



*Awareness and Capacity Building for Changes in Policy
Schemes for Disability towards Inclusive Societies*



The Best Practices and Policy Book

Created by



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1. Introduction

The ACCESS4ALL Project

ACCESS4ALL is a project funded by the Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission with duration of 24 months (November 2020-October 2022). The focus of the project is on people with disabilities and on their equal access to all aspects of life (i.e., culture, education, financial stability, healthcare, workforce, etc.).

The primary purpose of the project, via capacity building, thorough information about best practices, policy recommendations, and dissemination to raise awareness, is to help people with disabilities to have conventional access to their fundamental human rights so that they will encounter more employment opportunities as well as enjoy equal and active participation in cultural and social life.

The consortium is composed of eight organizations from six countries, namely Xenios Polis: Culture, Science & Action (coordinating partner from Greece), Culture Polis (Greece), Center for Social Innovation - CSI (Cyprus), Research and Education of Social Empowerment and Transformation - RESET (Cyprus), Valencia Inno Hub Association (Spain), BildungsLAB Hands & Minds Learning Center (Austria), Cooperativa Sociale San Saturnino onlus - SANSAT (Italy), and Tandem Plus Network (France).

The project partners paid attention to four categories of disabilities: sensorial, physical, mental, and cognitive/learning. Our overall goal via this project is to **increase visibility of disability** and to **create fairer societies accessible for all**.

The Best Practices and Policy Book

The purpose of *The Best Practices and Policy Book* is to conclude the deliveries and procedures of the overall products of the project, and at the same time, to enclose all the further policymaking context lines.

The Best Practices and Policy Book includes:

- An EU Report;
- Six National Reports, one from each country of the consortium, which focus on statistics, legislation, policy and practice, identifying issues, and searching for stakeholders;
- Best Practices from the consortium's countries (local and national level) and the EU in general;
- Policy Recommendations, that is a section about policy drafting and policymaking framework, which will focus on the ongoing challenges of the EU.

The Best Practices and Policy Book, apart from offering a compilation of information about best practices, it also promotes policy recommendations and scenarios, for EU policymakers, on accessibility for people with disabilities and inclusive (local) communities, national and European suggestions for facilitating the procedures, ways of engaging other stakeholders, and connecting inclusive societies with the participation of people with disabilities in all areas of life. It is devoted on policy suggestions on how to improve the impact of the adult education, and the initiatives towards change and formation of policies and contexts for communities with a real inclusive character.

Therefore, a key goal of this book is to indicate **existing good practices** and, when possible, reinforce them. At the same time, its content also aims towards **identifying gaps and issues** in existing practices. In this context, the overall role of the book is the **promotion of innovative solutions**, which will address and hopefully fill existing gaps.

2. European Union

Review of EU Framework

In 2007, countries from all over the world started signing the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD), a human rights instrument that recognizes the right of people with disabilities to participate in all areas of life on an equal basis, and that establishes the responsibility of governments to make sure of its effectiveness. All the member states of the European Union have ratified the UNCRPD and have a commitment to implement policies in this field. Despite this commitment, evidence shows that people with disabilities still face serious obstacles both in their personal and professional life; i.e., education, employment, finances, housing, understanding, well-being, etc.

Statistics

According to Eurostat, the European Parliament, and Papworth Trust, and cited in the Time to Act report (2021) created for the Europe Beyond Access project: “The EU-27 has **more than 42 million disabled people** aged 15–64, equivalent to **12.8% of the population** of that age. That figure rises rapidly when the definition of disability extends to those who acquire it in later life, that is **1 in 5 people (19%) in the European population**”.

There are a number of different types of disabilities and they are normally divided into the following four: intellectual, physical, sensory, and mental illness. In addition, each individual is different; therefore, people with the same type of disability may have different experiences.

- An intellectual disability (i.e., Down syndrome) may affect an individual’s capacity to communicate, learn, and remember information. In a recently published study, the results show: “For Europe, between 2011–2015, we estimate 8,031 annual live births of children with DS and a live birth prevalence of 10.1 per 10,000 live births. Without elective terminations, LB prevalence would have been around 21.7 per 10,000 live births, or 17,331 births annually” (de Graaf, et al, 2020).
- A physical disability, whether it is temporary or permanent, may affect an individual’s mobility; i.e., wheelchair-bound due to spinal cord injury, either since

birth or caused by an accident; “The incidence of spinal cord injury is about 10,000 newly injured people per year in the EU, and due to an almost normal life expectancy more than 200,000 patients are living with a spinal cord injury in the EU. The impact on the individual’s quality of life is high, and social costs are enormous” (NISCI, 2018).

- A sensory disability affects the senses of an individual (i.e., hearing, sight, smell, taste, touch). Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are a lifelong developmental disability as they affect the way an individual interacts with the world and others around them. In a recently published study, about Europe, North America and Oceania, the results show that there was a steady and substantial increase in the prevalence of autism in the three aforementioned continents during the last three decades: “For Europe, the median prevalence was 59 per 10,000 population (range, 8 to 420; mean, 80)” (Anorson, et al., 2021).
- A mental illness affects an individual’s way of thinking, their emotional state and their behaviours. The more common mental illnesses are mood disorders and anxiety disorders. As explained by the European Commission, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of mental health of the European population was in the spotlight as “a cause for concern”. A chapter in the Health at a Glance Europe 2018 report explains that matters related to mental health affect about 84 million people across the European Union.

Taking into account the fact that disability is a multi-dimensional and complex concept, it goes without saying that the statistics presented in this part of our document are not exhaustive; they are focused on specific types of disabilities in an attempt to generate a general estimate of the condition and the needs in this field in the countries of the European Union as well as to showcase the importance of taking action to tackle these matters with projects such as ACCESS4ALL and other similar initiatives.

Legislation

The path towards disability awareness, change, and understanding has been gradual over the decades, and some steps have been proven vital at a worldwide institutional level.

- In 1980, the *International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH)* was published by the World Health Organization (WHO). This manual of classification relating to the consequences of disease “provides a conceptual framework for information by enabling classification, and hence description, of the three dimensions of the phenomenon of “disablement” (as a consequence of disease, injury or congenital condition). The ICIDH permits a highly complex issue to be easily grasped to a certain extent, and has gained almost worldwide recognition as a valuable tool in the perception of the problem of disablement, in describing this problem and developing solutions for this problem” (Schuntermann, 1996).
- In May 2001, WHO adopted the *International Classification of Functioning, Health and Disability (ICF)*, which is still in force in 191 countries worldwide. The ICF represents a real revolution in this field, in terms of perceptions and definitions, considering that it combines social and personal difficulties, it combines the public with the private. Therefore, it permits the correlation between environmental factors and health, how to former affects the latter.
- The six countries of the ACCESS4ALL consortium (Austria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Spain) are among the 185 countries in the world that ratified the UNCRPD. The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* was adopted in December 2006, opened for signature in March 2007, and entered into force in May 2008. As also explained earlier, the UNCRPD is an international human rights treaty, whose purpose is to promote, protect, and safeguard the rights of individuals with disabilities so that they are seen and treated as equal members of society.

Policy and Practice

In the last two decades (from the beginning of the 21st century), the European Union has adopted a number of Policies and Practices to address matters related to disabilities. The following Policies and Practices primarily concern the social integration of people with

disabilities in all areas of life; and to name a few: culture, education, employment, health, housing, social protection, transport, etc.

- [European Disability Strategy 2010-2020](#): Adopted in 2010 by the European Union to implement UNCRPD based on the experience of the Disability Action Plan (2004-2010). The **European Disability Strategy 2010-2020** focuses on 8 Key Areas, namely accessibility, participation, equality, employment, education & training, social protection, health, and external action; “The European disability strategy 2010-2020 (‘the Strategy’) set out the political framework and priorities of the EU disability policy. It aimed at empowering persons with disabilities to enjoy their full rights and to benefit from participating in society on an equal basis with others. It also aimed at implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) at EU level [...] The Commission launched the evaluation of the Strategy in 2019 to assess its implementation in terms of **effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence** and **EU added value**. A wide range of stakeholders was consulted, including Member States’ competent authorities, experts in the field of disability, civil society organizations, and citizens” (European Commission, 2020, p. 1).
- [Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2017-2023](#): Adopted in 2016 by the Council of Europe, it focuses on 5 cross-cutting themes (participation, cooperation & coordination, universal design & reasonable accommodation, gender equality perspective, multiple discrimination and education & training), and on 5 key areas (equality & non-discrimination, awareness raising, accessibility, equal recognition before the law, and freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse).
- [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#): Adopted in 2021 by the European Commission with the overall goal of safeguarding that people with disabilities in Europe, regardless of their gender, religion, race or ethnicity, age or sexual orientation:

- “enjoy their human rights,
- have equal opportunities,
- have equal access to participate in society and economy,
- are able to decide where, how and with whom they live,
- can move freely in the EU regardless of their support needs,
- no longer experience discrimination” (European Commission, 2021).

In addition, it also encompasses the implementation of the EU disability card pilot project.

Identifying Issues

Similar to the statistics’ section, the information below focuses on a fraction of the matters that affect the levels and quality of employability and social inclusion of people with disabilities.

In *Autism and Work*, a report published by Autism Europe, it is explained that: “Today, between 1 in 100 and 1 in 150 children are diagnosed with autism, amounting to around 3.3 million people with autism in the European Union. While access to diagnosis and therapies for children with autism is improving across Europe, in most regions, they grow up to face widespread unemployment and little or no support as adults. Studies have shown that between 76 and 90 per-cent of adults with autism are unemployed” (2014, p. 11). Based on the report, **people with autism** face the following barriers, when it comes to employment: lack of access to all levels of education and vocational training, lack of support for the transition to adult life, barriers during the recruitment process, and discrimination in relation to employment.

Females with disabilities are still particularly vulnerable in today’s society. The Council of Europe explains that one fifth of the world’s women and girls remain invisible and marginalised, both due to their gender and their disabilities. Females with disabilities are two to five times more likely to be victims of violence, compared to other girls and

women. In addition, they have lower levels of education, lower incomes, and more unmet health needs. As Dunja Mijatović writes: “Often, women with disabilities are invisible and marginalised in society, including among those promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, and those promoting gender equality and the advancement of women. The exclusion of women with disabilities from decision-making spaces has for a long time impoverished our societies. It masks the root causes of the discrimination they face, allows the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes, both concerning gender and disability, and leads to innumerable human rights violations” (Council of Europe, 2022).

Another topic that is in need of much more attention is **mental health**. Recent studies have shown that mental health can be both a consequence of and a risk factor for unemployment. As the European Commission explains: “Mental health and well-being are interlinked issues that are affected by policies and actions in a range of sectors, including education, health, employment, social inclusion and efforts to tackle poverty. This relationship is reciprocal: without adequate mental health prevention, support and treatment, the risks of poorer education or unemployment increase.” In addition, key facts by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2021) explain the following:

- “Globally, one in seven 10-19-year-olds experiences a mental disorder, accounting for 13% of the global burden of disease in this age group.
- Depression, anxiety and behavioural disorders are among the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents.
- Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-19 year-olds.
- The consequences of failing to address adolescent mental health conditions extend to adulthood, impairing both physical and mental health and limiting opportunities to lead fulfilling lives as adults.”

Therefore, it is important to address mental health matters in order to reduce the amount that they may affect an individual's employment opportunities and quality of life.

To sum up, addressing and tackling the exclusion of people with autism, females with disabilities, people with mental illnesses, and people with disabilities in general, as well as all other obstacles that these individuals may be forced to face on a day-to-day basis, must be given much greater priority.

Good Practices

Good Practices are recommended models that inspire and influence further initiatives and actions about a specific topic, and in our case, in accessibility and disability matters. Good Practices are actions, manuals, trainings, etc., that have been tested and validated, that have been successfully adopted by individuals and/or organizations and they have had positive results.

In this section of *The Best Practices and Policy Book*, we will focus on three Good Practices that stem from other Erasmus+ projects that have been completed and could possibly be considered to be good examples. We will also pay attention to an ongoing promising project, Europe Beyond Access, that combines disabilities with the Arts.

The following list is not exhaustive. The Best Practices presented in this book are an indication of a number of initiatives that are being carried out all across Europe with the goal to tackle disability related matters. The same approach applies to the Good Practices presented by the ACCESS4ALL consortium at national level.

Good Practice 1:

Title: Inclusion in Europe through Knowledge and Technology (2015-2017)

Organization/Author: The project is funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme. The consortium is composed of eight partners from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Hungary, Italy and Romania.

Summary/Description: As explained by the Pancyprian Organization of the Blind, “drawing from experience from multiple European projects, the objectives of the project are: to document fundamental pedagogical principles, methods and tools for teaching key subjects to the blind, partially sighted and dyslexic by exploring the practice at specialised educational institutions; to collect and document good practices to support the transition from segregation towards inclusion amongst mainstream and specialised educational institutions; and to create scalable educational material on the Robo Braille service to ease adoption of automated production of alternate media.”

Target Group(s): Teachers and all other educational staff working with people who are blind, partially sighted, or dyslexic.

Impact on Beneficiaries: The innovation and positive impact of this project stem from the development of educational guides, with the use of ICT tools, for teaching first language, foreign language, mathematics, and music to students who are blind, partially sighted, or dyslexic.

Methods of Implementation: Again, as explained by the Pancyprian Organization of the Blind: “Knowledge on teaching principles, methods, educational materials and teaching aids must be documented in countries where it still exists. Countries transitioning from segregation towards inclusion must learn from others how best to support mainstream integration and how to avoid the pitfalls of others. And training material on efficient conversion of educational material into alternate formats such as digital Braille, audio books and e-books must be made available on a broad scale to students with special needs in mainstream education, as well as to their teachers and relatives.”

Sustainability: The informative educational guides that were created by the partners of the project are still available after the closure of the lifecycle of the project and can be used accordingly by educators of students who are blind or partially sighted as well as by other stakeholders who would like to learn more and get involved in similar initiatives.

Direct Links:

- <https://www.subvedenti.it/wp-content/uploads/Foreign-Language.pdf>
- <https://www.subvedenti.it/wp-content/uploads/Math.pdf>
- <https://www.robobrace.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Teaching-Maths-Blind.pdf>
- <https://www.robobrace.org/>

Good Practice 2:

Title: Empowerment for Social Inclusion - Youth With Disabilities on a Labour Market

Organization/Author: An Erasmus+ project that created a Training Manual.

The consortium is composed of eight countries and organizations from Albania, Cyprus, Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Spain and Turkey.

Summary/Description: The primary purpose of the project is to equip youth workers, who are already working with young people with disabilities, with new tools, skills and methods (e.g. career consulting) of helping this vulnerable group integrate into the labour market. More aims of the project are: to develop the youth workers' knowledge in terms of the situation of young people with disabilities in the labour market, and therefore, their special needs; to offer the participants range of information about potential opportunities for young people with disabilities in terms of other EU projects, and also, global initiatives; to create an informative, practical Training Manual that will be used by people working with disability matters and all other stakeholders.

Target Group(s): Youth workers working with young people with disability.

Impact on Beneficiaries: As the SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres explain, the Training Manual “gives theoretical and practical knowledge on how to work and deal with people with disabilities who are actively seeking for a job. Besides the models and the framework explained inside, the reader can find unique ideas and motivation for working with people with disability.” The project had a positive impact on its participants, and also, on local communities, related organizations, and other stakeholders interested in this topic.

Methods of Implementation: As explained in the Manual, non-formal education methodology was applied for the training, and also, other methods such drama, theatre of the oppressed to accommodate the sharing of experiences on living with disabilities in a social context, etc. In addition, the Manual was widely disseminated via online tools.

Sustainability: The Training Manual is easily accessible online to the general public so that it can be used accordingly by all interested individuals. Youth and adults with disabilities, unfortunately, still experience trouble with finding employment; therefore, the information found in the Training Manual can potentially provide relevant assistance to those who will chose to use it.

Direct Link:

- https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-1508/Manual%20for%20youth%20workers%20working%20with%20young%20people%20with%20disabilities.pdf

Good Practice 3:

Title: I DECIDE: Supported Decision Making using Digital Literacy & Numeracy skills (2017-2020)

Organization/Author: This is a project funded by the European Union through the 2017 Erasmus+ call. The consortium is composed of organizations from five countries: Spain, Belgium, Finland, England, and Greece.

Summary/Description: The primary purpose of the project is to enhance the skills as well as provide tools to people with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities in order to help them make decisions about three key areas of their lives: personal finances, their rights as consumers, and matters affecting their health and well-being. At the same time, and as a second goal, the project offers the needed knowledge, skills and tools to support professionals so that they will be able to help people with disabilities to achieve learning.

Target Group(s): Individuals with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, related staff and support workers, other professionals and stakeholders.

Impact on Beneficiaries: Individuals with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities receive the right knowledge and support they need to handle essential parts of their daily lives and to improve their quality of life. The project focuses on the application of digital, literacy and numeracy skills in three important aspects of a person's life (consumer rights, finances, health and well-being) as a means of offering increased support in decision-making.

Methods of Implementation: The partners of the project created an Individualized Plan that the supporters can use to outline the activities to be carried out by the interested individual as well as the needed resources. To plan the activities, the supporter will consult manuals that contain information on health, personal finances, and consumer rights. The digital, literacy, and numerical skills of the interested individual are also being evaluated with specific tools that have been developed in order to add activities to the plan that will address and improve these abilities.

Sustainability: The partners of the project developed an inclusive and interactive online course to offer training in disability related issues to different social groups as well as stakeholders (i.e. a toolkit with a guide for people with intellectual disabilities, a training

course for staff and support workers, support manuals for other professionals). All materials are available online to download and use.

Direct Link: In this YouTube video, the partners of the project explain basic information about the project as well as the positive impact it has on the interested individuals and the methods that this is achieved: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDqo6SKtK5M>

Picture:



I-DECIDE – Supported Decision Making using Digital, Literacy & Numeracy Skills



Good Practice 4:

Title: Europe Beyond Access (2018-2022)

Organization/Author: The consortium is composed of seven leading culture organisations: the British Council (operating for this project in the UK and Poland), Onassis Stegi (Greece), Kampnagel (Germany), Per Art (Serbia), Skånes Dansteater (Sweden), Holland Dance Festival (Netherlands) and Oriente Occidente (Italy).

Summary/Description: As the British Council Arts explains, Europe Beyond Access is a “four-year pan-European project aimed at supporting disabled artists to break the glass ceilings of the contemporary theatre and dance sectors”. It is one of Europe’s largest Arts and Disability programme, supporting and promoting artists with disabilities on the international stage, gathering audiences for their work, and creating a network of leading mainstream institutions that are committed to commissioning and presenting work by artists with disabilities.

Target Groups: Artists with disabilities (i.e. choreographers, dancers, interdisciplinary artists, etc.), audiences with disabilities, arts professionals with disabilities, culture organizations and institutions, all other interested individuals and stakeholders.

Impact on Beneficiaries: The impact is the potential to increase the interest in disability-led work as well as to create better industry conditions to produce and present the work of artists with disabilities. Inclusive participation in the Arts and disability mainstreaming are promoted. Making cultural programmes accessible to disabled artists and disabled audiences. The project is helping artists with disabilities to confront the normative gaze, to create social change through their artistic work, and to make a political statement by taking up space.

Methods of Implementation: Constant creation of videos by the partners and the participating artists as well as articles with updates about the progress of the project. Thorough dissemination of the project. Development of tools and understanding in the wider performing arts market. Collaboration with a number of the world's leading arts networks to promote artistic work and to educate arts professionals. In addition, *On the Move* explains: "As part of the project, *On the Move* has been commissioned by the British Council to produce two reports aimed at identifying barriers to the international mobility of disabled artists, to programming disabled artists in Europe, and to making venues and events accessible for audiences. Based on an open survey and a series of interviews with cultural networks and EBA project partners, these two publications will look at the state of current knowledge concerning disabled artists, disabled audiences, and access provision."

Sustainability: Europe Beyond Access is an ongoing project that will reach its end in December 2022. It advocates for change in culture and the Arts, areas that systematically marginalise disabled artists and disabled arts professionals. The sustainability of the project will stem from the two reports it has produced, its articles and videos, its actions of implementation, and its overall unique and much needed initiatives.

Direct Links:

- <https://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/europe-beyond-access/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/europebeyondaccess>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7bXKbUUf28>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpeK6lPyNul>

Picture:



Source: *on-the-move.org*

3. Austria

National Report

Statistics

Statistical data and overviews on disability and accessibility in Austria and/or EU in general.

The data available on people with disabilities in Austria, as well as at the international level, is limited. This is partly due to the fact that the understanding of impairment and which persons are affected by it is not uniform.¹

Attention is also drawn to this in the **2016 report of the federal government on the situation of people with disabilities in Austria**: “The collection of statistical data on people with impairments in Austria - as in many other countries - is only covered to a limited extent by administrative data sources. Therefore, special programs on permanent impairments or disabilities have been repeatedly conducted within the framework of the microcensus.”²

¹ Vienna University of Economics and Business (2022): People with Disabilities - Overview. <https://www.wu.ac.at/npocompetence/unsere-themen/menschen-mit-behinderungen/menschen-mit-beeintraechtigungen-ueberblick>, 6/24/2022

² Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (2016): Report of the Federal Government on the Situation of Persons with Disabilities in Austria 2016. Decided on August 22, 2017. Annex 5 - Microcensus

Such a special program is the **Microcensus Supplementary Survey of Statistics Austria** in 2015 (first time in 2007). Results can be found, among others, in the **Federal Government's Report on the Situation of People with Disabilities in Austria 2016**: The supplementary study conducted by Statistics Austria in 2015 shows that 18.4 percent of Austrians (about 1.3 million persons) in private households aged 15 and older suffer from a permanent impairment. The most frequently mentioned permanent impairments were problems with mobility (14.1%, about 1.0 million persons) followed by multiple permanent impairments (7.3%, about 534,000 persons). Impairments other than those specified in the survey were also mentioned (5.1%, about 374,000 persons), had nervous or psychological problems (3.7%, about 270,000 persons). Also mentioned were problems with vision (3.0%, about 216,000 persons), hearing (2.1%, about 157,000 persons), and mental problems or problems with learning (0.8%, about 60,000 persons) and speaking (0.4%, about 26,000 persons).³

Other findings include: "Among persons with mobility problems, 3.7% or 271,000 persons had severe problems, about 40,000 persons (0.5% of the population 15 years and older) reported being dependent on the use of a wheelchair, 216,000 persons with vision problems (3.0%), 53,000 persons (0.7%) had severe problems, about 2,200 persons (0.03%) described themselves as blind, and about 157,000 persons reported hearing problems (2.1%), including 19,000 persons (0.3%) with severe hearing problems."⁴

In the **Austrian Disability Policy 2008-2016 report**, the following is reported in the context of the 2015 Statistics Austria microcensus supplementary survey:

Supplementary Survey of Statistics Austria 2015, p. 239.
<https://broschuerenservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=428>, 24.6.2022

³ Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (2016): Report of the Federal Government on the Situation of Persons with Disabilities in Austria 2016. Decided on August 22, 2017. Annex 5 - Microcensus Supplementary Survey of Statistics Austria 2015, p. 239.
<https://broschuerenservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=428>, 24.6.2022

⁴ Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (2016): Report of the Federal Government on the Situation of Persons with Disabilities in Austria 2016. Decided on August 22, 2017. Annex 5 - Microcensus Supplementary Survey of Statistics Austria 2015, p. 240.
<https://broschuerenservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=428>, 24.6.2022

“**Gender differences** in the incidence of permanent impairment were small: 18.8% of females and 17.9% of males had long-term impairment.

Disabilities are strongly **age-dependent**. Around one third of respondents over the age of 60 were affected. Multiple impairments occur almost three times as often in those aged 60 and over as in those aged 20 to 60.

The largest group is made up of people with **mobility impairments**, namely a projected 1.0 million people. Of this group, around 40,000 people are dependent on the use of a wheelchair. 534,000 people live with multiple health impairments. With around 270,000 affected persons, nervous or psychological problems were the third most common. In fourth place were problems with vision (around 216,000 people) and in fifth place, problems with hearing (around 157,000 people).

People with disabilities are more likely to have lower **educational attainment** than people without disabilities. Their **employment rate**, i.e. their participation in the labor market, is also significantly lower than that of non-disabled persons. Furthermore, people with disabilities more often live in **single-person households** contrary to non-disabled persons.

The survey also asked in which **areas of life** disadvantages and problems arise due to the disability in everyday life. The six most frequently mentioned areas are leisure time, the workplace, the apartment or house, public transport, the financial situation and access to public buildings.”⁵

According to Statistics Austria, in 2020 the **pensions of** persons with reduced working capacity and/or permanent disability decreased to 141,689 (-3.6% compared to 2019).⁶

The **long-term care allowance**, which is regulated by federal law in Austria, is an earmarked benefit for additional care-related expenses. The respective award (classification into levels 1-7) is based on the monthly extent of the need for care. In 2021,

⁵ Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (2016): Austrian Disability Policy 2008-2016. Based on the Report of the Federal Government on the Situation of Persons with Disabilities in Austria 2016 (adopted on August 22, 2017), p. 41. <https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Soziales/Menschen-mit-Behinderungen/Bericht-der-Bundesregierung-ueber-die-Lage-der-Menschen-mit-Behinderung.html>, 24.6.2022

⁶ Statistics Austria (n.d.): Pensions of reduced working capacity/incapacity. <https://www.statistik.at/statistiken/arbeitsmarkt/arbeit-und-gesundheit/pensionen-der-gemindert-arbeitsfaehigkeit/erwerbsunfaehigkeit>, 22.6.2022

there were a total of 465,814 recipients of long-term care benefits (290,779 women, 175,035 men).⁷

As mentioned at the outset, the international data situation regarding this topic is not very satisfactory. In 2012, the **European Health and Social Integration Survey (EHSIS)** was conducted. However, since there is no common legal basis for this, selected aspects are taken over in the European Health **Interview Survey (EHIS), which is conducted every 5 years.** In addition, the following surveys exist:

- Australian Survey of Disability, Aging and Carers (SDAC)
- Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD)
- Life Opportunities Survey in Great Britain (LOS)
- Representative survey on the participation of people with disabilities Germany⁸

Legislation

Overview of national legislation focusing on disability and accessibility and rights of people with disabilities.

In Austria, the equality of persons with disabilities is regulated by constitutional law. Relevant in equality law is the **Disability Equality Package**. This package formulates the “prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities in various areas of life.”⁹ However, a legal basis is also provided by the **Austrian Constitution**, which pursues certain fundamental and human rights. The constitution “secures and guarantees human rights and fundamental rights. These are, for example, the right to life, the prohibition of torture and inhuman punishment or the prohibition of slavery. This includes the

⁷ Statistics Austria (2022): Care allowance.

<https://www.statistik.at/statistiken/bevoelkerung-und-soziales/sozialleistungen/bundespflegegeld>, 6/22/2022

⁸ Vienna University of Economics and Business (2022): People with Disabilities - Overview.
<https://www.wu.ac.at/npocompetence/unsere-themen/menschen-mit-behinderungen/menschen-mit-beeintraechtigungen-ueberblick>, 6/24/2022

⁹ Österreich.gv.at (2022): General information on equality for people with disabilities.
https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/themen/menschen_mit_behinderungen/gleichstellung_von_menschen_mit_behinderungen/Seite.1871000.html, 22.6.2022

fundamental right that all people ‘are equal before the law’ and thus must be treated equally by the institutions of the state.”¹⁰

In addition to the Austrian Constitution, the following laws are relevant - in the context of disability equality law:

- **Disabled Persons Employment Act** (e.g. employers with more than 25 employees must employ at least one beneficiary disabled person - degree of disability at least 50%).¹¹
- **Federal Disability Act** (e.g. disabled people should be enabled to participate in society in the best possible way through various measures)¹²
- **Federal Disability Equality Act** (e.g. discrimination of people with disabilities - in the sense of equal participation opportunities - is to be prevented or eliminated)¹³
- **Equal Treatment Act** (e.g. equal treatment provisions with regard to gender, age, ethnicity, religion, ideology, sexual orientation)¹⁴

One important area of responsibility is the **Social Ministry Service**. It is responsible for compensation and welfare under social law (e.g. compensation for prisoners of war, crime victim compensation, victim welfare, vaccination damage), for care provision (e.g.

¹⁰ Republic of Austria Parliament (2018): What is a constitution? Fundamental and human rights.
<https://www.parlament.gv.at/PERK/VERF/WAS/>, 23.6.2022

¹¹ Federal Legal Information System (RIS) (2022): Federal law consolidated: Entire Disability Employment Act, version of 6/22/2022.
<https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10008253>, 6/22/2022.

¹² Federal Legal Information System (RIS) (2022): Federal Law Consolidated: Entire body of law for Federal Disabilities Act, version of 6/22/2022.
<https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10008713>, 6/22/2022.

¹³ Federal Legal Information System (RIS) (2022): Federal Law Consolidated: Entire body of law for Federal Disability Equality Act, version of 6/22/2022.
<https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20004228>, 6/22/2022.

¹⁴ Federal Legal Information System (RIS) (2022): Federal law consolidated: Entire body of law for Equal Treatment Act, version of 6/22/2022.
<https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20003395>, 6/22/2022.

24-hour care, care leave allowance) and for support services for people with disabilities. Core areas of the Social Ministry Service are the “improvement of the professional and social participation of people with disabilities, health impairments and/or disadvantages”. The service office promotes and coordinates - together with the provincial offices (regional contact points in the provinces) - any social services and also determines the degree of disability or the respective characteristic to be considered as a beneficiary disabled person. It also issues disability passes and parking permits and manages the support fund for people with disabilities.¹⁵

In Austria, people with disabilities have the possibility to turn to an advocate for **people with disabilities**, the so-called **Anwalt für Gleichbehandlungsfragen für Menschen mit Behinderungen**¹⁶, in case of perceived disadvantages and discrimination.

“The Disability Ombudsman is responsible for advising and supporting persons who feel discriminated against within the meaning of the prohibition of discrimination laid down in the Federal Disability Equality Act or the Disability Employment Act. In matters of insurance contract law, if the general interests of persons with disabilities are substantially affected thereby and in several cases, a lawsuit can be brought by the Austrian Council for Persons with Disabilities, the Klagsverband zur Durchsetzung der Rechte von Diskriminierungsopfern (Litigation Association for the Enforcement of the Rights of Victims of Discrimination) and also by the Ombud for Persons with Disabilities for the omission and elimination of discrimination on the grounds of disability. In the case of violations of legal requirements or prohibitions within the meaning of the Disability Equality Act, since January 1, 2018, the Ombud for the Disabled can also bring an action for injunctive relief and elimination of discrimination on the grounds of disability, in addition to the action for a declaratory judgment, provided that the defendant is a large corporation within the meaning of Section 3 of the Austrian Commercial Code (UGB). The

¹⁵ Österreich.gv.at (2022): The Social Ministry Service and its provincial offices.
https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/themen/menschen_mit_behinderungen/rehabilitation/Seite.1170300.html,
22.6.2022

¹⁶ Contact and information about the Disability Advocate can be found at:

<https://www.behindertenanwalt.gv.at>

Disability Advocate endeavors to offer help and support quickly and without the (otherwise) usual formalities.”¹⁷

Policy and Practice

Current state of policy and practice related to accessibility for people with disabilities.

In Austria, the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD)** has been in force since 2008, or more precisely since October 26, 2008. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) is a joint international treaty. In it, all signatory nations (as of 2018, that is 177 nations¹⁸) have committed to “promote, protect and ensure the human rights of persons with disabilities”. In addition, Austria has also signed the Optional Protocol, which supplements it on a voluntary basis. This gives individuals or groups of individuals the opportunity to submit an individual complaint directly to the UN Disability Rights Committee in Geneva.¹⁹

In addition, since 2010 there have been three **state reports from Austria on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. The reports present deficiencies and highlight problems that still existed in the area of disabilities and make various recommendations for action:

- Austria’s First State Report (2010)²⁰: On October 5, 2010, the first State Report was adopted by the Federal Government and in it a corresponding “balance sheet

¹⁷ Österreich.gv.at (2022): Federal Disability Advocate.

https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/themen/menschen_mit_behinderungen/gleichstellung_von_menschen_mit_behinderungen/Seite.1875000.html, 22.6.2022

¹⁸ Vienna University of Economics and Business (2022): People with Disabilities - Overview.

<https://www.wu.ac.at/npocompetence/unsere-themen/menschen-mit-behinderungen/menschen-mit-beeintraechtigungen-ueberblick>, 6/24/2022

¹⁹ Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (2020): UN Disability Rights Convention.

<https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Soziales/Menschen-mit-Behinderungen/UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention.html>, 6/22/2022

²⁰ The 1st report can be found at:

<https://broschuerenservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=216>, 6/22/2022

was drawn up on the first two years since the national entry into force of the Convention.”

- Second State Report of Austria (2013)²¹: Based on [Austria's first State Report](#) on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010 and the response to a list of questions in 2013, [concluding observations](#) with a total of 23 recommendations were published. These recommendations are to be implemented by the next State Audit of Austria.
- Third State Report of Austria (2019)²²: On September 4, 2019, the federal government adopted a combination of the second and third state reports on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In it, a list of 45 questions posed to Austria by the UN Disability Rights Committee were answered.²³

Further reports on the implementation of the UN Convention:

- Austrian Working Group for Rehabilitation (2010): Report on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Austria on the Occasion of the 1st State Report Procedure before the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.²⁴
- Austrian Council of Persons with Disabilities (2018): Report on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Austria on the Occasion of the 2nd State Report Procedure before the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.²⁵

²¹ The 2nd report can be found at:

<https://broschuerenservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=391>, 6/22/2022

²² The 3rd report can be found at:

<https://broschuerenservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=728>, 6/22/2022

²³ Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (2020): UN Disability Rights Convention.

<https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Soziales/Menschen-mit-Behinderungen/UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention.html>, 6/22/2022

²⁴ The report can be found at:

https://images.derstandard.at/2010/12/02/Behindertenrechtskonvention_Bericht.pdf, 6/22/2022

²⁵ The report can be found at:

<https://www.behindertenrat.at/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018-07-17-ZGB-Deutsch.pdf>, 6/22/2022

On July 24, 2012 the Austrian Council of Ministers adopted the **National Action Plan Disability 2012-2020**²⁶ (NAP Disability)²⁷. This action plan contains strategic considerations of the Austrian federal government regarding national implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). “The action plan presents the current situation for the respective subject areas, formulates political objectives and contains 250 measures - divided into eight focal points - which are to be implemented by 2020.”²⁸ This means that, on the one hand, longer-term disability policy objectives are addressed, and on the other hand, concrete measures for the period up to 2020 are also presented. For the implementation, there is a specially installed support group in the Ministry of Social Affairs with representatives from ministries, provinces, social partnership and science. Representatives of disability organizations, the monitoring committee and the Federal Disability Ombudsman are also part of this support group.²⁹

There is an **evaluation of the National Action Plan on Disability 2012-2020**³⁰. The evaluation examined how the National Action Plan on Disability was implemented from 2012 to 2020 and whether the measures set were suitable. The action plan expired in 2020, but is to be continued from 2021 to 2030. The homepage of the Ministry of Social Affairs states: “The NAP Disability, which expires in 2020, is to be scientifically evaluated and continued for the period from 2021 to 2030. In this way, Austria wants to consolidate the human rights for people with disabilities guaranteed by the UN Convention on the

²⁶ The National Action Plan can be found at: Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (2019): National Action Plan on Disability 2012-2020. Strategy of the Austrian Federal Government for the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Inclusion as a human right and mission. <https://broschuerenservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=225>, 6/22/2022

²⁷ An English version - National Action Plan on Disability 2012-2020 - can be found at: <https://broschuerenservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=225>, 6/22/2022

²⁸ Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (2020): National Disability Action Plan. <https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Soziales/Menschen-mit-Behinderungen/Nationaler-Aktionsplan-Behinderung.html>, 6/22/2022

²⁹ Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (2017): Social Report. Social policy developments and measures 2015-2016. Social policy analyses. <https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/pages/338/Sozialbericht2015-2016.pdf>, 22.6.2022

³⁰ The evaluation report can be found at: Biewer, G. et al. (2020): Evaluation of the National Disability Action Plan 2012-2020. <https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Soziales/Menschen-mit-Behinderungen/Nationaler-Aktionsplan-Behinderung.html>, 6/22/2022

Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). The preparation of the NAP Disability 2021-2030 is to be carried out in a broad participatory process involving the Länder.”³¹

In 2017, the federal government adopted the third **report on the situation of people with disabilities in Austria**. Central topics of this report are the status of implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the National Action Plan on Disability 2012-2020. A statistical data basis for this was formed by the Microcensus Supplementary Survey of Statistics Austria in 2015. A summary of the **Austrian Disability Policy 2008-2016** was produced, which addresses various aspects of disability policy in Austria and identifies the topics of discrimination, accessibility, education, employment, self-determination, health and awareness raising.³²

Identifying Issues

General issues affecting disability and accessibility as a whole and specific issues such as particular vulnerabilities of youth, elders, etc.

Impairments

People with disabilities and limitations are affected by disadvantage and discrimination. The limitations can be physical, cognitive/mental, social or communicative, whereby these can arise since birth or also later, for example, through accidents or illness.³³ It remains to be said that there is basically a heterogeneous understanding of what all counts as impairments and which persons are affected.³⁴

³¹ Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (2020): National Disability Action Plan.

<https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Soziales/Menschen-mit-Behinderungen/Nationaler-Aktionsplan-Behinderung.html>, 6/22/2022

³² Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (n.d.): Report of the Federal Government on the Situation of People with Disabilities. <https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Soziales/Menschen-mit-Behinderungen/Bericht-der-Bundesregierung-ueber-die-Lage-der-Menschen-mit-Behinderung.html>, 24.6.2022

³³ Northoff, R. (2013): Socialization, social behavior, and psychosocial disorders. An introduction to coping with social tasks. Weinheim, Basel: Beltz Juventa, p. 24f

³⁴ Vienna University of Economics and Business (2022): People with Disabilities - Overview. <https://www.wu.ac.at/npocompetence/unsere-themen/menschen-mit-behinderungen/menschen-mit-beeintraechtigungen-ueberblick>, 6/24/2022

Accessibility

“Essentially, people with disabilities should have the same access to publicly offered services as people without impairments. Services that are available to the public must therefore be accessible without barriers and must be accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities in the generally accepted manner, i.e., without particular difficulty and, as a matter of principle, without the assistance of others.”³⁵



Inclusion in the education system

The Austrian education system differentiates disabilities into learning disabilities, blindness, deafness, educational difficulties and severe disabilities and offers special schools with their own curriculum for these. Furthermore, there are special schools (Sonderpädagogik) with a regular curriculum for physically handicapped, speech impaired, visually impaired, hard of hearing and educationally handicapped children.³⁶

Inclusion in the workplace

People with intellectual disabilities in particular are largely excluded from the labor market.³⁷ However, there are always isolated resonances in social enterprises regarding people with disabilities. Various projects (e.g. Dialogue in the Dark, Discovering Hands, Specialisterne) show how even market-oriented companies can incorporate inclusion in a value-added manner.³⁸

Aging society

³⁵ Vienna University of Economics and Business (2022): People with Disabilities - Overview. <https://www.wu.ac.at/npocompetence/unsere-themen/menschen-mit-behinderungen/menschen-mit-beeintraechtigungen-ueberblick>, 6/24/2022

³⁶ OeAD-GmbH - Agency for Education and Internationalization (2021): The Austrian Education System. <https://www.bildungssystem.at/schule-oberstufe/inklusive-bildung>, 23.6.2022

³⁷ Fischer, E./Heger, M. (2019): Vocational participation and integration of people with intellectual disabilities. Final report of the scientific monitoring of the project "Transition Förderschule-Beruf". Oberhausen: Athena, p. 54

³⁸ Vienna University of Economics and Business (2022): People with Disabilities - Overview. <https://www.wu.ac.at/npocompetence/unsere-themen/menschen-mit-behinderungen/menschen-mit-beeintraechtigungen-ueberblick>, 6/24/2022

“In recent years, the topic of age and impairment has become more relevant, especially with regard to intellectually impaired people. Many intellectually impaired people participate in workshops and live in residential facilities that are not nursing homes. Now, for the first time, a generation is entering older age. However, these people have, in some cases, different needs in terms of care and support than people who have spent their lives (into old age) without obvious impairments.”³⁹

Participation in research

“The participation of people with disabilities in all areas of life also means inclusive research. Through participation and cooperation with people with disabilities, research results can be developed and reviewed in a participatory manner. In the field of assistive technologies, the need to involve users of these technologies in the development process was recognized early on (cf. BMASK, 2017, p. 156). The evaluation of social services by users (NUEVA) has also led to the development of promising research approaches (Konrad and Schützhoff, 2010). Inclusive research enables deeper insights into the lifeworld of the people concerned. It is assumed, on the one hand, that there is a right to inclusion in the field of research that concerns them, and on the other hand, that the perspective of people with disabilities should have a significant place, if only for reasons relevant to research (Breinlinger, 2011).”⁴⁰

Stakeholders

Identify relevant stakeholders - supporting agencies and various implementation activities.

Accessible Media (www.barrierefreiemedien.at)

As part of the implementation of the National Action Plan on Disability (NAP Disability), in 2017 a working group, together with experts and disability associations, developed

³⁹ Vienna University of Economics and Business (2022): People with Disabilities - Overview.
<https://www.wu.ac.at/npocompetence/unsere-themen/menschen-mit-behinderungen/menschen-mit-beeintraechtigungen-ueberblick>, 6/24/2022

⁴⁰ Hora, K./Schober, C. (2018): Involving people with disabilities in research. In: Statistics Austria (ed.): A voice for all - breaking down barriers in research and social statistics. Final Report, p. 14.
https://www.wu.ac.at/fileadmin/wu/d/cc/npocompetence/09_NPO_Abgeschlossene_Projekte/stimme_17_Endbericht.pdf, 24.6.2022

recommendations for the portrayal of people with disabilities in the media. As one of the envisaged implementation measures, the website www.barrierefreiemedien.at was developed.⁴¹ This platform provides interested parties with various recommendations, tips and sources regarding media portrayals of people with disabilities.

Austrian Council for the Disabled (www.behindertenrat.at)

“As an umbrella organization, the Austrian Council of People with Disabilities represents over 80 member organizations in Austria. Representing the interests of 1.4 million people with disabilities in Austria, the Disability Council advocates for the rights of people with disabilities nationally and internationally.”⁴²

ÖZIV - Federal Association for People with Disabilities (www.oeziv.org)

ÖZIV is a service-providing interest group that offers various support services for people with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses throughout Austria. The federal association aims for an inclusive society without barriers; all people should have an equal opportunity to participate. ÖZIV is an important partner for clients and companies in business, politics and the media.⁴³

Ombud for Equal Treatment (www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.gv.at)

The Ombud for Equal Treatment offers free consultations and support to help people obtain their right to equal treatment. The Ombud raises awareness and provides information (including lectures, workshop, newsletter, blog) on different levels of any kind of equality and discrimination. One concern is the further development of the legal basis regarding the topic.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Doeller, J. et al. (2020): Overview. On the cross-cutting issue of "disability" in Austria, p. 81.
<https://broschuerenservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=436>, 23.6.2022

⁴² Austrian Council for the Disabled (2022): The Austrian Council for the Disabled.
<https://www.behindertenrat.at>, 6/22/2022

⁴³ ÖZIV - Bundesverband (n.d.): General information.
https://www.oeziv.org/interessenvertretung/allgemeine_informationen, 23.6.2022

⁴⁴ Gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft (n.d.): Wir über uns. Vision and working methods.
<https://www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.gv.at/wir-ueber-uns/vision.html>, 23.6.2022

Essl Foundation MGE - Zero Project (www.zeroproject.org)

The goal of the non-profit private foundation Essl Foundation MGE, which has been in existence since 2007, is to support people with disabilities, for example in the areas of training and employment, in addition to social innovations and projects. The main project is the Zero Project. This project is a worldwide network of experts who use various innovations to help people with disabilities integrate into society all over the world. ⁴⁵

**WINTEC - Science Award Inclusion through Science and Technology**

(www.sozialministerium.at/WINTEC)

As an implementation measure within the framework of the National Action Plan on Disability, the Ministry of Social Affairs has been offering the WINTEC Science Award since 2015. Within the framework of this call for entries, projects can be submitted from all fields of science that contribute “to breaking down barriers and strengthening the idea of inclusion”. The three best and most innovative submissions are awarded prizes by a designated jury.⁴⁶

ZARA - Civil Courage and Anti-Racism Work (www.zara.or.at)

The Zara initiative aims to achieve a racism-free society through counseling, awareness-raising and prevention. The institution offers free counseling and various training programs (including for children, young people and adults) against hate on the net and against exclusion and discrimination of people.⁴⁷

SOS Human Rights Austria (www.sos.at)

SOS Human Rights Austria is a non-profit, independent association founded in 1993. Its tasks lie in the care and accompaniment of refugees as well as in the implementation of

⁴⁵ Zero Project (n.d.): About the Essl Foundation.

<https://austria.zeroproject.org/austria/uber-die-essl-foundation/>, 6/23/2022.

⁴⁶ Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection (2019): WINTEC - Wissenschaftspreis Inklusion durch Naturwissenschaften und Technik. <https://www.sozialministerium.at/Ministerium/Preise-und-Guetesiegel/WINTEC-Wissenschaftspreis-Inklusion-durch-Naturwissenschaften-und-Technik.html>, 23.6.2022

⁴⁷ ZARA (2021): ZARA - Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit.

<https://www.zara.or.at/de>, 23.6.2022

various projects on the topic of anti-discrimination, awareness work and human rights education.⁴⁸

City of Vienna/Women's Service Vienna - MA 57

(<https://www.wien.gv.at/kontakte/ma57/>)

“The Women's Service Vienna (MA 57) is committed to a gender-equitable society. The focus is on the self-determined and safe life of girls and women.”⁴⁹

The Women's Service addresses all women's issues ranging from gender equality, health, poverty and education to work, disability and migration.⁵⁰

Bidok - Disability Inclusion Documentation (<http://bidok.uibk.ac.at>)

Bidok is an accessible digital library. The digital library contains a wide range of studies and documents on the topic of disability and inclusion (Disability Studies). The platform, which is part of the Institute of Educational Science at the University of Innsbruck, is funded by the Social Ministry Service and is an open access service that is available to all interested parties.⁵¹

⁴⁸ SOS Human Rights Austria (n.d.): What we do.

<http://www.sos.at/index.php?id=220>, 23.6.2022

⁴⁹ Stadt Wien/Frauenservice Wien (n.d.): MA 57 - Frauenservice Wien.

<https://www.wien.gv.at/kontakte/ma57/>, 6/24/2022

⁵⁰ City of Vienna/Women's Service Vienna (n.d.): Keywords on women's issues.

<https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/frauen/stichwort/index.html>, 24.6.2022

⁵¹ Förderverein bidok Österreich (o.J.): The (old) digital library on disability and inclusion by bidok.

<http://bidok.uibk.ac.at/bibliothek/index.html>, 24.6.2022

Good Practices

Good Practice 1:

Title: Zero Project Austria

Organization/author: The Essl Foundation MGE

Summary:

Zero Project Austria functions as a platform to remove barriers in Austria, and in particular, with regards to employment.

Through events called “Unternehmensdialoge (Business Dialogues)” and “Branchendialoge (Industry dialogs)”, Zero Project Austria connects and sensitizes companies, decision makers and employees. These initiatives not only focus on the rights of persons with disabilities, but also highlight good practices across the country. Outstanding companies are awarded the renowned “Austrian Leading Company (ALC)” Award.

Employment of people with disabilities is currently still mainly understood as a social project and too little as an economic concern. Since 2017, they have therefore been organizing event formats throughout Austria together with our partner organizations, at which they inspire entrepreneurs, CEOs and managers to increasingly employ people with disabilities in the primary labor market.

Unfortunately, many benefits from employing people with disabilities remain largely untapped at present:

- 3/4 of Austrian companies pay a compensation tax instead of using valuable talents
- 15% of the population live with a disability, most of them are without employment
- every 3rd household is affected by disability

In addition, Zero Project Austria collaborates with “Die Presse”, a leading Austrian newspaper to publish an annual supplement on the occasion of the International Day of



Persons with Disabilities, which takes place on December 3 each year. The magazine analyzes, comments and discusses Accessibility and inclusive employment in Austria.

Impact on Beneficiaries: ZeroProject impacts people with disabilities by giving them a platform to be heard. The project creates a space where professionals, industry leaders, policy makers and people with disabilities can come together and discuss plans of action to create a nation with zero barriers.

Methods of Implementation: The project created the “Austrian Leading Company (ALC)” Award to be given to companies which have proved to be successful in creating a workplace with zero barriers. They not only created this good practice award but they also collect and share good practices from all over the world.

Sustainability: The project was started in 2007 by The Essl Foundation and renamed to The Zero Project in 2011. Since then the sustainability of the project focused on continually sharing Good Practices, having an annual conference regarding barrier free companies and creating the “ALC” Award.

Direct Link: <https://austria.zeroproject.org/austria/>

Citation: *Zero Project Austria - Beschäftigung von Menschen mit Behinderungen*. Zero Project. (2022, March 21). Retrieved May 16, 2022, from <https://austria.zeroproject.org/austria/>

Picture:



Good Practice 2:

Title: Resource center for students with different abilities

Organization/author: Uniability

Summary: It became apparent that joint projects, such as an information brochure for disabled students, required a formal structure for the group that would make it possible

to obtain subsidies and sponsorships. Therefore, the association UNIABILITY was founded in 1996.

Successful studying is still associated with enormous difficulties for people with disabilities. Uniability works against this inequality of opportunity. Uniability is a working group of disability representatives, affected persons and others, whose goal is to improve the study and working conditions at all Austrian universities and colleges and to represent the interests of affected persons in public. Different disabilities require appropriate adaptations of teaching, learning and living conditions. We therefore consider flexibility to be one of the most important criteria of our work.

They provide their clients with an initial individual consultation on questions at the beginning of one's studies, which should support your choice of studies. If you have already decided to study at a university, we will be happy to assist you with any questions you may have about preparing for your studies.

Impact on Beneficiaries: Uniability's beneficiaries include persons with disabilities, universities, teachers, policy makers, etc. By focusing on the barriers faced by students with disabilities and compiling knowledge on the accessibility of these universities, Uniability is able to act as a resource center for the students.

Methods of Implementation: Uniability is a part of the Austrian Disability Council; Uniability was mentioned in the report on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Austria.

Sustainability: Uniability was founded in 1996, due to the lack of organization and support for people with different abilities in universities. They were able to sustain themselves through legitimization and support from the then Minister of Science, Busek, which created positions for representatives for disabled students at six universities.

Direct Link: <https://www.uniability.org/verein/>

Citation: Ajeitler. (2020, August 26). *Über uns*. Uniability. Retrieved May 16, 2022, from <https://www.uniability.org/verein/>

Picture:



Good Practice 3:

Title: Specialisterne transforms autism strengths into entrepreneurial success

Organization/author: Specialisterne

Summary: According to estimates, 1% of the population is on the autism spectrum. Of all the employable people in this group, about 80% are unemployed, which is 19,000 people in Austria. In fact, their employment rate is lower than people with learning disabilities or other disabilities. In addition, people on the autism spectrum face bullying at school, resulting from a lack of understanding in society.

The mission of Specialisterne is to create jobs for people with autism by turning autism strengths into business successes (creating win-win-win). They do this by identifying, qualifying and placing talents in the autism spectrum in future jobs.

Specialisterne Austria is the Austrian competence center for the topic of autism and work. They offer classes and training in coding, AI, Data, Software Testing and more, each tailored to meet the needs of persons with autism.

Impact on Beneficiaries: Specialisterne Austria allows their beneficiaries to seek employment in IT for a more independent life. They also take into consideration the companies which their trainees will be employed by to make sure that their trainees will be well equipped and have the support which they need.

Methods of Implementation: In their neurodivergence-oriented specialized courses, trainees will gain the necessary technical know-how and complete your training with an internationally recognized certification. Through this achievement they are considered a good practice. Their training courses continue to be used and implemented in many countries around the world.

Sustainability: Specialisterne Foundation was founded in Denmark in 2004 by Thorkil Sonne. Currently Specialisterne is present in more than 12 countries worldwide, growing, and working towards the goal of creating one million jobs for people on the autism spectrum. This is made possible through a social entrepreneurial mindset, corporate engagement, and a global promotion of neurodiversity awareness.

Direct Link: [https://at.specialisterne.com/specialisterne/#SPA Found](https://at.specialisterne.com/specialisterne/#SPA_Found)

Citation:

Hendricks, Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation 2010, 32: 125-134.

Specialisterne. (2022, May 18). Retrieved May 16, 2022, from

https://at.specialisterne.com/specialisterne/#SPA_SPA

Picture:



4. Cyprus

National Report

This national report is developed in the framework of the ACCESS4ALL project by the two Cypriot Partners, CSI and RESET. The report highlights the current situation of people with disabilities, locally, by reviewing existing practices and conditions, as well as by reviewing relative policy recommendations and scenarios on accessibility and inclusive communities; aiming at national suggestions on ways of facilitation of the procedures, ways of engaging other stakeholders as well connecting inclusive societies and disabled persons- participation in all realms of social/personal life.

The research was conducted by focusing on secondary research, mainly through governmental organizations and EU sources:

- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth
- Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social insurance
- Pancyprian Alliance for Disability
- Statistical Service of Cyprus
- The Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED)
- Eurostat

Statistics

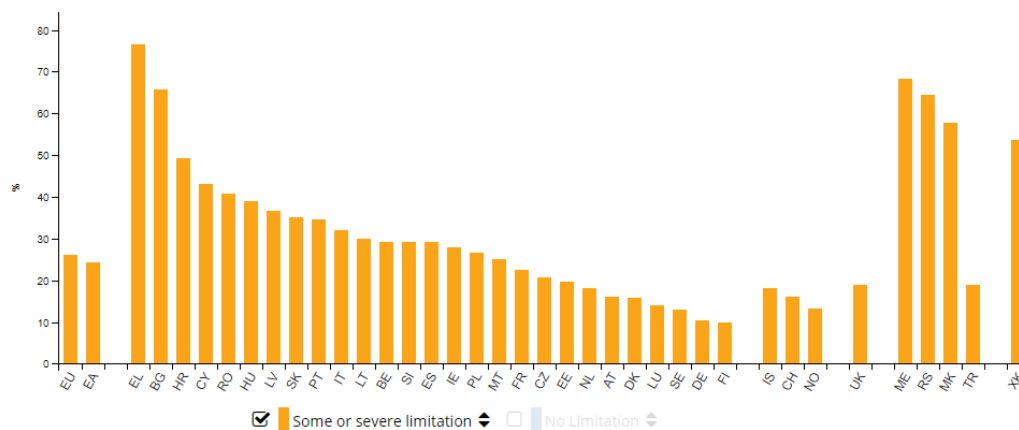
A fifth of Cyprus' population over 16 reported having a long-term disability in 2017, with the highest proportion being people who have a health condition but do not declare a basic activity difficulty (Eurostat, 2015).

In Cyprus, employment of people with health conditions and basic activity difficulty are 41.4% and 46.3%, respectively. Both groups addressed that their main reason for not searching for employment is their disability. According to Eurostat (2015), for all the EU-28 countries, the percentage of persons employed was smaller for those having a health condition. Among those employed, the sector of services employs about one-third of the population. People with health conditions designated more frequently their illness, injury or disability as the reasons for their employment situation. For example, in Cyprus, 23.1% of the people having a health problem declared that their disability is the main reason for working part-time, 38.9% for not searching for an employment and 35.4% for leaving their last job. Whereas only 1.5%, 0.9% and 3.5% (respectively) of the population without health problems quoted these reasons.

Employment is an important factor when speaking of economic well being, as it reduces the risk of poverty. According to Eurostat statistics in 2019, in-work poverty in Cyprus occurred at only 6.8%. However, people with activity limitation have a higher percentage of being exposed to in-work poverty. In Cyprus the proportion of in-work poverty is approximately 9% for those with activity limitation and for those with no limitation 6%. Similar results are seen in all EU countries. In the EU-27, 10.6% of those in employment with an activity limitation were at risk of poverty, whereas the percentage of those with no limitation was down to 9%.

Irrespective of whether employed or unemployed, people who have an activity limitation are generally more exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion (Eurostat, 2021). In Cyprus more than 4 out of 10 people with activity limitation report having difficulties in making ends meet.

Population living in households that reported having difficulties in making ends meet, 2019



Note: % share of the population with and without activity limitation aged 16 or over

(EU-27) Estimated data

BE: Break in time series

IS, UK, XX: 2018 data

UK: Low reliability

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: hlth_dm060)

eurostat

Statistics show the disabled population is suffering from financial difficulties with >50% not being able to afford a one-week holiday once per year, >50% not being able to meet unexpected financial expenses, and 20% falling behind with payments.

Overall financial stability is crucial for persons with disabilities, and unfortunately, they rely heavily on social benefits, allowances and pensions. In 2019, over 60% of the population in Cyprus with an activity limitation would have been at risk of poverty if social transfers were not available to them. The Minimum Guaranteed Income and General Social Benefits Law of 2014 (109(I)/2014) ensures a minimum standard of living for each family that meets certain criteria, including individuals with disabilities. Disabled people are entitled to the disability pension, which consists of a basic pension and a supplementary pension.

Legislation

A legal framework – in line with the European standards – exists in Cyprus for the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, aiming to secure peoples' fundamental rights for a dignified living and social security.

A cornerstone of Cyprus' legislation system regarding the rights of people with disabilities is The Law on Persons with Disabilities of 2000 [127(I)/2000] (CY Law, 2000). This legislation relies upon the principle of non-discrimination and it safeguards the inclusion of persons with disabilities in social community life and employment. The basic rights of persons with disabilities according to The People with Disability Act of 2000 are:

- Early identification and diagnosis of disability, intervention and prevention of its further consequences, provision of medical care, restoration of functions including provision and training in the use of prosthetic and orthotic members, as well as psychological and other support for the individual and his family;
- Personal support with auxiliary instruments, other means and services to assist it in daily living and working, with an interpreter or escort, and other necessary support, where necessary;
- Accessibility to housing, buildings, roads and the natural environment and public transport and other means of transport in general;
- Access to the joined education according to their needs;
- Access to information and communication by specific means where necessary, in particular for certain groups of people with sensory disabilities;
- Services of social and economic integration of vocational evaluation and guidance, vocational training and employment on the open labour market;
- A decent standard of living and where necessary through financial and social services;
- The creation of a personal and family life;
- Participation in cultural, social, sporting, religious and leisure activities.

The past years a number of legislations have been signed in order to fight any kind of discrimination, and ensure equal treatment, such as the 2004 Fight against Racial and

Other Discriminations Law, the 2004 Equal Treatment in Employment and Work Law, the 2007 Amended Law, the 2009 Law embodied in the national Cypriot legal framework through the European Directives, and the 2009 Recruitment of persons with disabilities in Public Sector Law promoting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities (Parlalis, 2013). In terms of health, The General Health System Law [89(I)2001] (CY Law, 2001) and the General Health System Amendment Law [74(I)2017] (CY Law, 2017), define the provision of universal coverage and equal treatment, the freedom of choice of health care provider and social solidarity.

In 2011, Cyprus ratified the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, which was undoubtedly a critical step for the protection of people with disabilities. The general principles of the Convention are:

- (a) Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;
- (b) Non-discrimination;
- (c) Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
- (d) Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
- (e) Equality of opportunity;
- (f) Accessibility;
- (g) Equality between men and women;
- (h) Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities (Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, 2012).

In May 2012, the Council of Ministers set up the necessary mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the CRPD: **The Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities** is designated as the Focal point for the implementation of the CRPD; **The Pancyprian Council of Persons with Disabilities** – which operates within the framework of laws concerning Persons with Disabilities Laws 2000-2014 (L. 127(i)/2000) as advisory body – as Coordination Mechanism; **The Ombudsman and Human Rights/Equality Authority** as the Independent Mechanism to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the CRPD (Pancyprian Alliance for Disability, 2016).

Policy and Practice

The Department for Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities coordinated, with the state services responsible for disability issues, the preparation of the First National Disability Strategy 2018-2028 and the Second National Action Plan for Disability 2018-2020. Both, the **First Disability strategy 2018 – 2028** and the **Second Disability Action Plan 2018 – 2020**, are referred to as documents in alignment to the UNCRPD and were developed after the consultation with the disability organizations in Cyprus.

The **First National Disability Strategy 2018-2028** (Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, 2014) is built on the principles of the Strategic Planning Guide of the Ministry of Finance and is linked to the recommendations made to the Republic of Cyprus by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Committee, the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and the Council of Europe's Disability Strategy 2017-2023. Its purpose is to define the vision, values, strategic goals and objectives of the Republic of Cyprus for the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities, by directing all the state actors towards those actions that will add value and will further improve the quality of persons with disabilities' life. Committed to the national strategy and action plan, Cyprus launched policies in the sector of employment, education, accessibility and independent living.

Employment

According to 'The Recruitment of Persons with Disabilities in the Wider Public Sector Law, L.146(I)/2009' persons with disabilities who fulfill specific objective requirements are recruited in employment positions in the wider public sector at a quota of 10% of the number of vacancies. This fact reinforces the need of education and especially Vocational Training for people with disabilities. The Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities offers vocational training schemes to enhance and diversify the training opportunities for persons with disabilities:

- i. Scheme for the Vocational Training of Persons with Disabilities
- ii. Scheme for the subsidization of Organisations for Vocational Training Programmes for Person with Disability

- iii. Scheme for the subsidization of Organisations for Vocational Training Programmes for disability professionals
- iv. Scheme for the Creation and Operation of Small Units for Self-Employment Purposes of Persons with Disabilities

State Parties are obligated to protect and ensure the realization of the right to work by taking appropriate steps, such as to promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market. Furthermore, the Department in cooperation with the Services should undertake the provision of financial assistance for the supply of special supporting technological equipment for the exercise of the duties of the vacancy by the persons with disabilities, and place them to a position which serves both the administrative needs of the Service and the special needs arising from the nature and condition of the disability of the person (Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, 2012).

Education

The state recognizes that all learners have the right to an education appropriate to their needs. According to the 113(I)/1999 Special Education Law the state should provide a legal framework where those with special educational requirements can receive an education that meets their individual needs, in the least restrictive environment. Special education provision is offered in the following educational settings:

- Public mainstream schools: Children with special needs can be enrolled in a public school and be provided with special education either in a mainstream classroom or in a special unit;
- Special education schools: Children with special needs can be enrolled in public special schools staffed with the necessary teaching personnel and other specialists;
- Education outside school premises (education at home): children with special needs in primary and secondary education, who due to health reasons cannot attend the regular school programme.

In 2019 The Council of Ministers approved the creation and operation of the Centre for Family Intervention and Support for Autism. Established in October 2021, providing specialized services to children of pre-school age diagnosed at the Autism Disorder

Spectrum, the Center aims to successfully integrate the children in the school environment and generally to develop their social skills. Substantial and immediate support is also provided to families immediately after diagnosis, by providing resources to families through appropriate guidance, education and psychological support, so that they can cope with the difficulties that may be presented or arise.



Accessibility

An ongoing project to create a barrier-free Cyprus, implies an inclusive and accessible public transportation. In recent years, the Republic of Cyprus has subsidized public transport companies for mass purchases of fully accessible new buses. The Ministry of Communications and Works is involved in undertaking important initiatives for the improvement of transport accessibility for disabled people. The Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities operates two schemes relevant to the transportation of people with disabilities: to be offered funding and without any taxation when it comes to buying a car, and to provide funding for the transportation needs of the individual. Certain newly built or modified buildings after 1999 must follow the standards for becoming accessible to all disabled people.

Cyprus is also participating in an initiative by the European Commission, issuing **European Disability cards** to persons with disabilities, with a purpose to promote mobility, participation and inclusion. The European Disability card offers access to the card holder of certain benefits in the field of culture, tourism, entertainment, sports and transports (European Disability Card, 2022).

Furthermore, persons with certain disabilities (such as Severe Motor Disability Allowance from the Disabled Welfare Service, visual disability, intellectual disabilities with additional motor difficulties and/or have received financial assistance for purchasing a car by the Ministry of Finance) are eligible for a **Disabled Parking Permit - Blue Badge**. The permit allows them to park in marked disabled parking bays and may park free of charge and without time limit on roads where payment is required and/or is restricted by time (Cyprus Driving, 2022).

Independent living

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities commits all EU Member States to the right of independent living in the community for all persons with disabilities – which includes achieving de-institutionalization for those residing in institutional settings. As in Europe - with an approximate 1.4million people with disabilities living in institutions in the EU (Inclusion Europe, 2020) - Cyprus' de-institutionalization was quite problematic until recently, since there were no sufficient structures supporting the transition from institutions to community living. Yet, with the new Action plan the state has been through changes such as 'the operation of "Ledra" assisted living house' and 'the de-institutionalization of people with mental disabilities from the Athalassa's psychiatric hospital'. Furthermore, a scheme for the Inclusion of people with severe disabilities in assisted living programmes, seeks to create new family-like housing in the community of assisted living with a limited number of residents based on their individual needs and preferences.

The Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance provides [support services of care and housing](#) to older people and people with disabilities, in daily care programmes and residential care programmes. (i) Home care services: Caregivers visit individuals at their own premises and provide services (ii) Day-care services: Individuals who cannot care for themselves can spend their daytime at their local day-care center. The center offers cooked meals and laundry facilities (iii) Residential care services: Individuals whose needs cannot be met on a 24-hour basis, are places in governmental, community or privately-owned Residential Homes.

Identifying Issues

A thorough research in the general issues that people with disabilities face in Cyprus has demonstrated that whereas many initiatives have been implemented in Cyprus that aim to help disabled people acquire equal rights, there are still many issues that need to be tackled so that the discrimination against persons with disabilities deteriorates and eventually fades.

One of the findings of this research is that Cyprus has one of the highest percentages among EU countries of disabled adults who are tortured by financial problems.

Specifically, and according to Chrysostomou (2021), “Among EU member states, approximately two-thirds of people with a disability faced financial difficulties in Greece, 76.5 per cent, and Bulgaria (65.7 per cent). Just under half of the population were in this situation... in Cyprus (43.2 per cent).”

Moreover, it is also observed that the group of disabled children is one of the most vulnerable groups in Cyprus when it comes to the difficulties they face because of their disability. In fact, children with disabilities are the ones who feel more socially excluded and marginalized when compared to any other age group. According to Hope For Children CRC Policy Center, children “don’t enjoy equal opportunities in education, health and entertainment due to the lack of proper infrastructure” (World Day of Persons with Disabilities, n.d.). This is certainly not an unexpected discovery, since disabled children are often victims of bullying in the educational institutions they attend, which ultimately leaves them feeling isolated and abandoned. Disabled children are also having difficulties in receiving equal education rights and opportunities.

Another important remark is that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the difficulties that people with disabilities have to deal with. According to Hope For Children CRC Policy Center, “since March 2020, every person with a disability has been affected by drastic political, social and economic changes as a result of domestic and international reactions to COVID-19 (World Day of Persons with Disabilities, n.d.). To be more precise, the urgent need for social distancing and isolation has deprived disabled people “access of many of the services they need as well as their quality” (World Day of Persons with Disabilities, n.d.). Reporting to this issue, the chairman of the Cyprus Confederation of Organizations of the Disabled (KYSOA) Christakis Nicolaides raises the issue of the lack of protection of people with disabilities, and reveals that the government has not given enough support to this vulnerable group during the pandemic (Shkurko, 2020). Specifically, Nicolaides states that “the fact that no specific measures were adopted for the protection and support of disabled people is a clear violation of their human rights” (Shkurko, 2020). Crucially, he also adds that the disabled population is even more vulnerable when it comes to being infected by the coronavirus, given that “most of them suffer from pre-existing medical conditions” (Shkurko, 2020). Therefore, he considers it unacceptable that the lack of measures for the safeguarding of people with disabilities forces them to “go to their workplaces putting themselves and their colleagues at risk” (Shkurko, 2020).

Further, what can also be observed is that in the Cypriot society, there seems to be a lack of awareness of citizens when it comes to disability issues. Unfortunately, many Cypriots do not understand the importance of parking spaces that are reserved for people with disabilities, and they often use them for their own benefit, depriving disabled people of an essential tool which enables them to safely maneuver in and out of their vehicle. A possible reason for this problematic tendency is simply the lack of Cypriot citizens’ awareness of the difficulties that disabled people face on a daily basis. In order for that to be prevented, schools and educational establishments in general, must properly educate young children for all disability issues, and specifically, they should indicate the importance of parking spaces reserved for PWDs.

Lastly, when it comes to mental health/ invisible disabilities issues, which are equally important and prominent, Cyprus is in urgent need of more actions related to Mental

Health awareness, education, and support. As it is mentioned in the National Policies Platform of the European Commission: “There are no top-level strategies and other policy measures addressing the mental health of young people in Cyprus, including suicide prevention measures” (EACEA National Policies Platform: Youthwiki, n.d.). There are some relevant policies, programs, projects, or initiatives, but prevention programs organized by top-level authorities are not available, and much more needs to be done in order to effectively tackle these issues, like applying a suicide prevention strategy, either as a standalone document or as an integrated element of another national policy. Further, it is truly unfortunate that Mental Health issues are still considered a taboo in the Cypriot society, and that generally the topic of mental illness is often shrouded in stigma. Many people who face mental health issues are afraid to admit it or reach for medical help, or if they are willing to ask for help, they cannot find the support they need. Therefore, it is essential to find a solution to this issue and implement new strategies, so that people with invisible disabilities have the appropriate support that is necessary to them.

Stakeholders

➤ **Cyprus Confederation of Organisations of the Disabled (CYSOA)**

The Cyprus Confederation of the Disabled Organization (CYSOA) has functioned successfully since 1984. KYSOA is heavily involved with disability issues and its main mission is to promote measures that contribute to disabled people’s full involvement in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the Cypriot society.

The Confederation has as its main goal to create a European political framework for disability, and it is determined to create the basis for the attainment of equal opportunities of PWDs which will enable them to fight against discrimination. What is more, CYSOA is also a member of the European Forum of Persons with Disabilities, which represents people with disabilities of the Member States in the dialogue with the institutions of the European Union.

(<http://www.kysoa.org.cy/kysoa/page.php?pageID=3>)

➤ **Pancyprian Organization of the Blind**

The goal of the Pancyprrian Organization of the blind is to provide people with visual disabilities with equal rights which will help them function in the community in a successful and productive way. It was established in 1980 by 20 blind and partially sighted people, who are also Cypriot citizens. The Organization is non-governmental and mainly charity funded. Some of the main aims of the Organization are the promotion of the social welfare of people with visual disabilities, the prevention of blindness and the promotion of medical treatment, the boosting of education and vocational training as well as the promotion of the rehabilitation and integration of people with visual disabilities, and the acquisition of required and appropriate technical aids and appliances. The Organization is also focused in developing the conditions for equivalent living standards, for integrating the visually impaired persons into the society in general, for spreading the information with regard to the difficulties the visually impaired people face, and for promoting sports among and between the visually impaired.

(<http://pot.org.cy/index.php/en/>)

➤ **P.O.A.A. Pancyprrian Organization for the Disabled**

The Pancyprrian Organization for the Disabled was founded in 1966 and it is the first and largest Organization for people with disabilities in Cyprus. The main goal of the organization is to protect the rights of people with disabilities. It focuses on mobility impairments and their co-existence with any other disability or health problem. Therefore, the target group of this organization includes members, people of any age with any mobility disability. (https://poaalesou.org/?page_id=19&lang=en)

➤ **Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities**

The Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities was founded in 2009. It has as its main goal to promote social protection, social inclusion and to integrate people with disabilities in the labor market. The mission of this department is to upgrade the quality of life of disabled people, and ultimately provide them with new prospects for social inclusion. The main responsibilities of this Department is to provide assessments and certifications of disability and functioning, and social benefits to disabled people, to provide them with direct and indirect vocational rehabilitation and other support services, and manage the effective implementation of the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the National Disability Action Plan.

(http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dsid/dsid.nsf/index_en/index_en)

➤ **OPAK**

The Cyprus Paraplegic Association is a non-profit organization founded in 1980 in Cyprus by individuals with paraplegia and tetraplegia. Their goal is to improve the life quality of people with spinal cord injuries, ensure the respect of their human rights, help their integration in society and provide them with medical and professional rehabilitation. This organization is the result of the efforts of people with spinal cord injuries. The goal of this organization is to promote the welfare of the members of the Organization in general, to provide them with medical care, to encourage the State for more active support and make sure that society treats people with paraplegia and quadriplegia with respect. It also aims at providing educational support to its members, financially aiding the members of the Organization, cooperating with any Organization, Association or individuals to help achieve the Organization's goals, and lastly, promoting, encouraging and developing sports among the disabled. (<https://opak.org.cy/>)

➤ **School for the Deaf**

The School for the Deaf is one of the oldest educational institutions in Cyprus, founded in 1953. It is a place where deaf people can be educated and receive several services. Within the school, there is a specialized nursery and childcare center for the deaf, a Department of Primary Education, a Department of Secondary General Education, a Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training and personalized programs for deaf children, who receive a certificate from the School for the Deaf. When it comes to services, there are counseling services for Deaf Adults, an Audiology Center, the Early Intervention and Education Program, the Children's Integration Program in Secondary General Education and the School's Partial Integration Program. (<http://eid-scholi-kofonlef.schools.ac.cy/>)

➤ **St Barnabas School for the Blind**

The St Barnabas School for the Blind is situated in Nicosia, and it the only educational institution of its kind in Cyprus. The establishment of the school in 1929 marked the beginning of the provision of special education in Cyprus. Today, St Barnabas is a multi-dynamic center that provides a wide range of services that includes special education for

children with Visual Impairment (VI), support services for students with VI attending mainstream educational settings, support services for VI students who attend Higher Education Institutions in Cyprus and abroad, vocational training program for adults, training program for adults aiming towards the enhancement of creativity skills and self-development, an Early Intervention Program for children with VI and their families, a unit for children with VI and additional disabilities, a program of education for persons with deaf-blindness, social services etc. It also offers cooperation with other institutions and organizations (i.e., The Department of Antiquities, The National Theatre of Cyprus) regarding the accessibility and material adaptations for persons with VI.

(<http://erisfavia.sed.uth.gr/index.php/project-partners/st-barnabas-school-for-the-blind>)

Good Practices

Good Practice 1:

Title: Able Book

Organization/Author: Non-Governmental Organization, Andreas Vasileiou CEO

Summary/Description:

A startup non-profit organization, Able Book, recently launched an innovative app for people with disabilities. This app was promoted by Bank of Cyprus IDEA, and its purpose is to provide vulnerable groups with equal opportunities. House president, Annita Dimitriou, mentioned that this initiative represents an effort that will make Cyprus “more accessible to people with disabilities” (Able book: The new app for people with mobility challenges, n.d.). Precisely, Able Book has aimed “to create an online platform with applications that will improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and vulnerable groups, enable them to participate and function in society, enjoy the same opportunities and to have equal access to social goods” (Able Book: The new application for people with mobility challenges, n.d.). The CEO of Able Book is Andreas Vasileiou, who is a disabled person himself. While describing his challenging life journey, Andreas Vasileiou states that he had to fight to stay alive, since as soon as he was born, before he even opened his eyes, his mother’s umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck, making him unable to breathe. He was placed in an incubator and managed to stay alive. However, he was

diagnosed at the age of four months old with quadriplegia and dystonia. He has difficulties in speaking and moving on one side of his body. Despite his disability, however, he has managed to make friends at school, and go to the University of Cyprus to study Engineering. As soon as he graduated though, and began searching for a job, he realized that people with disabilities have no equal opportunities as non-disabled people. That is one of the main reasons that lead him to create this electronic platform.

Target groups: People with mobility challenges, vulnerable groups of the society, NGOs & CSOs of people with disabilities, organizations supporting inclusion, integration practices, and human rights.

Impact on Beneficiaries: This platform aims to raise public awareness by informing people about the problems people with disabilities face on an everyday basis. It also aims to offer innovative solutions to these issues and decrease disabled people's feeling of social exclusion and marginalization, ultimately making them feeling equal members of this society. What Able Book offers is a platform that allows public and private organizations and companies to list the services they offer to people with disabilities, so that people in need can track them and take advantage of them.

Method of Implementation: Precisely, one of the main information that is offered in the application is several spaces "that provide wheelchair access, count the available disabled parking spaces and indicate all routes accessible to wheelchairs or, if necessary, public transport within the city" (Able Book, n.d.). This information can play a crucial role in allowing people with disabilities to entertain themselves as any other non-disabled person and overcome any barriers that their disability could offer them (Able Book, n.d.). Service providers will be able to record their services in the platform, interact with existing smart city platforms and provide this information to the general public.

The platform includes the following: the inclusion of smart tools like "interfaces concerning the company and the various organizations and companies which will allow them to record the services they provide and whether they are accessible to people with disabilities", the "evaluation of entries by the public through the use of the practice of "crowdsourcing", "same integration with IoT and Smart City interfaces", "smart analytical and design component", "an additional component for posts about people with disabilities; this component aims to bring together different companies and people with disabilities for potential jobs for people with disabilities" (Able Book, n.d.).

In order to gain access to this application, firstly have to sign in using your account and start using it for free. The application has a slick design, and aims to navigate you through your daily life. It also has a user-friendly design with regular updates, something that makes it even more useful. When disabled or non-disabled people use it, they can find anything from parking to services that will make disabled people's lives much easier. They can view all the facilities that are listed, check what services they offer and view their photos.

The Able Book is divided into 2 sections, the informative section and an interactive map. The platform also includes several articles, videos related to people with disabilities but also to other vulnerable groups. It also offers contact information, and mentions some events which aim in raising awareness. According to Vasileiou, "the main innovation, however, is Able Map, which for the first time in Cyprus created a map containing all the parking spaces for the disabled in 22 municipalities (8 remaining). They are also planning to add areas that have suitable facilities for disabled people, and restaurants with menus for people with health problems (Clinical Sciences: People's Testimonials, New Able Book Platform for PWDs, n.d.).

Sustainability: This is a recent effort that has achieved a lot of success since its implementation. It has provided people with disabilities with the necessary information they need in order to be able to move to different locations. The application has improved a lot up until this moment, and new initiatives are being suggested and applied as the organization grows stronger. Lastly, such initiative can be transferable in different contexts.

Direct Link: <https://ablebook.com.cy/>

Further Reading: https://www.facebook.com/AbleBook/?ref=page_internal

Picture:



Good Practice 2:

Title: OPAK Care Service (Εν Έργω)

Organization/Author: Cyprus' Paraplegic Organization (OPAK)

Summary/Description: The Cyprus' Paraplegic Organization (OPAK) is one of the most influential and active organizations in Cyprus, and has as its mission to help disabled people acquire equal rights and opportunities. The Care Service is one of OPAK'S most important achievements since its foundation. It aims to provide its quadriplegic or paraplegic members support and care to eventually enable them to live independently, with the help of a trained staff. The service is offered throughout Cyprus, and all of the professionals handle their job with professionalism, confidentiality and respect. The overall mission of this service is to provide the members of O.P.A.K with quality life. Moreover, OPAK was involved in the development and execution of the project "HERMES II- Tourism without Obstacles for Everyone" with Paralimni Municipality (Cyprus), and Syros-Ermoupoli Municipality (Greece). Several interventions have been carried out from this project, mainly related to accessible infrastructure for people with disabilities (i.e. fitness equipment, land and sea wheelchairs, sea-tracks, sanitary facilities, a printed and a digital information guide).

Target Groups: People with spinal cord injury, members of O.P.A.K who have completed their rehabilitation program (paraplegic and quadriplegic people), vulnerable groups of the society, NGOs & CSOs of people with disabilities, organizations supporting inclusion, integration practices, and human rights.

Impact on Beneficiaries: This initiative is one of the most successful initiatives that was implemented in Cyprus, since it enables people with physical disabilities (quadriplegia, paraplegia) to attain an independent lifestyle with the assistance of a trained staff.

Methods of Implementation: The Service employs a variety of trained caregivers and nurses, who are very well aware of the needs and requirements of people with disabilities. The service is also supported by professionals such as social workers, psychologists and other collaborators. An on-call line is also maintained for additional needs from 12:00-14:00 daily. Within the framework of the care service, the following is provided: nursing support, medication, personal hygiene and care, feeding, accompaniment, socialization, reintegration of the patient. As it was mentioned above,

the service offers social workers, who are concerned with the social reintegration and assertion of the rights of the members of the organization. The role of the social worker is guiding, advising, supporting the members and their families. Moreover, some other roles of the social worker are to visit the Spinal Cord Injury Center of Nicosia General Hospital, participate in the Multidisciplinary Team of the Centre for spinal cord injuries of the Nicosia General Hospital and offer various services and ministries for the service of the members of the Organization. Moreover, the service offers psychological support services by an experienced registered clinical psychologist. The purpose of the service is to support people who have been admitted to the Nicosia General Hospital Spinal Cord Injury Centre following a trauma or illness or disease which caused damage to the spinal cord and ultimately quadriplegia or paraplegia. The service is intended to enhance the quality and social life of the persons and their family members, their social adaptation and their professional rehabilitation. The service is offered individually or in the family environment or through support groups. This program allows people with severe mobility disability the opportunity to travel alone, or with their partner, having at their disposal the accessible cars of OPAK and the person on duty driver.

Sustainability: Undoubtedly, OPAK's care service represents one of the most successful efforts of the organization since the majority of PWDs are taking advantage of this service. The transfer service started in 2007 and continues to operate with increased needs until today, providing easy transfer to more than 100 people nationwide, mainly in Nicosia and Limassol. That is why this is a sustainable service that will continue to function for many years to come, and it will manage to achieve an even higher success rate.

Direct Link: <http://opak.org.cy/ypiresia frontidas/>

Further Reading:

- <https://keep.eu/projects/19810/Tourism-without-Obstacles-f-EN/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/ERMHS2>
- https://opak-org-cy.translate.googleusercontent.com/translate?x_tr_sl=el&x_tr_tl=en&x_tr_hl=en&x_tr_pto=sc

Picture:



Good Practice 3:

Title: Film Festival on Disability

Organization/Author: CSI - Center for Social Innovation

Summary/Description: Every December, a Film Festival on Disability is hosted in Nicosia, Cyprus, that lasts two days. In the festival there are two film screenings per night. The films are from European, American, Asian, etc., cinema, and they are related to topics of visible and invisible disabilities. The First Film Festival on Disability took place in December 2021. The festival took place for the purposes of the European projects BRIDGES and Starting UP 4 Inclusion (Erasmus+ projects). The Second Film Festival on Disability is expected to take place in December 2022. The purpose is to promote civil obligation for inclusion, emotional engagement, and awareness.

Target Groups: People with disabilities, young graduates, university students, people from youth organizations oriented towards diversity and inclusion, members of NGOs and associations of people with special needs, teachers of all educational levels, special education teachers, stakeholders, people from ministries and policy makers took part, as well as entrepreneurs and employers/companies willing to hire people with special needs, people with physical and intellectual disabilities, and all other interested individuals.

Impact on Beneficiaries: The film festival allowed the participants to attend the screening of two movies related to disability, and enabled them to discuss the social aspects of different forms of disability (physical, intellectual, etc.), as they are presented in the movies and exchange views and experiences about overcoming the barriers that people with special needs face in their effort for inclusion in education and in the labor market. The event was a good opportunity for young people and stakeholders to meet, discuss, network and explore possibilities for education, training, employment and

entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs and employers/companies that participated in the event were also willing to hire people with special needs.

Methods of Implementation: The Multiplier Event for the project Starting UP 4 Inclusion in Cyprus took place on Tuesday 16 of November 2021 in the innovative way of a film festival related to disability. The venue, ARTOS House, where the event took place, is a hub of arts, science and innovation, accessible to people with special needs, which also has a big screening hall. During the event, the participants had the chance to be informed about the project, the partner organizations and the main aims. Furthermore, each Intellectual Output was presented and the participants were able to ask questions and discuss about the project. What is more, the event included the screening of two movies related to disability, *I am Sam* (2001) and *The Intouchables* (2011). The first movie is about a father (Sean Penn) with an intellectual disability who is fighting for the custody of his 7-year-old daughter (Dakota Fanning). The second movie is about a black caretaker from a run-down neighborhood (Omar Sy) and a wealthy quadriplegic (François Cluzet) trying to communicate and make things work. After the screening of each movie, the participants had an interesting discussion in which they shared their experiences as people with disabilities and their advice in overcoming the boundaries their disability may provide them with. The event as a whole gave disabled people the chance to connect with each other and talk about their experience, and gave them the chance to interact with stakeholders and employers who were willing to hire them. At the end of the event, all participants received a set of wooden coasters with quotes from the movies and the logo of the project as a gift from Center for Social Innovation.

Sustainability: The Film Festival on Disabilities was organized with huge success in 2021, and it has achieved a significant impact. That is why it will be organized again this year. There is also the intention from CSI to organize this event on an annual basis. Therefore, this is a sustainable practice that can be transferable in different contexts.

Picture:



Making disability an equal way of living



International
Day of
Persons with
Disabilities
3 DECEMBER

Conclusions & Recommendations

Key Results of Research

Taking everything into account, this report has summarized among other things the most important statistical information regarding the Cypriot population that struggles with health conditions and illnesses, their employment rate, their financial difficulties, their social benefits, allowances and pensions. Moreover, this report has analyzed the legal framework that exists in Cyprus for the protection of disabled people, which aims to ensure that PWDs have access to a dignified living condition, and that they receive equal treatment. It has also discussed the policies and practices that exist in Cyprus and concern people with disabilities, their educational rights and possibilities. The report has also made reference to different actions that were made to enable people with disabilities to live independently. Further, this report was also dedicated to identifying some of the most significant issues that people with disabilities face in Cyprus, and several vital issues that pertain to society's stance towards the issue of disability in general. Moreover, the report has collected some of the most influential and helpful stakeholders that operate in Cyprus that have as their main mission to help people with disabilities receive equal opportunities as well as integrate them into the society. Lastly, the report mentioned three successful Good Practices that are implemented in Cyprus at a high success rate,

and has discussed their mission and goals, their target group, their impact on beneficiaries, their method of implementation, as well as their sustainability.

Recommendations for Future Actions

One of the main findings of this national research is the fact that several important and fruitful initiatives and efforts were made up until this moment in Cyprus throughout the years that aimed at providing the necessary support to people with disabilities. Nevertheless, the implementation of more policies, strategies and procedures that will be a product of collective effort and will have as their main mission to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities is of crucial importance.



5. France

National Report

Statistics

12 million French citizens are living with one or the other disability. Recent disability survey reports of France indicate that growing age is one of the major causes of disability in France. As people grow older they are more likely to acquire locomotor, visual or auditory disabilities. In fact, more than 50% of the disabled people reported in 2020 were over 45 years of age. French men are more likely to be affected by mental illnesses as compared to women. Only 36% of French citizens with disabilities were gainfully employed, according to a 2020 survey. About 1 in 5 persons with disabilities reported that professional integration had been very tough for them due to their disability. Further, 3 quarters of the French population have been reported to say that it is difficult for any company to hire persons with disabilities. However, the majority of the employed persons with disabilities said that their needs for workplace adjustments were met at least partially.⁵²

⁵² "Disability in France: Definition, Employment, Laws and Discrimination." (n.d.). *Wecapable.com*. Retrieved July 1, 2022 from <https://wecapable.com/disability-in-france-definition-employment-laws-discrimination>

In 2020, 40% of employees consider that people are often or very often treated unfavorably or discriminated against in France because of their health or disability. Only ten per cent of respondents believe that people with disabilities do not experience discriminatory situations. About half of the French respondents believe that such situations occur sometimes or rarely. Half of the population will be confronted with a disability in the course of their lives, either occasionally or permanently, while 85% of disabilities occur in adulthood.⁵³ Of the 2.7 million disabled people of working age (15-64), only 3.6% are in employment, according to Agefiph data. 45% of disabled workers are aged 50 and over and 49% are women. 37% of people with disabilities have a level of education equal to or higher than the baccalaureate, compared to 53% of the entire French workforce.

The majority of recognized workers work in the private sector (70%) compared to 22% in the public sector and 8% as self-employed. Of these, 11% have managerial status. 32% of disabled workers work part-time. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is 14%, compared to the national average of 8.1% for the entire French population.

Recruitment of disabled workers is expected to increase by 26% in 2021. In 2005, the so-called "disability law" aimed to improve the way in which disability was taken into account in companies and public institutions. From now on, they should hire at least 6% of disabled employees. Nearly 80% of companies with more than 20 employees employ at least one disabled person, but only 30% of them meet their obligations under the law.⁵⁴

In order to improve these figures, the government would like to focus on training by doubling the number of apprentices with disabilities. At present, these represent only 1% of the apprenticeship sector, i.e. around 4,000 young people in the CFAs (centres de formation d'apprentis spécialisés).

⁵³Guirec Gombert (24 December 2021) "Dix chiffres sur le handicap en France" Retrieved July 1, 2022 from <https://www.helloworkplace.fr/chiffres-handicap-france>

⁵⁴ La Rédaction (July 2020) « La refondation de la politique du handicap depuis 2005 » Retrieved 30 June, 2022 from <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/19410-la-refondation-de-la-politique-du-handicap-depuis-2005>

Legislation

Since the **Disability Act of 2005**, policies to promote the integration of people with disabilities have multiplied, yet the objectives defined by the text are still far from being achieved. New measures have recently been added to the legislative panel already in place, notably with the vote in September 2018 of a law “for the freedom to choose one’s professional future”, designed to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities in terms of employment. **Law n°75-534** of 30 June 1975 in favor of people with disabilities set the French legislative framework for 30 years.

It sets the legal framework for public authorities’ action:

- importance of prevention and screening of disabilities;
- educational obligation for disabled children and adolescents;
- access for disabled people to institutions open to the general population;
- and keeping people with disabilities in ordinary working and living environments whenever possible.⁵⁵

The law entrusts the recognition of disability to separate departmental commissions: for young people aged 0 to 20 (departmental commission for special education) and for adults (technical commission for vocational guidance and reclassification from the age of 20, the COTOREPs - *Technical Commission for Vocational Guidance and Reclassification*).⁵⁶

Its fundamental objective was to organize and develop the social assistance that the State has a duty to provide to people with disabilities, as part of national solidarity. It does not propose a definition of disability, but it does attempt to include a non-exhaustive concept of disability, considering the person with a disability as such, his or her capacities and difficulties in integrating.

This law was renewed by **law 2002-02** of 2 January 2002. The new law emphasizes the rights of the people taken in (charters, life projects, etc.). It improves the management of

⁵⁵ Les clés du social (2012) « *L’intégration des personnes handicapées : la loi du 30 juin 1975* » Retrieved June 30, 2022 from <https://www.clesdusocial.com/integration-des-personnes-handicapees-loi-30-juin-1975>

⁵⁶ La Rédaction (2019) « *Chronologie : évolution du regard sur les personnes handicapées* » Retrieved July 1, 2022 from [Chronologie : évolution du regard sur les personnes handicapées | vie-publique.fr](https://www.vie-publique.fr/chronologie/evolution-du-regard-sur-les-personnes-handicapees)

social and medico-social establishments and services: diversification of missions, coordination of the various players.

"Art. L. 116-1. - Social and medico-social action tends to promote, in an interministerial framework, the autonomy and protection of persons, social cohesion, the exercise of citizenship, to prevent exclusion and to correct its effects. It is based on a continuous assessment of the needs and expectations of members of all social groups, in particular people with disabilities and the elderly, vulnerable persons and families, in a situation of precariousness or poverty, and on the provision of benefits in cash or in kind. It shall be implemented by the State, regional and local authorities and their public institutions, social security bodies, associations and social and medico-social institutions within the meaning of Article L. 311-1.⁵⁷

The 1975 Act was completely overhauled by the **Act of 11 February 2005**, which gives a new definition of disability: For the purposes of this Act, a disability is any limitation of activity or restriction of participation in society suffered by a person in his or her environment due to a substantial, lasting or permanent impairment of one or more physical, sensory, mental, cognitive or psychological functions, a multiple disability or a disabling health problem.

Since the promulgation of the law of 11 February 2005, France has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006, in early **2010**.

This convention aims to promote and protect the civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights of people with disabilities on an equal basis with other citizens. This implies the adoption of an "**integrated approach to disability in public policies**", defined by the Prime Minister's circular of 4 July **2014**, which makes it mandatory to take into account provisions relating to people with disabilities.

⁵⁷ « Code de l'action sociale et des familles » Retrieved July 4, 2022 from https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000045293678/

The ratification of the Convention has also led the Government to pay particular attention to the issue of direct participation of persons with disabilities in the development of policies that concern them.⁵⁸

Policy and Practice

Disability policy, which is highly interministerial in nature, is defined by the **Interministerial Committee on Disability (CIH)**, chaired by the Prime Minister and made up of almost all government ministers.

The Directorate General for Social Cohesion (DGCS), in conjunction with the SG CIH, leads interministerial discussions and work on disability within the framework of an ongoing dialogue with representatives of local authorities and associations of individuals and institution managers, within the framework of the **National Consultative Council for the Disabled (CNCPH)**.

On the occasion of the **National Disability Conference (CNH) on 11 December 2014**, chaired by the Head of State, three main objectives are set: to build a society that is more open to people with disabilities; to design responses and care adapted to each person's situation; and to simplify their daily lives.⁵⁹

Main Measures Adopted for 2022

- **Improved Compensation**

In order to improve compensation for psychological, mental, cognitive or neurodevelopmental disabilities (NDD) and following the action study carried out in

⁵⁸ Marie Lecerf Service de recherche pour les députés (June 2017) « *Politique européenne en faveur des personnes handicapées* » Retrieved July 4, 2022 from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/603981/EPRS_IDA%282017%29603981_FR.pdf

⁵⁹ « *La Conférence Nationale du Handicap* » (CNH) (2014) Retrieved on July 4, 2022 from <https://handicap.gouv.fr/la-conference-nationale-du-handicap-cnhd>

three precursor territories (Ardennes, Gironde and Vosges), regulatory changes will be made by the end of March 2022 to the reference system for access to the disability compensation benefit (PCH) with the creation of a new area of human assistance needs entitled “support for autonomy”. This replaces the “supervision” area and the launch of a training plan for MDPH professionals and support services to promote the use of this reference framework and improve the response to the specific needs of these people.

Recognition of deaf-blindness as a specific disability and adaptation of the compensation modalities by the creation by decree by the end of March 2022 of three progressive packages of PCH human aid dedicated to 30, 50 and 80 hours.⁶⁰

- **Employment**

Implementation of the priority measures of the transformation plan for establishments and services providing assistance through work (Esat):

- Improvement of rights for people in Esat (rights to exceptional leave, implementation of the priority measures of the transformation plan for establishments and services providing assistance through work (Esat): improvement of rights for people in Esat (rights to exceptional leave, recovery of Sundays and public holidays worked, etc.) and strengthening of their power to act by being an actor in their career path;
- Authorization to combine part-time work in a work center with work in an ordinary company in order to allow for gradual integration into the ordinary environment (3DS law);
- Extension until 31 December 2023 for adapted companies of the experiments allowing the creation of new springboard CDDs and adapted temporary work companies (EATT).
- Establishment of the first adapted companies in prisons in order to promote the professional integration of prisoners with disabilities: 14 prisons have volunteered.

⁶⁰ Secrétariat d'État auprès du Premier ministre en charge des Personnes handicapées (February 2022) « *Quand les enjeux du handicap progressent, c'est toute la société qui avance* (2022) Retrieved on July 1, 2022 from https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fhandicap.gouv.fr%2Fsites%2Fhandicap%2Ffiles%2F2022-02%2FDP_CIH_2022_1.docx%23%3A~%3Atext%3DCr%25C3%25A9ation%2520d%25C3%25A8s%25202022%2520de%2520six%2C%2527un%2520mat%25C3%25A9riel%2520de%2520CAA.&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

- Automatically issue recognition of disabled worker status (RQTH) for young people over 16 already supported by the MDPH in 2022.
- Guarantee access for all State civil servants to a disability advisor whose function is recognized and professionalized.
- Creation of an “Employment & Disability” barometer on the government portal “Les entreprises s’engagent”. This will enable private and public employers to publish their commitment to disability on a voluntary basis each year. Make the Worldskills competitions inclusive by bringing together Worldskills and Abilympics, which organize, with the support of the State, the Skills Olympics in France and the representation of France in European and international competitions. France will host the Worldskills international competition in 2024 in Lyon; Abilympics has put together the French team for the International Abilympics in Moscow in August 2022. The aim is to have one fully inclusive competition, open to both professionals without and with disabilities (Ibidem).
- **Access to Care and Technical Aids**
 - Development of local technical aid support teams aimed at helping people with disabilities to choose and use their equipment.
 - Creation, as of 2022, of six reference centers for the loan of alternative and improved communication (CAA), with a budget of 100,000 euros.
 - Deployment of disability referents in emergency medical structures (SAMU, SMUR, 15 and 114 centers) and in health establishments.
 - Generalize the Handigynéco system tested in the Île-de-France region to facilitate access to gynecological monitoring and care for women with disabilities, starting in Brittany and Normandy in 2022 by setting up individual consultations and training professionals from ESMS (Etablissements et services médico-sociaux).
 - Significant progress on automating the accessibility of government communication with the launch of an LSF (French sign language) avatar from January 2022 on the *gouvernement.fr* website and the development



of a reading assistance tool on the most frequently consulted government pages.⁶¹



Identifying Issues

A disability is “any limitation of activity or restriction of participation in society suffered by a person in his or her environment due to a substantial, lasting, or permanent impairment of one or more physical, sensory, mental, cognitive or psychological functions, a multiple disability or a disabling health disorder”. Source: Law of 11 February 2005, art. 14.

About 12 million French people⁶² (out of 66 million) are affected by a disability. 1.5 million have a visual impairment and 850,000 have reduced mobility.

9.6 million disabled people: this is the number of disabled people in the broadest sense: people who are administratively recognized, people who declare that they have had a health problem for at least six months and encounter significant difficulties in their daily activity or have had an accident at work during the year.⁶³

The transition to adulthood for young people with special educational needs is particularly difficult because of the conditions governing their transition from secondary to higher education and to employment. The rate of unemployment young people with disabilities is close to 34%, compared to 20.8% for the whole of the 15/24-year-old.

⁶¹ Secrétariat d'État auprès du Premier ministre en charge des Personnes handicapées (February 2022) « *Quand les enjeux du handicap progressent, c'est toute la société qui avance* (2022) Retrieved on July 1, 2022 from https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fhandicap.gouv.fr%2Fsites%2Fhandicap%2Ffiles%2F2022-02%2FDP_CIH_2022_1.docx%23%3A~%3Atext%3DCr%25C3%25A9ation%2520d%25C3%25A8s%25202022%2520de%2520six%2Cd%2527un%2520mat%25C3%25A9riel%2520de%2520CAA.&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

⁶² OCIPR - Union d'institutions de prévoyance “*Les chiffres-clés du handicap en France*” (July, 12, 2018) Retrieved on July 1, 2022 from <https://ocipr.fr/actualites/les-chiffres-cles-du-handicap-en-france>

⁶³ INSEE et L'Enquête Handicap-Santé « *Les Tableaux de l'économie française* » (2011), Retrieved July 1, 2022 from https://ifrhandicap.ined.fr/hid/hid_ftp/presentation/CDSHID

While apprenticeship is an important lever towards employment, young people with disabilities represent only 1% of apprentices, despite the government's ambitions to develop it massively through a series of recent measures (setting up a disability referent in all *Centres de Formation d'Apprentis* (Apprentice training centers) - CFAs, increasing the level of apprenticeship contracts, making CFAs universally accessible, etc.).

And according to the Caisse nationale de solidarité pour l'autonomie (CNSA), three years after completing their studies, students with disabilities are further away from the labor market and, if they are employed, they hold lower positions and express greater dissatisfaction.

Stakeholders

The European Disability Forum ([FEPH](#))

EDF (European Disability Forum) was created in 1997 to defend the rights of people with disabilities in the European Union and to ensure that they have a say in decisions taken at European level. This European non-profit NGO is, to date, the largest representative association of the 80 million people with disabilities in Europe. It is run by people with disabilities or their families and brings together more than one hundred organizations representing people with disabilities from EU Member States, such as the French Council of People with Disabilities for European Issues (CFHE) for France. EDF works closely with the institutions of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. Its headquarters are in Brussels.

The French Council of People with Disabilities for European Issues ([CFHE](#))

The French Council of People with Disabilities for European Issues (CFHE) was founded in 1993. The EC encouraged the creation, in each of the Member States, of a National Council representing people with disabilities and their families. It is within this framework that the 8 so-called founding associations (APAJH, APF, CFPSAA, FNATH,

GIHP, UNAFAM, UNAPEI, UNISDA), associations of people with disabilities and families, covering the different forms of disability, decided to unite and give the CFHE statutes that guarantee its representativeness. Like a transmission belt, the CFHE, through the European Disability Forum (EDF), provides NGOs and European bodies (European Parliament, European Commission, Council of the European Union) with studies, proposals and examples of good practice. In return, the CFHE acts both with the French political and administrative authorities and with our associations, so that the Community legislation and good practices identified by our EU colleagues are effectively transposed into our national legislation and really applied.

Association for Disabled Adults and Young People ([APAJH](#))

APAJH is the first organisation in France to consider and support all types of disability: physical, intellectual, sensory, psychological, cognitive, multiple disabilities, disabling health disorders, etc. The Federation's services develop tools, propose them and make them available for use by all: continuous improvement approach, tools for the self-determination of the people supported, information system.

[APF](#) France handicap

APF France handicap is the largest French organisation, recognised as being of public utility, for the defence and representation of people with disabilities and their families. Founded in 1933, known and recognised until April 2018 as the Association des paralysés de France, APF France handicap today brings together nearly 100,000 people: members, elected officials, employees, volunteers and users, not to mention its tens of thousands of donors and supporters. APF France Handicap promotes humanist, militant and social values and a project of general interest, that of an inclusive and supportive society. The association works for equal rights, citizenship, social participation and the free choice of lifestyle for people with disabilities and their families. APF France handicap has been granted special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2021.

Groupement des Intellectuels Handicapés Physiques ([GIHP](#))

The GIHP works to provide people with disabilities with the means to integrate and participate in social life at all stages of life. The GIHP all provide a local response to the

needs and expectations of people with disabilities, such as life-support services, Housing and Services Units (ULS), nursing homes, adapted transport services, cultural services, support services for students, etc. The GIHP develops its action in the social, medico-social field, possibly in the health field and, if necessary, in the field of the commercial competitive sector through associated structures. GIHP associations are run by disabled people for disabled people (motor and sensory disabilities).

National union of families and friends of physically ill and/or disabled people

(UNAFAM)

To carry out its activities, Unafam relies on its 2,000 volunteers, its 112 departmental and regional delegations and nearly 50 professionals at headquarters and in the delegations. Unafam has set up consultative and prospective bodies on different themes that appear essential for our association. These technical or working groups contribute to defining the positions and actions to be implemented by Unafam. These active groups include:

- Commissions: "Training", "Associative life", "Communication"
- Committees: Scientific Committee for researching
- Technical groups: "School and mental disorders", "Employment", "Housing and support", "Criminal justice", "Health and care"

Good Practices

Good Practice 1:

Title: Good Design Playbook

Organization/Author: APF Conseil

Summary/Description: Today, there are still too few products that consider the different types of disability. Many everyday objects, sometimes indispensable, remain inaccessible to a whole section of the population with special needs. This is why APF **France** handicap, in partnership with Groupe SEB and with the support of CNSA, has drawn up a **practical guide to designing everyday objects accessible to all**. The Good Design Playbook is the result of the work of more than 60 participants: occupational therapists, CNSA professionals, but also carers and people with **disabilities**. This user expertise is valuable for rethinking **innovation** in an inclusive way. Indeed, the fact that

people directly affected by disability take part in the design of everyday objects makes it possible to identify specific but real needs linked to their use, in order to ultimately create objects that leave no one out.

Target group: APF Companies, public bodies and higher education institutes.

Impact: APF Conseil offers consultancy services, awareness-raising, coaching and training for the employment and reception of people with disabilities. The facilitators are themselves in a situation of disability and are or have been professionally active. They adapt to your needs and design tailor-made training and consulting services.

Methodology: This guide was developed and tested on the basis of a case study and a practice that is essential for everyone: cooking. The production of the Good Design Playbook was carried out in an inclusive approach, drawing the knowledge and experience of people with disabilities in each phase of the project.

Sustainability: The design of the book can be applied, adapted and tested in other sectors: the design of products, services, spaces, digital interfaces. The objective of the Good Design Playbook is to present analyses, recommendations and design methods that can be enriched and fed by others.

Direct Links:

- <https://apf-conseil.com/good-design-playbook/good-design-playbook.pdf>
- <https://apf-conseil.com/good-design-playbook/>

Good Practice 2:

Title: The “Grands Caractères” - the first bookshop in France exclusively dedicated to books in large print.

Organization/Author: Grands Caractères bookshop

Summary/Description: The Grands Caractères bookshop has opened its doors in the 5th arrondissement of Paris. Dedicated to the **visually impaired**, it is a **first in France**. Until now, **there hasn't been any place like this**. Visually impaired people were condemned to buying only by mail order or catalogue. They were deprived of the pleasure of strolling around and could not benefit from the advice of booksellers. At the head of the project were the publishers “Voir de près” and “À vue d'œil”, two publishers of large-print books for readers with vision problems (AMD, retinitis pigmentosa, glaucoma, visual fatigue), learning disabilities (DYS disorders for example), or cognitive difficulties

(following an A.V.C., etc.). The books selected are novels, stories, documents, often at the heart of current literary events. In no case are they selected with preconceived notions that they are intended for a “restricted” readership. They are simply books chosen for their quality.

Target group: LARGE SIZE BOOKS are intended for those who have :

- A sight problem (AMD, retinitis pigmentosa, glaucoma, etc.)
- A desire for reading comfort
- Learning difficulties (DYS disorders, etc.)
- Cognitive difficulties

Impact: Improved reading comfort for people with vision problems.

Methodology: A LARGE CHARACTER BOOK is a book whose layout respects well-defined criteria (cf. the selection criteria of the Librairie des Grands Caractères) which improve reading comfort. The typeface is sober and enlarged, the line spacing is large, the contrast strong, and the paper opaque. Large print books are therefore larger than the original ones, but they remain light and manageable thanks to their careful manufacture and the paper chosen. Some books that are already large initially become two-volume works in large print.

Sustainability: LA LIBRAIRIE DES GRANDS CARACTÈRES is committed to promoting books in large print, which are often unknown or misunderstood. These books, which are larger than the original ones but remain light and manageable thanks to their careful manufacture, offer optimum comfort to people who have difficulty reading.

Direct Link: <https://librairiegrands caracteres.fr/>

Picture:



Good Practice 3:

Title: Justice and Disability: launch of the educational kit on disability for legal professionals

Organization/Author: Association Droit Pluriel

Summary/Description: The Human Rights Defender decided to support the association *Droit Pluriel* in a mission bringing together all justice professionals to support each citizen in knowing and asserting his or her rights without disability being an obstacle. *Droit Pluriel* has initiated a process in which judges, lawyers, court clerks, court commissioners, court conciliators and professionals working in the field of access to the law have co-constructed the educational tools of the “Justice and Disability” kit. A manual, a practical guide and three short films used to support the “Disability” module, which will be included in the training program of all these professionals.

Target group: Justice and Legal professional and people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities.

Impact: Improvements to simplify not only the lives of people with disabilities, but also those of all those subject to the law: improved accessibility with better space fitted out (ramps, intelligent signage, floor markings, etc.) and adapted devices (magnetic loop, documents in French that are easy to read and understand, etc.).

Methodology: Droit Pluriel has started the creation of pedagogical tools necessary for the training on law for professionals and people with disabilities. There are three such tools:

- The Training Manual provides a common base of knowledge for all professionals. It consists of four parts: a historical approach, a description of disability situations, recommendations for making oneself accessible and finally a chapter devoted to existing legislative provisions.
- The practical booklet is intended to be a dynamic synthesis of the manual, a support that condenses the essential information on accessibility.
- The production of three short films that depict meetings between justice professionals and people with disabilities.

Sustainability: There is an imperative need for training in accessibility for legal professionals, in order to improve access to justice for people with disabilities. The schools and training centers of the various institutions representing legal professionals (École Nationale de la Magistrature, Conseil National des Barreaux, École Nationale des

Greffes, Chambre Nationale des Huissiers de Justice and Fédération des Associations de Conciliateurs de Justice) have decided to contribute to the construction of the educational tools for this training, which will be integrated into their daily teaching.

Direct Link: [Droit Pluriel - Association pour une justice accessible à tous!](#)



6. Greece

National Report

This current report is being developed under the framework of the Intellectual Output 3 “The Best Practices and Policy Book” which aims to be part of a dedicated policy drafting and policy-making framework with the pillar purpose of addressing the ongoing challenges of the EU on the issue of disability. In this context the partners from Greece, Xenios Polis and Culture Polis, examine and analyze the integration of people with disability in Greek society, through the legislation, the existing policies, the identification of social, mainly, issues and finally best practices that indicate the efforts of the Greek Municipalities to integrate the people with disabilities in the social framework. Furthermore, this report is accompanied by statistics that are mentioned to current percentages in the field of disability in Greece.

Statistics

With approximately 1.000.000 people with Disabilities living in Greece, covering almost the 10% of the general population (Amea plus, 2016), the most pillar difficulties are faced on the field of employment, the participation in social and cultural life, the education, the financial field and the field of health **Employment:** More specifically, statistically indications, data from EU-SILC, in 2018, prove the difference between the employment rate for people with severe disabilities (31,1%) and for those without disabilities (60.7%) and approximately -19.6 points below the EU27 average. Furthermore, employment rate by gender and age is compounded by disability. Indicatively, disabled women in Greece

are significantly less likely to be employed (26.7 %) than non-disabled women in country (50%) and compared to disabled men in country (36.1 %) ⁶⁴.

Social & cultural life: 70% of people with severe disabilities aged 16-64 did not have any hobby in the last 12 months. The corresponding rate for people without disabilities was 40%. Only 5,4% of the population with severe disabilities have visited an archeological site or museum - even once in the last 12 months, compared to 20,1% of people without any activity restrictions ⁶⁵.

Health: Meanwhile, about 7% of women and 6% of men with disabilities report unmet needs for medical services in the EU, but the levels are much higher in Greece (25 % of women and 22 % of men) ⁶⁶.

Education: Students with disabilities and/or with special educational needs, who are attending general and special primary and secondary education amount to 101,683 students (7% of the country's student population). The student population of SETSU/ΣΜΕΑΕ (Special Education and Training School Units) consists mainly of students with intellectual disabilities at a rate of 35%, students with autism (31.4%) and students with multiple disabilities (12.1%). Additionally, the majority of students attending special secondary education choose special vocational education, and almost 50% of them attend Special Vocational Education and Training Workshops (ΕΕΕΕΚ). ⁶⁷

Important: For further statistics on disability rates in Greece, please visit [Intellectual Output 1/Summative Report/Greece, pages 31-38](#)

Legislation

⁶⁴ *European Semester 2020-2021 country fiche on disability equality* (2021) <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffdaf641-a70f-11eb-9585-01aa75ed71a1>

⁶⁵ *Single-digit participation rates of PWDs in social and cultural life.* (2021). <https://www.ertnews.gr/eidiseis/ellada/kinonia/monopsifia-ta-pososta-symmetochis-ton-amea-stin-koinoniki-kai-politistiki-zoi/>

⁶⁶ *EDF Strategic Framework 2017 – 2021.* (2017). <https://www.edf-feph.org/edf-strategic-framework-2017-2021/>

⁶⁷ *Research: Lack of support for students with disabilities in secondary school and their professional education is a major problem.* (2021). <https://www.esamea.gr/pressoffice/press-releases/5294-ereyna-megales-pliges-i-elleipsi-ypostirixis-ton-mathiton-me-anapiria-sti-ba-bathmia-kai-i-epaggelmatiki-toys-ekpaideysis>

The **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (CRPD), as well as the Optional Protocol accompanying it, were voted by the Plenary Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006 and entered into force on 3 May 2008. And yet, years later, in Greece it seems to be partially implemented, as it is theoretically established, but not sufficiently applied.

L.3488/2006 (Official Journal of the Hellenic Republic 191/A, published: 11/09/2006) which regards the *“Equal treatment irrespective of gender regarding accessibility in the field of employment, vocational training & evolution, terms & conditions of work and other relevant clauses”*.

Law 4440/2016 and specifically article 25, facilitates the recruitment of people with disabilities in job positions in both the public and the wider public sector. The program is aimed at private business, cooperatives, social bodies and solidarity economy, and generally at private sector employers who regularly engage in economic activity, as well as in local and second-level Local Government enterprises.

Law 3528/2007 (Official Journal of the Hellenic Republic 26/A, published: 09/02/2007), aims at the establishment of equitable rules that concern the hiring process and the occupational conditions of the public administration employees according to the principals of equality, meritocracy and social solidarity, and the need of ensuring the maximum of their work performance. Moreover:

- Article 7, it is mentioned that the employees are being hired based on whether their health enables them to perform the implementation of the duties of the corresponding place. The lack of physical abilities does not prevent the hiring process, provided that the employee, having the suitable and justified technical support, can fulfill the duties of their place.
- Article 153 of the current law, the employee loses their job after the decision of the official council, if a physical or intellectual disability occurs, according to articles 100, 165 and 167 of the Code. The employee does not lose their job if their disability allows them to exercise other kind of duties.

The ratification of all of the above was realized through the National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in June 2021, which addresses to the codification of the legislation concerning the rights of persons with disabilities. The entire [legislation](#) is addressed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Equality and Non-Discrimination, Institutions, Deinstitutionalization, Supported Living,

Independent Living, Children with Disabilities, Mental Health, Public Health, Rehabilitation, Education, Assessment and Certification of Disability, Work and Employment, Pensions and benefits, Social welfare – Structures, Access to Justice, Digital accessibility, Accessibility to transport, Accessible tourism, Accessibility to Goods – Services, Communication, Update, Information, Participation in cultural life and Sport, Participation in political life, National Accessibility Authority, Electronic Disability Card, Army and Security Forces.

Policy and Practice (existing state of policy)

Greek Ministry of Health/ Department for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities: Among its responsibilities, the department for the protection of persons with disabilities, in Greece, are the research of the issues problems raised in the field of disability, the study and the processing of the innovative methods of social care of people with disabilities and preparation of relevant programs. Further, it is responsible for the cooperation, approval and monitoring of the implementation of projects with the European Union (EU) and the supervision and monitoring of the projects in people with disabilities ([Directorate for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities](#), n.d.).

Greek Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs / Department of Disability Policies of Welfare: it has drawn up and supervises the implementation of 9 Financial Support programs for Persons with Disabilities (PWD). These programs cover all categories of disability, while are implemented in the context of the supplementary and complementary character of Welfare, in relation to the benefits of the insurance funds and depending on the type and degree of disability, the insurance status etc. (Persons with Disabilities, [Allowances](#), n.d.).

The National Action Plan for the rights of people with disabilities is addressed to pillar principles that improve the everyday life of people with disabilities, based on the approach to disability which is established in application of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In this context, the accessibility in the physical and digital environment is ensured and also every aspect of life; transport, public administration. Furthermore, the cooperation of the creative forces of all the involved

bodies facilitates the utilization and absorption of funding for the people with disabilities and strengthens the field of tourism with institutional interventions in the framework of accessible tourism.

Stakeholders

NCDP - NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE OF GREECE constitutes an organization representing the disability and chronic diseases' patient's movement in Greece. It was found in 1989 by organizations of people with disabilities, chronic diseases and their families, in order to cope with issues of common interest for all different categories of disability and chronic diseases. NCDP represents independently and strongly disabled people and people with chronic diseases to the Greek State and society. Currently NCDP represents people with all kinds of disability and 11 chronic diseases.

The GREEK FEDERATION OF THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED (Greek: E.O.K.A) constitutes a social-union organization, a member of NCDP, which represents the physically handicapped at a national level. Its aim is the safeguarding and promotion of rights, aiming at an equal participation in the social, economic and cultural life of Greece.

Social Projects/Greece	
Project Name	Description
OHAS - <i>Opening Heritage and Archeological Sites for People with Special Needs (2018-2021)</i>	Erasmus+ project OHAS - Opening Heritage and Archeological Sites for People with Special Needs (2018-2021). OHAS aimed to analyze best practices used in most accessible cultural and heritage sites, mix them with new ideas and transfer them into practical guidelines and curriculum that could be implemented in most places. Moreover, an important part of the project was an adult education training offered to aim to implement the

	<p>guidelines and practical solutions for inclusive education for disabled adults.</p> <p>Even though both of the projects deal with topics on disability and accessibility, ACCESS4ALL extends, improves and adds the OHAS project. ACCESS4ALL, apart from raising awareness on the needs and fundamental rights of persons with disabilities at local/regional level, is also concentrated on empowering interested stakeholders through open capacity building and awareness actions on how to implement disability concern/focus policies in their area and facilitate the inclusion and quality of disabled members of the community. The involved participants gain the proper, necessary and update knowledge and skills on a variety of issues concerning disability and real inclusive contexts in regard to the participation of disabled people in personal, labor and social life. Moreover, the fact that ACCESS4ALL has established a validation procedure of skills and knowledge for the individuals/trainees engaged in the ACCESS4ALL capacity-building actions undoubtedly gives added value.</p>
<p>BRIDGES – <i>Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue of Disability, Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders (2019-2021)</i></p>	<p>Erasmus+ project BRIDGES aims to strengthen and reinforce via training and relative tools key factors involved directly or indirectly with the disabled people integration and the positive reflections on</p>

	<p>the issue of disability. Furthermore, the project stands creating content resources towards the proper training of specific persons, who will act as mentors, ‘intermediators’ & ‘inter-coachers’ for people with disabilities and their integration, in order to cultivate to them special knowledge and skills. Further, it offers knowledge of labor services provisions, expertise on the supported models of employment, etc., in parallel with labor mapping and contextualization skills for people with disabilities. Finally, to create and deliver innovative products and training tools- as tailored needs learning resources – based on differentiation methodologies and adult education approaches.</p>
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Good Practices

Good Practice 1:

Title: Infrastructure Developments For The Benefit Of People With Disabilities In The Island Of Syros, Greece – Making Syros An Accessible Tourism Destination

Organization/Author: Eleftheria Karamitrou | CulturePolis

Summary/Description: In recent years, the Municipality of Syros – Ermoupolis has made significant progress in terms of improving and developing infrastructure for the service and hospitality of people with disabilities. Under this context, the municipality recently installed an elevator for facilitating access to the medieval settlement of Ano Syros mainly for people with disabilities and secondarily for elderly age groups. In addition to the instalment of the elevator, the municipality has also recently installed special SEATRAC mobility ramps on the beaches of Galissas and Agathopes to help people

with physical disabilities move in and out of the water. The two beaches offer extended wooden walkways that connect the parking area with the beach and specially designed wooden dressing rooms and umbrellas for the disabled. The beaches of Vari and Voulgari also include special equipment to offer access to people with disabilities. Undoubtedly, all these infrastructure improvements are making Syros an accessible tourism destination for people with disabilities. “This makes Syros one of the few destinations in Greece with a total of four accessible beaches,” the municipality said in an announcement. Last, but not least, it is worth being mentioned that Syros in 2021 was awarded the platinum Tourism Awards as a friendly destination for people with disabilities.

Target Group: People with disabilities - The main aim of the aforementioned good practices is the improvement and development of Syros infrastructure for the service and hospitality of people with disabilities, whether they are residents or/and tourists.

Impact on Beneficiaries: Minimizing barriers in infrastructure and improving access for people with disabilities, enable them to participate fully in social and economic life. The impact of such infrastructure improvements on direct beneficiaries is many and worth being mentioned. On a broad scale, people who experience disabilities on the island of Syros can have equal access to local archaeological sites, enjoy its seas and beaches – an inclusive environment is created, which allows them to enjoy their civil, cultural, and social rights. More narrowly, direct beneficiaries can EASILY:

- explore the area of Ano Syros and witness the medieval settlement (installation of elevator);
- move in and out of the water (installation of SEATRAC mobility ramps);
- change clothes (specially designed wooden dressing rooms);
- enjoy independent access to sea.

Methods of Implementation: Many of the infrastructure improvements on the island of Syros, namely on the beaches of Galissas, Agathopes, Vari and Voulgari were taken place with funds from the “Competitiveness Entrepreneurship and Innovation 2014-2020” operational program of the Development & Investment Ministry. The good practice of the island of Syros shows us that the contribution of programs and the funding they offer are invaluable for policymakers to implement and achieve infrastructure improvements of such scale and social impact.

Sustainability: The island of Syros and the significant progress has made towards people with disabilities can undoubtedly be an inspiring example in the field of policymaking. It

is evident that such massive infrastructure improvements would not have been materialized in practice without the financial support of programs like the “Competitiveness Entrepreneurship and Innovation 2014-2020”. Policymakers in other cities worldwide can take Syros' good practices as an example and search for programs either national or European that could support such infrastructures for the benefit of people with disabilities. Attempting to imitate those good practices would be something counterproductive; instead, attempting to use them as sources for inspiration and evaluation would be something that would give added value to the policy directions of interested policymakers.

Direct Links & Further Reading related to it

- <https://www.syros-ermoupolis.gr/anakoinoseis/leitoyrgia-anavatoriou-stin-ano-syro/>
- <https://news.gtp.gr/2020/08/04/syros-looking-promote-accessible-tourism-side/>
- <https://meallamatia.gr/i-syros-vravefthike-os-prosvasimos-proorismos/>

Pictures:



Good Practice 2:

Title: Online Guide With Athens' Most Accessible Routes for People With Disabilities

Organization/Author: Eleftheria Karamitrou | CulturePolis

Summary/Description: The Municipality of Athens has made and continues to make significant progress on issues surrounding disability and accessibility. Among its latest related initiatives was the launch, **as a pilot project**, of an online guide, which indicates

Athens' most accessible routes for with either visual or mobility disabilities. The guide includes eight routes of the most accessible tourist itineraries in Athens (the historic center, the Acropolis, Omonia square and the National Gardens), **both in Greek and English**, four for people with limited mobility and four for people with visual impairments. The routes can be found on an interactive map available at the website [This is Athens](#) – the city's official tourism guide – consisting of information on possible obstacles and ways to avoid them. An audio guide via widget is also provided. The website gives also to its visitors detailed information on Athens' transport system and its accessibility options.

Target Group: People with disabilities - The main aim of the good practice is to facilitate people who face mobility difficulties and the visually impaired to discover Athens and its neighborhoods through accessible routes of cultural and tourism interest.

Impact on Beneficiaries: The online guide addresses mainly residents, domestic and foreign travelers of the city of Athens. The benefits arising from that good practice are plenty and worth being mentioned. People with either visual or mobility disabilities, as the most direct beneficiaries, can:

- explore the Athenian cultural heritage;
- avoid possible obstacles and restrictions in the built environment;
- have quick access on Athens' transport system and its accessibility options;
- make use of an audio guide (there is the option and options are important!);
- have quick access to a detailed itinerary and map.

Methods of Implementation: It seems that **synergies** constitute the key method of successfully implementing the present good practice. In this pilot scheme, the Municipality of Athens, the tourism guide "This Is Athens" and the social enterprise "Me Alla Matia" worked together and the result of that collaboration was the delivery of such a useful, easily accessible guide with the most accessible tourist itineraries, for people with visual and mobility impairments. The benefits arising from the creation of synergies among different sectors and expertise are unquestionable. In the examined good practice, a policymaking public body (the Municipality of Athens), a tourism guide consisting of key stakeholders in the Athens tourism and travel industry (This Is Athens) and a social enterprise founded and organized by people with disabilities ("Me Alla Matia") – **which can definitely act as a focus group**, were the main pillars for creating such an impactful synergy with great social footprint.

Sustainability: Undoubtedly, the capital of a country is the most visited place in contrast to other parts of it. Have we ever wondered how feasible it is for people with disabilities to explore a country's capital without facing difficulties? Most of the time it becomes very challenging, especially when the weather conditions are not favorable. The initiative launched by the Municipality of Athens seems to greatly contribute to improving the accessibility to Athens' most central places for people with either visual or mobility disabilities, while "maintaining the necessary respect for the cultural heritage and the structural elements needed to be preserved". The online guide created, in the framework of a pilot project, can act as an example of good practice for other capitals in Europe and beyond, **which want to have a human-centered, participatory approach in their policy planning process.** It would be considered beneficial primarily in social and secondary in tourism and economic terms for such a good practice to be materialized in practice in other countries as well.

Direct Links & Further Reading:

- GTP, (2021). *Most Accessible Routes in Athens for People With Disabilities Now Online*. Available at: <https://news.gtp.gr/2021/12/03/most-accessible-routes-in-athens-for-people-with-disabilities-now-online/> [Accessed 16.6.2022].
- This Is Athens, (n.d.). *Accessible Athens*. Available at: <https://accessibleroutes.thisisathens.org/en/> [Accessed 16.6.2022].

Pictures:

Historic Heart to Urban Soul of Athens

From ancient citadel to buzzy modern metropolis - experience the evolution of Athens on this landmark-packed exploration.

Syntagma Square, Ermou Street, Church of Panagia Kapnikarea, Monastiraki Square, Thessio, Gazi

See the routes for:

MOTOR IMPAIRMENT

START THE ROUTE

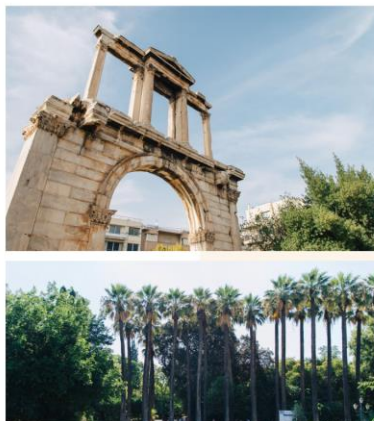
VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

START THE ROUTE



General Accessibility

- The itinerary has been designed to be predominantly downward. It is suggested that you do not attempt it from the opposite direction, since it is an ascent. The itinerary traverses around 3,5 km, without including the potential stroll in the National Garden.
- The first part of the itinerary is done via medium sized pavements with ramps. At some point there are no ramps, so we will navigate streets of light traffic. For the second part of the itinerary, we will be in a park with asphalt. If we choose to take a walk in the National Garden, we will meet soil, grass and fine gravel.
- Even though there are shorter ways to reach some points of interest, often there are no functional ramps. The suggested itinerary is step free.
- The lighting at night is sufficient to navigate.
- At each point of interest, the accessibility is indicated according to the information available on their website (without our verification).
- The itinerary starts from "Evangelismos" [metro](#) station (line 3, "Airport – Nikaa"). It ends at "Syntagma" [metro](#) station (also line 3, and line 2, "Anthoupoli- Elliniko"). All of the above stations provide adapted WCs, elevators and full access for a wheelchair. Boarding for wheelchairs is via the first and the last carriages, where there is no gap.



Good Practice 3:

Title: Komotini Receives Special Honor for Accessibility Initiatives

Organization/Author: Xenios Polis

Summary/Description: The city of Komotini, which is located in northern Greece, participated at the European 2021 Access City Award, in which the municipality received a special mention, was awarded entitled "Accessibility as an opportunity for the whole city", for its efforts to ensure equal access to city life for people with disabilities. The European Union's Access City Award is given annually to cities that have improved citizens' accessibility (physical and mental access) to their daily lives and to their expansion and quality of life, ensuring that everyone, without exception, has access to the urban environment.

Target Group: People with disabilities - The main aim of the good practice is to highlight effective methods for facilitating the people with disabilities in urban areas such as public spaces, public services and services transport, infrastructure, information, and communication.

Impact on Beneficiaries:

- Reconstruction of degraded areas and traffic roads, sidewalks, ramps for people with mobility problems, construction of a bicycle path with colored asphalt, construction of appropriate signage and street lighting in pedestrian crossings, sound system for the passage of the blind, reconstruction of the paved road, widening of sidewalks, planting, installation of protective railings.

- Renovation and improvement of public spaces with squares, playgrounds, installation of blind guides, lighting expansion. The playgrounds dispose spaces that are addressed also for children with disabilities.
- Low-floor city buses and environmentally friendly (according to EURO 3 standard), with the basic electrical installation of the Integrated Information System IBIS installed, with wheelchair ramp for the disabled with electric control, with surveillance cameras and passenger equipment.
- Development of social support infrastructures, which cover the needs of the needy and homeless people of the Municipality of Komotini.
- Construction of a Municipal Intercultural Kindergarten, accessible for People with Disability, in order to support and integrate mothers into the labor market and to help reduce the dividing lines between the various social groups at an early age.
- The infrastructure of preschool and school education has been improved, as well as 80% of the schools are accessible for the children with disability; they mainly dispose of special equipment according to their needs such as equipment for children with mobility problems, equipment for independent living laboratories, equipment of gymnastics, sports and psychomotor education.
- Installation of a non-permanent auxiliary device (placed every summer on Ioulia beach) for the people with a disability in order to access the sea (along with a shower, light alarm and locker rooms) as well as Seatrac with shower, light alarm and locker rooms. Also, on all the beaches of the Municipality of Komotini, wheelchairs have been installed.
- The Indoor Gym of Komotini was designed to be accessible to spectators and athletes with disability.
- Further, many important initiatives have also been adopted in the private sector. Coffee companies, restaurants and hotels have chosen to make their business accessible by using proper design and developing the necessary infrastructure. The Initiative for Accessibility Orientation has arisen the social profile and business awareness. This served as an incentive for the city of Komotini, as more and more companies want to improve the quality of their services.

Methods of Implementation: For the city of Komotini, the initiative started in the early 1990s and the starting point was the establishment of the Association of People with Disabilities of N. Rodopi "Perpato" in 2002, which took on the adoption of ramps, and

accessible infrastructure and further many entertainment opportunities for people who were with different accessibility needs. From 2000 to 2021, actions were implemented and completed by the Municipality and the Region of Eastern Macedonia - Thrace, which contributed substantially to the improvement of the quality of life of citizens with respect for the accessibility of Persons with Disabilities.

Sustainability: The effective practice of Komotini a city with 51,000 inhabitants, slowly but surely ensures growth in leisure, entertainment, transportation, sports, tourism and in education. This is based on the close cooperation between the public and private sector with institutions/associations related to disability. Companies and associations are well aware of the needs of people with disabilities and can help improve existing legal practices.

Direct Links & Further Reading:

In English

- <https://news.gtp.gr/2020/12/03/komotini-receives-special-honor-for-accessibility-initiatives/>
- <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?&catId=88&eventsId=1604>

In Greek

- <https://www.komotini.gr/>
- <https://e-thessalia.gr/i-komotini-i-pio-prosvasimi-poli-tis-elladas-eyropaiki-diakrisi-sta-vraveia-prosvasimon-poleon-2021/>
- <https://ecozen.gr/2020/12/access-city-award-komotini-eyropaiko-paradeigma-pros-mimisi/>

Picture:



7. Italy

Statistics

In Italy, there are 3 million 150 thousand people with disabilities (5.2% of the population).⁶⁸ Disability phenomena mostly affect the elderly: 1.5 million over 75 (22% of the population in that age group) and 1 million of them are women.

Geographically speaking, disability is most prevalent on the islands and in central Italy: The Regions in which the phenomenon is most prevalent are Umbria and Sardinia (6.9% and 7.9% of the population, respectively). Lombardy and Trentino Alto Adige, on the other hand, are the Regions with the lowest prevalence: 4.1% and 3.8% respectively.

It was also found that disabled people live, for the most part, alone (29%) or with their spouses (27.4%), 16.2% with spouse and children, 7.4% with children and no spouse, about 9% with one or both parents, the remaining 11% live in other types of households.

Disability obviously entails different levels of reduction in personal autonomy from providing self-care (washing, dressing, eating alone, etc.) to performing daily household activities (preparing meals, shopping, using the telephone, taking medicine, etc.). Added to this, the ability to move around freely is very limited among people with disabilities. Mobility data, for 2019, show that only 14.4 percent of people with disabilities travel by urban public transportation, these differences vary greatly with age. In the case of train use, the differences are even more pronounced.

The need for travel is then often related to the employment of people with disabilities.

In this regard, it is emphasised that disability also greatly affects the possibility of finding a **job**: in 2019, only 32.2 percent of the population with limitations between 15 and 64 years old were employed compared to 59.8 percent of people without limitations. 20,7% are looking for a job while 43,5% are inactive (among people without limitations the percentage is 27,5%).

⁶⁸ 2019 Data – Indagine Conoscitiva delle Persone con Disabilità (Survey on people with disabilities) – Hearing of ISTAT President Giancarlo Bilangiardo - at the Technical Scientific Committee of the National Observatory on the Condition of Persons with Disabilities - Rome March 24, 2021

Another factor favoring/limiting employability is the educational qualification in correlation with disability. Among people with disabilities, 63.4% of those with at least a university degree are employed, 42.7% of high school graduates and only 19.5% of those with at most a secondary school diploma.⁶⁹

On the **school attendance** of students with disabilities, ISTAT found in the 2019/2020 scholastic year an increase in attendance of students with disabilities by more than 13 thousand students more than the previous year: pupils with disabilities in 2019 were nearly 300 thousand. However, opportunities for school participation of pupils with disabilities have been limited due to the pandemic, which has necessitated distance learning. It was estimated that between April and June 2020, over 23% of pupils with disabilities did not participate in lessons.

In the 2020-2021 school year, pupils with disabilities increased (+4,000, 3.6% of those enrolled). Participation in teaching has improved: the number of those excluded from distance learning (DAD) has fallen to 2.3%, compared to 23% in the previous year. In the periods when it was used, many participated in presence with other classmates (38%).

In structural terms, the situation is as follows:

+27%	32%	1%
Classroom computer stations for pupils with disabilities in the last three years. IT workstations still insufficient in 2 out of 3 schools.	Accessible schools for pupils with mobility disabilities.	Schools provided with accessibility aids for pupils with blindness or low vision. Visual impairment present in 16% of schools.

The pupils with disabilities are taken care of by about 176,000 support teachers; however, it should be pointed out that 37% lack specific training and 20% are assigned late. There is a shortage of autonomy and communication assistants.

⁶⁹ "Conoscere il mondo della disabilità (Getting to know the world of disability)", 2019, ISTAT

The families of people with disabilities enjoy a lower level of **economic well-being** on average: according to the latest available estimates, their average annual equivalised income (including state transfers) is €17,476, 7.8% lower than the national average. 28.7% of households with at least one disabled person are materially deprived.

Another specific ISTAT found that **physical or sexual violence** experienced by women reaches 31.5 per cent over a lifetime, but for women with health problems or disabilities the situation is more critical: it reaches 36 per cent among those who report poor health, 36.6 per cent among those with severe limitations.

Legislation

The most important law is the 'Framework law for assistance, social integration and the rights of disabled persons 5 February 1992 no. 104', implementing the principles established by the UN with the proclamation of the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981. Law 104/1992 is divided into 42 articles, in which it gives a complete view of the rights of disabled people by reaffirming that the State: - guarantees respect for human dignity, freedom and autonomy of a disabled person, - prevents disabling conditions and guarantees civil, political and property rights to every individual, - ensures services and benefits to prevent, treat and rehabilitate disabled people, - provides interventions to overcome marginalisation and social exclusion of a disabled person⁷⁰.

Very important is the **Law 12 March 1999 no. 68**, entitled 'Rules for the right of disabled people to work', the aim of which is to promote the inclusion and integration of disabled people in the world of work through support services and targeted placement.⁷¹ The assessment of disability conditions is among the measures to facilitate targeted placement and the search for the most suitable job for the individual disabled person. According to Act No. 68, employers are required to employ disabled workers to the following extent:

⁷⁰ <https://www.diritto.it/articoli/lavoro/05%20disabili.pdf>

⁷¹ Law No. 68 of March 12, 1999 Norms for the right of the disabled to work (Official Gazette No. 68, 3/23/1999-Ordinary Suppl. No. 57)

- seven per cent of the workers employed, if they employ more than 50 employees
- two workers, if they employ between 36 and 50 employees
- one worker, if they employ between 15 and 35 employees

Article 10, Legislative Decree No. 151 of September 14, 2015, amends Article 13 of Law No. 68 by passing all disability management to INPS⁷², including the incentive for hiring workers with disabilities. The request for use must be sent to the institute through special telematic procedures.

The bodies in charge of disability assessment differ in relation to the type of disability. In fact, Article 1 (paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of Law No. 68 of 1999) distinguishes into three major groups the categories of disabled workers, to be subjected to this assessment:

- civil invalids, civil blind and civil deaf
- labor invalids (in this case, disability assessment is carried out by INAIL - National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work)⁷³
- invalids of war and for reasons of service.

The assessments carried out by Asl medical commissions are civil invalidity, handicap and disability:

civil disability, which refers to the assessment that gives rise to a percentage according to the type and severity of the pathology;

handicap, which refers to the difficulty of social integration due to the pathology or impairment from which the person concerned is affected (provided for in the legal system by the aforementioned Law 104/1992);

disability, which examines the capacity for work integration according to the pathology found (Law 68/1999).⁷⁴

The diversity of evaluation criteria between civil disability and handicap situation is fundamental considering that a percentage of disability less than 100%, could correspond

⁷² INPS: National Social Security Institute

⁷³ Circular 66, July 10, 2001

⁷⁴ Differenza tra invalidità civile, handicap e disabilità (Difference between civil invalidity, handicap and disability), by Gabriela Maucci and Sandra Torregiani, SuperAbile, 1 June 2020.

in terms of handicap, the recognition of the situation of severe handicap (according to art. 3, paragraph 3 of Law 104/92).

Each of these items corresponds to a precise definition and the assessment is carried out by different medical commissions.

- Civil invalid status is only recognised from a percentage reduction in working capacity of more than 33%. With this percentage of disability you are not entitled to any benefits.
- Those recognised as having a disability percentage of more than 45% have the possibility of benefiting from the Targeted Employment, i.e., inclusion in the special lists of the Job Centres for subsidised employment.
- Workers with more than 51% disability can take leave for treatment related to the recognised disability, for a period not exceeding 30 days per year with costs borne by the company.
- An employee with a disability of more than 60 percent has the opportunity to be included in the "reserve quota" of the company in which he or she is already employed, regardless of the time of the contract.
- Those with a disability of more than 66% are entitled to full exemption from co-payment on specialist and instrumental diagnostic services, and in addition to a facility for payment of prescription drugs.
- Those with civil disabilities above 74% are entitled to a care allowance, granted from age 18 to 65.
- For those with a disability of more than 75%, retirement benefits are provided:
 - For those with a disability of 80% and above, early access to the old-age pension is provided; (as of 2016 55 years and 7 months for women and 60 years and 7 months for men).
 - The 100% disabled can take advantage of - exemption from co-payment for specialist medical, diagnostic and medication services and - disability pension.

In addition, Law No. 18 of February 11, 1980 introduced for those who have difficulty in performing the daily acts of life or to those who cannot walk without the help of another person and regardless of income received, an accompanying allowance.⁷⁵

Policy and Practice

The concept of disability has evolved over time and from a "social burden" it has become a resource of civilization and learning for all.⁷⁶

The scientific literature has shown, how the elements of fragility that can limit the development and social progress of individuals are multiple and depend on the society and the context in which they are placed: the full inclusion of people with disabilities is in any case a challenge that passes through a path of collective participation that includes not only the disabled person but the family, work, the services, local communities and society in general.⁷⁷

During the last few years important results have been achieved in Italy for the benefit of the integration of people with disabilities, in several respects⁷⁸:

Mobility

The new National Data Bank CUDE (Unified European Disability Card) has initiated the Disability Card, which will allow people with disabilities to more easily access many services, not to mention the impetus given to the possible free parking between blue lines at the national level, within the framework of the so-called "Infrastructure Decree".⁷⁹

Disability Legislation

⁷⁵ Law Feb. 11, 1980, No. 18 "Accompaniment allowance to totally disabled civil invalids"-Published in G. U. Feb. 14, 1980, No. 44)

⁷⁶ Inclusion e disabilità: le sfide più urgenti per l'integrazione scolastica - Andrea Canevaro, Carlo Scataglini e Dario Ianes – on the occasion of the International and European Day of Persons with Disabilities.

⁷⁷ Hearing of the President of the National Institute of Statistics Gian Carlo Blangiardo at the Technical Scientific Committee of the National Observatory on the Condition of Persons with Disabilities Rome, March 24, 2021

⁷⁸ Disabilità Politiche per l'inclusione, le sfide per il 2022 – 4 January 2022- Vincenzo Falabella national president of FISH (Italian Federation for Overcoming Handicaps).

⁷⁹ Decree Law June 16, 2022 No. 68

The turning point of the year was the provision of a Delegated Law to the Government on Disability⁸⁰ to implement the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,⁸¹ consistent with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union⁸² and the recent Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030⁸³. The Delegated Law was passed in the last days of 2021 as Law 227/21, the main objective of which is "to amend disability legislation and promote deinstitutionalization (i.e., transfer from public or private institutions to family or community homes) and autonomy for people with disabilities."⁸⁴

Tax Benefits

In the area of tax benefits, a number of measures⁸⁵ were recently planned to be introduced in the Universal Single Allowance Law, aimed at preventing possible inequalities towards families with disabilities. Just at the end of the year, then, the Budget Law for 2022 (Law 234/21) was passed, which approved several allocations with the establishment of new specific Funds, which also look at sectors such as school services (transportation and assistance to autonomy and communication) or tourism.⁸⁶

Labour Inclusion

With regard to labour inclusion, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies released in 2021 the Report to Parliament on the state of implementation of Law 68/99 'Rules for the right to work of the disabled' for the three-year period 2016-2018.

Since, during the emergency period linked to the Covid-19 epidemic, companies were no longer obliged to hire the so-called 'protected categories', this analysis represents the most up-to-date scenario of the targeted employment system.

⁸⁰ Law Draft 2475 "Delegation of power to the government in the field of disability."

⁸¹ The Convention, approved by the United Nations General Assembly on December 13, 2006, ratified by Italy through Law No. 18 of March 3, 2009

⁸² Entered into force with the Treaty of Lisbon on December 1, 2009. It is legally binding in all EU member states.

⁸³ Adopted by the European Commission on March 3, 2021.

⁸⁴ Law December 22, 2022 No. 227

⁸⁵ DECREE-LAW No. 73 of June 21, 2022 called "Urgent measures on tax simplification and labor clearance, State Treasury and further financial and social provisions". (OJ General Series No. 143, June 21, 2022)

⁸⁶ Law No. 234 of December 30, 2021 - Budget Law

The number of people enrolled in the placement system has risen throughout the country from around 700,000 in 2006 to over 900,000 in 2018, with a constant increase over the last three years. The distribution over the territory shows that those registered are more concentrated - around 60% of the total - in the South than in other territorial areas. The trend in job starts shows a clear positive trend between 2014 and 2018, in line with general labour market trends. This is, probably, also thanks to the regulatory reform processes introduced by Legislative Decree 151/2015 “Provisions for rationalisation and simplification of procedures and fulfilments for citizens and businesses and other provisions on employment relations and equal opportunities”.

With respect to the territorial distribution, the largest amount of starts is concentrated in the Northern areas, with the highest intensity of production, with percentages between 50 and 60 per cent of the total number of people started work. In the Centre, there are percentages that, up to and including 2015, barely exceed 20% and have increased in the last three years. In Southern Italy, an improvement is noted in the years 2014 and 2015, but the percentage of the total returns to below 20% in the following years.

Identifying Issues

As we have seen, in Italy the general situation of disability and consequently of accessibility and inclusion is apparently well covered by national and regional laws and measures, including constitutional protection. In real life, however, people with disabilities often encounter difficulties in inclusion due to stereotypes and prejudices, the presence of architectural barriers or the lack of facilities capable of putting people with disabilities in the same conditions as everyone else and making them autonomous.

This also has negative effects on families who are unable to support the financial needs of disabled people or do not have sufficient psychological support from regional or local services. The situation is aggravated for people with major disabilities or severe intellectual or physical handicaps.

A survey by ISTAT⁸⁷ (National Institute of Statistics) has shown that the main problem when discussing disability concerns the definition of 'disability' itself.

It is now well established that disability is the result of an interaction between the individual's level of physical or sensory or cognitive or mental limitation and the living context. Disability is therefore largely a consequence of social factors: if the context is not accessible or inclusive, disability increases. Italy adopted this definition of disability proposed by the World Health Organisation's ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) classification approved in 2001, where disability is no longer conceived as a reduction in functional capacities (determined by a medical diagnosis), but rather as 'the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and restrictions to participation'.

Disability is therefore seen not as an individual physical or mental impairment, but in its social dimension as society's inability to guarantee all individuals equal opportunities for inclusion. This same approach is adopted by the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,⁸⁸ which defines persons with disabilities as those who "...have enduring physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with barriers of various kinds may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others".

The person with a disability precisely because of this inability to interact properly and fully with society suffers from severe limitations. These limitations have been defined by Amartya Sen⁸⁹ as severe limitations in the performance of one or more basic functions, the so called 'functionings'⁹⁰. While the concept of disability, however, appears clear from a doctrinaire point of view, under the practical and concretely operational aspect there are still multiple difficulties both in identifying the areas in which limitations in

⁸⁷ Conoscere il mondo della disabilità – Persone, relazioni e Istituzioni . Istat 2019

⁸⁸ The Convention, approved by the United Nations General Assembly on December 13, 2006, ratified by Italy through Law No. 18 of March 3, 2009

⁸⁹ Indian philosopher and academic economist, professor at Harvard University and 1998 Nobel laureate in economics Amartya Kuman Sen, developed a critical examination of 'welfare economics by developing a radically new approach to the theory of equality and freedom. In particular, Sen proposed the two new notions of capabilities and functioning as more appropriate measures of freedom and quality of life for individuals.

⁹⁰ Quality of What? AMARTYA SEN THE TANNER LECTURE ON HUMAN VALUES Delivered at Stanford University May 22, 1979

functionings manifest themselves and in developing a shared instrument capable of describing the negative interaction between health and social context from which disability arises.

Limitations in education

Disabled persons have the right to choose their own educational and professional path from the early age to University and to the labor market. In order to create conditions of equality toward the other students, they are entitled to receive individual support or ad-personam assistance thanks to the presence of support teachers or to benefit of technological or specific supports. Unfortunately, not always the child receives the number of hours of support which is entitled. The data show significant differences between pupils with disabilities and the rest of the school population. Indeed, in 2017, 49.8% of pupils with disabilities enrolled in a vocationally-oriented school, compared to 20.1% of all pupils. There are two reasons for this: 1) that about half of the pupils with disabilities prefer training courses geared towards immediate employment, 2) that pupils with disabilities are often steered in this direction, advising them to forego extending their education to University.

Limitations in workforce participation

The relationship between people with disabilities and work still remains a critical dimension in Italy. The participation of disabled people to the labor market should happen in condition of equality with other laborers both for the access to the job than for the development of a professional path. However, statistics show the practical difficulty of this goal, as there are often large numbers of disabled young people out of work. Out of 100 people aged 15-64 years who - despite having functional limitations in motor or sensory functions essential to daily life or intellectual or behavioral disorders - are still able to work, only 35.8% are employed (compared to 57.8% of people without disabilities). 20,7% are looking for a job while 43,5% are inactive (among people without limitations the percentage is 27,5%). Is true that private companies may benefit of tax benefits in case of recruitment of disabled people but is also true that they often prefer to lose these benefits avoiding the intake of disadvantaged ones. This behavior is due always to the approach of the companies that consider the disabled people as a burden, disregarding their competences, skills and resources that they may bring in the recruiting

company. This difficulty is greater for people with intellectual, mental or sensorial disabilities.

Limitations in assistance

In Italy, there are about 2,300,000 families with at least one disabled person, who are forced to pay for services because public assistance is not sufficient to meet individual needs. This economic burden is compounded by the reduced availability of income found in these families: 28.7% of them are materially deprived.

Stakeholders

FISH Nazionale - Onlus - Federazione Italiana per il superamento dell'handicap - FISH (Federazione Italiana per il Superamento dell'Handicap), established in 1994, is an umbrella organization whose members include some of the most representative associations engaged, at the national and local levels, in policies aimed at the social inclusion of people with different disabilities. Starting from the new bio-psycho-social vision of disability, opposed to a medical model that for decades has reiterated prejudice and segregation, FISH intervenes to ensure non-discrimination and equal opportunities, in every sphere of life. Through collaboration with the Italian Disability Forum (FID), the body that represents Italy within the European Disability Forum (EDF), it connects national policies with transnational ones, ensuring that the contribution of the Italian movement for the rights of people with disabilities is consistently represented, for example, at the European Union or the United Nations.

ANIEP - Associazione nazionale per la promozione e la difesa dei diritti delle persone disabili.

National Association for the Promotion and Defence of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with legal personality under dpr 269/86 federated with FISH. Founded in 1957 and present at the national level, it is an association that deals with the promotion and representation of the social and civil rights of the disabled in order to ensure to them, too, what the Constitution provides for all citizens. In addition to this institutional commitment, ANIEP deals with the legal and welfare aspects of the problem: counselling activities, support for families where severely handicapped people live, work

cooperatives, summer stays. But laws are not enough. ANIEP researches diversity problems and social prejudices, disseminates information, data and documentation to create positive cultural attitudes.

APS Associazione Nuove Frontiere Onlus

The Association represents a disability hub for the Municipality of Ladispoli, offering habilitative workshops: theater, gardening, cooking school, pizza, painting, art, recycling, and rehabilitative sports workshop.

Suitable and effective workshops that give emotional serenity in a social context that fosters personal evolution and supports and increases relationships with other individuals. The association follows various initiatives and even during the pandemic has continued to provide its active support and contribution to the communities of disabled children in the area.

Centro Diurno Asl Roma 4

The Day Care Centre is a semi-residential facility with social-health and social-rehabilitation functions in which services and activities are provided for Users in charge of the Mental Health Centre (MHC) who need to maintain a strong link with the family and social context. It is a functional facility for the therapeutic project and social inclusion aimed at the recovery of personal and social skills. It also performs an intermediate function between inpatient and outpatient care, within the Department of Mental Health (DSM).

Società Cooperativa Sociale Progetto 96

Progetto 96 Social Cooperative Society is a type A cooperative, established in May 1996 in Rieti in order to deal mainly with educational assistance for handicapped people in the territory, Progetto 96 places the person as a whole at the center of its intervention, encouraging processes of autonomy, empowerment and awareness of resources and limits. Through the daily relationship it intends to provide a proposal to individual needs, encouraging the expression of each person's personality, valuing differences and facilitating group relations.

Cooperativa Centro per l'Autonomia (CPA)

The Cooperative Centre for Autonomy was founded in 1997 at the urging and initiative of the Paraplegic Association of Rome and Latium, which acts for the affirmation of the rights of people with disabilities, against discrimination and marginalization, in favor of real inclusion in society. The Cooperative's mission is to foster relationships of active citizenship and processes of self-determination on the issues of the most discriminated and marginalized people from the social context of its reference territory.

Associazione Italiana Persone Down onlus (AIPD)

The Italian Down Persons Association was founded in Rome in 1979 under the name of Down Children Association. The AIPD acts as a point of reference for families and social, health and education professionals on all issues concerning Down's syndrome. Its aim is to protect the rights of people with Down's syndrome, to promote their full physical and mental development, to contribute to their school and social integration at all levels, to make their real abilities known and to spread awareness of the syndrome. AIPD has 43 sections throughout the country and is mainly made up of parents and people with Down syndrome. The AIPD has been a member of the Italian Federation for Overcoming Disability (FISH) since 1994. It also maintains relations with other Italian associations of people with Down's syndrome for a useful exchange of information and to address issues of common interest with a common front. At international level, it is a member of EDSA (European Down Syndrome Association).

Good Practices

Good Practice 1:

Title: A ValueAble Network

Organization/Author: Lead partner of the two projects was AIPD - Associazione Italiana Persone Down, in partnership with [Down Espana](#), [Associação Portuguesa de Portadores de Trissomia 21](#), [Down Sendromu Derneği](#), [Down Alapitvany](#), [Hamburger Arbeitassistenz](#), [Sol Melià](#), [Axis Hoteis](#), [Confindustria Alberghi](#), [Associazione Europea Direttori di Alberghi \(EHMA\)](#). The initiative is supported by EDSA, the European Down Syndrome Association.

Summary/Description: A ValueAble Network is a European network of socially responsible hospitality companies. It stems from a project of the same title approved under the Erasmus+ program 2017 - 2019, which in turn was the continuation of the previous project “On my own ... at work” (2014-2017). During these years, a group of disability associations, universities, hotels and one foundation for equal opportunities designed, developed and tested the three tools, which are now promoted by the network: an **app** for the *trainees/workers* with intellectual disabilities, **videos** for a proper relationship between people with *intellectual disabilities* and their colleagues, and **e-learning** for *managers* of the *hospitality sector* aimed at certifying the efforts of the company towards *job inclusion*.

Target Group: People with physical or mental disabilities.

Methods of Implementation: The main objective is the access to the world of work of people with intellectual disabilities in the hospitality sector (hotels, restaurants, fast food, etc.) through the consolidation and extension of the European ValueAble network, made up of companies in the sector favorable to labor inclusion. The following actions were carried out: traineeships for trainees with intellectual disabilities; online training and study visits, at facilities already members of the ValueAble network, for managers of hospitality facilities from different European countries interested in joining the network; and exchange of good practices. The tools, already tested and designed ad hoc to facilitate the process of joining the network are:

1. the “quality kit”, which includes a manual containing suggestions to support a non-discriminatory labor inclusion process and a code of conduct that must be followed in order to join the network and receive certification with the relevant registered trademark;
2. the “On my own...at work” app, available in Android and iOS versions, for mobile phones and tablets, which supports the trainee/worker with intellectual disabilities, enabling him/her to be more and more autonomous;
3. 14 videos (available online) that are an effective staff training tool and show how to manage the relationship between trainees/workers with intellectual disabilities and their colleagues.

The ValueAble Label

ValueAble handing opportunities is an international certification awarded to companies belonging to the European network of socially responsible hotels and restaurants, which

comply with specific national legislation and offer career advancement opportunities to people with intellectual disabilities by offering internships and/or job opportunities according to the rules of the ValueAble Code of Conduct.

There are 3 different labels corresponding to different degrees of commitment:

- BRONZE - The bronze version certifies specific conditions and actions aimed at inclusion without discrimination and offering internships to people with intellectual disabilities.
- SILVER - The silver version requires an additional commitment: fixed-term (minimum 3 months) or open-ended contract for at least one employee with intellectual disability.
- GOLD - The gold version is granted to employers who hire at least one employee with intellectual disability and act as ValueAble brand ambassadors.

Impact on Beneficiaries: Various professionals, scholars, companies and NGOs have supported the network. On the occasion of the celebration of WDS 2018, World Down Syndrome Day, at the UN headquarters in New York, the conference “What I bring to the workplace” was held, during which people with Down syndrome, members of the UN CRPD (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), government officials and representatives of associations shared the experiences implemented in their territories on the subject of employment. AIPD, representing EDSA - European Down Syndrome Association, brought the experience of the ‘A ValueAble Network’ project, with the intervention of Dr Paola Vulterini, head of the initiative.

Sustainability: The network is now well established. After the two projects already mentioned, two more projects were implemented to ensure sustainability and innovation in the work of the network. The ValueAble network has more than 100 members from Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey and numerous supporting organizations.

Direct Links:

- <https://www.aipd.it/site/a-valueable-network/>
- www.valueablenetwork.eu
- <https://www.aipd.it/site/wdsd-2018-lintervento-aipd-alla-conferenza-di-new-york/>

Good Practice 2:

Title: Employment inclusion of people with mental problems through the development of relationships within society and with stakeholders.

Organization/Author: The Il Portico Cooperative founded in 1984 with the purpose of offering help for social inclusion through obtaining stable and valued employment. The Cooperative includes as members operators of the psychiatric daycare center in Passirana (Rho), users of psychiatric services and members of families with disabilities.

Target Groups: People with psychological problems primarily. The type of users has been, over time, further diversified and expanded to include all categories of vulnerable people. This has been possible thanks to the relationship between public (hospitals, municipalities) and private (local companies, foundations) stakeholders. Currently, the cooperative provides employment to 320 people of whom 140 are in a vulnerable situation.

Impact on Beneficiaries: To make the disadvantaged person a full-fledged worker, to be able to feel like a citizen of equal dignity with others come out of illness-induced chronicity and above all to acquire a social role. They must be taught to share spaces and resources with other people, to respect schedules, to relate to colleagues and outsiders.

Methods of Implementation: Teamwork, consisting of person with discomfort and without.

Sustainability: The Cooperative's work provides an effective response to the need for employment and reintegration into social life of people with mental distress and those at risk of marginalization. It is a need that is constantly monitored and adapts over time with the changing needs of users so that it is always current.

Direct Links:

- info@cooperativailportico.com
- cooperativailportico@legalmail.it

Good Practice 3:

Title: HAKUNA MATATA 2.0

Organization/Author: Promoted by the association Amici di Galiana Onlus and monitored by Progetto Tuscia.

Target Group: 11 young people aged 18 to 35 with disabilities and mental disorders.

Impact on Beneficiaries: The 10-month project involved young people with the objective of training them in new skills in the agricultural sector expendable in the labor market for subsequent social-work placement, including self-employment. The companies involved in the project are all part of the Sol.Care Bio-Social Agriculture network.

Methods of Implementation: The project is part of the broader social projects of both Project Tuscia and the SOLCARE network, according to which, on an economic level, linking the management of production processes to the creation of services and welfare for the people involved means contributing to the creation of development paths in rural areas, consolidating the network of services available and diversifying income opportunities.

Sustainability: The Hakuna Matata 2.0 Project has been adapted to different realities with the aim of fostering the integration of people with disabilities within the Tuscia territory. There are several projects launched under Hakuna Matata that combine social integration with the enhancement of local resources.

Direct Link: <https://www.projecttuscia.com/altri-progetti/hakuna-matata-2-0/>

Conclusions & Recommendations

Our brief research showed that, although the legislative framework in Italy is good and progress has been made in the process of inclusion of people with disabilities, there is still a long way to go. The inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities require specific responsibility and attention on the part of legislators and public administrators but also on the part of civil society as a whole. We need to promote and grow a culture of inclusion and work towards effective mainstreaming: this means that disability issues must be taken into account both in the planning and in the implementation of all policies that have an impact on society. Another very important element is participation in political and social life. Promoting the participation of people with disabilities should not just be a slogan. There are different types of disability and each person with a given disability is different from another person with the same type of disability: this entails activating processes of listening and designing interventions that can bring about real changes.

8. Spain

National Report

This national report is developed in the framework of the Access4all - IO3 (No. 2020-1-EL01-KA204-079196). Its specific objectives are aimed at finding out about the policies of interaction between the people with disabilities (PwDs) and its social participation in the Spanish civilian population.

In order to evaluate it, reliable sources have been consulted, both primary, such as current legislation or book chapters, and secondary, such as journal articles and scientific works. In addition, the study has been completed with interviews with the target organizations, which provide a more practical approach to the analysis.

The scope is the degree of inclusiveness of public policies in Spain. For this, we need to know the opposite concept: social exclusion. It is understood as a phenomenon of structural causes, which measures the impact of different axes of risk on individuals, which includes difficulties or barriers in at least the economic, political and social axis.

On these terms, the report will first contextualize the national paradigm of disability management, in terms of statistics and legislation. Then, it will explain the policies/practices in place to protect the right to participation in public life of PwDs, i.e. institutional support received. Thirdly, it will list the main problems they raise; and end with a list of good practices and national case studies in the field of accessibility.

Key Findings

Since the last decade of the 20th century, the Social State model has begun to make headway in Spain, implementing an approach to personal autonomy in the management of people with disabilities based on the rights of all people and non-discrimination (art. 12 Convention). Spain has tried to harmonize its legislative sources and adapt its public policies to this new reality and remove barriers to full social inclusion in public life, together with the development of the concept of functional diversity, which seeks to

understand disability as a diversity in functioning, and not a deficit, in order to shape the collective identity of society. However, has this really been achieved?

Legislation

In terms of legislation, the following stand out:

The Spanish Constitution (“*Constitución Española*”) (articles 9.2, 14, 15, 35.1, 49, among others) refers to the rights of people with disabilities from a double perspective: 1) absence of discrimination, 2) positive action of public authorities to implement an integration policy.

Workers' Statute of 1979 (“*Estatuto de los Trabajadores de 1979*”) (e.g. Art. 2.g, Art. 17). Consolidates the right not to be discriminated against directly or indirectly on the grounds of disability in the field of labor relations.

Royal Decree 1414/2006, of 1 December, which determines the consideration of a person with a disability for the purposes of Law 51/2003, of 2 December, on Equal Opportunities, non-discrimination and universal accessibility for people with disabilities (“*Real Decreto 1414/2006, de 1 de diciembre, por el que se determina la consideración de persona con discapacidad a los efectos de la Ley 51/2003, de 2 de diciembre, de Igualdad de oportunidades, no discriminación y accesibilidad universal de las personas con discapacidad*”). It unifies the conditions required to guarantee the right to equal opportunities for people with disabilities by the Autonomous Communities and City Councils. Among others, positive actions, in order to increase the representation of the group.

Law 39/2006 of 14 December, on the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Care for People in a Situation of Dependency (“*Ley 39/2006 de 14 de Diciembre, de Promoción de la Autonomía Personal y Atención a las personas en situación de Dependencia*”), regulates support for people in vulnerability to carry out essential activities of daily living.

Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013, of 29 November, approving the Consolidated Text of the General Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion (“*Real Decreto Legislativo 1/2013, de 29 de noviembre, por el que se aprueba el Texto Refundido de la Ley General de derechos de las personas con discapacidad y de su inclusión social*”). It recognizes the right to full and effective participation in public decision-making and introduces labor inclusion measures, such as the obligation for public and

private companies with 50 or more employees to have a quota of 2% of staff with a certified disability equal to or greater than 33%.

Statistics

According to the National Institute of Statistics in 2020, in Spain there are a total of 4.38 million people (94.9 out of every thousand inhabitants) who claim to have some kind of disability.

According to data from the 2012 Survey on Social Integration and Health (EISS), 25.27% of the Spanish population with disabilities feel discriminated against, and 1 in 4 people with disabilities experience barriers in the following areas. Among the reasons, there are common reasons, such as economic reasons; lack of opportunities, lack of qualifications or experience; and lack of technical aids or personal assistance. Psychological reasons, such as lack of self-confidence. Accessibility reasons, such as difficulties of entry and mobility in buildings; difficulties in getting to buildings due to mobility problems. Health reasons, such as chronic illnesses that limit daily activities.

From lowest to highest:

1. **To use private or public transport** (54.56%). For example, the conditions of the stop or station (7.9%), difficulties in getting on or off (20.8%).
2. **To access or move around buildings** (61.74%).
3. **For training activities** (69.51%).
4. **To get out of the house** (81%).
5. **For access to suitable employment** between 15 and 64 years of age (90.25%). To the above causes, we add that in Spain a job can affect the receipt of other perceived benefits or services (16.3%).
6. **For leisure and cultural activities** (91.03%). 85% of people with disabilities report having barriers to practicing hobbies and 83% to attending cultural events. This includes the reason of not having anyone to go with (20%) or the distance to the event (up to 26%).

If we segment by gender, women report experiencing more barriers than men, particularly to leave home (12.67 more) or to access training (11.47 more). Regarding the latter, the INE, IMSERSO and ONCE Foundation survey shows that the rate of unemployed women with disabilities is 84%, double the rate among men; with a rate of “inactive” women of 76.41%. They are outside the training and labor insertion circuits, compared to 59.4% of men.

Policy and Practice

Article 54 of Legislative Royal Decree 1/2013 deals with the right of persons with disabilities to participate in public life under equal conditions. In order to guarantee this right, which is also provided for in the Constitution (see above), positive action by the public authorities is necessary.

Spanish institutional support is based on the principles of non-discrimination, equal treatment and equal opportunities, independent living, normalization, universal accessibility, mainstreaming, efficiency and effectiveness, among others. Among other policies, there was the Spanish Disability Strategy 2012-2020, inspired by the European Strategy 2020, which sought to describe a strategic framework for people with disabilities to guide public policies. It included recommendations for real and effective measures and opinions to meet the demands of the labor market - to increase the employment rate of the group -, education - to reduce the rate of early school leavers and raise the percentage of higher education -, poverty and social exclusion. With regard to the latter, reports such as the FOESSA Foundation’s Reports on Social Exclusion in Spain have been reported.

Beyond legislation and strategies, the reality is that the exercise of the right to participation is left almost exclusively to associative organizations. They act as intermediaries representing the collective, relegating to them the planning, adoption and management of regulations and public policies on disability.

The disability association movement in Spain was born in the 1960s. At the beginning, they were family members who grouped together in an entity around the same diagnosis,

for example, Down's syndrome, and from the perspective of charity or care for people with this disability. After the emergence of the welfare state, these groups have changed. They are not just families, but people who are grouped around a specific type of need or claim.

According to data from the Tax Agency in 2009, 2.7% of the more than 360,000 registered associations belonged to the Social Action sector, and a third of these were related to people with disabilities.

The involvement of associations in public-political dialogue helps the institutional authorities to understand the needs of the target group (PwD), and gives them 'self-management' of the issues that affect them. Furthermore, they stand as the channels of communication for people with disabilities to have access to knowledge about their rights.

Stakeholders

Organizations, which act as stakeholders.

Below will be mentioned the national platforms with majority representation. They are active in counselling, leisure, employment, education and training, accessibility, communication, research:

- **Spanish Committee of Representatives of People with Disabilities (CERMI):** Main platform representing people with disabilities, generic, with more than 3,000 associations.
- **Confederación Española de Organizaciones en Favor de las Personas con Retraso Mental (FEAPS):** representing the sector of people with intellectual disabilities, and made up of more than 800 local associations.
- **Confederación Coordinadora Estatal de Minusválidos Físicos de España (COCEMFE):** with more than 1,500 associations, which carry out.
- **Spanish National Organization of the Blind (ONCE):** Unlike the previous organizations, it is a public law corporation, with provincial and regional delegations throughout Spain.

- **Spanish Federation of Associations for the Care of Persons with Cerebral Palsy (ASPACE)**
- **Spanish Federation of Institutions for Down Syndrome (Down España)**
- **Autism Consortium**



Identifying Issues

Broadly speaking, the main issues and problems with the policies of PwD in Spain are the following:

1. The exercise of the right to participation of PwDs is left to the associations, but may be affected by:
 - a. The volatility of their services. Associations are dependent on an agreement or subsidy. This may weaken their capacity for political influence since, being financially dependent on the administration, they are accountable to it.
 - b. The emergence of new social risks, which have displaced disability from its pre-eminent place as a vulnerable sector. In recent years, new social challenges have arisen, such as the transformation of the social role of women and family models or migration. This has relegated disability to an additional factor to be claimed. Associations have therefore been forced to specialize in one type of struggle, and to combine the support of people with disabilities with other objectives, such as gender equality.
2. Despite attempts to consolidate the paradigm of personal autonomy in Spanish legislation, the protectionist or welfarist perspective is still latent in its measures. For example, the small amount of economic benefits (disability or invalidity) are mostly incompatible with work, which prevents the full realization of an independent life, as many people prefer not to work with a low number of hours and a low salary and compensate for this by receiving a pension.
3. The active policies that have to do with positive action and non-discrimination are basically the reserve quota (policies of difference) and aid and tax relief for employers for the employment of PwD. Although they are essential for the integration of this group, their objective is far from the moral objective they were intended to achieve. Respect for the human rights of people with disabilities has

not yet become part of the collective conscience. Instead of using PwD to demonstrate their social or ethical commitment, the motive is mainly to comply with legislation.

4. CERMI's 2020 report highlights several complaints from the Spanish State for breaches of the European Convention on Human Rights. It highlights the absence of a strong dependency care system, which does not focus on personal autonomy; and the absence of institutionalization or public policies without dialogue or consultation with civil society beyond associations. According to CERMI, it is essential to appeal to civil dialogue, and efforts should be guided to achieve shared governance. To this end, common guidelines must be provided.

Good Practices

Good Practice 1:

Title: “Xarxa hacia el empleo” project (“network towards employment” in English) from Asociación Xarxa Dones amb discapacitat (“Network of women with disabilities Association”, in English).

Summary/Description: The Association of Women with Disabilities XARXA is formed by women in search of the full normalisation of the lives of women with disabilities and gender equality. Its staff includes psychologists, therapists and adult trainers who provide training for women with disabilities to develop their social and personal skills and improve their employability. In addition, they provide awareness programmes in schools and town councils to promote the employability and incorporation of women with disabilities into the world of work, overcoming situations of risk of social exclusion. The “Xarxa hacia el empleo” project is aimed at women with a legally recognised disability certificate who are legally unemployed (18 to 65 years old). The aim is to familiarise women with disabilities seeking employment with the Job Search Plans, political, working, social and cultural life; to improve their training for their incorporation or reincorporation into the world of work; to establish collaboration agreements with companies; and to alleviate the digital breach by training them in computers and new technologies. During the programme, a personalised employment and training itinerary is designed for each woman. These programmes are publicly funded and free of charge.

100% of the participants manage to improve their skills, and 80% get an internship or a job in companies that adapt the jobs to the needs of the applicant.

Direct Links:

- <https://xarxamujeres.es>
- <https://xarxamujeres.es/nuevo-programa-5/>

**Good Practice 2:**

Title: Foro de Vida Independiente y Divertad (“Forum for Independent Living and Fun” in English)

Summary/Description: Since 2001, the Foro de Vida Independiente y Divertad (concept of 'dignity' and 'freedom') was created to promote the US Independent Living movement in Spain. It is a 'non-organization', a community that interacts through a forum for philosophical reflection and the struggle for the rights of people with functional diversity via the Internet, and face-to-face meetings for general participation. They have no presidency, no board of directors, no tax ID and no budget. All members participate directly and equally to give visibility to disability. They maintain direct contact with politicians and have appeared for the vindication of rights in the European Congress of Independent Living (2003), in the Congress of Deputies, autonomous parliaments, speeches, congresses, etc. They also carry out research, generating a large amount of documentation: press releases, articles in different magazines, and the publication of several books.

Direct Link: <http://forovidaindependiente.org/>

Good Practice 3:

Title: Telefónica, the telecom Spanish company, which best integrates people with disabilities in the workplace.

Summary/Description: Telefónica is operating in more than 25 countries. It is recognised worldwide for its policy of integrating people with disabilities into the workplace and has received numerous awards for this. Telefonica set up the Association of the Telefonica Group for the Attention of Disabled People (in Spanish, ATAM), as its first action. The association aimed to promote social integration and employment reach by PwD and to ensure that all companies inside the Telefónica umbrella included them as

workforce, while ensuring the Spanish legislation was followed. After that, the ATAM created SILA, a working integration service that acts as intermediary between companies and PwD looking for a job and provides training to them to increase their chances of finding a job in other companies than Telefonica. In addition, Telefonica adopted some policies since 2009 in line with the integration of PwD: (A) It has an established percentage of their workforce who needs to be filled by Pw; (B) Their suppliers must declare they accomplish the legal requirements in terms of disability in their countries; (C) There is a list of preferred suppliers, made by those companies with a majority of PwD.

Direct Links:

- https://www.ilo.org/public/spanish/dialogue/actemp/downloads/publications/working_paper_n3_sp.pdf
- <https://www.telefonica.com/>

Conclusion & Recommendations

The following conclusions could be drawn to answer the question of what the issues about disability & accessibility and/or with disabilities the rights of people would be that are not addressed by existing literature or practices. Firstly, that the perspective of personal autonomy of PwD is still to be consolidated. There are remnants of the protectionist state in Spanish legislation. The recommendations are to focus the need for support on their autonomy, rather than on the support of their legal capacity. Furthermore, we are faced with rules that lack uniformity and policies without consensus between communities. Ideally, a common and shared general framework should be created for the achievement of the collective's objectives. On the other hand, the real and effective exercise of citizen participation in public decisions is indispensable. In the case of Spain, it seems that this right is not yet guaranteed, as dialogue is being delegated to representative associations that are economically dependent on the state. And finally, Spain demonstrates a low ethical/moral awareness when it comes to the labor approach. As we have seen, positive policies have served to increase the number of employees with disabilities, but there is a lack of specific criteria to promote and develop sustainability in companies from a social point of view. New policies should emphasize, for example,

facilitating the accessibility of company information on the protection of PwDs rather than simply complying with laws and avoiding sanctions for non-compliance.

Policy Recommendations

Austria

This part of our book will cover National and European suggestions, recommendations, scenarios on how to better include people with disabilities and their participation in all aspects of their social and personal lives, how to engage policy makers to play a role in connecting inclusive societies and disability, any potential activities/strategies/practices should be implemented towards accessibility, disability, inclusion and activation for disabled persons and any potential policies deriving from the experiences and knowledge acquired through ACCESS4ALL outputs.

To include disabled persons in all realms of social/personal life starts by improving accessibility within the community by providing opportunities and resources that enable them to make progress and succeed. For example, improving accessibility could be carrying out inclusive research, which can be used to better understand the complexities and lack of accessibility disabled persons are facing in their individual communities. It starts through awareness raising and hearing from persons with disabilities, in order to pinpoint areas where accessibility development is needed. Furthermore, to make accessibility sustainable, policies must be put in place to do so.

A few examples of engaging policy makers may be through the change in attitude of how employment of PwD is viewed (awareness raising), asking/requiring policy makers to attend awareness raising events. How can we change the understanding of employment of PwD? Well, if an Austrian company has more than 25 employees it is required by law to employ a disabled person, however 75% of Austrian companies pay a tax instead of employing valuable talents. Employment of people with disabilities is currently still perceived as more of a social project and too little as an economic concern. This shift can change the way in which people with disabilities are treated in society and increase their opportunities in ways which would be a step forward to a more equal society. Another way of engaging policy makers could be through mandatory attendance of disability

awareness events. Such events include “Unternehmensdialoge (Business Dialogues)” and “Branchendialoge (Industry dialogs)” from the Zero Project Austria. This particular event has the power to connect and sensitize companies, decision makers and employees. This event does not only highlight the rights of PwD, but also the actions/good practices, which are being implemented throughout Austria to give them their rights. These recommendations are a few steps which can be taken to increase that awareness inside the Austrian government and their policy makers

Accessibility is not yet available to all citizens of the EU. These are some priorities to consider when funding programs/project aiming to improve accessibility:

- **Impairments:** Health impairments make it difficult to participate in everyday life or complete tasks, therefore we as a society need to address the barriers faced by those to live with impairments. Currently there is a heterogeneous perception of what impairments include. However, through awareness raising we can have a more holistic understanding of impairments and how they affect our communities, through identifying then breaking barriers.
- **Accessibility:** Accessibility is the concept of whether a product or service can be used by everyone—however they encounter it. People with disabilities should be able to use public services with ease and independence.
- **Inclusion in the workplace:** Exclusion in the labor market exists mainly to those with intellectual disabilities; this is one of the barriers Austria needs to break. This can be done through project funding, aiming to engage this group of people into the labor market.
- **Ageing society:** A new generation is entering old age in Austria. In some cases, aging and impairment can require different care, such as the transition from independent living into nursing homes.

Through ACCESS4ALL one has the chance to review research conducted in 6 different EU countries. A result of this research was learning of the different accessibility initiatives which had been put into place in each of the EU countries. This connection of research is a great example of knowledge sharing. Not only is ACCESS4ALL a great knowledge sharing site, it is also a space to test your own experience and knowledge in accessibility.

So how could Austria use the resources of ACCESS4ALL?

Through the good practices handbook (IO3), Austria could learn how to make beaches more accessible through implementing the same (or similar) strategies used in Greece and Cyprus. Or through funding a bookstore which caters to visually impaired people such as the first bookstore to do so in Paris, France called Grands Caractères bookshop. ACCESS4ALL not only promotes inspiration in accessibility policy reform but also has the possibility to teach the reader about accessibility policies in the EU, disabilities and media exploitation, and much more. One forward thinking way to look into how this information could be used in Austria is by testing your governmental branch's or company's current knowledge of accessibility and how it is represented and addressed in the EU.

Cyprus

According to the World Report on Disability (2011), the CRPD and the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF) emphasize how environmental factors affect and restrict the participation of people with disabilities; the Report focused on the following evidence of barriers:

- **Inadequate policies and standards:** policymaking does not always consider the needs of people with disabilities and existing policies are not always implemented;
- **Negative attitudes:** people with disabilities often face prejudice and negativity in the areas of health, education, employment, even from family members;
- **Lack of provision of services:** there are not enough healthcare, rehabilitation, and support services to address the matters that people with disabilities deal with;
- **Problems with service delivery:** there is a lack of quality and adequacy in terms of services;
- **Inadequate funding:** insufficient resources are offered for the implementation of policies;
- **Lack of accessibility:** inadequate implementation of Universal Design;
- **Lack of consultation and involvement:** people with disabilities are often excluded from decision-making in matters that directly affect their lives;
- **Lack of data and evidence:** inadequate data on disability and evidence on effective programs.

A decade has passed since the World Report on Disability was originally published, and although there has been an increase in initiatives in a variety of aspects relating to disabilities at local, national, European, and global level, the aforementioned barriers still exist, they are ongoing challenges that still affect the lives of people with disabilities. According to the Report, the ways in which these barriers affect the lives of people with disabilities are: poor health outcomes, lower educational achievements, less economic activity, higher rates of poverty, and they are not always able to live independently or fully participate in community activities.

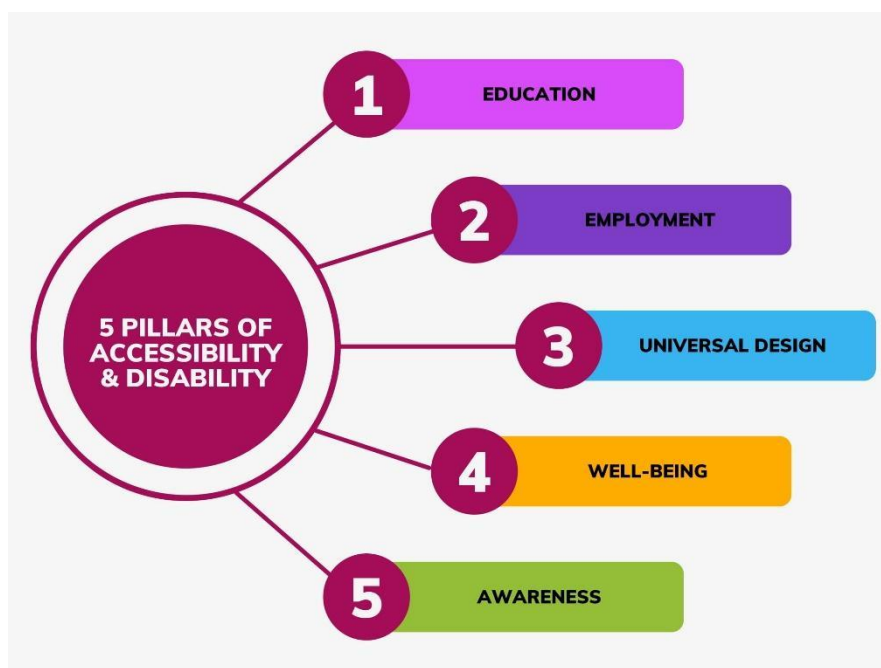
According to the *Policy Guidelines for Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals - Foundations* (United Nations, 2020, p. 12) the five **core pillars** for constructing **inclusive policies** are:

- **“Non-discrimination:** a non-discrimination framework, which prohibits discrimination across all areas of life and ensures that reasonable accommodation is available to persons with disabilities is essential;
- **Accessibility:** involves addressing and preventing barriers which restrict the participation of persons with disabilities;
- **Support** for persons with disabilities (assistive technology and support services) allows them to benefit from policies and programmes alongside their peers and partially remedies limitations in accessibility;
- **Participation** of persons with disabilities ensures that their valuable expertise and experiences shape policy and programmes, to ensure the most effective solutions;
- **Awareness-raising for and about** persons with disabilities contributes to combating negative stereotypes and promotes knowledge about, and respect for, their rights and dignity.”

All policies and good practices need to focus on overcoming obstacles that are recurrent or unattended, or on minimizing them as much as possible, in order to promote shared prosperity, participation and safety that will be enjoyed by all humans equally. This section of *The Best Practices and Policy Book* is addressed to policymakers at local, national, and European level, and it will focus on suggestions/scenarios about disability

and accessibility, on ways of creating inclusive communities, of engaging stakeholders, etc.

With regard to Cyprus, and by extension the European Union, we will focus on a 5 pillars policy recommendation model about accessibility and disability that emphasizes five essential realms that affect the life of people with disabilities: education, employment, universal design, well-being, and awareness. These 5 suggested pillars stem from the literature review about Cyprus' context as well as on the overall national outcomes obtained during the lifecycle of the ACCESS4ALL project.



Education

Education is essential for the personal and professional development of all individuals and it is therefore one of the basic human rights. Education offers the possibility to fully participate in society and access to the labor market. In Cyprus, students with disabilities still face difficulties when it comes to their smooth and equal access to education, whether that is caused by lack of support, infrastructures or overall organization, etc. Although it needs to be mentioned that there are certain initiatives that offer the right educational environment, namely the School for the Deaf and St Barnabas School for the Blind. Policies and practices that promote an inclusive education system need to focus on

safeguarding that students with disabilities will not be discriminated against and will be able to access education on the same basis as their fellow students.

Employment

The right to employment, and by extension to financial stability and independent living (housing), is another basic human right. Therefore, policies and practices that safeguard this right need to be promoted. One such initiative is the [Diversity Charter Cyprus](#), which generates an ethical commitment to every signatory, to develop and promote diverse, inclusive policies and practices to ensure equal opportunities for all employees in the Cypriot workplace. Diversity Charter Cyprus is an initiative for inclusion and diversity in the Cypriot workplace, and it is part of the European Platform of Diversity Charters of the European Commission since 2020.

Universal Design

It is important to pay attention to the provision of the right infrastructures, in terms of transportation, housing, schools, workplaces, and other locations/buildings (i.e. cafés, restaurants, supermarkets, etc.), in order to create friendlier environments for people with disabilities so that they will be able to lead a fulfilling personal/professional/social life. With regard to Cyprus, the island has been trying to create accessible beaches for its tourists/visitors with mobility difficulties. It is also worth mentioning that Landa Beach in Ayia Napa is the first beach with a [Guidance System for the Visually Impaired](#); a system that ensures autonomous and safe access to the sea. Signs guide users, informing them about the distance from the beach to the sea and the depth of the water, with the help of a waterproof remote control. The action was carried out within the framework of the project “Accessible Nature and Culture - Sustainable Tourism - In-Heritage”.

Well-Being

Unflinching access to healthcare, rehabilitation, and well-being facilities, information and services needs to be safeguarded via the creation and/or implementation of policies and practices. People with disabilities often deal with inaccessible healthcare facilities, poor quality of services, and lack of information. It is therefore essential that European countries pay closer attention to disability, health and well-being. The United Nations’ [Good Health and Well-Being](#) (2020) offers thorough information on this matter.

Awareness

Raising awareness and understanding is one of the first and most important actions when it comes to increasing the visibility of disability and normalizing it. Offering the correct information and educating people about disability, whether they are stakeholders, people with disabilities themselves, or a wider, general audience, can have a great impact. As Disability World writes, “**the biggest barrier people with disabilities encounter is other people.**” One of the more effective ways of raising awareness and understanding is capacity-building that deals with best practices and policy recommendations.

France

Disability policy in France is defined by the Inter-ministerial Committee on Disability (CIH), chaired by the Prime Minister and made up of almost all government ministers. On the occasion of the National Disability Conference (CNH) on 11 December 2014, chaired by the Head of State, three main objectives are set: to build a society that is more open to people with disabilities; to design responses and care adapted to each person's situation; and to simplify their daily lives. Targets set in the framework of the 2014 CNH:

- In terms of **schooling**:
 - outsourcing and relocating teaching units currently located in medico-social establishments to ‘ordinary’ schools;
 - improving the quality of learning for deaf children.
- In terms of **accessibility**:
 - Facilitating access to public information, promoting citizenship and “leaving no one behind the digital revolution” by including measures in the bill “for a digital Republic” on website accessibility and telephone accessibility;
 - Improving information on everyday consumer products, in particular through the signing of an agreement with the National Consumer Institute (INC).
- In the field of **employment**:
 - Strengthen vocational training by defining an action plan in the field of vocational rehabilitation;

- To improve bridges between sheltered employment and ordinary employment.

Around two million people worldwide (15% of the population) live with some form of disability. This is according to the World Disability Report of the World Health Organization (WHO). Beyond their physical, mental or sensory impairments, people with disabilities face barriers to inclusion in many aspects of life: they generally have fewer socio-economic opportunities, have less access to education and are more likely to live in poverty. Stigma and discrimination can be a major barrier to their full and equal participation in decision-making.

Accessibility is an essential issue. The definition may vary, but basically accessibility means guaranteeing to each individual, whether with disabilities or not, the possibility of understanding a space, of integrating into it and of interacting with its content. Unfortunately, the challenge is still great, especially in developing countries, due to low awareness and limited inclusion of people with disabilities.

- **An inclusive education system** is crucial for the successful integration of people with disabilities into the labor market. Such an education system must take into account the specific needs of people with disabilities and must ensure that they have the same opportunities to receive quality education as students with no disabilities.
- **Involve people with disabilities and civil society in all phases of policy-making**, and the implementation of projects and programs. The participation and consultation of all users, including those with different forms of disability, is essential, as they are in a better position than anyone else to identify the shortcomings of the infrastructure and thus contribute to removing them.
- Create instruments that focus on **improving accessibility in the urban environment**. Creating inclusive cities requires effective legal frameworks and standards that make accessibility possible in all aspects of daily life.
- Encourage a **cross-cutting approach among different ministries** so that their policies jointly support the needs of people with disabilities.

- The authorities must **guarantee the application of inclusive projects** and ensure that the country does not continue to invest in projects that are not accessible to all citizens.
- **Raise awareness and empower public officials** responsible for implementing these projects and citizens in general. Greater social awareness of the challenges of accessibility will help people understand that this is not just a problem for people with disabilities, and that an attitude of solidarity helps citizens to have free access to all the services and opportunities that our society offers and to exercise their rights as citizens.
- **Promoting accessibility:** accessibility offers citizens, whether disabled or able-bodied, better opportunities to fully enjoy their rights.

In March 2021, the *European Commission* adopted the Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030. This strategy builds on the results of the previous EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020. Despite the progress made over the last ten years, people with disabilities still face considerable barriers and are at increased risk of poverty and social exclusion. The new strategy therefore includes an ambitious set of flagship actions and initiatives in different areas and sets many priorities, such as:

- **Accessibility:** being able to move and stay freely, but also to participate in the democratic process;
- **Decent quality of life and independent living:** the strategy focuses on, among other things, the de-institutionalization process, social protection and non-discrimination at work;
- **Equal participation:** the strategy aims to effectively protect people with disabilities against all forms of discrimination and violence, to ensure equal opportunities and equal access to justice, education, culture, sport and tourism, but also to all health services;
- **the EU's commitment** to make this strategy a reality.

The Commission will assist Member States in developing their national strategies and action plans for the further implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and EU legislation in this field.

Strategic partnerships with civil society can support resource mobilization efforts, increase the impact of equity-focused policy advocacy, strengthen the reach and impact of services and programs for the most disadvantaged communities and ensure that results are sustainable. With their knowledge of the national policy context, extensive social networks and direct access to communities, civil society organizations have the potential to significantly enhance the reach and impact of inclusive education for people with disabilities.

Organizations do not have to be necessarily at big scale; international or governmental. They can be community or neighborhood centered, informal groups of families or people with disabilities.

In this, **Advocacy** has a central role. It can take many forms, including forms, including media campaigns, public speaking, and educational activities. Advocacy ensures that people - all people - make their voices and wishes heard on the issues that are important to them, ensuring that access to information and services is readily available and that everyone understands the potential consequences of the responsibilities, choices and options that are made. A major objective is that everyone can learn and exercise their role as an advocate for their own rights. Regardless of the type of advocacy used, it is important to include people with disabilities in the process and to engage them in the development, implementation and evaluation of key communication materials.

Greece

This document attempts to summarise a number of policy recommendations addressed mainly to leaders of local governments and communities who have the responsibility to provide measures for facilitating the life of impaired citizens no matter what is their disability (physical. Mental. ...).

These recommendations are partly based on the Greek Report developed by the project consortium in July 2022 - whose statistics and presentation of selected best practices are very pertinent, a complementary search in the provisions published recently by the Greek government resulting to the creation of Local / Regional Reference Points, and other local measures (see IO3 Greek National Report). In addition we took the initiative to extend the search for policy guidance from countries and finally a review of additional best

practices in EU countries, in particular those that demonstrate a high level of concern for impaired people at the level of local communities e.g. Disability Rights UK has recently undertaken research (<http://tinyurl.com/mn6rov5>).

We believe that the policy recommendations identified are very relevant for all national contexts and may inspire Greek local authorities – as well others, to make use of them. Recent research shows that inclusive local communities, with strong social networks bring rewards for the whole community: strong political institutions, improved economic development, improved health and more effective public services.

A key issue internationally is that disabled people have had limited engagement and participation, but that participation is essential to make communities inclusive. If local authorities work with Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and other partners to support new approaches to participation, there are benefits for everyone. It is about making human rights real for everyone, every day.

From this limited effort to present policy recommendations a first conclusion may be derived:

Inclusive communities benefit everyone: they contribute to the area's health, economic growth, and strength of democratic engagement. They are needed to ensure maximum commitment to tackling the key 21st Century challenges, from climate change to ensuring new models of service to mobilise networks to support people who are living longer.

Local authorities are in the central position to foster this inclusion, by working with all citizens and particularly by working with Disabled People's Organisations. This can be done through different levels of participation of disabled people – from consultation on pre-existing plans through to decision making and democratic engagement. The higher the level of participation, the fuller the inclusion is likely to be. It is by public authorities working with disabled people and their organisations that we are likely to see a step change in inclusion.

This is about making human rights real for everyone, every day.

Draft Proposals for Policy recommendations

In the following paragraphs focused policy recommendations are synoptically presented in a format consisting of a few lines of introductory statement, and inside a box the

correspondent policy recommendation(s). Additional text in provided in form of Annex for further reading be provided for reference.

1. Participation of disabled people

Participation by disabled people in development and decision-making is vital – from seeking feedback through to full decision-making and leadership by disabled people. To achieve fully inclusive outcomes (i.e. disabled people taking part in society) requires fully inclusive processes (i.e. disabled people participating at all stages in planning and decision-making). These approaches can also help local authorities meet their obligations under National Legislation and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Policy recommendation 1:

Local communities should reinforce disabled people in development and decision making by promoting inclusion and applying concrete measures for achieving this objective.

Selective examples addressed to disabled people:

- a. Enabling them to have a voice working alongside local decision-makers create welcoming attitudes.
- b. Allowing local / school libraries to provide easy read information and greater access to premises.
- c. Creating framework for action on independent living, committing to action across government to forge an inclusive and enabling society.
- d. Developing programmes for Introducing the Community Inclusion mentors which supports disabled and older people to engage in and contribute to their communities, and helps staff and organisations to understand how to build and support real inclusion.
- e. Exploit possibilities for fully inclusive public education where disabled and non-disabled children learn together from the youngest age and positively influence everyone's attitudes and expectations.
- f. Opening up opportunities to go to music festivals, by making them more inclusive.
- g. Bringing the same range of interests as other citizens, for example, in protecting the environment and local biodiversity, ensuring good relationships within the diverse

communities, and tackling injustice, and need to be equal contributors to progress on these agenda.

0. Role Local Authorities and inclusive communities

Local government is a central element of every local community. With its partners it plays a key leadership role, a crucial role in economic growth and can make a tangible, lasting difference to people's lives. Local government is unique in delivering such a wide range of local services from a framework governed by a democratic process in which every adult has the opportunity to participate. Councils are often the single most important source of practical advice to local communities, actively involving people in the design and delivery of their local services.

Ensuring that local communities remain cohesive, with fair and effective service delivery is even tougher. Operating in an environment where communities are inclusive supports that essential cohesion, helps with fair and effective service delivery and provides a positive environment for economic growth.

Disabled people need to move from being recipients of services to influencers and decision-makers. There has been much discussion in recent years of 'shifting the balance of power', 'choice and control' and increased power of the citizen – including the disabled citizen. But the experience on the ground is that power imbalances often remain. For example, often there will be good engagement with parents and carers of disabled children but little with young people themselves.

Disabled people bring a broad range of knowledge, skills, expertise and information which public bodies working for inclusion will find invaluable. This knowledge is not just about disability related services but can inform and improve the inclusive nature of environments, services and communities for everyone. This ensures developments are informed by the expertise of the people who understand disability equality and inclusion best – disabled people, across the spectrum of experiences of living with a disability or long-term health condition.

Through participation disabled people realise their rights to social, economic and political citizenship.

Policy recommendation 2:

Governmental agencies at all levels and in particular local authorities should engage disabled people directly in the design and review of the policies that affect them, and devolving decision-making to local level, will ensure disabled people take a central role in the management of their own lives.

Facilitating engagement

Putting the participation of disabled people at the heart of building inclusive communities needs to be done well to be effective. Different levels of participation have been identified: Engagement to seek feedback; Focused participation; Wider participation and decision-making; Being at the heart of governance. This is important in relation to all citizens, but has particular significance to disabled people who are seldom heard but crucial to the creation of inclusive communities.

Many local authorities will already have a relationship with local voluntary sector organisations, charities and Disabled People's Organisations.

These relationships vary and in some areas, they may be less than effective.

Policy recommendation 3

Establishing a more formal relationship with Disabled People's Organisations in particular those that can bring significant benefits and support a firm structure for ensuring the participation of disabled people.

In particular local authorities should review their actions as follows:

- Reinforce current engagement to consider the level of participation by disabled people, and ensure that engagement which is focused on resident satisfaction with local authority services.
- Look at their engagement mechanisms to make sure these are fully accessible for disabled people.
- Consider more innovative ways to engage with disabled people, possibly by working with local Disabled People's Organisations to identify them.

Focused participation

Many local authorities have moved on from basic engagement and requests for feedback to understanding the benefits of residents participating in service design, delivery and, in some cases, strategic policy development. This has been particularly true of work with disabled people and disability organisations.

Under equality legislation, local authorities are obliged to pay due regard to equality in key decision-making. This public sector equality duty is regarded as a strong element of good decision-making and when not undertaken effectively has been the subject of a number of legal cases. The early participation of disabled people in considering the equality impact of key decisions can bring real benefits: ensuring that 'due regard' is effectively paid, and bringing effective outcomes including improved decision-making and more inclusive communities.¹⁷

Policy recommendation 4

Local authorities should review their actions as follows:

- Consider areas where disabled people make up a significant percentage of service users and consider what mechanisms could be put in place to increase their feedback on services and, crucially, their participation in and advice on future plans.
- Ensure that participation mechanisms are clearly focused on disabled people and not just on carers or family members, for example in relation to services for disabled children.
- Identify other key areas where the participation of disabled people may bring specific and helpful advice.
- Look at putting in place formal advisory groups or mechanisms to ensure the consistent participation of disabled people and effective advice.
- Identify specific roles for local Disabled People's Organisations and consider what commissioning arrangements could be put in place.

Wider participation and decision-making

Whilst the participation of disabled people on issues with a clear 'disability impact' is of tremendous value, there can be even more value in participation on wider issues, often in a very structured way that has a specific impact on decisions.

The key to effectiveness is not making assumptions about the areas of local authority policy development or services where disabled people can add value. It may not be obvious to an Environment Department that talking to local disabled people about how to improve waste collection would be beneficial. In fact some local authorities who have done this have discovered that removing some of the barriers experienced by disabled people to recycling and refuse services benefit the whole population.

This approach, more than all others, is likely to lead to more inclusive communities because it cuts across all the key areas and ensures that disabled people are at the heart of decisions.

Policy recommendation 5

Local authorities should review their actions as follows:

- Review what formal mechanisms they already have in place for disabled people to participate in decision-making or offer advice in an official setting.
- Look at the role which is being played by disabled people in the production of equality impact assessments or assessing the equality impact of key decisions.
- Consider whether they wish to establish a formal advisory group of disabled people and what their role would need to be to ensure effective outcomes.
- Produce, in conjunction with disabled people, a participation plan involving a range of mechanisms and activities to increase the participation and influence of disabled people.
- Review their committee structure to identify whether there are increased opportunities for participation by disabled people.
- Identify what the most effective role could be for local Organisations of Disabled People in supporting these activities and consider what this would mean in relation to commissioning.
- Establish direct relationships with, or commission, local Disabled People's Organisations to advise on scrutiny processes in general or on specific issues under consideration.
- Co-opt disabled people onto scrutiny committees or listen to their views within scrutiny enquiries or panels.

- Carefully scrutinise equality impact assessments associated with specific proposals to ensure that the impact on disabled people is fully considered and their views taken into account.

ANNEX: Additional comments concerning key areas for participation

The material below is extracted from a very comprehensive report : **Inclusive Communities A guide for Local Authorities**, written in UK by Marie Pye and Liz Sayce, with the support of an Advisory Group

Economic growth

Too often disabled people have not benefited even when jobs and skills are coming on stream in a local area. Disabled people are left until last – either out of work or stuck in low paid, low skilled, insecure employment.

Many people living with disability or health conditions want decent employment: a real opportunity of a career (not just a job), with equality, and flexibility if needed to accommodate impairment, for instance, being able to work when well if you have a fluctuating condition.

Where local authorities and Disabled People’s Organisations have linked up with this mainstream agenda of economic growth it has sometimes paid dividends.

Improving employment

Local Business Associations may wish to link up with Disabled People’s Organisations and other local partners to open up local opportunities for disabled people to:

- Ensure that local Labour Market Intelligence is shared with disability organisations that may be advising people on skills or careers: where are jobs, apprenticeships, traineeships or other opportunities coming up?
- Share available stories from disabled people who are working, or pursuing apprenticeships – driving up expectations about what disabled people can achieve.
- Explore partnership opportunities. A Disabled People’s Organisation or other disability organisation may be able to support local employers to retain or recruit

and/or support individuals to keep or secure jobs, apprenticeships, traineeships, new enterprises, or gain new skills or qualifications.

- Support peer support and peer mentoring. There is nothing quite so powerful when out of work and lacking confidence as learning from someone who has travelled the same path before you.

Personalised Employment Support

- Offer of personalised employment support on people's own terms 'we'll work with you, not make decisions for you'. Support is designed around the clients' own employment goals and individual needs and is delivered by other disabled people who have lived experience of the barriers of prejudice, environment and lack of support. Policy and practice is based on the social model of disability and clients learn to understand how barriers can be removed to enable them to work in any role or workplace.
- Interesting practices are the following in UK: : a 'Talent Match' Coach to work specifically with young disabled people who are NEET ('Not in Employment, Education or Training') and support them to achieve their employment goals, enabling them to access apprenticeships, vocational training, work experience and volunteering on their journey to employment.

Health & Well-Being Boards

The new focus on increased responsibility for public health brings new opportunities to make communities more inclusive by increasing the participation of disabled people.

In Greece, every local authority area has set up a Reference Point overseeing local work to set priorities for commissioning health and social care and improving the health and well-being of the whole local community.

Organisations led by people with lived experience of disability or long term health conditions can, and often do, promote social networks and mobilise the power of community and peer support, overcoming isolation, enabling disabled people (who often experience inadequate health care) to achieve better health and opportunities, influencing local health provision.

Mental Healthwatch

Local authorities may wish to approach a local Disabled People's Organisation to explore how users of local services can best feed into priority setting – both strategically (thinking jointly about the best methods for engagement) and practically (for example, commissioning a DPO to undertake engagement exercises, focus groups, surveys etc) – since Disabled People's Organisations are often well placed to reach under-served groups, and already have their trust).

Disabled people at the heart of governance

Engagement and participation are of immense value in ensuring that services and decision-making foster inclusive communities. However, the ultimate role in decision-making within local areas is through the ballot box and standing for election. A truly inclusive community is one which has maximum participation by disabled people in democratic processes and is successful in ensuring that disabled people are represented within governance structures.

Some of the barriers to participating in elections for disabled people are cultural or relate to the nature of political engagement – for instance, it is only recently that some elected officials have begun to feel safe to be open about hidden impairments like mental health issues – whilst others may be practical or physical.

Local authorities have a role in promoting voting and this goes beyond removing physical barriers and improving accessibility. Consideration of the cultural context for some disabled people may help to tailor communications to increase the understanding of the relevance of democratic participation. This could range from highlighting the role that elected members have in relation to key services for disabled people through to highlighting the history of disabled people who were denied the right to vote, or positive stories about disabled people who have been involved in local politics. Again there may be a clear role for local Disabled People's Organisations in supporting this work.

Whilst neither government nor local authorities can or should influence the selection of candidates by political parties, or decisions about who stands in elections, they do have a clear role in supporting and encouraging disabled people to consider this option and removing any specific barriers. Additionally local authorities have a strong role in promoting the work which is being undertaken

by the government and by other organisations such as the Local Government Association.

Interesting best practices on promoting involvement in local government

Be a Councillor campaign

The Local Government Association could organize a Be A Councillor campaign which recognises that local government is only as vibrant, effective and relevant as the people elected to run it. The campaign works to increase the talent pool from which councillors are elected and ensure councils better represent their electorate.

Self advocacy

Organise visits and short democracy awareness workshops in the framework of an initiative e.g. Be Heard, a self-advocacy group for adults with learning difficulties. A further session after elections will give participants a chance to give feedback on their voting experience and meet some of the newly elected councillors. Members were given the opportunity to find out who their ward councillor was and how to contact them.

The key role for organisations of disabled people

It is clear from National and EU legislation related to inclusive Local Communities that the active role of disabled people is crucial and that local authorities are central to ensuring that the work is strongly influenced by and at best led by disabled people. The challenge for local government, in difficult economic times when efficiency is top of the agenda is how to facilitate this participation of disabled people. The solution in many areas will lie in a close working relationship with local Disabled People's Organisations. These organisations, mainly voluntary in nature and led by disabled people, can be both the experts on disability equality and the conduit to engagement and participation by a wider group of local disabled people.

These organisations can be engaged or commissioned to undertake a wide range of activities to support the role of disabled people in developing inclusive communities:

- Advising at a strategic level on how to engage disabled people across mainstream agendas, like health and well-being, economic growth, civic participation, and environmental protection. This might include strengthening disabled people's involvement in the Health and Well-Being Board or LEP,

scrutiny processes, and other existing structures – or establishing new structures for disabled people’s engagement in decision-making. It might involve specific engagement mechanisms to work with these structures.

- Engagement of disabled people to support the council in agreeing equality objectives, in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty; and in agreeing where disabled people’s participation will add most value overall (from refuse collection to housing).
- Advising on the engagement of disabled people within mainstream engagement activities (from resident surveys to local forums).
- Advising on the engagement of disabled people on issues relating specifically to the inclusion of disabled people – and inclusive communities.
- Actually facilitating disabled people’s participation in specific projects.
- Facilitating the participation of disabled people more widely in the work the authority is doing, in order to foster an inclusive approach.
- Providing advice on involving disabled people in decision-making and where appropriate organising such involvement.
- Working with the local authority to ensure that disabled people are encouraged and facilitated to participate in voting, and rolling out the Be a Councillor campaign locally.

Whilst organisations of disabled people are mostly based in the voluntary sector they cannot be simply treated as volunteers and would need to be commissioned to undertake this role in a professional capacity and valued for their professional expertise. Some organisations may not be well versed in participating in commissioning in the same way that larger or national charities may be and may require some support to undertake this. In some areas there may not be local Disabled People's Organisations although there may be issue or impairment specific local organisations concerned with disability issues. There may be a role for the local authority in supporting the establishment of a local Disabled People's Organisation led and controlled by disabled people.

Developing this relationship with local organisations of disabled people is likely to be the most effective way of ensuring that work to create inclusive communities is built on solid foundations.

Reinforce Local Voices

Local Voices is a project developed at local level in conjunction with their local organisation of disabled people and run by disabled people.

This wide-ranging project provides an opportunity for local disabled people to influence local decisions that affect them and help the authorities deliver better services for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. There is a network which disabled people can become involved in and regular events and activities to keep people engaged. The project is run by a steering committee made up of people from Tower Hamlets who are disabled or have long-term health conditions.

Local authorities may wish to:

- Review what current services they are commissioning that local Disabled People's Organisations could also be invited to deliver.
- Identify what activities or actions local Disabled People's Organisations could support them with in relation to engagement and participation of disabled people.
- Support local Disabled People's Organisations who are unfamiliar with commissioning processes to ensure they are able to effectively participate in these.
- Where there is not a specific Disabled People's Organisation in a local area, consider supporting disabled people and specific groups of disabled people working on other issues to establish one.

Tackling barriers to participation

Traditional and even less traditional methods of engaging with and encouraging participation of residents often present particular barriers for disabled people. Efforts to identify and overcome barriers, working with disabled people, are well-documented. Overcoming barriers often centres on early discussions with disabled people about positive participation, accessible and focused communication, removing physical barriers, providing appropriate adjustments for face-to-face participation and necessary support and resources.

Some Local Authorities have found that simply removing barriers may not necessarily bring disabled people flooding to participate. Disabled people may have a record of low levels of participation. Outreach work, building confidence and making the case for how participation may improve services and make communities more inclusive has been needed. Disabled people may also be local residents who have a record of low levels of participation. Promoting examples of how previous participation led to better and more inclusive outcomes will be central to this: 'You said, we did' – where what 'we did' was something more inclusive!

Increasingly service delivery, engagement and participation across local authorities take place electronically, through online services, electronic communication or social media. Some disabled people appreciate this: it is how some younger people expect to participate. It can be helpful, for instance, for people who find face to face contact more challenging (like some people with autism) or who are unable for health reasons to travel. For others it creates huge new barriers, with access issues relating to new technology, costs of accessible technology and unfamiliarity. These methods of participation are likely to continue, particularly with reduced resources available to local authorities.⁴⁴

Some straightforward adjustments can be built into local authority services to improve access: for example, ensuring that accessible technology and adjustments are available for computers and equipment provided for public use in libraries, leisure centres or drop-in shops. This could include ergonomic keyboards and large screens, or the flexibility to provide more bespoke software for regular users in places like libraries.

Many local authorities have gone beyond simply removing the barriers and have worked with disabled and older people to identify issues in using electronic communication and to find ways to encourage their use, maximising the benefits both for individuals and the community more broadly. Being on-line is one important part of social and economic citizenship, offering access to everything from cheaper shopping deals to knowledge and social opportunities.⁴⁵

Leicester on line

CareOnLine is a free service provided by Leicestershire County Council which introduces computers and the Internet to disabled adults and their carers, especially those with no experience or who cannot leave home.

CareOnLine is an outreach service providing a complete package of advice, technical support and training into people's homes, to help overcome fear of technology and encourage learning. Their website provides a wealth of information and advice for the community. Learning to use new technology gives disabled people equal opportunities and the chance to communicate and take part in their local community and more widely, which they might otherwise find extremely difficult.

Just one example is that CareOnLine consulted Blaby District Council and the Tenants Association at Jubilee House Sheltered Housing scheme on whether they would like a computer. Colin Norman, the chairman of the association organised a meeting between CareOnLine and residents to discuss the idea and agree what the residents wanted.

CareOnLine installed a computer in the community lounge and residents were offered training. 14 people aged 65 to 85 attended the first course to begin developing skills in internet use, e-mail and word processing.

Local authorities may wish to:

- Review their current engagement and participation activities to assess the level of activity from disabled people.
- Work with disabled people and/or Disabled People's Organisations to identify specific barriers and ways to remove these.
- Consider positive measures to encourage engagement and participation with disabled people.
- Identify ways to remove barriers and improve online and electronic engagement to ensure that this is fully accessible for disabled people, and introduce specific projects to increase the take-up among disabled people of electronic communication and social media.

Italy

On 3 March 2021, the European Commission adopted the Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030 to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities in society, in line with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (adopted on 13 December 2006).

In 2001, the WHO approved and ratified the new International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) and recommended its use in member states.

It is thus recognized that disability results from the interaction between the characteristics of the person and the environment in which he or she lives and works. It is therefore essential to work on removing barriers of various kinds that hinder the exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities to be realized.

This requires the commitment of all social actors. This is in line to the stated WHO strategy of **Community-based Inclusive Development** to promote the empowerment of persons with disabilities and their organizations, promoting the **mainstreaming** of disability (i.e. the mainstreaming of disability issues into all social, economic, legislative, political and cultural policies and practices).

Awareness must be promoted that persons with disabilities are no longer objects of intervention, but subjects in their own right, whose participation must be guaranteed. Inclusion cannot be achieved without the direct participation of the persons concerned.

In pursuing the goal of an inclusive society, design and research activity based on the **participatory approach** is strategic, in order to design proposals that can influence cultures, policies and social practices for the effective inclusion of people with disabilities.

Equal participation in cultural social life must be guaranteed, Equal participation in social and cultural life must be guaranteed by removing barriers (physical ones and those generated by stereotypes) and improving mobility. All too often, urban areas present insurmountable obstacles (subways and other public transport not accessible, roads not practicable, public services also not accessible). On the other hand, many rural areas are isolated, not reached by services and therefore elderly and disabled people have difficulties not only in participating but also in receiving assistance.

In the field of **education**, cross-cutting policies and concrete measures are needed to ensure access to quality education for all and also to provide the technological tools to

facilitate learning. Strengthening specific teacher training and increasing the number of teachers for support are imperative.

As far as **employment** is concerned, employability must be promoted, awareness raised among companies to ensure non-discrimination. The political and administrative system should also provide the tools and support to also support self- and collective forms of enterprise.

Spain

In the last decades disabilities have become a major part of our everyday lives as a result of many regulations and policies that have been established in order to prevent discrimination of these groups and to promote measures of empowering them. WHO (World Health Organization), has declared that people with disabilities that are approximately 1 billion around the world, have all rights as they are humans.

Even though that their rights have been recognized and established in the majority of institution in the European union, they still have to face discrimination in the labor force, as there are no job opportunities, they have less educational practices, help and tools in their hands, while they cannot be included in the society due to the fact that there are less services and activities for them.

- Making an **inclusive educational system** is very important. Each state of the EU needs to make sure that they provide quality educational system to all; kids, teenagers and adults.
- In order for people with disabilities to **feel included in the social life and culture**, there is need of creating policies that themselves could participate or that will help them involve in all phases of the policy making.
- **Equal participation in cultural social life** must be guaranteed. Equal participation in social and cultural life must be guaranteed by removing barriers (physical ones and those generated by stereotypes) and improving mobility. All too often, urban areas present insurmountable obstacles (subways and other public transport not accessible, roads not practicable, public services also not

accessible). On the other hand, many rural areas are isolated, not reached by services and therefore elderly and disabled people have difficulties not only in participating but also in receiving assistance.

- The most important is to **raise awareness** to all people about those that have disabilities. It is crucial to stress that people with disabilities should not be treated in bad manners like “objects”, but as humans with their own rights in life, sports, employment, education, entertainment etc. However, awareness should be also raised among the people with disabilities, because in order for them to feel included they should be participating in general to activities and fields of life.

The policy and framework that the ACCESS4LL is deriving from is the Disability Rights and Strategy of 2021-2030 that the European Commission has adopted this year, as well as the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Lastly, WHO strategy tries to promote the empowerment of people with disabilities throughout the Community-based Inclusive Development.

The target group is policy makers at local, national or EU level and especially the ones that are able to serve positive policy change in the fields of education, employment, cultural life, training, sports, health services etc.

Furthermore, stakeholders like the government, schools, local council, NGOs are groups that are also consisted to be target audience of the project.

Some activities and recommendations for the stakeholders in order to promote the rights of disable people but also to empower them are

- The community and municipality should create activities outdoor or indoors that firstly could be reached by everyone especially to the ones that have mobility difficulties. Furthermore, they should improve the transportation of people with disabilities living in rural regions that public services are not accessible, or the transportation is not available.
- The stakeholders that are able to help in order for people with disabilities to be included in society and business life are the schools, training centers and the most fundamental government.

- The government should provide not only the ones with disabilities but also the businesses with tools and training to provide discrimination in workforce. Moreover, it should create job opportunities for those with disabilities and training programs in order to boost their skills in specific fields of employment.
- Regarding schools and training centers the government again should have action. To be more specific, the government should train the educators into inclusive activities and increase the number of teachers that have studied and worked in the field of disabilities. Furthermore, the schools and training centers should have necessary tools and ensure the quality of education.
- On the other hand, educators that are currently in schools should be trained further to this field and try to create an inclusive environment in their teaching classes, while they need to raise awareness to the other students and try to cultivate the feeling of respect in their person.

As we have seen, positive policies have served to increase the number of employees with disabilities, but there is a lack of specific criteria to promote and develop sustainability in companies from a social point of view. New policies should emphasize, for example, facilitating the accessibility of company information on the protection of PwDs rather than simply complying with laws and avoiding sanctions for non-compliance, while schools and educators should try to create an environment of respect, diminish discrimination and help people and students with disabilities to feel included.



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