

# Catalogue of positive actions to encourage the hiring of **persons with disabilities** and combating stereotypes



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## Introduction



Persons with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures a dignified lifestyle, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in wider society, and a work environment adapted to their needs<sup>1</sup>.

The right of persons with disabilities to work and be employed on an equal basis with others is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has been ratified by all EU Member States<sup>2</sup>. Principle 17 of the European Pillar of Social Rights reaffirms the right of persons with disabilities to services that enable them to participate in the labour market and a work environment adapted to their needs<sup>3</sup>. Closing the employment gap between persons with and without disabilities is one of the objectives of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 (the Strategy)<sup>4</sup>, which invited Member States to set national targets for employment and adult learning for persons with disabilities.

One of the Strategy's seven flagship initiatives is the [Disability Employment Package](#) (the Package). The Package aims to improve the labour market outcomes of persons with disabilities by providing guidance and good practices for employers, employers' associations, and public authorities, as well as by raising awareness about persons with disabilities and by combating stereotypes. The Package's actions cover all stages of recruitment and employment: strengthening the capacities of employment and integration services; promoting hiring perspectives through affirmative action; combating stereotypes; ensuring reasonable accommodation; securing health and safety at work; vocational rehabilitation schemes in cases of chronic diseases or accidents; exploring quality jobs in sheltered employment; and pathways to the open labour market<sup>5</sup>.

The [Council Conclusions of 8 December 2022](#) on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market acknowledge the Package's actions and call upon the Member States to implement its relevant guidelines; to support vocational education and training of persons with disabilities; and to facilitate the transition of persons with disabilities to the labour market. The Council Conclusions also reiterate the Strategy's

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<sup>1</sup> [The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/crpdgc8-general-comment-no-8-2022-right-persons>

<sup>3</sup> [The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-30 \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> Commission Communication of 3 March 2021: [Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#), COM(2021) 101 final.

call to set up national targets on employment of persons with disabilities and their participation in adult learning <sup>6</sup>.

This catalogue, which the Commission produced with the help of the European Disability Expertise (EDE) project and the members of the Disability Platform subgroup on employment, is one of the Package's deliverables. It publicises positive actions carried out by employers and public authorities in Europe to hire persons with disabilities. Those actions can be considered good practices and serve as an inspiration for employers, employers' organisations, public authorities, trade unions and other stakeholders that support employment of persons with disabilities.

A range of measures to make it easier to hire persons with disabilities is available for employers throughout the EU. These include quotas; tax relief; reductions in social security contributions or mandatory health insurance payments; wage or other subsidies; grants; awareness-raising; and information, training and advice. This catalogue presents selected examples to illustrate different practices, relevant actors and objectives. The measures are presented under specific headers for ease of reference, but many could concern more than one category. We therefore advise all those looking for inspiring practices to read through the whole catalogue.

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<sup>6</sup>For more information see: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/epsco/2022/12/08/> and <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14495-2022-INIT/en/pdf>.



## 1 Support service for business

Many European states provide specific support to make it easier for businesses to recruit and retain persons with disabilities. Such support is diverse and comprises both broad sets of actions implemented at national, regional or local level, and specific initiatives such as projects, guidelines or events.

### 1.1 Programme: ‘Service for Business’ – Austria

The Service for Business programme for employers was introduced as a pilot in all Austrian regions in 2020. Its measures range from individually informing, advising and supporting businesses to employing persons with disabilities, including:

- comprehensive information and advice on funding opportunities and, if required, support with funding management;
- advice on the legal framework for the employment of persons with disabilities;
- support in the recruiting process, in particular in the creation of job advertisements and the preparation and design of the application process, the avoidance of possible discrimination and the pre-selection of suitable applicants;
- assistance in the planning and implementation of organisational measures to create and design suitable and accessible workplaces; and support with the clarification of measures to achieve the greatest possible accessibility in the operational environment<sup>7</sup>.

During the 2022 evaluation, the employers and other stakeholders involved gave a positive feedback about the programme. Employers appreciated the ‘one stop shop’ principle for information on employment of persons with disabilities. Other stakeholders (such as organisations providing work (place) assistance) valued the particular focus on employers and the fact that this new programme fills a gap. These positive results mean that the ‘Service for Business’ pilot has now been implemented permanently within a well-established and differentiated scheme of (support) services for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market.

The Service for Business programme may be regarded as good practice because it complements the already existing support services for persons with disabilities<sup>8</sup> by incorporating a specific focus on employers. By providing comprehensive support to businesses, a strong emphasis is put on the importance of environmental changes in making workplaces accessible. This includes the issue of non-discriminatory attitudes in the whole process of recruitment (awareness-raising), workplace adaptation and ongoing support during the actual employment of persons with disabilities. <http://www.sarew.be/qui-sommes-nous/historique/>

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<sup>7</sup> See information on Service for Businesses (in German): <https://www.betriebsservice.info/>.

<sup>8</sup> Under the umbrella structure ‘NEBA’, a differentiated structure of support services has recently been developed that includes six key measures: youth coaching, ‘fit for training’, VET assistance, job coaching, work (place) assistance and ‘Service for Business’. See information on NEBA (in German): <https://neba.at/>.



## **1.2 Service assisting with job search for deaf or hard of hearing people in Wallonia – region of Belgium**

Service d'aide à la recherche d'un emploi pour personnes sourdes et malentendantes en Wallonie, (Service assisting with job search for deaf or hard of hearing people in Wallonia), SAREW<sup>9</sup> offers tailored solutions addressing specific barriers deaf people face in a professional context. It provides comprehensive support, from designing Curriculum Vitae, to preparation for job interviews, or placing the individuals in deaf-friendly work environments. In addition to individualized support, SAREW also engages in awareness-raising initiatives targeted at companies and employment sites. The goal is to foster the inclusion of deaf people by promoting the use of their national sign languages, the French Belgian Sign Language (LSFB) at the workplace.

In addition, SAREW undertakes initiatives to raise awareness and engage public authorities to take concrete actions towards employment accessibility for deaf people. The activities are carried out by a team of deaf and hearing people with in-depth knowledge of the unique requirements of deaf people, as well as the specific challenges tied to the use of their national sign language.

## **1.3 Active labour market measures in employment services – Croatia**

The Croatian Employment Service uses active labour market measures to target persons with disabilities. Its policies include two measures aimed at employers of persons with disabilities: employment support – green/digital; and the public works scheme. The employment support – green/digital scheme requires that the employment must relate to green or digital activities. The employment support measures provide employers with financial subsidies for 24 months towards the salaries of persons with disabilities.

Croatia's Ombudsperson for Persons with Disabilities<sup>10</sup> has highlighted the Croatian Employment Service's active employment policy measures as a positive example. She has pointed out that the data indicate that active policy measures are well-accepted tools used by employers for employing persons with disabilities and are therefore vital to successful employment for a very significant number of persons with disabilities. According to the Ombudsperson the availability of measures and the ability to use them has often had a decisive effect on the employer's final decision as to whether or not to employ a person with a disability.

The latest data show that these measures have increased the number of employed persons with disabilities, with the largest share coming through public works<sup>11</sup>. In 2021, 765 persons with disabilities were included in the various active employment measures (both those which were aimed at employers and those which were not) implemented by the Croatian Employment Service: 487 men (63.7%) and 278 women

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.sarew.be/qui-sommes-nous/historique/>

<sup>10</sup> Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities, *Report of the Ombudsman for 2020 (Izvešće o radu Pravobraniteljice za osobe s invaliditetom za 2020. godinu)*, 2021,.

<sup>11</sup> Academic research that shows that public works schemes have only limited effectiveness in providing long-term sustainable transition to regular employment for participants. An example of this research is: Card, D., Kluve, J. and Weber, A., *What works? A meta analysis of recent active labour market programs*, IZA Discussion Paper No 9236, 2015, <https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/9236/what-works-a-meta-analysis-of-recent-active-labor-market-program-evaluations>



(36.3%). The number of persons with disabilities newly included in active employment policy measures increased by 23% on 2020, when 622 persons with disabilities were newly included. Most persons with disabilities were employed through the financing/co-financing of public works and were 372 in 2021 (48.6% of the total number of persons with disabilities newly included in the measures). A total of 194 persons with disabilities (25.4%) were included in employment support measures (21.3% more than in 2020) <sup>12</sup>.

#### **1.4 Labour market activation project: ‘Business training fields – on the way to a flexi job’ – Denmark**

The City of Aarhus implements a project called ‘Virksomheds øve baner – på vej i fleksjob’ (‘Business training fields – on the way to a flexi job’) <sup>13</sup>, which is funded by Erhvervsfremmestyrelsen (the Danish Business Promotion Agency) and the EU Social Fund. The objective of the project was to support the integration of the participants into the labour market with training and flexi-job offers. The project ran from 1 March 2021 until the end of 2022, and the goal was for 180 citizens to complete it. Offers were made to citizens who were approved for a flexi-job but had not yet made contact with a potential employer. The project provided participants with training in social as well as professional skills as they became part of an ordinary workplace. The participants were then supposed to be retained through a flexi-job. The project thus supported both the employer and the employee.

#### **1.5 Creating bridges between employment, rehabilitation and education stakeholders – Finland**

The VATES Foundation <sup>14</sup> is an expert organisation for the equal employment of persons with disabilities, long-term illnesses, and persons with partial work capacity. VATES works in co-operation with employment, rehabilitation and education stakeholders. For example, a work coach can help with tailoring suitable work tasks and familiarising employees with them. VATES also informs employers about opportunities and forms of support for employment.

VATES has developed cooperation between employers using the disability employment forum concept. The annual event is part of a dialogue and information-sharing with employers on forms of support, services and practices that can promote the employment of persons with disabilities, persons with partial work capacity and persons with long-term illnesses. The initiative helps combat stereotypes. The VATES Foundation also produced a handbook to support employment <sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities, *Report of the Ombudsman for 2021, 2022* [Pravobranitelj za osobe s invaliditetom | POSI](#).

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.aarhus.dk/borger/job-og-ledighed/handicap-og-job/saerlige-virksomhedsindsatser/virksomhedsovebaner-paa-vej-i-fleksjob/>

<sup>14</sup> VATES Foundation, <https://www.vates.fi/tyonantajalle.html>.

<sup>15</sup> VATES Foundation (2019) *Työn tukena* (Support for employment), <https://www.vates.fi/media/projektit/tyon-tukena/ty-f6n-tukena-koulutusmateriaali-saavutettava-pdf1.pdf>.

## **1.6 Targeted measures of the Service Pôle Emploi: ‘Employment and Autism’ – France**

The ‘Employment and Autism’ initiative launched by the [Service Pôle Emploi](#) (a French public institution for job-search assistance and unemployment compensation) started in 2018 as a pilot in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine and Pays de la Loire regions. Since 2022, it has been deployed on a larger scale. This initiative provides jobseekers with autism with individualised support in accessing employment. It also provides support for social aspects, such as housing, healthcare, and mobility. Employment counsellors, who are sensitised to autism, accompany jobseekers to help them decide their professional path or training project, introduce them to job-search techniques, facilitate contacts with companies and successfully integrate them into the workforce. As highlighted on the [Pôle Emploi website](#), ‘About 200 persons with autism have received support in job searching since the launch of the programme in the two pilot regions of Pays de la Loire and Nouvelle-Aquitaine. The rate of return to employment for these persons has risen to 42% in Nouvelle-Aquitaine and to 23% in the Pays de la Loire. These figures clearly show that offering the right support (so that persons with autism feel confident about themselves with counsellors and then with recruiters) makes for a good rate of return to employment – especially since each support measure is long-term and offered for more than a year’.

## **1.7 Inclusive pathways of employment within the civil service – Ireland**

The Irish government has developed and implemented more inclusive recruitment pathways into the civil service for persons with disabilities. This inclusive method, which takes a skills-first approach involves potential employees undertaking a work placement (usually around 10 months) during which they get to demonstrate their skills and they learn new ones. A positive work placement then permits the candidates to compete in a confined competition at the end of their placement. The knowledge developed in the training programme are relevant and suitable for employment in the civil service. The pathway encourages employers to provide inclusive work environments, and to make reasonable accommodations that generate long-term sustainable employment while giving candidates a chance to demonstrate their skills and abilities to future employers.

## **1.8 Guidelines on targeted placement of persons with disabilities and diversity management – Italy**

Italy adopted guidelines on the targeted placement of persons with disabilities<sup>16</sup> in 2022 with the aim of providing practical information for employers. The guidelines include a collection of good practices for professional integration. These good practices are recorded on an accessible IT platform that is searchable, dynamic and can be further updated. The guidelines also allow (but do not require) private employers to appoint a disability manager.

Even before the guidelines were proposed, some private companies had introduced diversity management mechanisms. Over a fifth of companies (20.7%, or over 5 700

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<sup>16</sup> Ministerial Decree No 43 of 11 March 2022 of the Minister of Labour and Social Policies in implementation of Article 1(1) of Legislative Decree No 151/2015.

companies) had adopted at least one measure by 2019 that was not legally required but was aimed at managing and enhancing diversity among workers, and that related to gender, age, citizenship, nationality and/or ethnicity, religious beliefs or disability<sup>17</sup>. Such measures were found in over a third of large companies (500+ employees) and about a fifth of smaller companies (50-499 employees). The greater attention given by larger companies to non-legally required diversity measures focus on disability, with such measures being implemented by about 16% of companies on average (but more than 25% of larger companies).

Good practices also include the creation of service agencies to promote a culture of inclusion at work of persons with disabilities and thus reverse the existing paradigm: 'not from the person with disabilities to the company, but from the company to the person with disabilities'. In other words, the starting point for these service agencies is providing support to the company in drafting a personalised inclusion action plan.

### 1.9 Open-Doors Day for Persons with Disabilities – Latvia

The 'Open-Doors Day for Persons with Disabilities' allows several support measures to be implemented simultaneously over a short period:

- job vacancies are applied for with the employer's registration;
- when expressing an interest in attending the event, a person with a disability also registers with the State Employment Agency (PES)<sup>18</sup>;
- the employer becomes acquainted with the potential employee;
- the employer has the opportunity to demonstrate on the spot the work to be performed, to provide information on its requirements and to become acquainted with a potential employee's abilities and suitability for the work;
- the employee can be engaged for a temporary trial period and receive feedback directly from the potential employer;
- the employer can recruit a person with a disability;
- a person with disabilities can take up work.

This measure helps combat stereotypes. PES data<sup>19</sup> indicate that employers are increasingly interested in the Open-Doors Day. The number of persons with disabilities recruited is also increasing. The event is relatively new and the years of the pandemic have introduced some adjustments, so data on the number of persons with disabilities who have been hired after events organised online is not available.

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<sup>17</sup> Istituto nazionale di statistica (Istat), *Conoscere il mondo della disabilità (Knowing the world of disability)*, Rome, 2019, <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2019/12/Disabilit%C3%A0-1.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> <https://begluintegracija.nva.gov.lv/en/>

<sup>19</sup> In 2017, 62 employers and 207 persons with disabilities participated in an Open-Doors Day: <https://www.nva.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/atverto-durvju-diena-uznemumos-personam-ar-invaliditati>.

In 2018, 65 employers and 296 persons with disabilities participated: <https://www.nva.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/nva-akcija-atverto-durvju-diena-personam-ar-invaliditati-uznemumos-piedalijas-65-darba-deveji-un-296-darba-mekletaji>.

In 2019, 69 employers participated: <https://www.nva.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/sonedel-visa-latvija-norisinas-nva-akcija-atverto-durvju-diena-personam-ar-invaliditati-uznemumos>.

## 1.10 Early detection and intervention – Liechtenstein

Liechtenstein's Disability Insurance Office carries out measures for the early detection of persons at risk of disability and preventive measures. Notification of early registration with the Disability Insurance Office by the employer and cooperation with the Office does not affect an existing employment relationship (such as the employer's right to terminate the employment contract). A notification of early registration can be made voluntarily by the employer, in agreement with the employee or based on legal provisions<sup>20</sup>. The legal obligation to register an employee with the Office exists after at least 6 weeks of absence from work due to health reasons (minimum 50% incapacity for working ability). This obligation applies to the employer, doctors and social security institutions (such as institutions for health insurance, accident insurance and unemployment insurance). The obligation to report does not apply if it becomes apparent that full fitness for work will be regained in the near future (in cases where a longer recovery period is required after an accident). The employee must be informed of the notification in advance.

If an insured person participates in the early registration process with the Disability Insurance Office, the Office hands over the assessment to independent external specialists (case managers). In cooperation with the insured person, the employer and doctors (or other specialists) try to steer the individual case with as little bureaucracy as possible, making full use of the entire range of disability insurance benefits and, if necessary, coordinating with other agencies. In addition to the existing integration measures undertaken by the Disability Insurance Office (such as retraining with daily allowance and job trials with a daily allowance), many other early-intervention measures are available within the early-assessment framework (such as financing of short-term employment measures, training courses, familiarisation grants for job trials and support through job coaching). A contact person in the Disability Insurance Office is assigned to the employer to keep the employer informed on an ongoing basis and to actively involve them in the integration process.

Early intervention measures are generally available for up to 1 year. Within this period, it must be clarified whether integration or reintegration is possible or whether a disability insurance registration is definitely appropriate.

## 1.11 Awareness-raising and information to employers – Luxembourg

Good practice in support measures directed at employers in Luxembourg includes measures such as the 'Duoday' initiative (ADEM's<sup>21</sup> single point of contact for employers), the 'employment cafes' initiative to encourage encounters between employers and jobseekers, and the introduction of inclusion assistants. These constitute a coherent and complementary set of support services for raising companies' awareness; providing information and guidance on relevant topics such

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<sup>20</sup> See the information sheet from the IV office regarding early registration: [https://www.ahv.li/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Dokumente/Online-Schalter/MB/AHV-IV-FAK-MB-3-04--Frueherfassung\\_IV.pdf](https://www.ahv.li/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Online-Schalter/MB/AHV-IV-FAK-MB-3-04--Frueherfassung_IV.pdf) and [https://www.ahv.li/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Dokumente/Online-Schalter/MB/AHV-IV-FAK-MB-3-05--Meldepflicht\\_Frueherfassung.pdf](https://www.ahv.li/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Online-Schalter/MB/AHV-IV-FAK-MB-3-05--Meldepflicht_Frueherfassung.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> National Employment Agency (Agence pour le développement de l'emploi – ADEM), <https://adem.public.lu/en.html>.

as recruitment procedures and incentives; and facilitating the integration of persons with disabilities into the mainstream labour market and sustaining their jobs.

Trade unions can also be a reference point for employers who wish to integrate a 'worker with disability'. The Onafhängege Gewerkschaftsbond Lëtzebuerg – OGB-L (Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Luxembourg)<sup>22</sup> has a department for workers with disabilities to represent the trade union and the political and social demands of workers with disabilities. In addition, the Luxembourg Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (LCGB)<sup>23</sup> is committed to reinforcing the integration of persons with disabilities into the private sector and to encouraging companies to properly integrate workers with disabilities.

### **1.12 Vocational assessment, support and training for employment (VASTE), job carving – Malta**

The Maltese Public Employment Services (PES) implements the vocational assessment, support and training for employment (VASTE) programme in partnership with the [Lino Spiteri Foundation](#) (LSF) and partially financed by the 2014-2020 European Social Funds. The programme has been designed to bring participants closer to the labour market, facilitate employment and ensure long-term retention of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable individuals.

The PES has used a holistic and innovative concept approach to create an extensive series of employability-enhancing training options, work-related experiences and support options aimed at providing different employment channels.

Initial client assessments and workplace visits are intended to help jobseekers, employees and employers engage in meaningful employment. Pre-employment training has the aim of increasing work prospects by providing participants with life and communication skills, pre-employment skills, basic clerical skills and basic ICT skills. The sheltered employment training which is offered to participants with disabilities who are still far away from the labour market is a one-year programme which provides hands-on work-related training (such as on work ethics, independent living, communication and social skills).

The LSF deals specifically with unemployed persons with disabilities on a one-to-one basis through the provision of advisory assistance and job search support. The LSF's corporate relations unit approaches and liaises with private enterprises, provides recruitment services and facilitates access to incentives and schemes available to this class of clients. Through its job-carving approach, it works to create employment opportunities for jobseekers by analysing an enterprise's requirements and operation/workflow. It then identifies elements and tasks in the enterprise's existing jobs in order to design a new job or workflow into which a person with a disability or a mixed-ability group of persons with disabilities could be integrated. It carves jobs according to the client's abilities.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.ogbl.lu/de/>

<sup>23</sup> [LCGB - Lëtzebuenger Chrëschtliche Gewerkschaftsbond](#).



### 1.13 Coalition for Technology and Inclusion – Netherlands

The Coalition for Technology and Inclusion (CTI) is a partnership of the Netherlands Employee Insurance Agency (UWV), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and various partners. The CTI is committed to connect the domains of technology and work and income, so that technology is being developed and used to strive towards a more inclusive labour market. This requires a lot of practical experience, which is why the CTI has initiated a number of pilots in which new technological applications are currently tested in the area of work and reintegration. For example: speech recognition for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, VR glasses for persons that have psychosocial disabilities and providing support by augmented reality technology for packing dentist's bags. The pilots are monitored and will be evaluated. The results and outcomes may offer perspectives on structural support while working for persons with disabilities, and use of the technology that has been developed in the pilots.

### 1.14 Targeted methodology – Norway

'Work and Inclusion' (W&I) in Norway has a methodology called Ripples in the Water (RIW), which promotes cooperation between companies that are members of the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (the NHO) and W&I service providers. The aim of RIW is to increase the level of employment of persons with disabilities or disadvantages by applying the understanding that the vast majority of people both want to and are able to work. The methodology aims at meeting employers' real labour needs and at providing support to both employers and candidates before, during and after employment. A company contacts a service provider, which assesses the company's needs and considers whether it has suitable candidates for the position in question. The advisers from the service provider also work with the Inclusive Job Design methodology to examine with the employer whether a new position that matches the needs and skills of a candidate can be created. The service provider may also provide training and coaching to prepare the candidate to become employable. It also provides follow-up support at the workplace, including coaching after the candidate has been permanently employed. An evaluation of the programme's results commissioned by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has shown that this method resulted in three times more persons being employed than ordinary supportive employment<sup>24</sup>. The 2017 evaluation showed that around 80% of the candidates obtained permanent employment thanks to this method and that 57% of the NHO companies would not have recruited without it<sup>25</sup>. Furthermore, 84% of the companies trust the service providers to propose relevant candidates, 79% believed that they received relevant information about the candidates and 77% agreed that the proposed candidate matched the needs of the company.<sup>26</sup>

In January 2019 NHO and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) started a collaborative two-year project called Ripples in the Water 2 (RIW 2) to involve more companies and to improve access to qualified candidates with disabilities. RIW

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<sup>24</sup> EPR (2018). Toolkit on Partnerships with Employers, <http://epr.eu/wp-content/uploads/Toolkit-Partnership-with-employers-with-easy-to-read-summary.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www-nho-no.translate.goog/samarbeid/ringer-i-vannet/artikler/rekrutteringssuksessen-fortsetter/? x tr sl=auto& x tr tl=en& x tr hl=en-US& x tr pto=wapp>

<sup>26</sup> EPR (2018). Toolkit on Partnerships with Employers, <http://epr.eu/wp-content/uploads/Toolkit-Partnership-with-employers-with-easy-to-read-summary.pdf>.

2 receives funds from the Norwegian Government and has started to be tested in three pilots in different parts of the country.

### **1.15 Dedicated service – Portugal**

The Operação para o Emprego de pessoas com deficiência (OED) (Employment Operation for Persons with Disabilities)<sup>27</sup> is a pioneering service that works to improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the open labour market in the city of Lisbon. The agency was created in 1991 and is a partnership between a disability service provider (Fundação LIGA), Lisbon City Council and the National Institute for Employment and Vocational Training. It supports persons with disabilities in their job search through professional assessment, career guidance and the development of socio-professional skills. It also supports employers in recruitment and selection and provides them with information and advice on how to apply for the benefits provided by the State and on the adaptation of workplaces.

### **1.16 Awareness-raising and information - handbook to encourage employers – Slovenia**

Funded by the European Social Fund, the ZaVse/4ALL project produced a handbook in 2019 to encourage employers to hire persons with disabilities in the open labour market<sup>28</sup>. The ZaVse/4ALL project was directed by the Združenje izvajalcev zaposlitvene rehabilitacije v Republiki Sloveniji, (Association of Vocational Rehabilitation Providers of the Republic of Slovenia) and the project partners were two NGOs: Slovene Philanthropy and the Vozim Association. The handbook is aimed at raising employers' awareness about the employment and integration of persons with disabilities in the labour market. It describes what an employer has to do in order to meet the quota and set up an adapted workplace, and it contains information about employment centres. It answers employers' questions about the requirements for employing persons with disabilities in a regular work environment and lists all the important legislation that employers need to know before hiring persons with disabilities. There is a focus on incentives for employers.

The handbook gives examples of specific cases where persons were employed before becoming disabled and then went through different phases in order to obtain employment in a protected workplace in an ordinary environment – before finally re-entering employment. The examples highlight the procedures that apply so that a person with disabilities can obtain a protected workplace in a regular environment.

### **1.17 Increasing knowledge about inclusive recruitment – Sweden**

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) is an employers' organisation that represents and advocates for local government in Sweden<sup>29</sup>. All of Sweden's municipalities and regions are members of SALAR. In 2017-2019, SALAR

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.oed.com.pt/pt/paginainicial/>

<sup>28</sup> Association of Vocational Rehabilitation Providers in the Republic of Slovenia, *Spodbujajmo zaposlovanje invalidov: priročnik (Encouraging the employment of people with disabilities: a handbook)*, Ljubljana, 2019, [https://za-vse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Prirocnik-Spodbujajmo-zaposlovanje-invalidov\\_web.pdf](https://za-vse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Prirocnik-Spodbujajmo-zaposlovanje-invalidov_web.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> [English pages | SKR](#)



ran a project to increase public-sector employer's knowledge about what inclusive recruitment can mean in practice<sup>30</sup>. The project involved public employers in eight municipalities in Sweden and supported their locally chosen initiatives<sup>31</sup>, thus promoting the implementation of inclusive recruitment in the local municipal environment. SALAR's website contains information on the project and short films in which employers, employees and support organisations share their views on inclusive recruitment and provides examples of good practices. It also contains guidelines on non-discriminatory recruitment<sup>32</sup> and accessibility at the workplace<sup>33</sup> as well as sources of support for employers.

The project also promoted collaboration with the Swedish Public Employment Service and local municipal labour-market initiatives, thus facilitating relationships between important actors. The employers in the project expressed their willingness to hire persons with disabilities but highlighted their need for support to enable them to fully accommodate employees with disabilities. The Swedish Public Employment Service has several short films on its website that address employers regarding inclusive recruitment and the employment of persons with disabilities<sup>34</sup>. These films provide information as well as examples of inspirational inclusive work practices. There is also a podcast in which the service provides inspiration and information to employers on the recruitment and employment of persons with disabilities and on support available from the service<sup>35</sup>.

### **1.18 Inclusive SMEs in Europe – EU project (Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain)**

The Inclusive SMEs in Europe (i-SME) project was implemented to support the European Commission's Disability Employment Package, which aims to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy social inclusion and economic autonomy through employment. This package is an integral part of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 and is aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The goal of the project was to advance this principle by taking action in the labour market. The more SMEs are aware of the work potential of persons with disabilities, the more they know about the comprehensive support available at local, regional, and national levels, the more SMEs would consider hiring persons with disabilities and thus become "inclusive SMEs". They would open their doors to a new group of potential employees, enabling them to participate in the open labour market by matching their skills and abilities to jobs and creating adapted working environments. Throughout the project, good practices for integrating employees with disabilities across Europe were collected and analysed.

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<sup>30</sup> [Erfarenhet av att anställa en person med funktionsnedsättning](#)

<sup>31</sup> The locally chosen initiatives could for example be to design a new position in healthcare ('serviceassistent') with associated training; or to initiate a joint method between municipal human resources services and vocational rehabilitation services for supporting employees with disabilities.

<sup>32</sup> [Rekrytera och matcha | SKR](#)

<sup>33</sup> [Tillgängliga arbetsplatser | SKR](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Arbetsgivare](#)

<sup>35</sup> [Arbetsgivarpodden](#)

Concrete deliverables of the project are the Action Guidelines to change SMEs' attitudes towards hiring persons with disabilities, as well as short videos and testimonies. The guidelines are for use by any institution, public or private, seeking to encourage employers to hire individuals with disabilities. 38 cases were compiled that fed into the videos narrating the stories of 27 SMEs. These resources are available for everyone in the iSME project website<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> [Guidelines – i-SME](#), [Inspiration videos – i-SME](#)



## 2 Subsidies

EU Member States provide a wide range of financial support to encourage and help employers to hire, retain and train persons with disabilities. In some Member States, payments or grants are provided to employers if they employ a person with a disability. Grants and subsidies can also be paid to employers who provide trial-employment, training or an internship to a person with a disability. In some states, financial support is available to cover (some of) the additional costs of employing a particular person with a disability (such as costs of additional training, support or adapting a workstation).

Wage subsidies are a common way of encouraging the employment of persons with disabilities. All EU Member States have such schemes or some other form of financial support. These schemes vary. Some compensate an employer for the reduced productivity of a specific worker. Others provide subsidies when an eligible person with a disability is employed but without any requirement to demonstrate reduced productivity. Wage subsidies can be paid for a fixed or maximum duration, or on an ongoing and permanent basis; and can be capped at a maximum percentage of a set wage, which is often linked to the minimum wage. In some cases, employers have to satisfy additional requirements in order to receive a wage subsidy for a worker with a disability.

About a third of the EU's Member States offer tax relief to employers who employ workers with disabilities in the open labour market. The methods vary and include lower levels of tax on the remuneration paid to employees, no tax on goods or services purchased to facilitate the working of employees with a disability, or a flat-rate tax deduction. In all cases, the employees in question must have been officially assessed and recognised as having a disability.

About half of the EU's Member States apply some form of reduction to social security and/or mandatory health insurance payments for employers who employ persons with disabilities. Such reductions may be for a fixed period or permanent.

### 2.1 Financial support to businesses for hiring persons with disabilities – Austria

As part of the business-oriented part of the inclusion package launched in 2019, businesses can apply for a so-called 'inclusion subsidy' that covers 30% of the gross salary of persons with disabilities who have beneficiary status. The 'inclusion subsidy plus' increases this subsidy by an additional 25% and targets women with disabilities, who face particularly difficult challenges in finding employment in the open labour market. The 'inclusion subsidy' is granted for 1 year and for a maximum of EUR 1 000. The 'inclusion subsidy plus' is also granted for 1 year and for a maximum of EUR 1 250.

The 'inclusion bonus' is a specific measure to increase the inclusion of adults in vocational education and training (VET) and supports businesses in employing persons with disabilities during the whole duration of their apprenticeship training

(approximately 3 years). The 'inclusion bonus' is equal to the current amount of the compensatory tax, which is to be paid by companies that do not fulfil their legal obligation to employ persons with disabilities. It amounts to EUR 292 per month (in 2023)<sup>37</sup>.

The 'inclusion subsidy', 'inclusion subsidy plus' and 'inclusion bonus' are good practices because they increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the open labour market by focusing on the business side and by complementing the set of support measures targeting persons with disabilities directly. Furthermore, the 'inclusion subsidy plus' for women with disabilities and the 'inclusion bonus' are tailor-made measures that focus on specific target groups facing additional barriers in the open labour market.

## 2.2 Wage subsidy and bonuses – Belgium

In Flanders, a wage subsidy known as VOP (Vlaamse Ondersteunings Premie) consists of an allowance for the employment of employees with a disability. It corresponds to the loss of efficiency of the employee with a work disability and covers 20-60% of the relevant wage cost (including social and tax charges) but is capped at 200% of the guaranteed average minimum monthly income<sup>38</sup>. The employer is not required to submit supporting documents to justify how it uses this subsidy and is free to use it either for measures that benefit the employee with a disability and/or to add it to the company's income to compensate for the loss of return.

Being entitled to a VOP benefits jobseekers with disabilities, whose chances of obtaining employment are significantly higher if they can bring their employer the right to a VOP<sup>39</sup>.

In Wallonia, employers are entitled to an integration bonus (la prime à l'intégration) - a flat-rate financial contribution designed to encourage recruitment of persons with disabilities.

## 2.3 Job integration subsidy – Germany

The job integration subsidy is a key support and incentive measure for German employers. The subsidy is based on the assumption that applicants do not yet have the knowledge required for the job and that the process of gaining this knowledge could take longer than usual. Both the amount and the duration of the subsidy depend on the individual case. An implementation study by the Institute for Work and Qualification (IAQ) in cooperation with the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) has found that specialists in employment agencies and job centres often apply a standard method of managing the integration subsidy that is also familiar to many

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<sup>37</sup> More information on the compensatory tax obligation in Austria can be found here: <https://www.sozialministerium.at/en/Topics/Social-Affairs/People-with-Disabilities/The-participation-in-employment-of-people-with-disabilities.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Articles 28-34, Regulation of the Flemish Government of 18 July 2008 on the professional integration of persons with a work disability.

<sup>39</sup> Desiere, S., Cabus, S., and Cockx, B., *Evaluatie van het Vlaamse doelgroepenbeleid (Evaluation of the Flemish target group policy)*, KU Leuven / Catholic University of Leuven, 2020, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/publicaties/evaluatie-van-het-vlaamse-doelgroepenbeleid>, p. 175.

company personnel managers<sup>40</sup>. The subsidy has therefore been shown to be a tried and tested instrument<sup>41</sup>.

Another proven measure is the reimbursement of costs for the trial employment of persons with disabilities as well as employees of sheltered workshops (WfbMs) for up to 3 months. This can smooth the transition to full and permanent employment and thus (re-)entry into the open labour market. Employers are given an opportunity to get to know potential employees with disabilities and their skills and, to find suitable skilled workers. The costs of trial employment are reimbursed by the employment agency or job centre. This includes wage or salary costs (including the employer's social security contributions), benefits based on statutory or collectively agreed regulations, apportionments and contributions to the employers' liability insurance association. For employees who previously worked in a WfbM, companies can also apply to the integration office for 'benefits to compensate for extraordinary burdens'<sup>42</sup>.

The availability of investment subsidies for the disability-friendly redesign and reorganisation of workplaces and for maintaining places of training is becoming established as a proven funding measure. All work equipment for a disability-friendly design of the workplace (such as computer systems for blind and visually-impaired persons or special office chairs) is subsidised in individual cases<sup>43</sup>. The procurement, maintenance and servicing of all measures and the adaptation of aids (as well as any necessary training for this) all receive funding<sup>44</sup>. The integration offices cover a large share of the costs as part of the benefits for participation in working life. The funding is financed through a compensatory levy paid by the companies. In 2019, the integration offices paid out a total of EUR 556 million in subsidies, including EUR 26.57 million for the furnishing of disability-friendly workplaces and training places. Spatial accessibility is now an essential goal of inclusion policy, but raising awareness of digital accessibility still receives comparatively little attention<sup>45</sup>.

## 2.4 Adaptation of the legal framework – Denmark

Denmark has adopted two pieces of legislation required by EU equality directives<sup>46</sup>. These are the Act on Equality in the Labour Market in 2008 and the general Act against Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities in 2016. Even before EU directives required legislation in this area, a number of laws to get more persons with disabilities into employment were passed around 2000, in particular the Acts on Active

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<sup>40</sup> Report of the Institute for Labour Market and Occupational Research on inclusion grants: Brüssig, M., Schwarzkopf, M. and Stephan, G., 'Eingliederungszuschüsse. Bewährtes Instrument 20i tzu vielen Varianten', IAB-Kurzbericht, Aktuelle Analysen aus dem Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung, No 12, Nürnberg, 2011, <https://doku.iab.de/kurzber/2011/kb1211.pdf>, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Aktion Mensch, Inclusionbarometer, An instrument for measuring progress in the inclusion of people with disabilities in the German labor market (*Inklusionsbarometer Arbeit. Ein Instrument zur Messung von Fortschritten bei der Inklusion von Menschen mit Behinderung auf dem deutschen Arbeitsmarkt*, Vol. 9, Bonn, 2021) <https://delivery-aktion-mensch.stylelabs.cloud/api/public/content/inklusionsbarometer2021?v=ad527273>, p. 13.

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.talentplus.de/foerderung/neueinstellung/probebeschaeftigung/index.html>

<sup>43</sup> Employees apply for highly personalised aids themselves.

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.talentplus.de/foerderung/hilfen-im-arbeitsleben/arbeitsplatzausstattung/index.html>

<sup>45</sup> See Aktion Mensch (2021), pp. 25 and 27.

<sup>46</sup> [Non-discrimination \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/e300042c-325c-4761-995d-6f9a6c104260/policy-communication/en/12222/Non-discrimination%20(europa.eu))

Employment Efforts<sup>47</sup> and on Compensation for Persons with Disability in Occupation<sup>48</sup>.

This legislation's provisions included wage subsidies in the first phase of employment and personal assistance if necessary.

## 2.5 Wage Subsidy Programme – Greece

In Greece, the 2021 Wage Subsidy Programme is funded from the regular budget of the Public Employment Service. It is linked with funding for reasonable accommodation, which is exclusively available through the wage-subsidy programme. It targets long-term unemployed persons with disabilities who have not benefited from active labour policies<sup>49</sup>.

## 2.6 Support for accredited employers – Hungary

Accredited employers may be reimbursed for up to 100% of the extra costs of employing persons with an altered ability to work (100% of pay is reimbursed in the first year of employment, 90% in the second year and 80% from the third year<sup>50</sup>). Financial support is provided by the relevant regional government office for a period of up to 3 years and may be renewed. Only employers that fall within the scope of the (private employment) Labour Code are eligible. EU projects often aim at providing guidance/information for employers on how to identify appropriate types of accommodation for persons with disabilities.

There are two kinds of support measures: (1) pay for persons with an altered ability to work; and (2) reimbursement of extra costs of employment deriving from their employment<sup>51</sup>. The eligibility and amount of the financial support are based on Government Decree No 327/2012<sup>52</sup>.

## 2.7 Social security contribution exemption – Hungary

An employer who employs a person with an altered ability to work is entitled to a reduction or exemption from the social security contribution. If the employee earns up to twice the minimum wage, the employer is fully exempted, if it so requests, from paying the social security contribution. The employer must pay 13% on the basis of any amount of pay exceeding twice the minimum wage<sup>53</sup> (the ordinary contribution is 13% of the entire amount of pay). This concession applies to all employers, in both the private and the public sectors.

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<sup>47</sup> <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/Ita/2019/548>

<sup>48</sup> LBK No 108 of 3 February 2020, <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/Ita/2020/108>.

<sup>49</sup> Greek Ombudsman (2019a), *Report on Implementation of UN CRPD* (ar.72 L. 4488/2017), first report, [https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/ohe\\_el--2.pdf](https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/ohe_el--2.pdf), p. 29. For a detailed analysis, please see also the EDE EU Semester Country Report (Greece), 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Article 20/B of Government Decree No 327/2012.

<sup>51</sup> Article 20/A of Government Decree No 327/2012.

<sup>52</sup> The rules of accreditation and financial support are contained in Government Decree No 327/2012, which is available in Hungarian at <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1200327.kor>.

<sup>53</sup> Article 13, Act 52 of 2018 on social security contribution (*szociális hozzájárulási adó*), which is available in Hungarian at <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1800052.tv>.



## 2.8 Specialised visits to employers during internships – Latvia

In Latvia, the students at the Social Integration State Agency's (SIVA)<sup>54</sup> Jurmala vocational secondary school and college gain experience through training/qualification internships in a range of areas, such as information technology, business organisation, catering, personnel management, warehouse work, floristic gardening and carpentry.

After a professional assessment, working-aged persons with a disability or functional disorders can receive state-financed vocational rehabilitation. During vocational rehabilitation, the person is provided with the necessary multidisciplinary support activities to improve their professional skills, professional qualifications, and work capacity, as well as to strengthen abilities and motivation with the overall aim of supporting their integration into the labour market.

SIVA's careers advisers provide motivational career-guidance support and provide advice to students during their studies to prepare them for training and qualification internships. When starting cooperation in a traineeship between a student and employer, an interview with the employer takes place to define the goals of the student's internship. Each trainee gets their traineeship supervisor providing a range of support during the whole period of the traineeship. After the traineeship, the employer provides feedback to the careers advisers by filling in an evaluation form on the skills that the trainee has acquired during the traineeship and cooperation in general, and makes suggestions to SIVA on how to improve the content of the training/study programmes in order to better reflect the needs of the employer and the labour market.

The traineeship supervisor's responsibility is to evaluate the trainee during the traineeship so that the trainee can be offered a permanent job after the training in SIVA finishes. SIVA's careers advisers visit employers in the field during traineeships to establish further cooperation and discuss the trainee's job opportunities. SIVA's careers advisers provide employers with the information they need on organising traineeships, starting permanent employment of persons with disabilities and functional disorders, and personalised consultations in adapting the workplace and environment. This cooperation and support methodology makes employers aware of the support that is available and encourages them to employ persons with disabilities and to maintain this cooperation in the future.

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<sup>54</sup> <https://www.siva.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/sakusies-ziemas-uznemsana-siva-koledza-un-jumalas-profesionalaja-vidusskola>



## 2.9 Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation Service – Luxembourg

In Luxembourg, the costs of training, rehabilitation and vocational re-education are covered by ADEM's <sup>55</sup> Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation Service. These costs include allowances for rehabilitation <sup>56</sup>, initiation and returning to work, as well as related costs such as those of registration, transport, meals and small teaching materials. In 2020, ADEM's Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation Service covered financial participation in 29 different ways, including social security contributions, the costs of adapting workstations and access to work, training, transport costs and additional leave costs <sup>57</sup>.

Employers who hire an employee with a disability may also receive reimbursement for part of the salary cost, training costs, costs of adapting workstations, and costs of access to work and transport, as well as for the provision of adapted professional equipment and the employer's share of social contributions.

## 2.10 Fiscal incentives for employers – Malta

An employer who employs a person with a disability is exempted from paying the employer's share of social security contributions for that employee and may also be eligible to claim a fiscal incentive equivalent to 25% of the basic wage of the person with disabilities (up to a maximum of EUR 4 500 for each person with a disability) <sup>58</sup>.

In 2021, 69 companies received this fiscal incentive for a total of EUR 393 291 in relation to the employment of 177 persons with disabilities. The number of applications have been increasing from 12 employers for 54 persons with disabilities in 2016 <sup>59</sup> and 46 employers and 101 employees in 2017 <sup>60</sup>

The slow but steady increase since 2016 in the number of companies benefiting from this fiscal incentive <sup>61</sup> demonstrates that employers are interested. This could be in part because some employers welcome the incentive to employ persons with disabilities considering it as a contribution towards the quota, instead of paying a fine for failing to employ persons with disabilities <sup>62</sup>.

In addition, Jobsplus (Malta's Public Employment Service) also administers the Access to Employment Scheme (A2E), which provides a wage subsidy to employers

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<sup>55</sup> Agence pour le développement de l'emploi – ADEM, (National Employment Agency, <https://adem.public.lu/en.html>).

<sup>56</sup> 'Réentraînement à l'effort'.

<sup>57</sup> Ministry of Labour, Employment and the Social and Solidarity Economy, *Rapport d'activité 2020 (2020 Activity Report)*, p. 112: <https://gouvernement.lu/dam-assets/fr/publications/rapport-activite/minist-travail-emploi/2020-rapport-activite/2020-rapport-activite-mteess.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> Jobsplus, 'Employing Persons with Disability', <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/employers-mt-MT-en-GB/employing-persons/employing-persons-disability>.

<sup>59</sup> Jobsplus, Annual Report 2016, <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/publications/annual-reports>.

<sup>60</sup> Jobsplus, Annual Report 2017, <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/publications/annual-reports>.

<sup>61</sup> Jobsplus, annual reports page, <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/publications/annual-reports>.

<sup>62</sup> Axisa, T., 'The Effectiveness of Disability Quotas when Employing Persons with Disabilities: An Exploratory Study among Maltese Employers', De Montfort University, United Kingdom, 2018.

to promote the employment of vulnerable jobseekers – including persons with recognized disabilities. This scheme facilitates the integration of jobseekers into the labour market by enhancing opportunities to enter the labour market and providing work experience to those furthest away from gainful occupation. It bridges the gap between labour-market supply and demand, thus increasing social cohesion. An employer who hires a person who is a registered person with a disability under national law may be entitled to 156 weeks of subsidy. Employers benefiting from A2E are not eligible for the fiscal incentive described in the previous paragraphs.

## **2.11 Social Innovation Fund – Netherlands**

The social innovation fund (in Dutch: Sociaal Innovatiefonds) was established in 2020 by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The fund aims to support employers to invest in and create employment for groups of persons who have a distance to the labour market, including persons with disabilities. In the Netherlands more and more employers are willing to invest in their business case and workplace adjustments in order to create inclusive jobs. However, employers also experience practical and financial barriers while trying to create these jobs. The goal of the public-private social innovation fund is to support the employer and examine how these barriers can be lifted in order to stimulate employers to create multiple sustainable inclusive jobs in their organization. The fund provides business development support, support regarding financial engineering and provides loans to employers.

## **2.12 Wage subsidies – Poland**

Wage subsidies are a well-established incentive for hiring persons with disabilities and have contributed to the shift from sheltered employment to employment in the open labour market. Empirical research conducted among 439 employers of persons with disabilities indicates that employers consider that the most effective financial forms of support are subsidies towards the salaries of employed people (62%), reimbursement of the costs of adapting workstations (58%) and reimbursement of the costs of equipping workstations to meet the needs of persons with disabilities (34%). As many as 89% of the respondents know about the available forms of financial support for employing of persons with disabilities<sup>63</sup>.

## **2.13 Support for gaining qualifications and direct support for persons with disabilities to participate in training and employment – Portugal**

Employment and Support Program for the Qualification of People with Disabilities and Disabilities, implemented under the Decree-Law No. 290/2009, provides financial support to employers for adapting jobs and eliminating architectural barriers, supported employment, through insertion internships or participation in a professional or socially useful activity to facilitate the transition of the participants to the open labour market.

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<sup>63</sup> Bugajska, J. et al., *Model wsparcia osób niepełnosprawnych w środowisku pracy. Mapa drogowa* (Model for supporting disabled persons in the work environment: a road map), Warsaw, 2018, [https://www.ciop.pl/CIOPPortalWAR/file/88309/Model\\_wsparcia\\_osob\\_niepelnosprawnych\\_w\\_srodowisku\\_pracy-Mapa\\_drogowa.pdf](https://www.ciop.pl/CIOPPortalWAR/file/88309/Model_wsparcia_osob_niepelnosprawnych_w_srodowisku_pracy-Mapa_drogowa.pdf).

Under another piece of legislation, the Decree-Law no. 93/2009 persons with disabilities have the right to be reimbursed for the acquisition, adaptation or repair of products, devices or equipment essential for participation in a professional training and employment, including career progression.

## 2.14 Placement allowance – Slovakia

Slovakia has a placement allowance for social enterprises working on integration<sup>64</sup>. This can be provided to a social enterprise if a disadvantaged employee (including a person with disabilities) makes a transition to a job in the open labour market before completing 2 years of work at the social enterprise. In such cases, a monthly subsidy can be paid to the enterprise for up to 12 months if the employee retains the job in the open labour market. The amount of this subsidy varies from 5% of the national average wage during the first three months to 35% of the national average wage during the tenth to twelfth months. Only two enterprises received the placement subsidy by the end of 2020<sup>65</sup>, but the increase in the number of social enterprises suggests that the placement allowance may help persons with disabilities to make the transition to the open labour market.

This measure compensates social enterprises for the loss of a good employee. Social enterprises and sheltered workshops need to retain the most productive employees with disabilities (rather than help them to find a job in the open labour market) in order to remain competitive. Furthermore, the level of the allowance is set to increase in several phases over 12 months if the employee who transitioned to the open labour market is able to stay at the new workplace.

## 2.15 Employment platform – Spain

In Spain the [ONCE Foundation](#) has established Inserta, an expert agency in labour-mediation services for persons with disabilities. Inserta has developed [Por Talento](#), a platform co-financed by ONCE and the European Social Fund that coordinates job offers from over 4 000 collaborating companies and assists over 190 000 jobseekers registered in its database<sup>66</sup>. Por Talento supports companies in setting up and applying corporate social responsibility disability policies by giving them the opportunity to manage their job offers in real time and to access information on all candidates matching the requested profiles – thus helping them to find suitable candidates. Por Talento is equipped with the latest technological innovations, is at the forefront of labour mediation and allows users to directly interact with Inserta's experts in order to keep themselves fully up to date with what training and job opportunities are available. Por Talento is an open and fully-inclusive meeting-place for jobseekers with a disability, companies that are looking to hire, public administrations and other interested persons. It is open round the clock throughout the year. Between 2016 and

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<sup>64</sup> Act No 112/2018 *Zákon č. 112/2018 Z. z. o sociálnej ekonomike a o sociálnych podnikoch v znení neskorších predpisov* (Coll. L. on the Social Economy and Social Enterprises, as amended), <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2018/112/20180501.html>.

<sup>65</sup> Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, *Správa o sociálnej situácii obyvateľstva Slovenskej republiky za rok 2019* (*Report on the Social Situation of the Population in the Slovak Republic in 2019*) [https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/ministerstvo/analyticke-centrum/2020/sprava\\_o\\_soc\\_situacii\\_obyvatelstva\\_sr\\_2019.pdf](https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/ministerstvo/analyticke-centrum/2020/sprava_o_soc_situacii_obyvatelstva_sr_2019.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> <https://knowledge.epr.equass.be/article/378-por-talento>

2021, Inserta supported over 175 000 jobseekers, processed over 54 000 job offers for persons with disabilities, and helped train about 76 000 students with a disability<sup>67</sup>. The training and work-mediation activities are free for beneficiaries thanks to the financing provided by the ONCE Foundation and the European Social Fund.

The ONCE Foundation also has the Inserta Programme, which was created specifically to support large companies. The ONCE Foundation has signed cooperation agreements with about 50 large national and multinational companies and with many SMEs<sup>68</sup>. The agreements include an action plan to promote employment of persons with disabilities within these companies, as well as the implementation of a series of measures as part of their corporate social responsibility strategies to improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities. The ONCE Foundation provides awareness and training initiatives, seminars, legislative advice, and a bonuses and grants calculator that gives information on the financial support that is available. The companies involved include Ikea, McDonald's, Ford, KPMG, Barclays and Repsol<sup>69</sup>.

Thanks to its expertise in supporting persons with disabilities, Inserta also cooperates with the Spanish public employment services at the national and regional levels, delivering specific person-centred services and publicly funded programmes.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> <https://www.portalentoes.com/Descubre/Cifras/Default.aspx>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.insertaempleo.es/servicios/demandantes/programa-inserta>

<sup>69</sup> <https://knowledge.epr.equass.be/article/378-por-talento>

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.insertaempleo.es/sites/default/files/cuentas/II.pdf> page 13



### 3 Quota system

Quota systems involve a requirement or recommendation that covered employers must/should employ a set percentage (or quota) of officially recognised persons with disabilities. Most of the EU's Member States operate a quota system.

Quotas can vary in terms of the percentage of workers with disabilities to be employed, the size of employers covered, the means by which the quota target can be met (aside from actually employing workers with a disability), and whether they operate in both the public and private sector, or only in the public sector. About a third of the Member States impose fines, fees or levies on employers who do not meet their quota.

Many of the quotas have been assessed in some way. Almost all such assessments have found that quota schemes were having little effect on the employment rate of persons with disabilities, although some were generating considerable revenue, which either went to a fund to support the employment of workers with disabilities or to the general state budget.

#### 3.1 A quota system in public sector in Wallonia region of Belgium

In Wallonia public services and public interest bodies must employ 2.5% of workers with disabilities. This obligation is put in place to enable people with a recognised and proven permanent disability to take up a job within the quota. L'Agence wallonne pour une vie de qualité (The Walloon Agency for Welfare and Health, Disability and Family), AVIQ, draws up a progress report every two years. The report provides recommendations to the Walloon government on employment policy for workers with disabilities. These proposals include, for example extending the list of public services covered, increasing the ratio of workers with disabilities to be employed, or defining action plans to recruit and retain workers with disabilities in Walloon administrations.

#### 3.2 A quota system for recruitment in the wider public sector – Cyprus

In Cyprus, a quota was established by the Recruitment of Persons with Disabilities in the Wider Public Sector (Special Provisions) Law 2009<sup>71</sup>. Since 2010, a quota system has been operated for all recruitment in the civil service, the education service and public law entities. Up to 10% of vacant posts in each service are reserved for persons with disabilities who have limited opportunities to find and retain a job on an equal basis with others and who satisfy specific criteria (e.g. academic and professional qualifications, and performance capabilities). The Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities supports the authorities responsible for recruitment by providing them with independent reports of multidisciplinary committees that assess disability and capacity to perform the duties of specific vacant posts. From 2010 to 2021, the law has enabled 281 persons with all types of disabilities to gain employment as schoolteachers, lawyers, engineers, officers, technicians, clerks and many other officials in the wider public sector. Reasonable adjustments at the workplace (including

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<sup>71</sup> Law 2009 (N.146(I)/2009), [http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2009\\_1\\_146.html](http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2009_1_146.html).

a personal assistant if needed) are regulated in Cyprus by the General Law for Persons with Disabilities.

### **3.3 Public service target– Ireland**

Ireland is unique in that it does not have a quota but has a statutory minimum employment target. The 1998-2015 Employment Equality Acts prohibit discrimination on the ground of disability in employment (including training and recruitment) and require employers to take appropriate measures to accommodate the needs of current and prospective employees with disabilities.

Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 states that every year public bodies must demonstrate that a minimum of 3% of their employees are persons with disabilities. The National Disability Authority (NDA) monitors progress and produces a 'Part 5' report every year. Since 2011, the public sector has continued to exceed the minimum 3% target. In 2021, the percentage of employees reporting a disability in the public sector was 3.6%.<sup>72</sup> If a public body does not make the minimum target for two consecutive years, the NDA can request additional information from this public body to determine if they were compliant under Part 5. If a public body is determined to be non-compliant, the relevant Minister is informed, and the NDA advises this public body on actions necessary to improve its performance. The name of the public body is also published in the 'Part 5' report.

The minimum statutory employment target will be increasing from 3% to 4.5% in 2024 and 6% by 2025, as outlined in the enacted Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) (Amendment) Act 2022.<sup>73</sup> The increase in the minimum statutory employment was a key recommendation from the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015 – 2024.<sup>74</sup>

For private employers, the State operates a Reasonable Accommodation Fund that consists of a wage-subsidy scheme, a workplace/equipment adaptation fund, an employee-retention grant scheme and a disability-awareness support scheme.

### **3.4 2% quota system – Malta**

Positive support measures to end underemployment of persons with disabilities are key to unlocking job potential. In 2015, the Maltese Government committed to enforcing the quota requirement that persons with disabilities must represent at least 2% of the workforce for employers with more than 20 employees. Following a 2021 legal amendment, employers who fail to meet this quota are required to make an annual contribution of EUR 2 400 for every person with a disability that they should be but are not employing. This contribution is capped at EUR 10 000 per employer.

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<sup>72</sup> <https://nda.ie/uploads/publications/Part-5-report-for-2021.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2022/act/46/enacted/en/html>

<sup>74</sup> <https://assets.gov.ie/18906/1120bc6ad254489db9571c74e8572f44.pdf>



### 3.5 Employment quotas– Portugal

Since 2001, an employment quota has been set for persons with disabilities with a disability level equal to or greater than 60% in central and local government services and bodies, and in public institutions. In 2019, Law 4/2019<sup>75</sup> introduced employment quotas (with a transitional period of 4 or 5 years) for persons with disabilities in the private sector and public bodies not covered by Decree-Law 29/2001<sup>76</sup>. The employment quotas cannot be less than 1% or 2% of the number of workers employed, depending on the size of the employer. Employers with fewer than 75 employees are not required to meet these employment quotas. Since 1 February 2023, private employers with more than 100 employees are required to comply with the quota for workers with disabilities. On February 1, 2024, the obligation will be extended to smaller entities, with 75 to 100 employees.

The employment quotas in place for both the public and private sectors are a good incentive measure but need to be more strictly enforced. The available research<sup>77</sup> indicates that they seem to have boosted the retention of workers with acquired disabilities more than they have improved their access to the labour market.

### 3.6 Quota reserved for persons with intellectual disabilities – Spain

Spain has introduced a quota of 2% of positions reserved for persons with intellectual disabilities in the public sector. Several laws<sup>78</sup> recognise that some persons with disabilities have a specific type of disability (e.g. cerebral palsy or autism spectrum disorder) or degree of disability that makes it more difficult for them to access the labour market – and would therefore benefit from targeted affirmative action measures to help them enter the labour market.

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<sup>75</sup> Law 4/2019, <https://files.dre.pt/1s/2019/01/00700/0008900090.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> Decree-Law 29/2001 of 3 February, <https://files.dre.pt/1s/2001/02/029a00/05870589.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> See the 2021 report from the Observatory on Disability and Human Rights at: <http://oddh.iscsp.ulisboa.pt/index.php/pt/2013-04-24-18-50-23/publicacoes-dos-investigadores-oddh/item/557-relatorio-oddh-2021>.

<sup>78</sup> For example, Royal Decree 870/2007 of 2 July 2007 regulating the supported employment programme as a measure to promote the employment of people with disabilities in the ordinary labour market, BOE, 14 July 2007, No 168, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2007/BOE-A-2007-13588-consolidado.pdf>.





## 4 Awareness-raising

Raising employers' awareness of the employment of persons with disabilities can include schemes that provide information, advice and support to employers to employ persons with disabilities; disability-related awards for employers who apply good practice; schemes providing disability-awareness training; and advice on accessibility.

Good practice guides, websites and advice services directed at employers are available across the EU. Guides containing information for employers are the most common tools, followed by websites. About a third of the EU's Member States have advisory services. A very diverse range of information is provided. Similarly, a variety of organisations publish such guides or websites, or provide advice. The organisations most commonly involved are public bodies and NGOs/Disabled Persons Organisations (DPO). Some of these guides and other information sources have been (partly) funded through EU programmes. The impact of very few of these initiatives has been evaluated or assessed.

### 4.1 Increase workplace inclusion and diversity in the 'social profit' sector – Belgium

Talentoscoop<sup>79</sup> was a Flemish-transnational European Social Fund project promoted by GTB<sup>80</sup>, VERSO and De Werkplekarchitecten (Sterpunt Ondernemen) along with international partners, including the European Platform for Rehabilitation. The aim of Talentoscoop was to increase workplace inclusion and diversity in the 'social profit' sector and to support social profit managers and their HR teams in changing their mindset and employing people that are more remote from the labour market.

The project addresses two challenges faced by the social sector in Flanders: (1) the need for more than 46 000 new workers every year and (2) the low diversity of employees within this sector and the fairly low employment rate in Belgium. A tailor-made service model was developed to support social employers with their HR policy. After a meeting to identify the organisation's needs and the proposal of an action plan, every social-profit organisation is assigned a single point of contact (SPOC). The SPOC is an individual adviser who offers support and suggests measures to address issues in recruitment, workplace-learning, job creation and staff retention. The actions are carried out by a workplace architect or a mediator (such as GTB) together with work teams within the social profit organisation, which also assess the implementation cost and social benefits of the service. The project thus increases staff awareness of the benefits of diversity policy to strengthen organisation growth. The Talentoscoop model was piloted in Flemish Brabant, Limburg and East Flanders, and continues as a service, with 7.5 full-time equivalent employees funded by the Public Employment Service VDAB.

Under the current programme, the project 'Sensibilisation' is financed by the European Social Fund. The project aims at strengthening the inclusion of workers with disabilities

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<sup>79</sup> <https://knowledge.epr.equass.be/article/387-talentoscoop>

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.epr.eu/member/gtb/>

in the labour market by raising awareness among those involved in professional inclusion (employment intermediaries, HRM, tutors).

## **4.2 The employability indicator project – Denmark**

The Employability Indicator Project (Danish: Beskæftigelses Indikator projektet/BIP) is a comprehensive scientific progression measurement study that focuses on what factors lead socially vulnerable recipients of social assistance benefits to take up employment. The project has examined the relationship between selected indicators for job readiness and the likelihood that vulnerable recipients of social assistance benefits will obtain a job. The results of the new research show which indicators are capable of predicting whether vulnerable recipients of social assistance benefits will start searching for a job, and whether or not they will obtain a job.

## **4.3 Annual report on disability and employment – Denmark**

The annual reports on disability and employment are prepared by VIVE (The Danish Centre for Social Science Research). The latest report is published in October 2023. The primary data source is Statistics Denmark's Labour Force Survey (AKU) for the fourth quarter of 2022. AKU is an interview survey that provides insight into the population's connection to the labour market. Connection to the labour market is self-reported (and may not necessarily correspond to the benefits one receives). The main purpose is to map the employment situation for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the report has included investigating how young people with disabilities are faring in terms of education and employment, assessing the employment potential among those with disabilities who are not currently employed, examining the prevalence of job mismatches among individuals with disabilities, and exploring whether barriers to hiring individuals with disabilities are decreasing compared to earlier times.

## **4.4 The 'come here – all are welcome' label – Estonia**

The 'come here – all are welcome' label was developed by the Estonia's Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, in cooperation with the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund<sup>81</sup>.

There are two versions of the label. The coloured label signifies an accessible physical environment and can be used by enterprises, organisations and public authorities to indicate that their building, facilities and premises are accessible.



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<sup>81</sup> <https://volinik.ee/siia-saab/>

The blue version of the label is intended to be used by employers who are prepared to offer equal opportunities to all jobseekers, regardless of any barriers they face. It can be added to vacancy notifications and employers' websites.



The use of the label indicates to the employer welcomes all potential job seekers. It signifies that the employer has already created or is prepared to make specific adjustment to create accessible and adjusted premises and facilities, work arrangements and information <sup>82</sup>.

#### 4.5 Information campaign: 'Open your mind' – Estonia

In 2016 the Ministry of Social Affairs developed an information campaign called 'Open your mind', with a website that includes short videos of persons with disabilities sharing their experiences <sup>83</sup>. The campaign focuses on the capabilities of persons rather than their disabilities and encourages employers to see persons with disabilities as a resource.

#### 4.6 Awareness-raising campaign: fight against stereotypes campaign – France

Awareness raising in France targets both employers and employees. Employees are addressed indirectly thanks to some financial support for awareness-raising campaigns within companies. Campaigns, led by Agefiph <sup>84</sup> and various associations <sup>85</sup>, mainly consist of providing information on services supporting inclusion. The campaigns are aimed at reassuring employers rather than highlighting opportunities in terms of the competences that are likely to meet their needs <sup>86</sup>. Campaigns often target employees as well as employers and particularly encourage them to have their disability recognised <sup>87</sup>.

A national awareness-raising campaign addressing the general public was launched in 2021 in order to fight against stereotypes <sup>88</sup>. The aim of this campaign was to raise awareness of the competences of persons with disabilities. The awareness-raising

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<sup>82</sup> <https://volinik.ee/siia-saab/tooandja-voimalused/>

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.tegijad.ee/>

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.agefiph.fr/employeur> Agefiph is a dedicated institution providing training, advice and subsidies for reasonable accommodation, assistive technologies and support for persons with disabilities, for private sector ([Services et aides financières | Agefiph](#)).

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.ladapt.net/securisation-des-parcours>

<sup>86</sup> Even if the slogan that has been adopted suggests as much. Agefiph, *L'inclusion de personnes handicapées, une opportunité RH à saisir ! (The inclusion of persons with disabilities, a human resource opportunity to be seized!)*, <https://www.agefiph.fr/employeur>.

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.agefiph.fr/actualites-handicap/retour-sur-la-conference-maintien-au-salon-preventica>

<sup>88</sup> Using the slogan 'Voyons les personnes avant le handicap' ('Let's see the people before the disability')

campaign faced criticism from the Conseil national consultatif des Personnes Handicapées (CNCPH) (the National Advisory Council of Disabled Persons)<sup>89</sup>, the advisory body that represents persons with disabilities on measures taken by the public authorities within the scope of France's disability policy. The Council considered that the slogan 'Avant de voir le handicap, regardons nos points communs' ('Before seeing the disability, let's look at what we have in common') as highlighting disability rather than sameness. Additionally, it was said that the campaign did not take into account the points of view of persons with disabilities and their families, and that it was not specific<sup>90</sup>.

#### **4.7 Value-added brunch with an employer – Latvia**

To counter the stereotypes about the employment of persons with disabilities and functional disorders and to promote their inclusion into the labour market, Latvia's Social Integration State Agency (SIVA)<sup>91</sup> organises informative and practical seminars for employers – 'Value-added brunches' – to discuss the most important aspects of employing persons with disabilities. The aim is to inform employers about the government's various support activities, explain how best to use this support, and provide practical advice on employing persons with different function disorders.

The annual value-added brunch has become a tradition and brings together employers, representatives of NGOs and representatives of state institutions. Employers share their experiences and success stories about successful employment in such a way as to inspire each other and generally make the labour market more inclusive.

The activities during the brunch include practical sessions in which employers can broaden their horizons about the daily challenges of persons with disabilities and function disorders. Various activities are organised for this, such as promoting awareness of various visual, hearing and mobility issues. Employers have the opportunity to learn about technical aids and assistive technologies that are made to facilitate daily work. The activities also inform about the labour-market trends and changes; serve as a for a to share examples of good practice; monitor progress of employment of persons with disabilities and promote cooperation between policymakers, employers and persons with disabilities.

Employers are provided with valuable advice on the accessibility of the digital environment, receive answers to their current questions and problems they are facing, and are informed about available state support for employment of persons with disabilities and other practical information – all in one place during the brunch event.

Employers see the need for regular cooperation and exchange of experience between employers and service-providers in order to promote employment and make the labour market more inclusive.

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<sup>89</sup> <https://www.gouvernement.fr/conseil-national-consultatif-des-personnes-handicapees-cncph>;  
<https://cncph.fr/>

<sup>90</sup> <https://informations.handicap.fr/a-campagne-nationale-handicap-lancee-impact-31651.php>

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.epr.eu/member/the-social-integration-state-agency-siva/>

#### 4.8 VASTE programme awareness-raising campaign – Malta

In 2017, [Jobsplus](#) conducted an awareness-raising campaign through vocational assessment, support and training for employment (VASTE) programme. This included publicising success stories on TV and radio spots, and raising awareness of services through adverts on buses, bus shelters and elsewhere (with a particular focus on various vulnerable groups). Following this campaign, Jobsplus carried out a survey in 2019 on the general public's awareness of the services being offered through the Inclusive Employment Services Division within Jobsplus and its partner the Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF) through the VASTE Programme. The survey also covered the type of measures that can be introduced in the future to increase this awareness. A sample size of 400 Maltese individuals aged 16 or over were surveyed by telephone. The survey helped to ensure that Jobsplus continues to take an active approach in outreach measures to ensure a level playing field so that all vulnerable individuals can enter the labour market and retain gainful employment.

#### 4.9 The value of becoming inclusive companies – Netherlands

A group of 2000 companies promoting socially responsible entrepreneurship founded an organisation called De Normaalste Zaak<sup>92</sup> ('the most natural thing'). De Normaalste Zaak organises awareness-raising among employers on the value of becoming inclusive companies and of hiring jobseekers with a disability in particular. It provides information via its website on good practice and does outreach work with employers (organising regional meetings between employers and thus facilitating peer-to-peer information exchange between human resource management professionals within the companies). De Normaalste Zaak has organised an extra exchange platform for employers who operate on a national scale.

The regional employer service-points are another example of good practice because they offer support and expertise on employing jobseekers with a disability on a regional basis within a general framework of mediation between employers and jobseekers<sup>93</sup>.

#### 4.10 Inclusive Employer Award – Portugal

The Inclusive Employer Award has been issued three times. 11 entities from the public and private sector received it in 2017, 28 in 2019 and 37 in 2021 (2 entities received a Mention of Excellence)<sup>94</sup>. The award publicises inclusive employment practices for persons with disabilities. The results show that public and private entities are interested in being recognised as inclusive companies and organisations. Persons with disabilities involved in the creation of companies can also be candidates for the award in question.

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<sup>92</sup> <https://www.denormaalstezaak.nl/over-de-normaalste-zaak/>

<sup>93</sup> The insurance company is called *de Goudse*. The website dedicated to hiring jobseekers with a disability is at: <https://www.ondernemenmetpersoneel.nl/aannemen/werving-en-selectie/personeel-met-een-arbeidsbeperking-aannemen>.

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.fegime.com/2021/12/07/fegime-portugal-member-is-voted-inclusive-employer-brand-2021-2022/>.

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