work contexts. This output of the project is prepared as a publication in the form of an eBook and showcase the project, making the case for the need to recognize the problem of disability in relation to work. The research cover initiatives of any kind that aims to tackle the problem in the partner countries. The aim of the research is to focus on the methodologies, strategies, initiatives and practices used by the institutions, companies or organizations to facilitate and integrate disabled people in the labour market or in the work environment. This activity ensure that the guidebook contains the research covering best practices and initiatives in term of strategies promoted in each partner country, in order to:

- to change the characteristics of the work environment through the recruitment
- inclusion and promotion of workers who are an expression of the diversity present in society

For EFE project, the research means desktop research, using data, elements, and information derived from public and private institutions or organisations, and other national and regional authorities.

The project partner analysed at their country level the social integration of the disabled people and the factors that condition and hinder employment of these persons (lack of education, career orientation and counselling, socio-economic problems, labour market and social policy issue, social ignorance).

The desk research includes identification of the existing strategies, techniques, methods, initiatives and programmes or projects at each project country level in order to create a future of Equality in Europe. The research that was carried out allow a design and implementation of an ITC tool that would manage all processes and to ensure the identification and diagnosis of the needed competencies of the beneficiaries of the project.

All project partners have identified and used a wide range of reliable sources starting from document analyses, assessments, surveys to case studies, observations and statistical databases.

The project consortium has thus agreed that its goal is not to try to leapfrog existing solutions (in-house solutions of countries and institutions) but rather to provide practical and theoretical tools to support disabled people in the workplace.

The implementation of the “Equality Future in Europe – EFE” project based on the conclusions of the Desk-Research, is evident that is a starting point for a development that will have far-reaching positive consequences for the VET sector and how disabled people are integrated in Europe.

1. MAIN TYPES OF DISABILITIES

As a first step, have been analysed the main types of disabilities to identify existing definitions and standards, recommendations by European institutions and bodies related disability term in order to create a foundation which serves to conduct the further research.

1.1 Defining disability. Origins

Originally, the term 'handicapped' did not refer to those who lacked something, but to those who performed better than others. It has been used in gambling since the 16th century and is therefore associated with the principle of a level playing field. At race tracks, stronger competitors are handicapped to reduce their chances of winning by adding extra weight before the start of the race. That levels the odds. With the outcome of the race having become uncertain, bets can be placed at random again. It amounts to putting the name of each horse into a hat and picking out the winner: 'hand in cap'!

It is not known exactly when, how and why the term went from referring to the limitation of the best horses' ability to human ability, but over the centuries the terms 'handicap' and 'handicapped' came to replace the more pejorative and degrading terms. From then on, the term 'handicap' has been widely used to denote a disadvantage, be it economic, social or physical.

1.2 The two disability models

Since the 1960s, there have been two main ways of thinking about disability: the medical model and the social model. Each model is based on a different idea about the relationship between an individual's health and the environment in which they live:

The medical model focuses on the person's medical condition – illness or injury – which is the direct cause of their disability and may have an impact on their quality of life. A medical intervention may be necessary to diagnose and treat the disability and/or to maintain or increase the person's abilities.

The social model focuses on the barriers created by society. Those may be physical or social restrictions, which prevent the abilities – physical, social or professional –, which each individual needs to thrive.

Before the 1970s, people with disabilities were viewed as medical failures and victims of circumstance, deserving of pity. These were the chief characteristics of the 'medical model' of disability, which placed the problem firmly with the individual and assumed that only a medical 'cure' could remove it.

Against this dominant model, a major shift in thinking took place in the 1960s, initially in the United States, with the 'independent living movement'. The paradigm shift sees the solution to the problem of disability in the restructuring of society and removal of barriers. This understanding of disability is referred to as the Social Model. It focuses on eliminating the barriers, promoting positive attitudes and making sure that laws and policies support the exercise of full participation and non-discrimination. It suggests that the individual and collective disadvantages suffered by people with disabilities are mainly a result of a complex form of institutional discrimination that is as deep-seated in our society.

The Medical model asks:	The Social model asks:
What is wrong with you?	What is wrong with society? What social, economic, political and/or environmental conditions need to be changed to facilitate the full enjoyment of all rights by all people with disabilities?
Are your difficulties in understanding people mainly due to a hearing problem?	Are your difficulties in understanding people mainly a result of their inability to communicate with you?
Did you move here because of your health problem?	What deficiencies in your housing caused you to move here?
Does your health problem / disability prevent you from going out as often or as far as you would like?	Are there any transport or financial problems preventing you from going out as often or as far as you would like?

1.3 International Classifications – ICDH, ICF

In 1980, the World Health Organisation (WHO) adopted the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) in which disability is understood as a person's ability, or lack thereof, to perform the social, economic and civil roles required of everybody in their daily lives. This means that environment creates disability, although it does of course originate from impairment.

The ICIDH therefore goes beyond the conventional medical model making up the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) by highlighting the impact of environmental and social norms on the disability process.

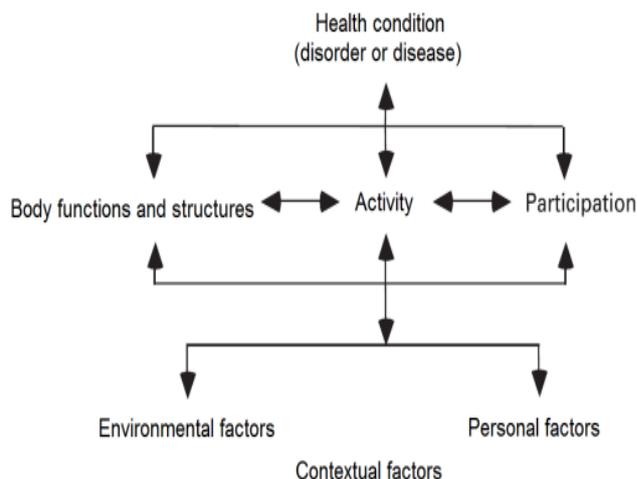
Based on Dr Philip Wood's model, the ICIDH combines three aspects of disability to formulate the social and medical model:

- **impairment**: structural or functional anomaly in the body (e.g., amputation, spinal cord injury, auditory or optical nerve deficiency, paraplegia);
- **disability**: restriction of the person's activities owing to a deficiency (e.g., inability to hear, walk, see, stand up or talk);
- **handicap**: restriction of the person's ability to perform their social role in full (e.g., earn a living, study, work).

To take that further and unify the two disability models – the medical and the social – by creating a new three-dimensional model, the WHO replaced the ICIDH with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) in 2001. It combines biomedical, psychological and social models and creates a common vocabulary and descriptive framework for the term 'functioning' (see Diagram 1).

Diagram 1 – Representation of the disability model of the International Classification of Functioning,

Disability and Health (ICF). Reference: WHO, 2001



The purpose of the ICF is to establish an open classification taking into account three aspects of an individual's 'functioning':

- body functions;
- functions related to the person's activities;
- functions which enable the person to participate in society.

On the basis of those three basic dimensions – body, activity and participation – the ICF model integrates the medical dimension of health conditions while referring to the context in which the individual lives and the society to which he or she belongs.

In line with the ICF, the UNCRPD of 2006 adopted a very broad definition of disability:

'Persons with disabilities include 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' (Article 1).

1.4 Classification of disabilities

Categories of disability types include various physical and mental impairments that can hamper or reduce a person's ability to carry out their day-to-day activities. These impairments can be termed as disability of the person to do his/her day-to-day activities. Disability can be broken down into a number of broad sub-categories, which include the following 8 main types of disability.

- Mobility/Physical
- Spinal Cord (SCI)
- Head Injuries (TBI)
- Vision
- Hearing
- Cognitive/Learning
- Psychological
- Invisible

I. Mobility and Physical Impairments

This category of disability includes people with varying types of physical disabilities including: upper limb(s) disability, lower limb(s) disability, manual dexterity, disability in co-ordination with different organs of the body. Disability in mobility can be either an in-born or acquired with age problem. It could also be the effect of a disease. People who have a broken bone also fall into this category of disability.

II. Spinal Cord Disability

Spinal cord injury (SCI) can sometimes lead to lifelong disabilities. This kind of injury mostly occurs due to severe accidents. The injury can be either complete or incomplete. In an incomplete injury, the messages conveyed by the spinal cord is not completely lost. Whereas a complete injury results in a total dis-functioning of the sensory organs. In some cases, spinal cord disability can be a birth defect.

III. Head Injuries - Brain Disability

A disability in the brain occurs due to a brain injury. The magnitude of the brain injury can range from mild, moderate and severe. There are two types of brain injuries: acquired brain injury (ABI), traumatic brain injury (TBI). ABI is not a hereditary type defect but is the degeneration that occurs after birth. The causes of such cases of injury are many and are mainly because of external forces applied to the body parts. TBI results in emotional dysfunction and behavioural disturbance.

IV. Vision Disability

There are hundreds of thousands of people that have minor to various serious vision disability or impairments. These injuries can also result into some serious problems or diseases like blindness and ocular trauma, to name a few. Some of the common vision impairment includes scratched cornea, scratches on the sclera, diabetes related eye conditions, dry eyes and corneal graft.

V. Hearing Disability

Hearing disabilities include people that are completely or partially deaf, ('deaf' is the politically correct term for a person with hearing impairment). People who are partially deaf can often use hearing aids to assist their hearing. Deafness can be evident at birth or occur later in life from several biologic causes, for example, meningitis can damage the auditory nerve or the cochlea. Deaf people use sign language as a means of communication. Hundreds of sign languages are in use around the world. In linguistic terms, sign languages are as rich and complex as any oral language, despite the common misconception that they are not "*real languages*".

VI. Cognitive or Learning Disabilities

Cognitive disabilities are kind of impairments present in people who are suffering from dyslexia and various other learning difficulties and include speech disorders.

VII. Psychological Disorders

Affective Disorders: disorders of mood or feeling states either short or long term.

Mental Health Impairment is the term used to describe people who have experienced psychiatric problems or illness such as:

Personality Disorders - defined as deeply inadequate patterns of behaviour and thought of sufficient severity to cause significant impairment to day-to-day activities.

Schizophrenia: A mental disorder characterized by disturbances of thinking, mood, and behaviour.

VIII. Invisible Disabilities

Invisible Disabilities are disabilities that are not immediately apparent to others.

1.5 The diversity of disability

Generalizations about "disability" or "*people with disabilities*" can mislead.

- Persons with disabilities have diverse personal factors with differences in gender, age, socioeconomic status, sexuality, ethnicity, or cultural heritage. Each has his or her personal preferences and responses to disability.

- Also, while disability correlates with disadvantage, not all people with disabilities are equally disadvantaged.
- Women with disabilities experience the combined disadvantages associated with gender as well as disability, and may be less likely to marry than non-disabled women.
- People who experience mental health conditions or intellectual impairments appear to be more disadvantaged in many settings than those who experience physical or sensory impairments.
- People with more severe impairments often experience greater disadvantage, as shown by evidence ranging from rural Guatemala to employment data from Europe. Conversely, wealth and status can help overcome activity limitations and participation restrictions.

2. National realities

To deepen the Desk Research, this chapter presents the national realities, an overview covering best practices and initiatives in term of strategies promoted in each partner country and how disability can be integrated into the workplace.

2.1 The importance of the field of research

CYPRUS

Despite the progress that was made over the last few years in Cyprus in promoting the rights of disabled people in employment and therefore, social inclusion, there is still a lot of space for the improvement of various policies and strategies. At this stage, national research is considered to be very significant for the national project partners, as a lot of concern is raised because of the lack of national data on disability. More specifically, even though some data is available, is significantly undermined. The "Department for the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities" is the responsible body in Cyprus for monitoring the national central database for people with disabilities. The database is based on the International Classification of Functionality, Disability and Health issued by the World Health Organisation. In more detail, the pertinent department is aiming to promote social protection and inclusion, and enhance the levels of employment (Department for the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, 2021). As a new department of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance of the Republic of Cyprus, it has been established from 2009, based on four organisational sectors such as, (a) Management of the System for the Assessment of Disability and Functioning, (b) Social Benefits, (c) Vocational Training and Other Support Services and (d) Focal Point for the implementation of the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Its main responsibilities are the:

- Provision of assessments and certifications of disability and functioning
- Provision of social benefits to persons with disabilities
- Provision of direct and indirect vocational rehabilitation and other support services
- Coordination of the effective implementation of the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the National Disability Action Plan.

Even though the Department for the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities has been established years back, recent case studies prove that people with disabilities face various socioeconomic and health challenges. According to this, the national online news portal Cyprus Mail published in February 2021 a recent Eurostat report that took place across various countries including Cyprus (2019), to highlight the financial problems people with disabilities face. To be more specific, the report addressed

the population over 16 years old with activity limitations, having difficulties making ends meet, with Cyprus having one of the highest percentages (43.2%) of adults with disabilities among EU countries. Moreover, another Eurostat survey (2017), also published in the Cyprus Mail online portal (2018) concluded that 20% of people in Cyprus over 16 years old reported having a long-term disability. The survey found that people in Cyprus felt some/severe limitations in getting involved and performing everyday activities for a period or six months or longer such as, studying, working, etc.

GREECE

We believe it is vital to focus on this field due to the many reasons people with disabilities are excluded from the labour market and from society in Greece:

- Social prejudice, with social racism, which, as a mindset, is still a structural feature of our society.
- The lack, on the part of the State, of integrated central planning, combining the needs of people with disabilities with education, vocational training and vocational guidance.
- The changes taking place in the labour market, in new technologies and in the economic environment in general, without people with disabilities being assisted by the creation of the necessary support structures to enable them to enter the labour market.
- Administrative bureaucracy in relation to the functioning of the mechanism of forced job placements. (e.g., Law 2643/98 on vacancy notices).
- The lack of access infrastructure for disabled people, such as accessible buildings, transport and others, with the consequence that disabled people are not facilitated to participate in social life.

ITALY

Work for disabled people is not only a right but also a particularly effective tool for combating social exclusion. The work environment therefore becomes an important place of integration. It has been shown how people with mental disabilities are able to make a significant contribution in different work contexts, especially when accompanied with appropriate support actions.

Hence the importance of our research work, in continuity with what is expressed by the Italian Constitution, which states that "the Republic recognizes the right to work for all citizens and promotes the conditions that make this right effective".

Through this article, in other words, the right to work is recognized as an important goal to be achieved. Law 68 of 1999 Rules for the right to work of the disabled established new rules based on the principle of a targeted placement of the person with disabilities, considering and respecting the potential of the worker without at the same time penalizing the expectations of the company he hires.

POLAND

The field research brings attention to the labour market inclusion of people with disabilities in Poland. At the end of 2019, employed disabled persons accounted for 3.6% of the total number of people working in medium and large enterprises out of which the majority were employed in the private sector (76.8%) (Statistics Poland data source, 2020). In the second quarter of 2020, people at working age with illness and disability constituted 23.4% of the economically inactive persons. In this period, also „Own illness or disability” were the third main reason for absences from work (Labour force survey in Poland – II quarter 2020, GUS). The research suggests that the labor market situation of working-age disabled people was and is still more difficult and complex than that of non-disabled workers. Other than the statistics there is also an issue of how disabled-friendly the Polish market is and if there is enough employers’ and employees’ knowledge on disability to ensure its effective management in the workplace.

ROMANIA

Some research studies investigate the socio-professional discrimination of individuals with disabilities in Romania and stress that Romanian employers prefer to pay state contributions to the detriment of employing individuals with disabilities considering that their socio-professional development opportunities are far below those of a person with a normal health condition. The phenomenon of unemployment among people with disabilities is unavoidable and generates devastating consequences on living standards, wellbeing and quality of life. Labour market insertion of individuals with disabilities implies not only hiring them and receiving a sum of money for their work, but also integrating them into the social life of their community. Other empirical studies analyse the duration of unemployment of the people with disabilities in Romania and results show that age, education and economic status have a significant influence on the probability of (re)employment of individuals with disabilities, during the analysed period.

The employment barriers faced by people with disabilities include the reluctance of employers to hire them and the small number of protected workplaces and a lower pay in comparison with the able-bodied employees in the same job position. The educational level has a stronger positive effect for people with disabilities than for non-disabled people. The issue regarding the transition from school to employment has become more important and actual within Romania's economic restructuring. Education is very important in preparing individuals to enter the labour market, by offering them the opportunity to improve and increase their amount of knowledge, skills and abilities. Employees with disabilities can integrate into the workplace accompanied with effective measures focused on empowerment, self-advocacy and social relations over the life span. It is also believed that disabled peoples' experiences enrich the cultural diversity of the workplace. Previous empirical studies have highlighted that family, training (both prior to and during the integration service), monitoring of the worker with disabilities in the workplace, and work setting were relevant and contributing aspects of the process of work integration.

2.2 Field of research - disability integrated in the workplace

CYPRUS

Another Eurostat survey in 2019 (Cyprus Mail, 2021) indicated that 33% of the national population with disabilities was at poverty risk or even social exclusion in 2019, placing Cyprus at the 10th position of all EU member states involved in the survey. To elaborate on this, the president of Cyprus Confederation of Organisations of the Disabled (KYSOA) stated (Cyprus Mail, 2019) that "More than 80 percent of people with disabilities are unemployed" to stress out the critical challenges they face regarding socio-economic inclusion. During the beginning of the COVID-19 period (Cyprus Mail, 2020), he called on the responsible authorities to pay more attention and protect the rights of people with disabilities at these critical times. According to the Recruitment of Persons with Disabilities in the Wider Public Sector (Special Provisions) Law of 2009, a person is defined disabled after a special multidisciplinary committee evaluates any permanent or indefinite physical or mental health limitation that reduces his/her possibility in finding a job (CY Law, 2021). In order disabled people to be able to be part of the public working system according to the provisions of the CY Law and the special multidisciplinary committee, they need to meet three criteria:

- To have the required qualifications;
- To be able to pass written and or/oral exams required for the position they apply for;
- To be deemed suitable to take the position

According to this, the public advocate Mrs. Lottides stated in 2020 (Cyprus Mail) that the public sector exams should be more individualised in order to meet disabled workers' needs. To clarify, she is calling on the public services to committee to make important and immediate adjustments in regards to the exams, especially for the people who have hearing or other special disabilities that do not allow them

to equally assert job positions. Speaking of that, the Department of Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities concludes a special list of candidates with disabilities and selects the number corresponding to 10% of the total number of vacancies to be addressed to disabled workers. Based on the position, in the public sector, the working equipment is adjusted to disabled workers' performance and the required duties of the position in a way that serves the requirements and needs of both, the individuals and the body of which they are hired (Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, 2021). Therefore, the Department of Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities is responsible for the fair treatment and integration of people with disabilities within their workplace, as well as for the evaluation of their progress.

GREECE

Employment of people with disabilities in Greece

The policies for work and employment, or in other words, the fight against unemployment and social exclusion, take on a special importance when it comes to citizens belonging to the category of persons with disabilities. One of the most important tools for the integration of people with disabilities into society is employment. Employment, together with education, are the main levers for the integration of people with disabilities into society, while at the same time the lack of comprehensive intervention policies in these areas is one of the main causes of social exclusion.

In these cases, a large number of complex problems arise, as well as the responsibility of the state and of society as a whole towards these people, who are estimated to make up around 10% of the country's total population. Especially for the disabled, their employment opportunities depend on a number of additional factors which are:

- a. the type of disorders they have
- b. the specialised training to be provided to these persons by the State; and
- c. their acceptance by the local community.

The best and clearest possible picture of the actual situation of people with disabilities in relation to work and employment, by category (age, gender, etc.), would be an additional important tool for the formulation and implementation of policies for the vocational rehabilitation of these people and would be a decisive factor in the effectiveness of the measures to be implemented. In Greece, the exclusion of disabled people from the labour market, particularly in recent years, has reached explosive proportions. According to estimates by OAED, this rate is 80%, while in the EU-15 countries it is 50% on average. The lack of a register of disabled people and the absence of individual databases for the processing of specific qualitative and quantitative data means that all the measures taken from time to time have been fragmentary.

The Ombudsman's Report (June 2005) clearly describes the situation in the employment sector with regard to the implementation of Law 2643/1998 and administrative procedures in general.

In order to integrate disabled people into the labour market, our country has adopted the model of forced job placements. However, social discrimination against people with disabilities by public and private sector enterprises is common. As pointed out in the Ombudsman's Report, a large number of disabled workers do not have sufficient information about the documents required for employment, so that applications are rejected due to lack of the necessary documents. In particular, private sector companies systematically refuse to hire people with disabilities for jobs. Social prejudices, as well as inadequate vocational training, are the main reasons for refusing to recruit workers with disabilities.

At the same time, programmes funded by the European Union and the Greek State for vocational training and education have been developed and implemented throughout this period, through the three Community Support Frameworks. However, it does not appear that these have so far contributed to their main objective, which is to reduce unemployment of people with disabilities.

The lack of indicators for evaluating these programmes in terms of the results they produce has the direct consequence, on the one hand, of wasting resources and, on the other hand, of training of

dubious quality and effectiveness. Vocational guidance is practically absent from the activities of the bodies responsible for the rehabilitation of disabled people, and the training programmes that are implemented do not meet the qualitative criteria necessary to offer the disabled people who participate in them adequate training to meet the needs of the labour market.

The integration of people with disabilities into the labour market is not an easy task, given the major problem of unemployment and a market that is constantly being increasingly competitive and with demands on the labour force of increasingly specialised skills, they face great difficulties in integrating into the labour market.

ITALY

According to the data relating to 2018, people with disabilities represent in Italy a universe of almost 360,000 employed employees, made up mostly of men (they are 58.7% compared to 41.3% women), mostly resident in Italy. Northern Italy (56.3%), respectively 32.6% in the North West and 23.7% in the North East; 22.3% are employed in the Center, while only 21.4% in the South.

This is a fairly long-lived employment segment if we consider that more than half (53.7%) are over fifty and 14.3% are over 60, while the share of those who are less than 40 years (17.5%): a figure that differs significantly from the general figure for Italian employment at additions, where the share of "under 40" and "over 50" is quite similar (respectively 36% and 34%) and this is attributable to a number of factors: the delay in access to work for people with disabilities and the of a mechanism of inclusion that tends to over-represent the more adult groups.

The national legislation on targeted placement envisages as a condition of enrolment a disability percentage of over 45%, which can reach up to 100%, but it is clear that recruitments tend to focus on the mildest levels of disability: the majority of the employed (61.9%) have a disability level below 67%, the average 18.5%, between 67% and 79% while 14.2% have a severe disability, over 80%.

Tendentially in the regions of the North East the share of employed with mild disabilities is higher than in the rest of Italy, while the North West is the area that has a higher incidence of employed with severe disability. An important contribution is made from this point of view by Lombardy, a region where the greater employment density corresponds to a more effective ability to integrate even those with more serious situations, considering that almost 20% of the employed have a disability greater than 80%.

POLAND

The employment rate of disabled people in Poland is still one of the lowest in the European Union. Among the 3.5 million disabled people at the working age, fewer than 0.5 million of them work. This issue results from many factors, e.g., the reluctance of employers to employ the disabled and the ineffective policy in this area in Poland. According to OECD studies, Poland is one of the countries with a very low employment rate of the disabled and it is one of the countries in Europe in which the difference between the employment rate of abled and disabled people is the highest. In Western European countries, employers have known for some time now that the disabled can be good employees and can achieve professional success. The Labour.

Force Survey (GUS LFS) as of 3 April 2018 indicates that in Poland in 2017 the professional activity rate of legally disabled people at the working age was 28.9%, while in the previous year it was 26.8%, and in 2015 - 25.9%. In 2017, out of 1.680 million legally disabled people at the working age, 1.194 million were passive, and 486,000 were professionally active, while two years before these numbers were respectively 1.864 million, 1.381 million and 483,000 people. This positive tendency is certainly related to the good economic situation, and thus the situation on the labour market - the unemployment rate which amounted to 13% in 2015 decreased to 9.3% in 2017. The number of employers (employers who operate on the open market) who hire people with disabilities is also growing (according to data as of 3 April 2018) - 27 500 in December 2016 up to 29 300 in December 2017. The right to work of disabled people in Poland is regulated under Article 69 of the Polish Constitution, which provides those public

authorities shall provide assistance to disabled people in securing their existence, with regard to social communication and preparation for work. Furthermore, according to the Charter of Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 1997, people with disabilities have "the right to work on the open labour market in accordance with their qualifications, education and opportunities, and to use professional counselling and intermediation, and when the disability and health state requires so - the right to work in conditions adapted to the needs of the disabled". Separate regulations are included in the Labour Code, which stipulates that, inter alia, any discrimination related to employment, direct or indirect, in particular due to gender, age, disability, race, religion, nationality, political beliefs, trade union membership, ethnic origin, faith, sexual orientation, as well as employment for a definite or indefinite period of time, full-time or part-time - is unacceptable.

ROMANIA

"Disability" – dizabilitate- in Romanian is a term used to characterise a heterogeneous group with limited activity and restriction of participation, secondary to a significant loss or deviation of the functions or structures of the organism. It can be congenital or acquired, reversible (or not, with gradual aggravation), with various degrees of severity. Disability can be correlated with disadvantage, but not all disabled people are equally disadvantaged [1] (speaking from medical, as well social points of view, an associated sensorial deficiency with a physical one, such as blindness with complete paraplegia, or overlapping a frustrating poverty, with old age and a severe paralysis, are extremely difficult). Some people acquired disability during their active labour activity; others may have never worked. In communist times, people with disabilities were referred to as 'handicapped', term which lasted well into the 90s and which now is avoided due to its offending connotation. The main trend in communist Romania was to institutionalise people with disabilities from early ages until adulthood. Little to no empowerment was given to this category of people, especially in the case of mental or psychic disability. Treatment was mainly in the form of medication as psychological therapy was forbidden in those times. As there was no birth control available, many unwanted babies used to end up in orphanages, where, due to improper care, a big proportion would develop disabilities which made their integration in the society very difficult. The 90s were a period when new services were created to assist this social group, new laws were passed to recognise a number of rights. Although these initiatives were welcome, the collective mental of the society and a more tolerant attitude towards people with disability was to begin to shape only after good 15 years of democracy and more specifically, once Romania became a member of UE in 2007. according to the Romanian law no. 448 regarding the protection and promotion of the rights of the disabled people [5/1], there are 10 types of handicap: physical, visual, hearing, deaf-mute, somatic, mental, psychic, HIV/AIDS associated, rare diseases, and 4 levels/ degree of handicap: mild (IV), medium (III), accentuated (II) and severe (I). In 2015 the number of non-institutionalised disabled adults, was 680,340 [2, 3].

Disabled people in Romania classified as severe (I) degree of handicap represents 35.77% of the total number (a slight growing tendency, in comparison with 35.26% in 2014, respectively 34.01% in 2013, reflecting the ascendant prevalence of disability due to population ageing and the global increase in chronic health conditions [2, 3]). The percentage of people with accentuated degree of handicap was 52.54% (in 2015), in comparison with 52.97% in 2014, and 53.80% in 2013. People with medium and mild degree of handicap represented 11.69% (in 2015), 11.77% (in 2014) and 12.19% (in 2013) of the total amount of disabled persons [2, 3].

According to the National Authority for Disabled Persons in Romania, on December 31st , 2016, 3.54% of Romania's population was represented by disabled people (DP), a total of 786,546 people. Only 17.97% of the total number of PD (who are fit for work) were employed by the end of 2016 (ANPD, 2017), compared to the total population of Romania where, on the report of data provided by the Institute of Statistics in Romania, the employment rate was 63.9% (INS, 2018). The evolution of the employment rate over the last 5 years in Romania International Archives of Medicine.

3. Social integration of the disabled people. Factors that condition and hinder their employment

The chapter analyses the integration of people with disabilities and factors that contribute to employment: education, vocational guidance and counselling, socio-economic issues, the problem of the labor market and social policy, social ignorance.

3.1 Integration of disabled people into **national** social and work contexts

CYPRUS

Eurosucces Consulting, following desk and field research, concluded that even though people with disabilities can nowadays have more opportunities in applying for various job vacancies, the data available is limited. To explain, even though the Law on the Recruitment of People with Disabilities in the Wider Public Sector has been considered a positive measure over the last few years, there is still a lot of space for improvement in regards to the social integration of people with disabilities within the workplace. To elaborate on this, people with disabilities can be appointed to many admission positions in the public sector (permanently, hourly, temporarily), except in call centre positions or positions that their performance requires the absence of any physical or mental disability such as the Army, National Guard, Police, Fire Service and Prisons, etc. Therefore, in order to be able to perceive a job position, they need to be assessed with three basic criteria:

- a. to have the required qualifications to be fulfilled
- b. pass any written and/or oral examinations required for the position
- c. be deemed suitable for the job position

In order to provide a better employability future, the Social Integration Department of People with Disabilities in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Insurance have developed a reference form for evaluating the disability and working ability of a graduate school or secondary school student, with the main aim to strengthen employment and inclusion. The reference form requires the consent of the student's guardian and the responsible teacher, and is completed by the competent Educational Officer and signed by the principal of the school. The form refers to the disabled student prior training or professional experience that has been already completed and requests detailed description on the knowledge, skills and competencies that have been gained. Such information must match the requirements of the job position the disabled students intends to get, and defines also the proper working environment such as, equipment, communication tools, keyboards, computers, etc.). More specifically, what is evaluated based on the reference form is:

- Knowledge learning and application (acoustic monitoring, reading learning, skills learning, problem-solving skills, etc.)
- Undertaking projects and requirements
- Communication skills
- Mobility
- Self-care ability
- Interpersonal interactions and relationships
- Important areas of life
- Additional information

GREECE

People with disabilities are estimated to make up about 10% of the general population of the country and suffer the absence of any state care, ranging from prevention of disability to exclusively public and

free early treatment and rehabilitation, with all that this implies. Greece is a country that is reacting at least hypocritically - if not regressively - to the full and proper treatment of this issue.

A survey conducted last year by Kappa Research SA found that the rapid deterioration in the quality of life of people with disabilities relates to living resources, especially income, including benefits and disability pensions (estimated by 74.1% of respondents), access to employment (59.1%), the support offered by social welfare to families of people with disabilities (53.7%), and access to health and welfare services (50.8%). In other words, the progress made in recent years in terms of the social inclusion of people with disabilities is in danger of being halted by the economic crisis, which has worsened their lives in recent years (58.8%), creating insurmountable financial difficulties for families (96.5%).

Integration into the world of work means integration into society itself, into the relationships that develop there, and personal development and fulfilment. The integration of people with disabilities into the labour market is a key element of economic independence, personal fulfilment and social fulfilment. People with disabilities should not be treated as modern-day pariahs. They should be fully and planned to participate in all social developments and enjoy all the benefits of society and, above all, of work. Unfortunately, this situation is not the reality in Greece.

ITALY

The realization of the inclusion and integration of disabled people in society and in the labor market requires and presupposes that the same society, guided and influenced by choices and legislative interventions, is able to accept the disabled person without considering them a mere burden.

Discrimination against people with disabilities has had a particular history in our legal system. Unlike other discriminations, fought in the 1960s in the wake of a social and cultural change that led to the recognition of appropriate legal remedies, for example to combat discrimination based on gender diversity or in the workplace, the recognition of protection sanctioning against disability discrimination took place much later, only in the nineties, and, once again, thanks to the influence of the supranational landscape. Therefore, the long silence on discrimination against the disabled in the workplace has come to an end in a fairly recent period and due to the need to adapt our system to EU law, in particular to Directive no. 78 of 2007. With the ratification of the United Nations Convention of 2006, a further step was taken thanks to the full recognition of the dignity of persons and equal rights. The differences deriving from disability cannot be eliminated, but they must not be detrimental to the person, allowing them to fulfil themselves better and to offer their contribution to the society of which they are part.

Workers with disabilities experience a series of difficulties that affect all areas of social life. Especially people with mental disabilities have limited ability to perform specific tasks: concentrating and maintaining attention, learning and remembering information, reacting quickly to external stimuli, planning operations and reflecting on the solution of problems. These are some examples of commonly used functions in everyday work for which mental illness is a critical factor. These are accompanied by environmental barriers, the most important of which is stigma.

The evidence on the phenomena of stigma and discrimination of workers with mental illness is rich. The stigma associated with mental disability in the workplace takes a variety of forms ranging from the phenomena of indirect discrimination, the result of cultural heritage and disincentives to work, to the most tangible phenomena of direct discrimination, that is, the aversion to hiring mentally disabled people that manifests itself in both employers and colleagues. The attitude is often prejudicial and feeds on the lack of knowledge on the type of discomfort of the worker to generate negative expectations, which can lead to both reticence to recruitment and the tendency to isolate the hired worker.

A consequence of the stigma is a decidedly greater propensity to possibly employ among the disabled those who have pathologies of a purely physical nature. Knowledge of a psychic pathology frequently leads to the negative outcome of a job interview, can lead to the withdrawal of an offer, or become a brake on career advancement. The fear of being stigmatized and rejected by employers can affect the

confidence and self-esteem of workers, with an immediate impact on the ability to hold a job interview. Over time, the perception of a stigmatizing external attitude risks evolving to the form of an internal stigma: the worker develops the conviction of not being suitable for the job and comes to abandon the idea of looking for one. A further consequence is a risk that the fear of a discriminatory attitude on the part of employers or colleagues leads the worker with mental illness to forego the benefits to which he is entitled by virtue of his disability, including the support of specialists or access to employee assistance programs developed in some company contexts.

Regarding the main difficulties that the disabled person encounters daily for job placement, we report communication difficulties; poor or inadequate guidance and training activities; insufficient incentives for companies willing to hire; prejudices, and lack of sensitivity towards the disabled.

POLAND

The factors that condition and hinder employment of disabled people in Poland:

- ways of perceiving disabled people by employers - nowadays many employers perceive disabled people through the prism of the negative stereotype that such a person is an inefficient, troublesome and demanding employee;
- necessity to incur additional costs related to employing a disabled person (organizational and technical changes, preparation of the workstation);
- complicated procedures and a lot of bureaucracy related to obtaining financial aid for employing a disabled person;
- lack of job offers for educated disabled people who have higher professional aspirations and do not want to work in security or cleaning;
- passive attitude of some of the disabled people and low self-esteem;
- associating disability with lack of qualifications, lack of motivation to work, frequent sick leaves, being addicted to other people;
- high level of social benefits for disabled people, which make full-time work less profitable in relation to the sum of benefits received;
- insufficient adjustment of vocational education specializations of disabled people to the expectations of the labour market.

Despite all the factors that condition and hinder employment of the disabled people in Poland, very frequently there are also mentioned the financial (subsidizing the salaries of disabled employees, reimbursement of costs for adapting the workplace, reimbursement of training costs of a disabled employee, etc.) and non-financial (improvement of the company's image, improvements in profitability, competitive advantage, inclusive work culture, ability awareness, etc.) benefits of employing disabled people, which make the employment of the disabled much more attractive. Such benefits influence the perception of employing the disabled and make it much more positive. Additionally, disabled people are often more motivated to work and loyal to the employer, which is confirmed by studies (PFRON 2013). Employers hiring people with disabilities generally do not confirm a negative opinion on this subject. 83% of employers evaluate the disabled as good employees (study in Mazowieckie voivodship on employers from the open labor market).

ROMANIA

Promoting optimal social integration of people with disabilities, as active citizens, able to control their own lives, and with active participation in society, represents the major objective of all health strategies and policies promoted by the Romanian authorities. According to the acting Romanian legislation, the process of social inclusion is the "assembly of multidimensional measures and actions from the fields of social protection, workforce employment, dwelling, education. Health, information-communication, mobility, security, justice and culture, are aiming to control social exclusion and to ensure the active participation of the people to all the economic, social, cultural and political aspects of the society".

The Romanian Government developed the National Strategy for the protection, integration and social inclusion of disabled persons for 2006-2013 aimed at “*Equal opportunities for people with handicaps towards a society without discrimination*”. For 2014-2020 a National Strategy project for social inclusion of people with disabilities “*Social policies - from rehabilitation of the individual to society reform*” was finally adopted in 2016. For 2021-2027, The National Strategy for the rights of people with disability and its main objective is to continue and develop the previous strategies (2016-2020, 2006-2013). Starting with 2010, Romania developed policies to increase accessibility, participation, equality, education and professional training, social protection, health and the employment rate of people with disabilities, in order to build a “*barrier-free Europe for all*”. According to the Romanian Constitution, the right to work cannot be restricted, and “the disabled people enjoy special protection” (stipulated by art.50). The state authority responsible for the vocational counselling, guidance, integration and employment is the National Agency for Employment and the National Authority for People with Disabilities (NAPD) and is focused on carrying out the responsibilities stated by the Convention of the rights of the people with disabilities adopted by UN in New York in December 2008. Romania signed this convention and in 2007 and ratified law no. 221/2010.

The NAPD has the following attributions:

- Coordinates the activities of protection and promotion of the rights of the disabled people, it elaborates policies, strategies and standards in this area and ensures the applicability of all specifications in this domain.
- Elaborates and proposes to the government- through the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection- public policy projects, sectorial strategies, regulations, reform programmes.
- Monitors the applicability of the law 448/2010
- Organises staff training in social protection units, it approves the county strategies of social services development.
- Collaborates with the National Agency for Employment to promote integration of the disabled category on the job market.

Until 2002, the employment rate of the disabled people was never analysed. Moreover, employment of the disabled people was never, in the past, objective for an active and coherent policy aimed to approach its goal. The percentage of employment of the disabled people in Romania is still at a relatively small rate: 88% of the severely disabled group are economically inactive, compared to 66% of the of those with limited disability and 26% of the non-impairing disability. The situation correlates directly with the fact that almost 90% of the severely disabled group are from rural areas. The same percentage of the same group did not complete primary education. Also, only 24% of the people in this category, aged 25-64 participated in the past 12 months in any adult training programme, compared to 37% of the general population.

Romania has the highest level of poverty of employed disabled people in EU-27. In 2018, the Romanian value was almost double compared with the European average -11%. Another reality to consider is the fact that 44% of the people with limited disability on the job market are self-employed or hold the status of non-remunerated family helper. Many people in this category are hired in jobs which do not provide enough income to make a decent living. They rarely benefit from qualified or highly qualified employment. This is a direct consequence of the unbalances in the educational system as well as of discrimination. The representative union system is not active for the disabled category in Romania and the proposition for a collective labour contract at national level for disabled employees has never been explored. Protected employment is underdeveloped and not sufficiently inclusive. Presently there are not sufficient mechanisms to avoid segregation in authorised protected units (APU) or insertion social enterprises (ISE). Public authorities can make acquisitions of products or services of APU or ISE but, in reality, this does not happen. APU have been negatively influenced recently by law alterations which eliminate the possibility for the employers who do not hire disabled people to opt for purchase of products or services from this group. The facilities offered to the insertions social enterprises were just

conjunctural, dependent of the existence of European funds.

There is currently an instrument which stimulates employers to hire disabled people by granting subventions, yet this method is not appealing enough for employers. In the public sector, although there is an obligation to hire from this category, the occupation level is very low. The budget collected from the sums paid by the employers who do not hire disabled people is not used to develop employment for these people. The lack of accessibility to employment for the disabled people can be blamed on several factors, such as:

- Little access to technologies and subventions
- The lack of assisted employment services
- Lack of counselling services to ensure reasonable adaptation to the job
- The labour medicine regulations are not specific enough to ensure better adaptability on the job market.
- No previous national campaigns to promote reasonable job adaptation or other rights of the disabled people.
- Limited participation in the educational system and in adult training programmes

In Romania, there is currently no mechanism of professional evaluation for the disabled and adult training is not adapted to the special needs of this group. They approach the labour market without any clue about their abilities, limitations and expectations.

Preparation for the job market could be improved by a vocational evaluation which would identify the work abilities of the disabled people as their potential is not truly evaluated neither in the social protection system, nor in the employment one. Adult training legislation requires that training programmes to be adapted to ensure equal and non-discriminatory access for the people with disabilities.

3.2 Current and relevant "hot topics" about the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace

CYPRUS

Based on a latest report published in 2021 (Ministry of Labour) on people with disabilities, the indicative data available in regards to the labour market that disabled people are positioned are:

- 30 people work in fast food restaurants
- 130 people work in supermarkets, bakeries and fruit shops
- 10 people work in agricultural crops and nurseries
- 30 people work in Community Councils, Municipalities, Hospitals, the Cyprus Sports Organization, the Cyprus Football Federation, the Special Olympics etc.

GREECE

A National Accessibility Authority is established in Greece in May-June 2021, aiming to complete the following tasks:

- a. Monitor the implementation of the international, EU and national framework regarding accessibility of people with disabilities,
- b. formulate proposals for overall policy, regulatory interventions and specific actions on accessibility, provide advice on relevant issues, and consult to this end with public administration, civil society and the disability movement,
- c. recommend the development and updating of accessibility standards in all sectors, such as the physical, built and digital environment, as well as in communications, transport, products and services, and advise on guidelines for their implementation,
- d. cooperate with the Coordination Mechanism in the Government to submit proposals towards the implementation and revision of the National Action Plan for Rights of Persons with

- Disabilities,
- e. participate in the legislative committees for the preparation of draft laws that participate in the drafting committees for the preparation of provisions for the drafting of bills relating to its competences or give an opinion on relevant provisions and to give its opinion on the compatibility of such proposals with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (Law No. 4074/2012, A'88), taking into account the relevant regulatory impact analysis,
 - f. is informed by the Regional Accessibility Committees and the Central Committee for Accessibility, taking into account the relevant provisions of Article 4074(4) of the Regulation, and is informed by the Regional Accessibility Committees and the Central Committee for Accessibility of the Republic of Moldova. The Committee is informed of the Regional Accessibility Committee and the Central Accessibility Committee of Articles 18 and 19 of the Law. 4495/2017 (A' 167) and any Committee on Accessibility and Issues of Persons with Disabilities established in the public and wider public sector and local authorities for Accessibility issues and implementation of the law. 4074/2012,
 - g. set up working groups of specialised staff from the public and private sectors to establish working groups of experts from the public and private sector, health care, rehabilitation and recovery service providers, define the way they are organised and operate and supervise their work,
 - h. draw up and submit in accordance with paragraph (a), for organisation and supervision of its activities,
 - i. represent the country in international organisations and bodies of the European Union within its competence,
 - j. develop initiatives to inform public opinion on matters relating to access for people with disabilities to all areas of human life in cooperation with the relevant competent ministries; and
 - k. provide technical assistance and training and organise conferences and seminars, independently or in cooperation with relevant institutions and organisations.

ITALY

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policies in the circular number 19/2020 suspended the obligation of hiring disabled people for employers, due to the COVID - 19 emergency.

The pandemic crisis that the country is going through, with closures and strong reductions in working hours in commercial, industrial, services and logistics activities, with the consequent use of COVID-19 social safety nets, entails serious difficulties in integrating disabled people into their own organic.

The obligation is suspended for the entire duration of the salary integration interventions for Covid-19 emergency, in proportion to the work activity effectively suspended and the number of hours integrated for the single provincial area on which the production unit concerned insists or to the quantity of reduced hours in proportion. The employer's obligation to submit the start-up request to the territorially competent targeted placement services is deemed to be restored when the crisis situation assisted by the supplementary tools dictated for the Covid-19 emergency subsides. Once the crisis situation assisted by the redundancy fund instruments due to the emergency is over, the employer will again have the obligation to submit the request for start-up to the territorially competent targeted placement services.

POLAND

Vocational Development Centres (ZAZ) applying for support from the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People (PFRON) will no longer have to submit copies of contracts that they have not concluded due to the coronavirus epidemic. Such a change is provided for by the Act of 17 December 2020, passed by the Sejm, amending the act on special solutions related to the preventing, counteracting and

combating COVID-19, other infectious diseases and crisis situations caused by them (i.e. Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1842, as amended), i.e. covid special act. As a rule, pursuant to Art. 15a of the special act, compensation from PFRON is due to the Vocational Development Centres whose revenues from manufacturing and service activities have decreased and are unable to cover the pay of disabled employees. Until now, the compensation covered only the remuneration paid, but after the change it will cover all the costs related to the employment of disabled people.

ROMANIA

There is an urgent need for improvement of the quality of the public employment services as well as the growth of the number of private institutions which provide such services. The current employment services offered are poor in terms of content and their integration with other social services is limited. There is urgent need for increasing the awareness level among the active disabled people as well as among employers about the importance of including this category on the job market. The capacity of self-evaluation of employment chances of the disabled people is considered the key element in this debate. Weak self-evaluation, together with a passive social assistance system, without employment stimuli, are great deterrents for disabled people in search of a job.

3.3 Institutions and organisations that provide guidelines, advocacy or support for the integration of the disabled people into social and work contexts

CYPRUS

A lot of private organisations at a national level are hiring people with disabilities in order to provide them with better opportunities in life and to improve their CSR policies, but we are still experiencing a lot of gaps on this field, since there is lack of online data for supporting these integrating actions. For example, based on [Bank of Cyprus Corporate Responsibility Report \(2019\)](#), through its IDEA Innovation Centre, an incubator-accelerator for start-ups and an entrepreneurship hub for young Cypriot entrepreneurs, supports the integration of people with disabilities within the workplace by providing start-ups with online platform and devices, suitable for disabled people. However, even though this is mentioned, no further information is provided to explain these strategies and working methods. The national system appears to lack of online data in regards to the employability opportunities provided to people with disabilities in the private and public sector (i.e., position, status, etc.). Additionally, some others work in car repair shops, playgrounds, bookstores, hairdressers, swimming pools, printing houses, stationery factory, control offices, retail stores, etc. According to the Ministry of Labour, the recruitment of people with disabilities upgrades the public image of the company (Corporate Social Responsibility), cultivates a positive atmosphere among employees and increases the commitment of the company's customers. The recruitment and position of people with disabilities in organisations takes place because of the Employment Plan of the Ministry of Labour, of which the annual amount for each program ranges from € 11,500 up to € 15,900 and 370 people with disabilities are supported. The Plan is also supporting the presence of job coaches within the organisations, who are there to support and guide people with disabilities in their working environment. The role of job mentors is mainly to support the social and professional integration of disabled workers, maintain a productive and safe environment within the organisational culture, maintain good relationships between them and the personnel, and develop their knowledge and skills. In collaboration with the hiring organisation, they also provide vocational guidance and training, based on individuals' needs.

Moreover, [Costas Papaellinas Organization \(Cyprus Pharmaceutical Organization Limited\)](#), in collaboration with [Ioannou Foundation](#), recruit individuals with intellectual disabilities in the context of the Supported Employment Programme, aiming to support people with intellectual disabilities in their integration to the open labour market.

With the assistance of the guidance officers of the Foundation, individuals are accompanied and have

on-job training until they become independent and can respond to the demands of the job and the conditions. The guidance officers continue to support the individuals by visiting the workplace and resolving potential problems or difficulties. In case the trainees lose their job, they are welcome to join the activities of the Foundation until they are instated in another job.

GREECE

In Greek society, the responsible body for the education of people with disabilities is the Ministry of Education. But in the field of training, although in theory it has been in operation for several decades, in practice this is not the case. This is evident as the relevant law was only enacted in 2008 (Law 3699/2008). In particular, there are specific vocational education and training workshops for people with disabilities. Anyone with severe learning difficulties can enrol in them, provided that they have been identified by the appropriate centre of professional education and have completed primary general or special education. The courses last 5-8 years and have compulsory attendance. In addition to general education courses, individuals acquire general academic, social skills, independent living skills and pre-vocational- skills. They also attend courses appropriate to each type of disability. At the end of the courses, individuals receive a secondary school diploma and a vocational training level 1 certificate.

ITALY

The public administration in Italy is required to hire people with disabilities in the mandatory quota provided for by the law and to observe specific constraints for recruiting in accordance with the provisions of the procedures for recruitment in public administrations. In addition to the public sector, there are other forms of integration of the disabled that have been gaining ground in recent years.

Social cooperatives, for example, play an important role in the integration of disabled people from a social and work point of view.

They are an instrument of integration and growth, collective and subjective, based on the recognition of the rights of each worker. The cooperative is based on a model that is able to support the emancipation path of citizens in difficulty, encourages a pro-active approach, and promotes a growth process that aims at conquering ways of life and behavior, as much as possible self-determined. Although there is a dimension linked to productivity and efficiency, the cooperative acts above all in social and participatory terms, since it is attentive to the personal and professional growth of its workers, and intends to promote their well-being.

Indeed, its main objective is the creation of specific training opportunities for people with disabilities, in different economic sectors such as agriculture, commerce and services. In this way, the general interest of the community is also pursued, which tends to human development and the social integration of citizens, through the management of social services, health and education. The social cooperative thus becomes a particularly suitable environment for providing effective answers to the employment questions of people with disabilities, because it offers an individualized path, able to offer technical skills to complete the required tasks, and to face the job. uncertainty, insecurity and stress, resulting from work. Specifically, the social cooperative model offers some services:

- promotes the development of skills in employees, which can be used in the labor market, through professional training and active learning in the field;
- offers its advice for orientation and, if necessary, the professional retraining of its users;
- establishes relationships with the local community, characterized by a flexibility of services, and a strong motivation of the staff, who are specially trained to work with people with disabilities;
- can conclude agreements with companies to obtain orders; in this case, the employee is hired by the latter, but lends his work within the cooperative;

- plans and follows the activation of professional experiences outside the cooperative, through agreements with the structures and entities active in the area;
- provides consultancy and various forms of support for businesses, as well as specific training interventions for colleagues who interact with the employee, and for monitoring activities.

In summary, the social cooperative: is concerned with promoting the social recognition of human needs, encourages cooperation and sharing of experiences, improves the sense of individual and collective responsibility, allows the construction of a structured and continuous project, based on the needs of individuals users.

POLAND

- *Biuro Pełnomocnika Rządu ds. Osób Niepełnosprawnych (Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People)*

The Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People exercises substantive supervision over the performance of tasks under the Act of 27 August 1997 on vocational and social rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities. It provides information regarding the rights of disabled people - bills and regulations, how to obtain the status of a disabled person - procedure, information regarding the employment of the disabled - setting up one's own business, addresses of supported employment enterprises, vocational development centres. As well as many publications on the topics related to disability.

- *The State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People (PFRON)*

The organization has existed since 1991, PFRON is a special purpose fund, the resources of which are allocated to the professional and social rehabilitation of disabled people and their employment. It provides information regarding the fund's programs and tasks for the current years, EU programs, as well as funding and reimbursement options.

- *Polski Związek Niewidomych (Polish Association of the Blind)*

It is an organization working for the benefit of the blind and people losing their sight, it takes care of the needs of the people. The organization is an effective, competent and financially independent proponent of this group of people. It helps the blind, partially sighted and their relatives to adapt to new living conditions. The organization provides advice and information on rehabilitation and social integration. It organizes individual and group trainings, during which important problems are discussed, e.g., the standards of functioning of the blind and partially sighted in Poland, education of the society in this field.

- *Polski Związek Głuchych (Polish Association of the Deaf)*

It is a non-governmental organization associating deaf and hard of hearing people as well as other people belonging to the deaf community. Its aim is to help the deaf and hard of hearing in all the aspects of life.

- *Towarzystwo Opieki nad Ociemniałymi (The Society for the Care of the Blind)*

The Society for the Care of the Blind is a public benefit organization. Its aim is to provide comprehensive care to the blind and partially sighted. It teaches, educates, rehabilitates and helps them find their purpose in the world. It also provides spiritual and religious care. There are many organizations/institutions related to integration of the disabled people into social and work contexts in Poland. The complete list can be found here: <http://niepelnosprawni.gov.pl/p,98,organizacje>

ROMANIA

The National Authority for People with Disabilities is the specialised body of the central public administration which coordinates, from a central level, the activities related to the special protection and promoting of the rights of the people with disabilities. It develops the policies, strategies and standards on promoting the rights of the people with disabilities, monitors the enforcement of the regulations in its own field of competence and controls the special protection activities undertaken for

the people with disabilities. The National Authority for People with Disabilities has, within its structure, the Superior Assessment Commission for adult people with disabilities, which makes decisions in order to settle the appeals against the certificates establishing the degree of the disability, issued by the county commissions or the commissions of the districts of Bucharest.

The National Institute for the Prevention and Combating of the Social Exclusion of People with Disabilities is also subordinated to the National Authority for People with Disabilities.

4. Strategies to create a future of equality in Europe

To further deepen the Desk Research, the chapter offers an overview of the techniques, methods and initiatives at national level to create a future of equality in Europe.

4.1 National legislation regarding the social integration and employment of people with disabilities

CYPRUS

The relevant legislation in Cyprus is A Law to Provide for Persons with Disabilities (2000), that defines the rights of disabled people to work under fair treatment and equal working conditions in the working environment. The Law also highlights political and ethical responsibilities and commitment through the promotion of various principles and actions at the national level, aiming to empower and ensure equality and access to a quality life. Among others, some of these principles refer to:

- Access to various services (i.e., financial, social, etc.)
- Access to various activities (i.e., social, cultural, athletic, creative, etc.)
- Creation of employment schemes
- Access to education and the labour market
- Transportation access

In addition, declared by the Department of Social Integration of People with Disabilities the Law on the Recruitment of People with Disabilities in public departments and organisations (2009) is a positive measure, aiming to develop and strengthen employment opportunities of people with disabilities, by creating an obligation for public organizations to hire up to 10% of their vacancies, people with disabilities who meet specific objective criteria.

The Department of Social Integration of People with Disabilities is the responsible body that undertakes the social and economic integration of people with disabilities in Cyprus. The main responsibilities of the public Department are:

- The provision of assessments and certifications of disability and functionality
- The provision of social benefits to people with disabilities
- The provision of direct and indirect vocational rehabilitation and other support services
- Coordinating the effective implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of people with disabilities and the National Disability Action Plan

GREECE

The formulation of a modern and functional legal framework regarding the employment of persons of special categories (persons with disabilities, relatives of persons with disabilities, children of disabled persons and war victims) is an imperative need in the current socio-economic developments.

In this context, Law 2643/1998 was passed, which ensured conditions of transparency and objectivity

in the system of mandatory placement of persons from protected categories in jobs by establishing objective placement criteria (points) based on the age of the protected person, marital status, financial situation, formal qualifications and disability rate, if they are disabled.

In addition, within the framework of the social state law for the care of people with disabilities, a series of laws were passed, such as Law 2956/2001, Law 2972/2001, Law 3051/2002, Law 3227/2004 and Law 3454/2006, which introduced further changes to Law 2643/1998, in order to make it more favourable and effective for people with disabilities.

Furthermore, **Law 3304/2005 further safeguards the rights of people with disabilities** by legally enshrining the principle of equal treatment, by incorporating into Greek domestic law the European Council Directive 2000/43/EC on combating discrimination on the grounds of religion or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation in the field of employment and work. Under Article 4 of Law 3304/2005, the scope of application of the principle of equal treatment in the field of employment and work in both the public and private sectors is defined.

In particular:

- a. the conditions of access to employment and employment in general, including selection criteria and conditions of recruitment, regardless of the sector of activity and at all levels of the professional hierarchy, as well as the conditions of service and professional development are defined,
- b. access to all types and all levels of vocational guidance, vocational training, further training and vocational reorientation, including the acquisition of practical work experience,
- c. the terms and conditions of employment and working conditions, including those relating to dismissal and pay, are defined,

Also, in the context of compliance with the principle of equal treatment, Article 10 of Law 3304/2005, requires employers to make reasonable adjustments for persons with disabilities and stipulates that: The employer shall be obliged to take all appropriate measures, where appropriate, to enable persons with disabilities to have access to, perform and progress in a job, as well as to participate in vocational training, provided that such measures do not impose a disproportionate burden on the employer. Disproportionate burden shall not be considered to be disproportionate where it is offset by protection measures taken in the context of the implementation of the policy in favour of people with disabilities. Furthermore, various ministerial decisions have been issued announcing various programmes relating to the employment of disabled people. These are subsidy programmes for employers to employ disabled people, subsidy programmes for young freelancers for disabled people and more general programmes aimed at combating the exclusion of disabled people from the labour market.

ITALY

There are many legal acts regarding the social integration and employment of people with disabilities in Italy: **Law 68 of 1999 "Rules for the right to work of the disabled"** not only represents the overcoming of the previous legislation but abandons the purely welfare philosophy of Law 482/68 "General discipline of compulsory hiring in public administrations and private companies" and creates new rules by setting them on the principle of a targeted placement of the disabled that respects the work potential of the worker without at the same time penalizing the expectations of the company that hires him. By targeted placement, we refer to that complex of technical and support tools that allow a preventive assessment of the effective capacity of the worker and the activation of all activities (workplace analysis, forms of support, positive actions and resolution of problems connected to the environments and interpersonal relationships in the daily work and relationship places) necessary to identify a job position suitable for these abilities (art. 2 Law 68/99). The intentions of the legislator are to regulate the work placement of disabled people, recognizing the importance of work for them as a fundamental element for social integration and quality of life. The Constitution, in art. 4 paragraph 1, states that **"the Republic recognizes the right to work for all citizens and promotes the conditions that**

make this right effective". In other words, it recognizes the right to work as the goal to be achieved through the direct commitment of public authorities aimed at creating the conditions suitable for its achievement. It is necessary to understand how the personal and social recovery of a person with a mental disorder is the result of a path that culminates in employment but does not end there. Decent work is the right of every person, thus directly affecting the quality of everyone's life project: self-realization, income security, socialization in the workplace and enjoyment of the rights of freedom which represent the backbone of the social pact that founds contemporary society. Specifically, the inclusion of disadvantaged people is good because it increases social cohesion, therefore, on the other hand, the prejudice towards these people radically decreases and improves the quality of life.

In addition to the possible presence within social cooperatives, people with disabilities can also be employed within companies. The first legislation governing this opportunity, as previously mentioned, was Law 482 of 2 April 1968, called Mandatory Placement. This law, however, proved to be ineffective and remained unimplemented, due to the numerous critical issues it presented. First, there was no correspondence between the skills of the worker and the needs of the organization. In addition, there were no forms of support and accompaniment for the neophyte within the working environment and, sometimes, there could also be objective constraints, which prevented his stay (architectural barriers, for example).

All these reasons led to the overcoming of the legislation, which was replaced by Law 68 of 12 March 1999, called Targeted Placement of disabled workers in organizations. The element of continuity, with the previous law, is the obligation for employers to ensure the presence of a percentage of disabled employees, proportional to the number of employees. The numbers are distributed as follows: an employee with disabilities, if there are fifteen workers; two employees with disabilities, if the workers are within fifty units, and 7% of the workforce, for larger organizations. The innovative aspect is the change of perspective, which can be summarized with the transition from mandatory placement to targeted placement. This means that hiring is no longer a mechanical combination, but the outcome of a process that involves various actors, in addition to disabled employees and the representatives of organizations.

POLAND

There are many legal acts regarding the social integration and employment of people with disabilities in Poland: *Ustawa z dnia 27 sierpnia 1997 r. o rehabilitacji zawodowej i społecznej oraz zatrudnianiu osób niepełnosprawnych. Dz.U.97.123.776 z późn. zm. (Act of 27 August 1997 on Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities)*

Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2004 r. o pomocy społecznej (Social Assistance Act of 12 March 2004)

Konwencja Praw Osób Niepełnosprawnych (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)

Rozporządzenie Ministra Gospodarki, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z 15 lipca 2003 r. w sprawie orzekania o niepełnosprawności i stopniu niepełnosprawności (Dz. U. Nr 139, poz. 1328) (Regulation of 15 July 2003 of the Minister of Economy, Labour and Social Policy to define disability)

Rozporządzenie Ministra Polityki Społecznej z dnia 6 sierpnia 2004 r. w sprawie określenia zadań samorządu województwa, które mogą być dofinansowane ze środków Państwowego Funduszu Rehabilitacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych (Dz.U Nr 187, poz. 1940) (Regulation of 6 August 2004 of the Minister of Social Policy on defining the tasks of the voivodeship local government, which may be co-financed by the State Fund for Rehabilitation of the Disabled People (Journal of Laws No. 187, item 1940))

Rozporządzenie Ministra Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 25 czerwca 2002 r. w sprawie określenia rodzajów zadań powiatu, które mogą być finansowane ze środków Państwowego Funduszu Rehabilitacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych (Dz. U. Nr 96, poz. 861, z późn. zm.) (Regulation of 25 June 2002 of the Minister of Labor and Social Policy on defining the types of powiat tasks that may be financed from the resources of the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (Journal of Laws No. 96,

item 861, as amended))

Rozporządzenie Ministra Gospodarki, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 25 marca 2004 r. w sprawie warsztatów terapii zajęciowej (Dz. U. Nr 63, poz. 587) (Regulation of 25 March 2004 of the Minister of Economy, Labor and Social Policy on occupational therapy workshops (Journal of Laws , No. 63, item 587))

Rozporządzenie Ministra Gospodarki, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 22 maja 2003 r. w sprawie turnusów rehabilitacyjnych (Dz. U. Nr 100, poz. 926) (Regulation of 22 May 2003 of the Minister of Economy, Labor and Social Policy on rehabilitation stays (Journal of Laws, No. 100, item 926))

Rozporządzenie Ministra Gospodarki, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 22 maja 2003 r. w sprawie szczegółowych zasad udzielania zwolnień od pracy osobom o znacznym lub umiarkowanym stopniu niepełnosprawności w celu uczestniczenia w turnusie rehabilitacyjnym (Dz. U. Nr 100, poz. 927) (Regulation of 22 May 2003 of the Minister of Economy, Labor and Social Policy on detailed rules for granting leave of absence from work to persons with severe or moderate degree of disability in order to participate in a rehabilitation stay (Journal of Laws No. 100, item 927))

Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 10 sierpnia 2001 r. w sprawie standardów wymagań będących podstawą przeprowadzania sprawdzianów i egzaminów (DzU nr 92, poz.1020 z późn. zm.) (Regulation of 10 August 2001 of the Minister of National Education on the standards of requirements that are the basis for conducting tests and examinations (Journal of Laws No. 92, item 1020, as amended))

Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 12 lutego 2001 r. w sprawie orzekania o potrzebie kształcenia specjalnego lub indywidualnego nauczania dzieci i młodzieży, oraz szczegółowych zasad kierowania do kształcenia specjalnego lub indywidualnego nauczania (DzU nr 13, poz. 114 z późn. zm.) (Regulation of 12 February 2001 of the Minister of National Education on the need for special education or individual teaching of children and adolescents, and on the detailed rules of referring children to special education or individual education. (Journal of Laws No. 13, item 114, as amended))

ROMANIA

Article 50 of the Romanian Constitution stipulates as follows: **“People with disabilities shall benefit from special protection. The State shall develop a national policy on equal opportunities, on the prevention and treatment of disabilities, with a view to ensuring the actual participation of the people with disabilities to the community life, under observance of the rights and duties incumbent upon parents and trustees.”** The system for the special protection of the people with disabilities is regulated by primary pieces of legislation – laws, ordinances, government decrees, and secondary pieces of legislation, which lay down methodological provisions.

Law no. 448/2006 on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities guarantees the rights of persons with disabilities to employment and to benefit of reasonable accommodation at their workplace, of career guidance and of professional retraining, where necessary.

While the legislation is aligned to international requirements, its practical implementation is deficient, with support being difficult to access and discrimination remaining pervasive. For example, people with intellectual disabilities have the lowest chances of employment – representing just 2.5 % of the people with disabilities employed in Romania, although they represent 16 % of total number. They face difficulties in accessing the labour market on the one hand due to their lack of training and reduced training opportunities and, on the other hand, due to the prejudices of employers. Employers have been found not to be willing to adapt their working conditions to the needs of particular individuals, remaining unable to understand how this can benefit all those involved. Moreover, employers remain scared and sceptical in relation to hiring such people and remain rather ignorant in relation to how support can be offered.

Other difficulties people with disabilities encounter are: the lack of flexible working hours and available support, where such support is necessary; the lack of adaptation of the working environment, including

its physical accessibility; poor infrastructure that makes going and coming back from work challenging; and social stigma and discrimination.

This all leads to people with disabilities having difficulties in finding or keeping a job, and sometimes leads to them quitting to try to obtain a job. At the same time, the inclusion of people with disabilities on the labour market and their social integration at work remains a poorly investigated subject.

4.2 National strategies, techniques, methods or initiatives to facilitate the integration of people with disabilities into the labour market

CYPRUS

Under the legal framework, after the evaluation completed by a special multidisciplinary committee, a person with a disability is found to have a deficiency/disability, which causes permanent or indefinite physical or mental limitation which reduces/excludes the possibility of finding and maintaining a suitable job. According to this, the main provisions of this general framework law in regards to the employability of people with disabilities are:

- a. possess the required qualifications for the position to be filled
- b. pass the written and/or oral examinations required for the position
- c. be deemed appropriate for the performance of the duties of the position being filled by the competent appointing body, which is obliged for that purpose, to take into account the report of the special multidisciplinary committee.

Based on these, the special multidisciplinary committee is responsible to assess applicants' disability and suitability in performing their tasks, drawing up special lists of disabled applicants of whom 10% will be placed into vacancies. Therefore, their placement into the workplace must suit not only the organisation, but the individuals as well. For this reason, the working facilities, the supply of technological equipment and the facilities where applicants complete their written and/or oral examinations are taken into account. With this in mind, the Department, in cooperation with the appointing bodies, coordinates and evaluates the implementation of the Law. Within the first quarter of each year, each appointing body will send to the Department a report with detailed data on people with disabilities who have been hired in the previous year, so that the Council of Ministers, the House of Representatives and the **Cyprus Confederation of Disabled Organizations** can be informed. As mentioned in the above, people with disabilities can be appointed to many admission positions in the public sector (permanently, hourly, temporarily), except in call centre positions or positions that their performance requires the absence of any physical or mental disability such as the Army, National Guard, Police, Fire Service and Prisons, etc. Therefore, in order to be able to perceive a job position, they need to be assessed with three basic criteria:

- a. to have the required qualifications to be fulfilled
- b. pass any written and/or oral examinations required for the position
- c. be deemed suitable for the job position

GREECE

The interventions of the State in the field of employment of people with disabilities, it is only in the last 40 years that State interventions have begun to take shape. In 1979, with Law 963, in 1986 with Law 1648 and in 1998 with Law 2643.

With the last revision of the Constitution (Article 21, paragraph 5) a general reference to the rights of disabled people to equal opportunities is made and in 2004 the Community Directive 78/2000 on combating discrimination is incorporated into Greek law, where there is a clear reference to taking measures to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities.

However, we note that all legislative interventions of the State, related to the employment of disabled people are included in the social protection measures for other population groups, with the

consequence that positive actions in favour of disabled people are diffused.

ITALY

Targeted placement is a strategy, a set of tools that allow people with disabilities to be included in the right place for them, through the analysis of available jobs, and the assessment of their skills. The ultimate goal is to activate a vicious circle that leads the worker and the organization to both be satisfied with the experience they share.

The legislation always provides that the service is managed by the provincial managers but, this time, it provides a series of opportunities, which can be used free of charge by organizations, by virtue of a state incentive specifically intended for work integration.

POLAND

Methods/initiatives that facilitate and integrate disabled people in the labour market or in the work environment:

Traineeships: Disabled people who are unemployed or looking for a job can serve a traineeship financed by PFRON (or other funds, e.g., Labour Fund). A professional traineeship may last from 3 to 12 months. The duration of the traineeship depends on the employer's offer, age and registration status with the employment office. The amount of the scholarship is 120% of the unemployment benefit. The person who serves a traineeship does not lose the status of an unemployed person or a jobseeker. The traineeship takes place according to a program that is determined by an employer and implemented at the workplace. Disabled trainees with severe or moderate degree of disability work up to 7 hours a day and up to 35 hours a week - full-time. The exception is shift work or if the occupational medicine specialist allows the disabled person to work more hours.

Trainings: Trainings provide the disabled people with the opportunity to gain or improve their professional qualifications, which increases their chances of employment and keeping a job. The trainings are financed and organized by regional (powiat) employment offices. In order to participate in the training, the following conditions must be met: the disabled person has to be registered with the employment office, lose the ability to perform the previous occupation, not have sufficient professional qualifications, or need to change qualifications or increase them, or do not have the ability to actively look for a job.

Career counselling: means activities aimed at helping in the right choice of a profession or job position. A career counsellor facilitates the assessment of one's own abilities, predispositions, and a better understanding of functioning in the professional environment. Career counselling may take the form of individual support (individual meetings with a person who discerns their career path) or group support (meetings in a group).

Employment services: State institutions whose task is to provide employment services are employment offices located in each powiat. The role of employment offices is to provide general support, prepare for a job interview and draft professional application documents (e.g. CV, cover letter), as well as to provide support from a career counsellor who will help to assess one's predispositions and find strengths. Employment services for the disabled are also provided by employment agencies.

They organize recruitment of employees for specific employers, create portals with job offers. Employment agencies charge a commission for their services.

ROMANIA

As a vulnerable group facing challenges on the labour market integration or maintenance, people with disabilities benefit from measures funded through the 2020 Law on the Unemployment Insurance Budget and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). The benefits available include:

- exemption from tax on wages for people with severe and accentuated disabilities;
- for people working from home, state-funded subsidies, where necessary, for the transportation

of materials used in the activity and the delivery of finished products;

- additional annual leave of at least 3 days;
- financial benefits for employers hiring people with disabilities, including: special benefits for employing people with disabilities who are freshly graduates or unemployed. For example, the employer would receive from the state budget one minimum wage for employing a person with disabilities who recently graduated the first two grades of high school; 1.2 minimum wages for those who freshly graduated from high school and 1.5 minimum wages for those who recently graduated from higher education; in the January-August 2020 period, it was reported such benefits were awarded in 57 cases. Moreover, any employer offering people with disabilities indefinite contracts receives, for 12 months, a RON 2.250 monthly benefit.

However, the existing incentives are of small values and are given for a limited amount of time, having little impact in addressing the difficulties people have in integrating on the labour market.

4.3 Special strategy regarding the inclusion and promotion of disabled workers

CYPRUS

Depending on the results of the practical implementation of the Law, it is possible in the future to start a dialogue with the social partners for the implementation of the Law in the private sector. In order to claim a job, the applicant must declare his/her disability in his/her job application or in the registered recruitment lists, submitting a relevant certificate for his/her disability. Following this, upon his/her recruitment, the applicants with disabilities have two basic rights according to the Law: (a) to be provided with special supporting technological equipment that may need for the performance of the position duties; (b) to be placed by his/her supervisor service in a workplace that serves both the needs of the service and the special needs arising from the type and condition of his disability.

Another strategy followed by the Productivity Centre, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and the Department of Social Integration of People with Disabilities develop the Vocational Profiling (person-centered tool) of a disabled candidate. With this intention, the disabled candidate decides what information to provide to the employer when choosing the suitable and desired workplace, in relation to the required tasks of the job position. The job match is significant as it reflects the needs of the employee and the employer and provides a realistic knowledge in regards to the abilities and talents that possess. The responsible authorities, before proceeding to the job finding, are taking into account the needs of the employer and the employee, the design of a creative and flexible workplace, as well as the provision of sufficient training to the individuals, mainly during the initial period. After the placement of the individual is confirmed, the organisation must provide and maintain:

- Training on the duties and social skills
- Regular feedback
- Follow ups
- Regular communication
- Consulting

The aim of this plan is to offer the best possible combination of skills/talents and support needs of the employee in relation to the requirements of the employer/position.

GREECE

Inclusion and promotion of disabled workers in Greece is a subject that is unfortunately neglected majorly in Greece. The initiatives that are working towards that direction are almost always private, in the framework of "corporate social responsibility" programs, which are short-lived and usually underfunded.

One such example comes from the company Mytilineos. Mytilineos, in 2020, in collaboration with the

social enterprise "knowl" has designed a program named "mellonabilities", lasting 6 months, aiming to provide personalized development of professional skills to people with disabilities (mobility, vision and hearing), with zero cost for the beneficiaries. The aim is the targeted preparation of the disabled participants for their successful integration in the labor market, gaining additional skills and understanding those conditions that facilitate their access and integration in the labor market, as well as the cultivation of mentality (candidates, employers, HR organizations/counseling) to help develop a sustainable employability model. This Mytilineos initiative is part of our support for the global 2030 Sustainable Development Goals for zero poverty, decent work, economic growth and less inequality.

ITALY

The legislation intends to ensure that employees can occupy an appropriate position, through the analysis of the job and characteristics of the candidate, and the presence of support for the solution of the problems they may encounter with the environments, tools and relationships, within the workplace. Despite the opportunities highlighted, there are still limitations. First of all, even if the placement has become targeted, the legislative imposition remains the main, if not the only, way for workers with disabilities to enter organizations. Secondly, the constraint linked to available economic resources remains: depending on the number of people to be placed, a quota is allocated for each employee, which also determines the services that can be provided. Furthermore, the possibility of implementing monitoring interventions, especially in the long term, is particularly critical, and this makes it difficult to obtain feedback on the results achieved. Furthermore, the legislation defines the tools and identifies the public services responsible for their provision, but does not specifically determine the ways in which they must be implemented. This is why each region, independently, manages the entire route with the help of the various local authorities, creating disparities between the different territories.

POLAND

Strategia na rzecz osób z niepełnosprawnościami 2020-2030 (Strategy for people with disabilities 2020-2030). The main goal of the Strategy for People with Disabilities is to include this group in social and professional life on the same level as other people. The strategy has been included in the Strategy for Responsible Development (SOD), which presents a model of socially sustainable development with the participation of all social groups. An important goal is also to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Poland ratified on 25 October 2012. This convention provides for a transition in the approach to disabled people from a medical model according to which disabled people are perceived based on certain physical or mental limitations to a model based on human rights, according to which people with disabilities have to be guaranteed all rights so that they can function in society in the same way as other citizens.

The first work on the document was started at the end of 2016. The dynamic economic development of Poland, in particular the development of new technologies, computerization, investments and innovations in the production and services sector, combined with investment in human capital, provides conditions for the effective inclusion of disabled people in social and professional life on an unprecedented scale.

ROMANIA

Considering that it is necessary to adopt an integrated approach of the disability, so that the needs of the people with disabilities should be reflected properly in all national development policies and programmes, especially those related to: housing and transportation, proper access to the physical and information environment, education, guidance, occupational training and reinsertion, *The National Strategy on the social protection, integration and inclusion of the people with disabilities for the period 2006 – 2013* was developed in such a way so as to be centred on the disabled person, who is a citizen with

full rights and obligations, and it represented a breakthrough in the field at the time.

The National Strategy on the social protection, integration and inclusion of the people with disabilities for the period 2006 – 2013 was the platform for all future actions. For 2014-2020 a National Strategy project for social inclusion of people with disabilities “Social policies - from rehabilitation of the individual to society reform” was finally adopted in 2016. For 2021-2027, The National Strategy for the rights of people with disability and its main objective is to continue and develop the previous strategies (2016-2020, 2006-2013).

The goal of the Strategies has been to ensure the full exertion by all people with disabilities of their rights and fundamental liberties, with a view to enhancing the quality of their life. The fundamental concept of the Strategies is the freedom of choice: the disabled person has the possibility to make decisions regarding his/her own life, to manage the complementary personal budget and choose the services he/she needs, as well as the providers of such services, based on individual service contracts.

The strategies have been based on the following fundamental principles:

1. respect for the rights and dignity of the people with disabilities, as provided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thus, communities must take into consideration the diversity of their members and make sure that the people with disabilities, members of the community, can effectively exert and enjoy all human rights: civil, political, social, economic and cultural;
2. equal opportunities for the people with disabilities, a principle understood as a process, as defined by the Standard Rules on Equal Opportunities for the People with Disabilities, whereby the various systems of the society, such as services, activities, information, communication and documentation are available to everyone. Disabled people are members of the society and must therefore receive all the support they need within the usual education, healthcare, employment, social service structures etc. As an integral part of the equal opportunities process, disabled people shall be helped and trained so that they should undertake full responsibility as members of the society;
3. social solidarity, according to which society shall participate in supporting the persons who cannot provide for their own social needs, with a view to maintaining and strengthening social cohesion. The community shall intervene in an active manner in fostering the rights of the people with disabilities and in creating, developing, diversifying and granting the services needed by the people with disabilities. These services should be of quality, based on the needs of the people with disabilities, shall be integrated in the social context and shall not be perceived as a source of segregation.
4. the interest of the people with disabilities, according to which any decision and measure shall be taken to the interest of such persons, being unacceptable those approaches based on mercy and the perception of the people with disabilities as helpless persons;
5. integrated approach, according to which the social protection, integration and inclusion of the people with disabilities shall be contained in all national policies in the social and educational fields, on employment, entertainment, access to information etc. The needs of the people with disabilities and their families are diversified and it is important for a comprehensive community response to be conceived so as to take into account both the person as a whole and the various aspects of his/her life.
6. partnership, according to which non-governmental organisations of the people with disabilities, which represent their interests or conduct activities in the field, shall be involved and consulted in the decision-making process on disability issues at all levels, as well as in the process of protection of the people with disabilities.

4.4 How do companies support disabled workers?

CYPRUS

Through the field research conducted at the initial stage of the project, it was identified that there are diverse support actions taken by the companies, respecting also the national legislation. For example: *Mentors providing vocational guidance to people with disabilities* at work and negotiating with employers in regards to appropriate employment conditions
Supporting working environment (i.e., equipment, communication tools, keyboards, computers, online platform and devices, etc.)
On-job training and guidance (including regular feedback, follow-ups and consulting), as well as training material and suitable training environment.

GREECE

According to 2011 research (Ntakou, Katsara, Kounoupas & Tabouri, 2011), the vast majority of companies do not employ people with disabilities and are not aware of the wage subsidy schemes for disabled employees in a company. It could be argued that if employers had the information about the programmes that exist, intended to employment of disabled people and subsidise part of the cost of their employment of their wages, then it is possible that unemployment among the disabled would be at a lower level. However, a further factor emerges. Businesses argued that they had not made use of the financial programmes, both because of limited resources, but mainly because they have not had applications from disabled people. This indicates that the motivation of the applicants themselves is also an important factor in transition to the labour market. In this respect, it is worth pointing out the importance of counselling towards information and motivation of people with disabilities to apply for a job. In addition, the employers' statements show that they are willing to employ people with disabilities if there is a satisfactory wage subsidy and to adapt their infrastructure (ramps, parking spaces, etc.) regardless of how visible the disability is. This shows that the criterion recruitment of disabled people is more economic and less of a matter of discrimination disability. Moreover, while accepting that workers with disabilities in the majority of cases, they can be productive in their jobs, admit that they are not given many opportunities to work. This may mean that employers are cautious and find it difficult to create job opportunities for people with disabilities. Or even that because of the heavy workload they do not take the time to organise a work structure that provides space and workers with disabilities.

Moreover, it seems that, apart from the financial incentives, which are very important, the most important factor in recruiting people with disabilities is the strengthening of the company's social profile. Obviously, a company's customers attach great importance to its social profile and perceive it as an achievement for a company to employ people with disabilities in its positions.

With regard to the position of the disabled worker in the working environment, employers do not seem to have identified dysfunctional relationships between employees with disabilities and their colleagues, management or even the management of the company. customers. This finding confirms the view that there is a culture of acceptance of diversity in the perceptions of non-disabled workers, and that people with disabilities can be productive and cooperate very well work well with their colleagues, to the benefit of their work. This is complemented by the finding that employers who survey stated that they were fairly to very satisfied with the performance of PWDs, which confirms the earlier surveys that that PWDs are consistent, productive and have fewer absences and accidents at work.

ITALY

The main services that can be offered to companies are:

- the agreement: the company can sign an agreement with the public services, in order to plan

the hiring times with them, and decide together the steps useful to facilitate the recruitment of a candidate who satisfies, as much as possible, the needs of the 'company';

- the selection of the candidate, among those present in the list of protected categories, in order to identify the profile that best meets the needs of the organization;
- company scouting to evaluate the possible tasks that can be assigned to the new employee;
- the internship, that is, a trial period of variable duration (from 60 to 90 days), which does not involve any cost for the company, and allows you to experience the employee's skills directly in the field;
- the support of a tutor who can monitor the path of the worker with disabilities, and offer advice and support to the organization.

POLAND

Companies may support disabled workers in many ways in Poland. They may also apply for reimbursements of costs for the following forms of support:

Adaptation of the workplace for people with disabilities: the subsidy is intended to reimburse the costs of adapting the company's premises - according to the needs of the disabled person, e.g. in the case of an employee using a wheelchair - widening the door, adjusting the toilet, creating a driveway, etc.; purchase of devices facilitating the performance of work by the disabled person; purchase of software to be used by the disabled person and other technological devices supporting that person in the performance of work; performing the necessary examinations and issuing certificates by an occupational medicine specialist;

Providing equipment for the disabled person's workstation: organizing the workstation - purchasing equipment, machines, devices, etc. necessary to perform work at a given position;

Providing an employee who will help and provide guidance to the disabled employee during work;

Providing or organizing trainings for disabled employees: trainings and courses are provided to help people with disabilities acquire new skills or improve their professional competences which are valuable on the labour market, and to increase their soft skills, i.e. social skills.

ROMANIA

Today, approximately 300,000 people living with a disability are unemployed in Romania. This is an astounding figure representing more than 50% of disabled persons deemed capable of working. More distressing is the fact that legislation has been adopted to ensure the right of people with disabilities to work in a non-discriminatory environment. This law, also known as Law 448/2006, cites that all institutions, private or public, with a minimum of 50 employees, must respect and fill a quota of 4% in terms of employing individuals with a disability. If this percentage is not met, employers are mandated to pay the government a sum equal to 50% of the minimum wage for each of these assigned positions that are considered vacant. Thus far, however, most companies have preferred the latter option of paying a wage, to the detriment of inclusion.

However, the National Strategies, which have been implemented since 2006, have encouraged companies' involvement and suggested different ways in which they can support disabled workers by:

- designing and adapting the workplaces so that they should become accessible to the people with disabilities;
- establishing and supporting service complexes made of protected workshops or units and protected homes;
- developing, at county level, new ways to organise the lucrative activities for disabled persons: social enterprises, protected homes;
- organising a retail market for the product of his/her work;
- conducting programmes, in collaboration or in partnership with other public or private entities or cult institutions, aimed at creating opportunities for the development of the disabled

- persons' skills;
- ensuring the equal access of the disabled persons to the training and advancement opportunities at the workplace;
 - promoting the concept according to which the employed disabled person is a value added to the society and especially the community he/she belongs;
 - creating the necessary conditions and services for the disabled person to be able to choose the form of occupational training or reconversion and the workplace, in accordance with his/her functional potential

5. Programmes and projects regarding integration of disabled people

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview for identifying the needs of disabled people. Particular attention is paid to improving of inclusion and empowering of disabled people in the workplace.

5.1 National programmes or projects which provide guidelines to the organization for integration of disabled people

CYPRUS

Employers access the Scheme for the subsidization of Organisations for Vocational Training Programmes for Person with Disability, with the main aim to enable the employment of persons with disabilities in the labour market through the provision of support and guidance by a job mentor/coach. The ulterior purpose of the Scheme is to ensure the social, economic and vocational inclusion of persons with disabilities, as members of the working force of their country, in the open labour market and society in general. The amount of sponsorship per programme shall be up to €13.500 annually for each programme of supported employment of each organization. The given amount is to be used for the expenditure for the employment of one Job Coach and is provided to the beneficiary considering that the following conditions are met:

- Each Job Coach must occupy in their programme at least 5 persons with disabilities
- Each organization can operate more than one supported employment programmes
- The persons enrolled in the programmes must maintain paid employment in the open labour market
- Supported employment services shall be provided by a professionally trained job coach, on an individualized basis and effectively responsive to the needs of the person as well as the potential employers. The ongoing support can last as long is necessary for the person to be fully and efficiently integrated and included in both the working environment and society in general
- The Organization must employ a job coach with all the necessary qualifications to fully respond to the tasks of the position of a Job Coach according to the job description of Job Coaches
- The Organization employs the Job Coach in accordance with the existing labour law. Also, the Organization allows the Department or other relevant
- Institutions and/or Organizations, to educate and train the Job Coach employed by the given Organization if that is deemed necessary and/or useful

“Beneficiaries” of the Scheme are certified non-governmental organizations who represent or offer

services to persons with physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disability and are active in designing and implementing programs, including training ones for their staff and/or persons with disabilities. Each programme can be sponsored with up to €5,000, with the exception of the programmes being co-funded by European funds, which may be sponsored up to €10,000. Costs include trainer's fees, training material and suitable training environment. The purpose of the training is to increase the knowledge and information about disability within the circles of professionals active in the field.

Additionally, The Ministry of Labour grants 24 Employment Support programs for People with Disabilities, on a nationwide basis, through which approximately 370 people are supported along with their mentors, most of them with mental and / or mental disability, with the annual sponsorship for each program to be ranged from € 11,500 up to € 15,900. The support services provided by the trained work guide depend on the needs of each individual, until he/she is fully integrated into the working environment. The duties of job mentors include providing vocational guidance to people with disabilities, negotiating with employers to provide appropriate employment conditions for people with disabilities. They also include the creation of a favourable work environment in the workplace in collaboration with the employer and other staff, as well as providing guidance, support/training in the field of employment according to the personal needs of individuals and the requirements of specific jobs.

The disabled work in various companies in the private sector such as car repair shops, playgrounds, bookstores, hairdressers, swimming pools, printing houses, stationery factory, control offices, retail stores, etc. According to the Ministry of Labour (2021), the recruitment of people with disabilities upgrades the public image of the company (Corporate Social Responsibility), cultivates a positive atmosphere among employees and increases the commitment of the company's customers.

GREECE

The Directorate of Social and Solidarity Economy, which is part of the Special Secretariat for Social and Solidarity Economy of the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, is making attempts towards promoting labour market integration.

According to the provisions of Law 4430/2016 (Government Gazette 205 A') "*Social and Solidarity Economy and the development of its institutions and other provisions*", Social Cooperative Enterprises (SCEs) may be established, which are divided into two categories, depending on the specific purpose they perform:

- A. Joint ventures are divided into the following types:
 - Vulnerable Group Integration, which seek to integrate people belonging to vulnerable social groups into economic and social life. A minimum of 30% of the members and employees of these enterprises must belong to these categories.
 - The minimum number of employees of the company shall be at least 30% of the total number of employees of the company. Inclusion of special groups, which seek to integrate into economic and social life persons belonging to special population groups. A minimum of 50% of the members and employees of these enterprises must belong to these categories.
- B. Joint ventures. Collective and social benefit enterprises, which develop 'sustainable development' activities and/or provide 'social services of general interest'.

ITALY

With the Decree of the President of the Republic of 4 October 2013, Italy adopted the first "Biennial Action Program for the promotion of the rights and integration of people with disabilities" which, in fact, opened a new reference scenario political and programmatic on the subject. For the first time, in fact, the condition of disability of many citizens of our country was represented in its entirety and for its value, not only as a welfare problem confined within the perimeter of "welfare" policies but as an essential area the protection of rights that affects politics and administration in all its national, regional

and local articulations.

In fact, the Program contains operational indications (lines of action) on many areas that directly or indirectly affect the quality of life of people with disabilities: from the revision of the criteria for the recognition of the same, to health, work, study and mobility. Without neglecting issues such as the development of the statistical system and monitoring of policy implementation or international cooperation. The Program itself is very articulated and indicates specific actions, implementing and involved subjects, economic sustainability, but its actual application depends on real political, organizational and administrative will. The definition of guidelines on targeted placement, aimed at relaunching the "spirit" of law 68/99, will constitute a national instrument of new direction and coordination for targeted placement services. The basic principles see the network of services as the protagonist (employment centers, social services, socio-health services) and the participation of the community forces in the choices of planning interventions: social partners, associations of people with disabilities and their families, social cooperatives. An important role is attributed to the bio-psycho-social assessment of disability, which emphasizes the strengths, what the individual is able to do rather than limitations and impairments. The institution of a person responsible for job placement in the workplace is being promoted, especially in large companies.

The "**Guidelines for the integration of disabled people in the company**" program was born in 2001 from a collaboration between the **ASPHI Onlus Foundation and the IBM Italia Foundation**, with the specific objectives of helping companies to improve the labor integration of people with disabilities transforming their assumption from a legislative obligation to opportunities to be exploited and made productive, and to increase the accessibility of the goods and services produced so that they can also be enjoyed by people with special needs, and in particular by the disabled.

In fact, from 2001 to today, the Program has grown, enriching itself with notable contributions and interventions from various different organizations.

Currently part of the working group are municipal and regional public administrations, large public bodies, medium and large companies.

the Program recognizes the importance of the fact that products and services are usable by all, from the point of view of "**Design for all**", a term that can be literally translated as "Design for all". Predicting from the beginning, methods and solutions that can also be used by disabled and / or disadvantaged people means addressing a wider segment of the population, and therefore a wider target. All this translates for companies into an advantage not only in terms of image, but also economic (because the target of potential users / customers is broadened).

The principle of "**Design for all**" obviously also extends to the design and implementation of computer applications and websites accessible to people with disabilities. This Program provides indications about a structured set of actions and interventions, coherent and appropriate to the context of each individual organization, for an institution / company that wants to:

- favour the development of the productivity of disabled collaborators;
- promote and support the attention to the "Design for all" of goods and services, thus contributing to concretely realize one's own Social Responsibility (CSR Corporate Social Responsibility) in the specific sector concerning disabled people.

The Entity / Company assumes the objectives of the Program in its "normal management", and assigns specific tasks to each Function considering them as elements for evaluating its efficiency.

In particular:

- expresses a formal commitment to adopt the aforementioned objectives and guidelines to pursue them and communicates them to the entire Organization, as a management commitment and expression of the will of the Top Management;
- appoints a "Key Executive", reporting directly to the Top Management, as the person in charge of the objectives and implementation of the guidelines.

This figure does not necessarily have to coincide with the Personnel Manager and indeed, in some ways,

it is better that he distinguishes himself, in order not to incur possible confusion of roles.

The identification of the activities and initiatives to be carried out varies from company to company, it also depends on its particular type, whether it be a private company, public body, widespread structure at a territorial level, etc.

POLAND

"ABSOLWENT" programme - the aim is enabling disabled people who graduated from a university or are in their last year at a university to enter the labour market. The program is an offer of cooperation addressed to universities, non-governmental organizations or partnerships established by them, because they will constitute a link between a disabled graduate and a potential employer and direct targeted financial support to both entities. The program is being implemented in the whole country. The program is implemented from the date of the resolution by the PFRON's Supervisory Board on the approval of the program until 31 December 2023. The budget of the program comes from the funds at the disposal of PFRON.

"Zajęcia klubowe w WTZ" programme - is a solution that is conducive to active support of workshops' participants who have entered the labour market and disabled people before starting the rehabilitation process by means of an occupational therapy workshop. The program is being implemented in the whole country. The aim of the program is to support people with disabilities in maintaining autonomy and independence in social and professional life through occupational therapy workshops club activities as an organized form of rehabilitation. The State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People has launched a support programme for disabled people as part of WTZ club activities as an organized form of rehabilitation. The period of the programme implementation "Zajęcia klubowe w WTZ": 1 February 2021 - 31 January 2022.

"Aktywny samorząd" programme - the main aim of the programme is to eliminate or reduce barriers limiting the participation of programme beneficiaries in social life, professional life and in access to education: preparing programme beneficiaries with movement, hearing and visual perception disorders to fulfil various social roles by enabling them to join the emerging information society; enabling the beneficiaries of the professional activation programme through the use of elements supporting their employment; improving the chances of programme beneficiaries to compete for employment on the open labour market by increasing their qualifications. The program is implemented from the date of its approval by the PFRON's Supervisory Board. The programme completion date will be determined by the PFRON's Supervisory Board.

"Rehabilitacja 25 plus" programme - the aim of the programme is to collect experiences aimed at developing solutions that ensure the continuity of therapeutic interventions for graduates in terms of maintaining autonomy and independence in social and professional life. The beneficiaries of the programme are unemployed disabled people who are graduates. The program is being implemented in the whole country. The program will be implemented until 31 December 2021. The program is implemented from the date of the resolution by the PFRON's Supervisory Board on the approval of the programme.

ROMANIA

The National Employment Agency reports that it is currently carrying out 13 projects aimed at stimulating employment for vulnerable groups, with a total value of over 650 million euros, supported through the European Social Fund (ESF).

21 Relevant projects are also being carried out by private funders. Such a project is 'Employed, not living out of social benefits', which targets people with Down Syndrome and the problem they face in accessing the labour market. This project is funded by ING Tech Romania, started in 2020 and is supposed to be carried out over 12 months, aiming at offering support for 120 individuals. The support will consist of getting knowledge on how to search for a job, learning how to communicate with

potential employers, to attend a job interview, to integrate in the working environment and to interact with colleagues and managers. On the other hand, an awareness campaign will be carried out among employers, to help them understand that people with Down Syndrome can be hired if the work environment is adapted to their specific abilities. An online platform will be launched, including useful information for beneficiaries, relatives and employers. The project also aims to launch, in 2021, the first Guide for the employment of People with Down Syndrome in Romania.

5.2 Guidelines for identifying the specific needs of people with disabilities in terms of labor market inclusion

CYPRUS

The Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Insurance have developed a reference form for evaluating the disability and working ability of a graduate school or secondary school student, with the main aim to strengthen employment and inclusion. The reference form requires the consent of the student's guardian and the responsible teacher, and is completed by the competent Educational Officer and signed by the principal of the school. The form refers to the disabled student prior training or professional experience that has been already completed and requests detailed description on the knowledge, skills and competencies that have been gained. Such information must match the requirements of the job position the disabled students intend to get, and defines also the proper working environment such as, equipment, communication tools, keyboards, computers, etc.). Moreover, people with disabilities can perceive a job position based on three main criteria. For example, to have the required qualifications to be fulfilled and to be deemed suitable for the job position, and lastly, to pass any written and/or oral examination required for the position. Depending on the results of the practical implementation of the Law, it is possible in the future to start a dialogue with the social partners for the implementation of the Law in the private sector. In order to claim a job, the applicant must declare his/her disability in his/her job application or in the registered recruitment lists, submitting a relevant certificate for his/her disability. Following this, upon his/her recruitment, the applicants with disabilities have two basic rights according to the Law:

- a. to be provided with special supporting technological equipment that may need for the performance of the position duties;
- b. to be placed by his/her supervisor service in a workplace that serves both the needs of the service and the special needs arising from the type and condition of his disability.

GREECE

The establishment of a public limited liability company and its inclusion in the provisions of this Law is affected by its registration in the Register, whereby it acquires legal personality and commercial status. The Register is the database maintained in electronic form by the Directorate's Registry Department in which the entities are registered. It aims to be an important database and a valuable tool, as it provides a complete picture of the existing SCEs.

Assisted Living Facilities (ASF)- will replace the existing medium and large sized units, which not only do not contribute to the high-quality personalised care required for the guests (children, people with disabilities, elderly), but also provide the background for the permanent reproduction of the "institutionalisation" that the beneficiaries experience during their stay in these types of structures.

Alternative forms of placement - within small and flexible structures with a single-digit capacity such as *Assisted Living Houses* - have for decades been considered and judged to be the most effective and efficient form of accommodation. It is more effective as it has a positive impact on most indicators of mental and physical health of the guests, education and learning of social and educational skills and ultimate psychosocial rehabilitation. Similarly, it is considered more cost-effective because it achieves 'economies of scale' over time. At the same time, they operate in conditions simulating life in the

community, preparing qualified guests for their future community integration. There are 40 supported living shelters operating nationwide and the future planning of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity includes the creation of 70 new SYDs.

ITALY

An important moment, to detect the specific needs of disabled people in the workplace, according to this program, is that of the census of disabled people in the company, in order to collect as much information as possible.

In respect of privacy, the Personnel and Human Resources Offices will be able to obtain:

- personal data (age, sex, geographical origin, type of disability, etc.) of people with disabilities regularly hired pursuant to law 68/99;
- data on the duties they hold within the organization;
- their "history" within the organization: the different roles covered, any promotions and salary increase, the degree of seniority, their position vis-à-vis INPS, etc.

In this way, a picture corresponding to the reality of the company and the characteristics of the people with disabilities who work there is available.

This is a good point to start a series of actions aimed and aimed at developing their productivity and improving their company "performance". For the development of the Program, it is important to periodically check the status of work integration in the company.

The tool for this research can be a "form / questionnaire", which collects information and level of satisfaction on various areas related to professional integration, some typically referable to the condition of disability (for example, the physical work environment or the computer aids) and others common to all employees of the organization (for example, the content and autonomy of work, social relations, formal and non-formal recognition, career paths, etc.).

Each item affects not only job placement, but also effective productivity, and can therefore be translated into quantitative and economic terms.

The "form / questionnaire" can be proposed both to disabled collaborators and to their managers / bosses, to evaluate any differences in perception. This methodology allows, among other things, to:

- identify critical issues and opportunities for improvement;
- compare the needs and expectations of disabled collaborators with what is expected and perceived by managers and managers;
- verify the effectiveness of initiatives undertaken;
- demonstrate the organization's interest in understanding the needs of its collaborators. The analysis of the findings will lead to the proposal and activation of further improvement initiatives, the results of which will be verified and consolidated by subsequent investigations.

POLAND

The publication "*Badanie potrzeb osób niepełnosprawnych*" (Need Assessment of persons with disabilities) developed at the request of the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People by the company: *Badania Społeczne Marzena Sochańska-Kawiecka* contains guidelines on identifying the needs of people with disabilities in many areas of their lives, including inclusion in the labour market. The aim of the study was to identify the needs of people with disabilities from the point of view of these people, as well as to provide recommendations on the possible support by PFRON of people with disabilities with regard to meeting their needs. The needs related to the area of professional work, indicated by 6% of the respondents, rendered to be particularly important in spontaneous statements for the mentally ill (11%). They mentioned most frequently issues such as: access to any job, regardless of its type and qualifications possessed, working conditions adapted to the capabilities of a disabled person - mainly lack of stress, more frequent breaks, understanding for indispositions. 19% of disabled people have specific needs regarding professional work. Most frequently the needs cover adapting the

workstation / workplace to individual needs or ensuring appropriate working conditions. Physical adaptations are more often needed by people with movement and vision impairments, while the need to ensure good conditions is more often mentioned by the mentally ill and carers of people with mental disabilities. On the other hand, for people with hearing impairments, support in finding a job and support in the workplace (e.g., sign interpreter) is important.

ROMANIA

The impact of all these programs remains for now limited. The employment rates are low, and a recent study reported that only 26 % of parents of young people with disabilities were aware of the professional support services offered by employment authorities, while only 10 % of these people were actually employed.

Law no. 145/2020 and Law no. 193/2020, which amended Law no. 448/2006, tried to address some of these shortcomings. People with disabilities were offered the possibility to choose, upon request, between benefiting of free public transport or receiving reimbursements, within certain limits, for the cost of the fuel of personal vehicles or vehicles belonging to their careers. Law 145/2020 also introduced in more clear terms certain obligations for employers, such as that to adapt the employees' tasks to their abilities and to offer, when needed, flexible working hours. Companies that do not take such measures will be susceptible of receiving significantly higher fines than before, ranging to up to RON 25.000 (approximately EUR 5130). While the legislator's intent is clear, concerns can be raised given that employers in Romania were already reticent in employing people with disabilities; the risk of being applied such quantum of fines might contribute to even more reticence.

6. COMMON POINTS - SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Summarization of the findings of the research and the most important and general focal points. The chapter was developed on the basis of the observations made in the previous chapters and therefore completes this Desk-Research.

6.1 Common points

- People with disabilities are still struggling to find employment in spite of the existent legislation and the right to work guaranteed by the Constitution of all participant countries;
- In most cases, there is a lack of national data on disability, which hinders the measures taken to address this issue;
- People with disabilities are at poverty risk, mainly in Cyprus, Greece, Poland and Romania;
- The reasons for refusing to recruit workers with disabilities are similar in all participant countries, the most common being: social prejudices, insufficient information about documents required, inadequate vocational training, an increasingly competitive labour market, the absence of an integrated central planning on the part of the State and the lack of infrastructure for disabled people.

6.2 Similarities and differences

- In all participant countries, governments and local authorities have been implementing strategies and projects in order to enhance the employability of disabled people. However, this

issue needs further addressing being quite intricate owing to the many factors contributing to achieving success in this field and which range from education, medical assistance, mentality, willingness to create an inclusive culture, financial incentive, social entrepreneurship, civic involvement, to name only a few;

- The legislation in all participant countries meant to combat discrimination against the disabled in the workplace has come into force quite recently and it was prompted by the need to adapt the national systems to the international and EU law;
- A common instrument to boost employability of disabled people in all participant countries is to grant subventions, yet this method is not deemed appealing enough, in Romania for example. Also, high levels of financial support offered to people with disabilities may deter them from pursuing a certain form of training/education or finding a job, as it is the case in Poland;
- One important factor conducive to low employability among disabled people is the lack of adequate education, although vocational education is available in all participant countries, but this one is insufficiently adapted to the needs of disabled people and to the requirements of the labour market. One useful document implemented in Cyprus, the reference form can be successfully used in other countries to assess working ability, skills and competence;
- Despite some improvements, mentality in most participant countries plays a key role in the way disabled people are perceived by employers and colleagues in the workplace, who might consider them insufficiently prepared or unable to perform different tasks, the situation of the mentally challenged being even worse. The stigma is still present although efforts towards an inclusive society have been made in all participant countries as far as the desk research shows.
- In all participant countries there is a mandatory quota to employ disabled people in the public sector. In addition, the social cooperatives and the involvement of different associations have thoroughly contributed to making things better.
- There is relevant legislation in all participant countries and there have been identified some successful strategies among which we can mention: Vocational Profiling in Cyprus, the targeted placement in Italy, a variety of initiatives in Poland (traineeships, trainings, employment services, all of which are state-run and funded);
- Despite the existent legislation, its implementation is deficient, such is the case in Romania, and consequently it leads to no or few results;
- In all participant countries financial benefits are available and guaranteed by law, although not all the companies are aware of these incentives (Italian research has pointed out this aspect) while in Romania the existing incentives are of small value and are given for a little amount of time, having little impact in addressing the difficulties people have in integrating on the labour market.

CONCLUSIONS

- In most participant countries, there are programmes which facilitate the provision of financial support and grants to employers and non-governmental institutions that offer services or mentor people with disabilities;
- Schemes such as the Social Cooperative Enterprise or Assisted Living Facilities are deemed to be helpful in improving the labour integration of people with disabilities;
- Most programmes have a positive effect on learning and education skills as they contain lines of action on many areas that directly affect the quality of life;
- However, were we to have a look at some of the national realities, we could easily conclude that the impact of all these programmes remains for now limited.

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