

Work inclusion of persons with disabilities

How can we promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the EU?





Digital Skills and
Jobs Coalition



Digital Skills and
Jobs Coalition

A research made by



www.dlearn.eu

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Foreword



This report presents the results of the research “Work inclusion of persons with disabilities”, a self-sustained survey promoted by the European Digital Learning Network ETS – Dlearn - over the past months to collect opinions and views about the topic of including disadvantaged persons in the workforce.

We collected more than 2000 questionnaires from people involved in this topic – employers, managers, HR Directors as well as people with a disability and the experts of EU policies on disability and employment, with the aim of tracking the main drivers governing this issue and trying to understand the current state of – the art within the European countries.

DLEARN – European Digital Learning Network ETS – is indeed a young reality, but still its journey until today has been outstanding and full of satisfactions. The wide experiences, know-how and strong relations of the involved members – which are actively committed to strengthen the voice of the network – have allowed us to become an acknowledged and influent player in the field of Education & Training. EU authorities and institutions, together with relevant sectorial organisations, look at us as a reliable and competent partner.

We are at the front line when it comes to raise awareness on the key role assumed by digital knowledge, a critical component today for the creation of a competitive economy and of a truly inclusive society. We strongly believe in the educational opportunities brought by digital technologies. Therefore, we created the network, and therefore we keep on working so hard: to produce – and offer – know-how, contents, models and solutions which will shape the future education at all the levels. I am proud of our accomplishments, and even more confident for the future progress of our work.

I invite you to analyse this report and to contact us if you wish to comment and give us your feedback. To know more about our network, visit our website www.dlearn.eu

Gianluca Coppola, President of the European Digital Learning Network ETS

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1. Executive summary

The European Digital Learning Network ETS – DLEARN – aims to embrace the challenges brought by the digital transformation in terms of digital skills mismatch and digital learning opportunities. The 47% of Europeans is not properly digitally skilled, yet soon 90% of jobs will require some level of digital skills.

We believe in the value of SHARING, CONNECTING, MULTIPLYING and ENHANCING the potential of our members, local territories and people.

Constant changes in economy and society have been urging governments to emphasize the contribution of education to a wide range of newly required skills and competencies. 21st Century skills are considered to be key enablers of responsible citizenship in a ICT-based economy.

A successful education and training in our knowledge society depends increasingly on the confident, competent and innovative use of ICT.

DLEARN wants to bring closer the experiences and voices of local territories and people to EU policies. Nowadays this process is hindered by the presence of bigger interests, notably big corporations or umbrella organizations. With our activities and through our network we want to minimize this gap, through the promotion of bottom-up initiatives, such as:

- Closer cooperation and enhancement of our activities to a higher level through periodic project labs;
- Tight networking activities and lobbying to achieve a fruitful accreditation of local needs to the relevant EU Commission DGs;
- Improving existing experiences and knowledge of digital learning through sharing of practices and creation of efficient business opportunities.

Dlearn is a network made of members based all over Europe. In the framework of our activities, DLEARN – in cooperation with the partners promoted a survey to collect experiences, issues and opinions about the employability and work inclusion for disadvantaged people. The initiative is part of the Digital Skills and Job Coalition's pledge awarded to Dlearn, not granted by any public funds. With the survey Work inclusion of disadvantaged people our objective was to understand the point of view of professionals, employers, managers, HR Directors, people with a disability and the experts of EU policies on disability and employment, thus, to collect feedback that will be shared among all European Countries and EU institutions from people that daily deals with problematics of work involvement of disadvantaged people.

We asked participants to share their point of view through a bottom-up approach, and this report aims to share their ideas among all EU countries and institutions.

1.1 Methodology

The survey was promoted to collect issues, practices and possible improvements in work inclusion of persons with disabilities. The questionnaire investigated different issues which are influencing the situation nowadays.

The investigation interested three main groups:

- Employers, Managing Directors, HR Directors
- Persons with a disability
- Experts of EU policies on disability and employment

Each respondent had the possibility to answer questions specifically related to their position, allowing for an in-depth insight of the current situation in work possibilities for disadvantaged people.

Ultimately, our aim was to deliver a comprehensive picture of the situation in these three sectors, so to understand the needs, problems, practices and possible improvements. The statistical results, both from a qualitative and quantitative point of view, have been analysed with the purpose of drafting recommendations. The recommendations, together with the analysis of the results, will be addressed to the stakeholders active in work inclusion of disadvantaged people.

1.2 Data gathering

The European Digital Learning Network ETS, together with its partners in this activity, as described above, has promoted the survey through different channels. The most used have been:

- Social Media, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn
- Newsletters
- Blog posts
- Websites
- Emails

The contacts used are those of the network, together with the partners' mailing list and social media contacts.

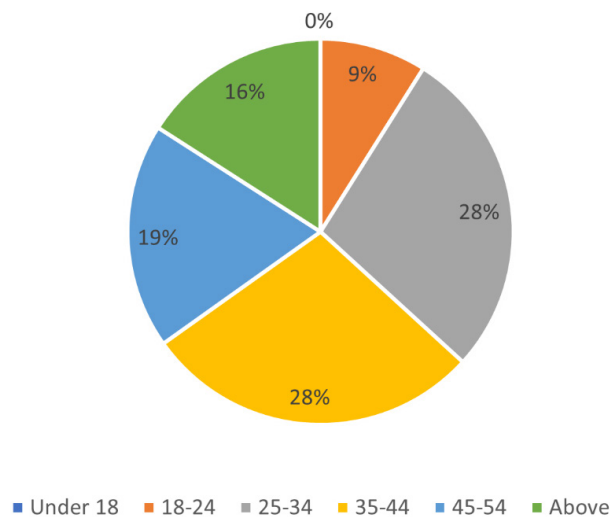
This approach allowed the survey to be spread all over Europe and the total number of respondents is 2147.

Country	Count	%
Italy	276	13%
France	178	8%
Spain	167	8%
Greece	159	7%
Germany	154	7%
Portugal	136	6%
Cyprus	134	6%
Belgium	88	4%
Hungary	77	4%
Bulgaria	76	4%
Slovenia	68	3%
Romania	65	3%
Netherlands	56	3%
Poland	48	2%
Croatia	37	2%
Malta	37	2%
Finland	35	2%
Ireland	35	2%
Austria	34	2%
United Kingdom	34	2%
Other	34	2%
Slovakia	32	1%
Serbia	27	1%
Lithuania	24	1%
Republic of North Macedonia	22	1%
Denmark	21	1%
Sweden	21	1%
Czech Republic	14	1%
Albania	13	1%
Latvia	12	1%
Luxembourg	11	1%
Norway	11	1%
Estonia	5	0%
Swiss Federation	5	0%
Turkey	1	0%
Iceland	0	0%
Montenegro	0	0%

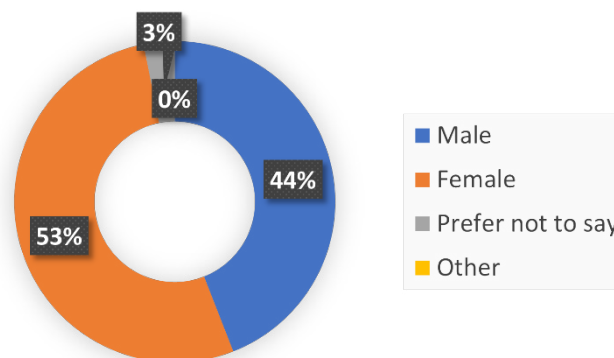
The countries which participated the most to the survey were: Italy 13%, France 8%, Spain 8%, Greece 7%, Germany 7%, Portugal 6% and Cyprus 6%, etc. Other countries participated on the survey in smaller amount, two countries did not reply.

The questionnaire also investigates some **demographic data** of the respondents.

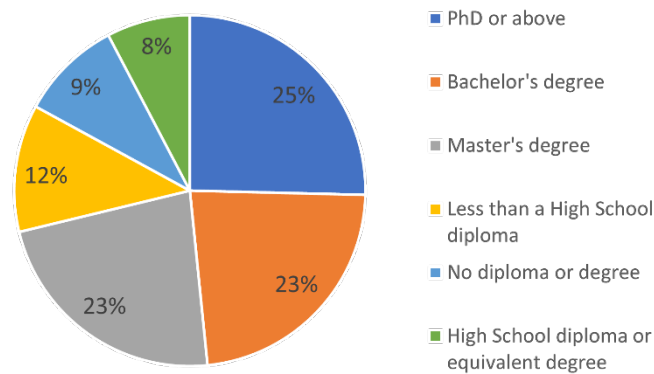
The biggest group considering the **age of respondents** is within the 25–34 years and 35–44 years of age (28 % each). Smaller groups are the participants of 45–54 years of age (19 %) and more, above 54 (16%). The smallest number of respondents, 9 %, belongs to the youngest group of the participants of the age of 18–24 years. The respondents were all the age above 18 years.



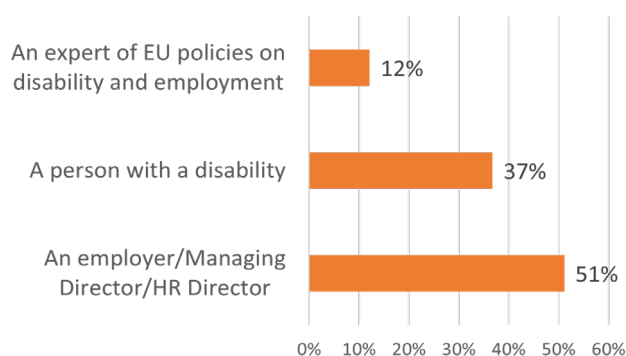
Regarding the **gender** of the participants, the biggest part belongs to female participants (53 %), followed by male respondents (44 %). 3 % of participants preferred not to say and no one chose other option.



We asked the participants also about the highest **level of education** they completed. The answers showed that majority of participants have reached the highest level of education (PhD and above), this group creates 25 %. A little less, 23 % of participants, reached Bachelor’s degree. Master’s degree level of education has the same percentage of participants. Less than a High School diploma has 12 % of respondents. No diploma or any degree has 9 %. 8 % of participants has High School diploma or equivalent degree.



Three sectors participated in this survey. Each sector had a group of respondents: **an expert of EU policies on disability and employment, a person with a disability and an employer, managing director or HR director.**



As we can see in the chart, the majority of participants, 51 %, are in the positions of employers, managing directors and HR directors. Persons with a disability created 37 % of respondents and 12 % of them are experts of EU policies on disability and employment.

1.3 What does disability mean for individuals and society?

There are many different types of disabilities such as intellectual, physical, sensory, and mental illness. The **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** defines persons with disabilities as *‘those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’*. According to the information published by the World Bank “one billion people, or 15% of the world’s population, experience some form of disability”. Only in the European Union it is around 87 million people. Adverse socioeconomic outcomes, such as lower levels of schooling, poorer health outcomes, lower employment rates, and higher rates of poverty, are more likely to affect people with disabilities. Disability may also increase the risk of poverty through lack of employment and education opportunities, lower wages, and increased cost of living with a disability.

On the other hand, one billion people worldwide who have impairments represent a pool of talent for both employment and the creation of new goods and services. They do, however, encounter daily obstacles that limit their capacity to equally contribute to the well-being of our society. This way not

only their rights are violated, but our society and its variety are also suffering. Considering the value that these individuals could provide if they were working, it also has a detrimental impact on the economy.

The European Commission states that only half of persons with disabilities are employed compared to 3 in 4 persons without disabilities. 28.4% of persons with disabilities are at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to 17.8% of persons without disabilities. Only 29.4% of persons with disabilities attain a tertiary degree compared to 43.8% of those without disabilities and 52% of persons with disabilities feel discriminated against. These numbers call for an action and the EU and its Member States claim to be committed to improving social and economic situation of persons with disabilities. As the work ambient changes with time, it brings new challenges as well as possibilities, like those connected to digitalisation.

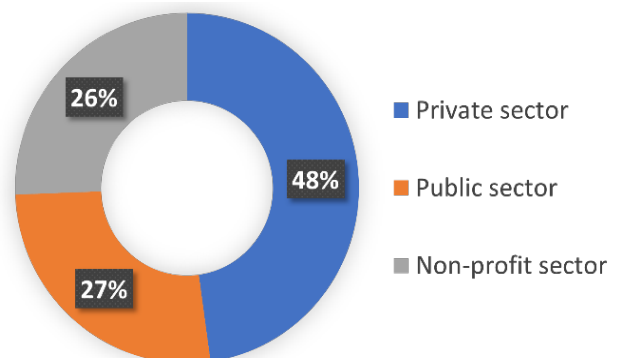
In the next chapter we will look at the answers of the survey participants and analyse the precious information collected from them.

2. Analysis of the three sectors

When we speak about involvement of persons with disabilities in the work process, the first we must try to understand are the three core parts to be combined in their needs, possibilities, expectations, and areas in which they meet or need to improve. Three main components, which if put together correctly, can create the required result. In this case we are talking about those who can provide the work opportunity - management of the organisations, employers, managing directors and human resources directors; people who despite being disabled in a certain way, want to contribute to society, use their skills, creativity, abilities and finally those who know the problematic on the highest level – the experts of EU policies on disability and employment. In our analysis we will take a closer look on all three sectors one by one, asking the questions which can help us to understand their situation and opinions and will help us to see the possible areas where the action is needed the most.

2.1 An employer/Managing Director/HR Director

In the following section we will analyze a group of people composed by employers, Managing Directors and HR Directors. Most of our participants in the group of management are those working in the private companies. They create 48 % (525 participants). The participants from public sector make 27 % (292 participant) and non-profit sector reached 26 % with 281 participants in the survey.

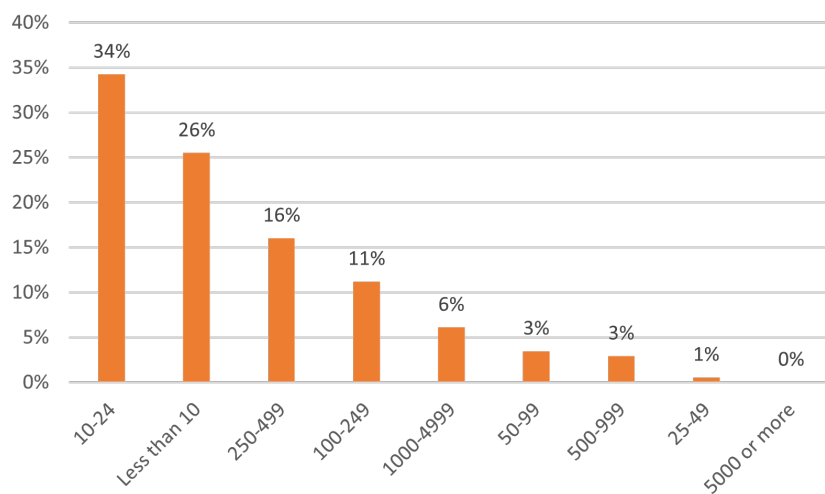


What is the main business of your company/organisation?

Most of the respondents replied that their main business was the health and social work (19 %, 209 participants). Tightly after them there are those who work in the field of education (18.4 %, 202 participants). On the third rank is the area of finances with 13.2 % and 145 participants. The table below shows the composition of our respondents regarding their business area.

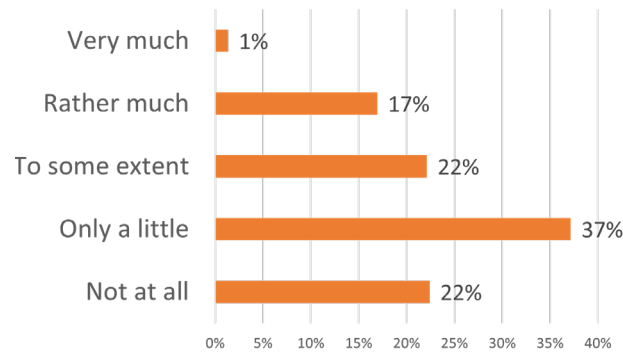
Answer	Count	%
Health and social work	209	19.0%
Education	202	18.4%
Finance	145	13.2%
Hotels and restaurants	112	10.2%
Transport/storage/communication	86	7.8%
Agriculture, forestry	79	7.2%
Wholesale/retail/repair	56	5.1%
Real estate/renting/business services	54	4.9%
Other community, social and personal services	54	4.9%
Manufacturing	45	4.1%
Construction	29	2.6%
Electricity, gas and water supply	23	2.1%
Other	4	0.4%
Fishing	0	0.0%
Mining and quarrying	0	0.0%
Public administration	0	0.0%

The companies with the number of employees between 10 to 24 create the biggest group in the survey. They make 34 % of all companies/ organisations (376 respondents). Smaller companies/ organisations are the second most represented in the survey with 26 % (280 respondents). The third rank belongs to those with 250 to 499 employees (16 %, 176 respondents) and the fourth position belongs to the companies/ organisations with 100 to 249 employees (11 %, 123 employees). This survey did not participate any company with more than 5 thousand employees.



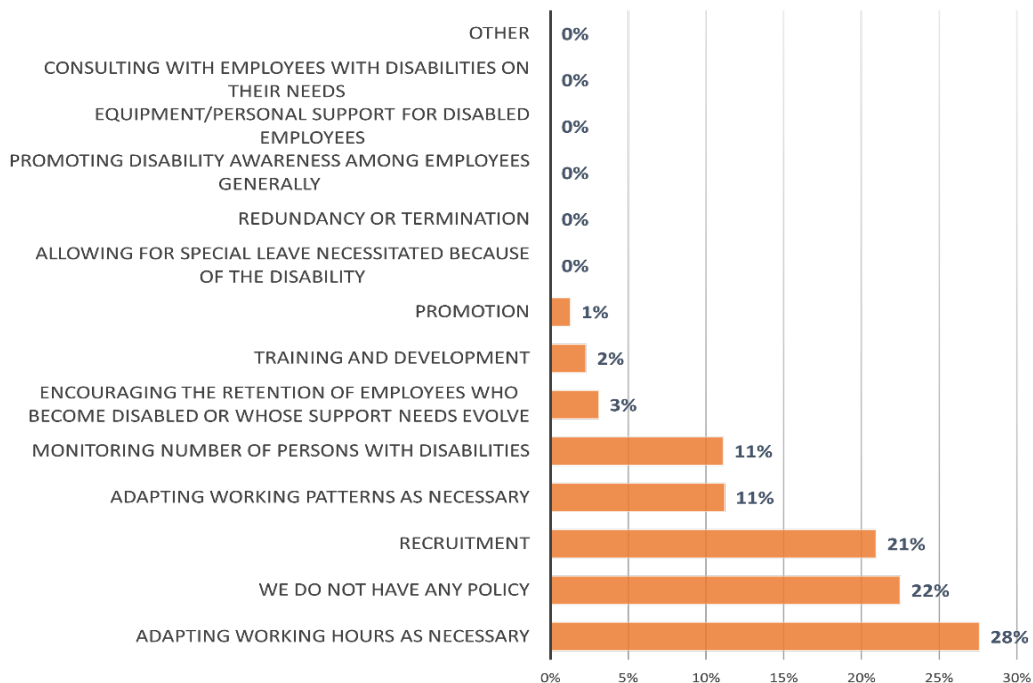
Are you familiar with the main international and national frameworks about the employment rights of persons with disabilities?

The most common answer to the question was “only a little”, answered by 408 participants (37%). The second most common answer with 22% – 246 participants was “not at all”. Only with 3 respondents less ranked the third answer “to some extent” (243 respondents, 22%). “Rather much” replied 17% (186 respondents) while “Very much” was the answer stated by only 1% (15 respondents).



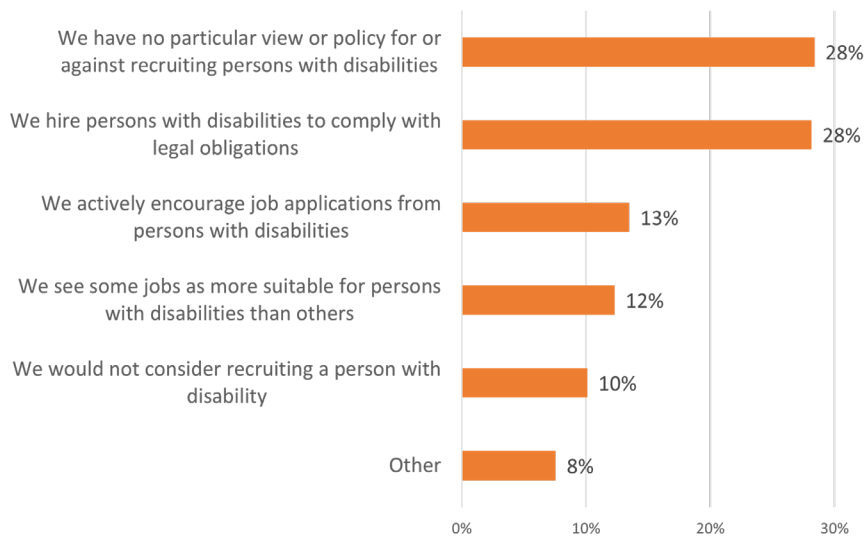
We asked the respondents who manage the companies/organisations or their parts whether they had a policy or practice which concerns the persons with disabilities. The most stated answers were these:

- Adapting working hours as necessary (303 respondents, 28%),
- We do not have any policy (247 respondents, 22%),
- Recruitment (230 respondents, 21%).

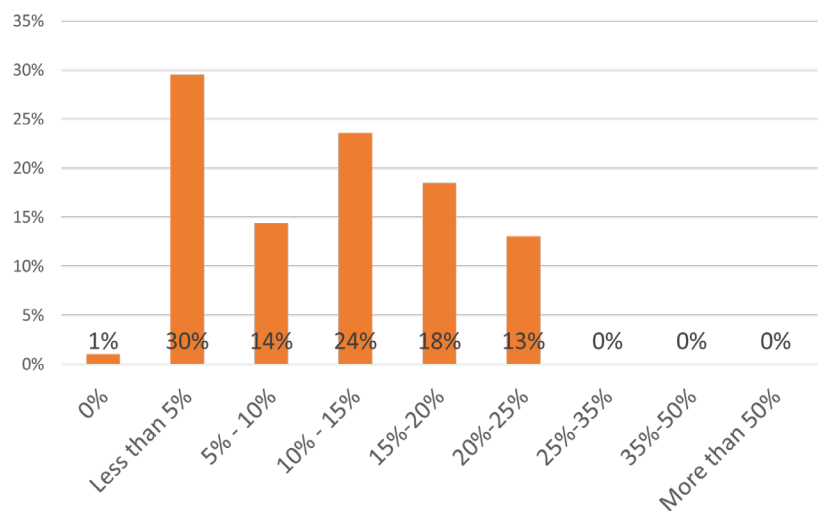


Which of the following best describes your organisation's attitudes towards the recruitment of persons with disabilities?

“We have no particular view or policy for or against recruiting persons with disabilities” was the answer of 312 respondents and with 28 % ranked the first position among the answers. The second one with the same percentage but with the count of 309 respondents was the answer “we hire persons with disabilities to comply with legal obligations”. The result of 13% (148 respondents) belongs to the answer “we actively encourage job applications from persons with disabilities” (148 respondents). 135 participants answered “we see some jobs as more suitable for persons with disabilities than others” and “we would not consider recruiting a person with disability” stated 111 respondents. 83 respondents chose the option “other” but did not specify the answer.



We also wanted to know from our respondents the percentage of persons with disabilities over the total number of employees at their company or organisation and we explained to the respondents that for the purposes of this survey we ask about the persons with disabilities included those who had long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.



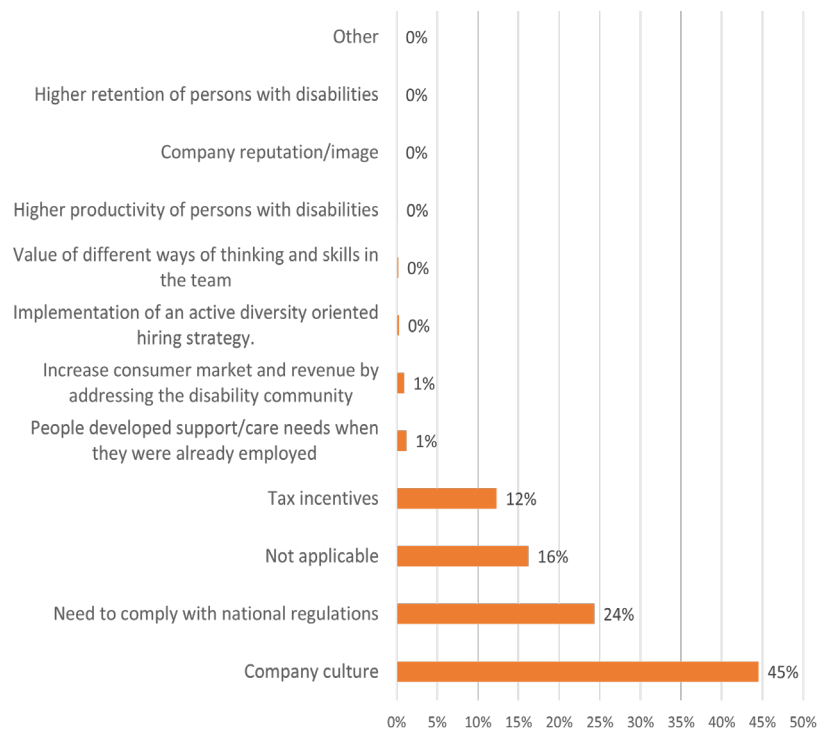
The first position belongs to the answer “Less than 5%” (30% - 324 respondents). The second most stated answer was “10% - 15%” (24 %, 259 respondents) and the third ranked the option 15%-20% (18% - 203 respondents). As we see from the chart, people with disabilities do not make more 25 % of employees in any of the companies/organisations, while 11 respondents (1%) answered the percentage of persons with disabilities over the total number of employees at their company/ organisation is zero.

In this occasion we searched further and asked those who do not employ/recruit persons with disabilities, what are their reasons or barriers for doing so. We learned from them that “No-one with a disability has ever applied for employment in the workplace” was the main reason. This answer chose 890 respondents (81 %). The second most chosen option was “Not applicable” which gained 103 votes (9%). The third ranked other reasons, chosen by 47 respondents (4%). These were not further specified.

Answer	Count	%
No-one with a disability has ever applied for employment in the workplace	890	81%
Not applicable	103	9%
Other	47	4%
Some have applied, but not been recruited, on grounds other than their disability	23	2%
Some have been employed in the past, but subsequently left	21	2%
Some have applied, but not been recruited due to their disability, which was considered as a barrier for a particular job	14	1%

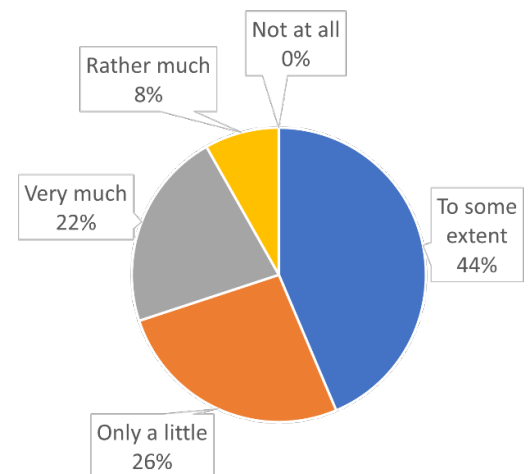
We also wanted to investigate the other part of respondents among the employers, those who stated that there are persons with disabilities among their employees, and we asked them the reasons for employing them. Chart below shows which answers the respondents chose. “company culture” was the reason of 489 respondents (45%) and gained the first rank among as the most stated answer. 267 participants (24 %) chose the option “Need to comply with national regulations” and this was the second most voted choice. The third option, “not applicable” was replied by 178 respondents (16 %).

The options “company reputation/ image” and “higher retention of persons with disabilities” were not chosen by any respondent.

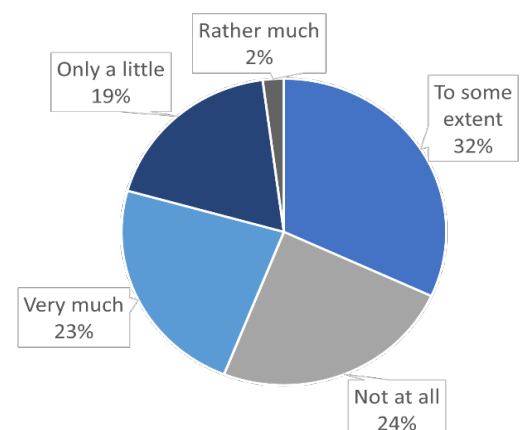


Do you think that better exploiting information and communication technology (ICT) and ICT tools in the recruitment process could increase the number of persons with disabilities among your employees?

Asking this question, we wanted to know from the respondents whether they believe that the proportion of employees with disabilities may rise if they used information and communication technology (ICT) and ICT tools more effectively during the hiring process. 44 % (479 participants) answered “To some extent” while “Only a little” chose as an answer 289 respondents (26 %). Fewer of them, 240, replied “Very much” and make 22 % of answers. “Rather much” (90 participants, 8%) was the last among the chosen options. “Not at all” gained no vote.



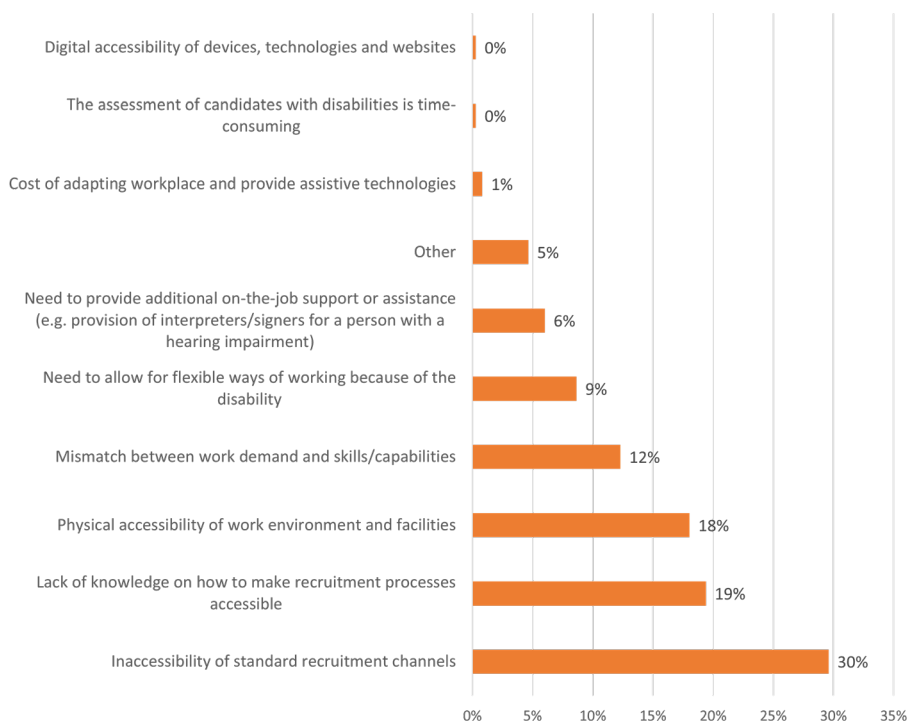
We were also interested in the ICT and ICT tools on the job and their potential to increase the number of persons with disabilities among the employees. As it resulted, the most of respondents, 350, incline to the answer “to some extent” (32 %) while 265 of them (24 %) believe that it doesn’t have any influence. Instead, 256 preferences (23%) gained the answer “very much”. “only a little” chose 204 participants (19 %) and “rather much” received 23 preferences (2%).



According to your company/organisation's experience, what are the main obstacles/costs, if any, to the recruitment of persons with disabilities?

The opinions of the participants of the survey are equally precious to us as their experiences. Here they shared with us their views on the main, if any, obstacles/costs, to the recruitment of persons with disabilities in their companies/organisations. In the chart we can see that 30 % of them (325 respondents) stated it was “Inaccessibility of standard recruitment channels”.

The second ranked “Lack of knowledge on how to make recruitment processes accessible” with 213 preferences (19%). The third most voted answer was “Physical accessibility of work environment and facilities” with 198 preferences (18%). The option “Other” despite of receiving 51 preferences and reaching 5 % of answers, remained without further comments. “The assessment of candidates with disabilities is time-consuming” and “Digital accessibility of devices, technologies and websites” received 3 votes each but remained the least voted with total of 0 % among the options.

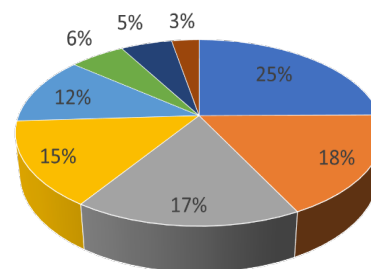


The employers' experiences reflected into the answers they provided to this survey, on the topic of the possibilities that could facilitate the recruitment of persons with disabilities in their companies and organisations. The table below resumes their votes for each answer. The most of them chose “improvement of physical accessibility of work environments and facilities” (213 votes, 19 %). The second ranked was “making specific requests to job centres/careers offices” (189 preferences, 17%) and the third most voted answer was “Using job advertisements welcoming persons with disabilities”, with 15 % (164 votes).

Answer	Count	%
Improve physical accessibility of work environments and facilities	213	19%
Making specific requests to job centres/careers offices	189	17%
Using job advertisements welcoming persons with disabilities	164	15%
Getting training about how to be inclusive during recruitment processes and on-the-job	156	14%
Set up dedicated recruitment processes for persons with disabilities	123	11%
Increase use of hardware and software specifically designed for persons with disabilities or following the principles of universal design	76	7%
Improve digital accessibility of devices, technologies and websites	69	6%
Using dedicated platforms for recruitment of persons with disabilities	65	6%
Adapting assessment tools to the disability of the applicant	43	4%
Other	0	0%

Retention of an employee with a disability is the next question we asked the respondents. According to their company/organisation’s experiences, the “Lack of training opportunities” is the main problem.

This answer was chosen by 189 respondents (25 %). As the second one ranked the option “No specific obstacle/cost compared to retention of people without disabilities” (134 preferences, 18%) and the third one which gained 128 preferences (17 %) was “Mismatch between work demand and skills/capabilities”. The option “Other” remained without further comment.



- Lack of training opportunities
- No specific obstacle/cost compared to retention of people without disabilities
- Mismatch between work demand and skills/capabilities
- Lack of career prospects for employees
- Cost of adapting workplace and provide assistive technologies
- Attitudes of colleagues making employees with disabilities feel uncomfortable
- Other
- Cost of providing additional on-the-job support or assistance (e.g. provision of interpreters/signers for a person with a hearing impairment)

According to your company/organisation's experience, what could you do, as an employer, to remove barriers to the retention of persons with disabilities?

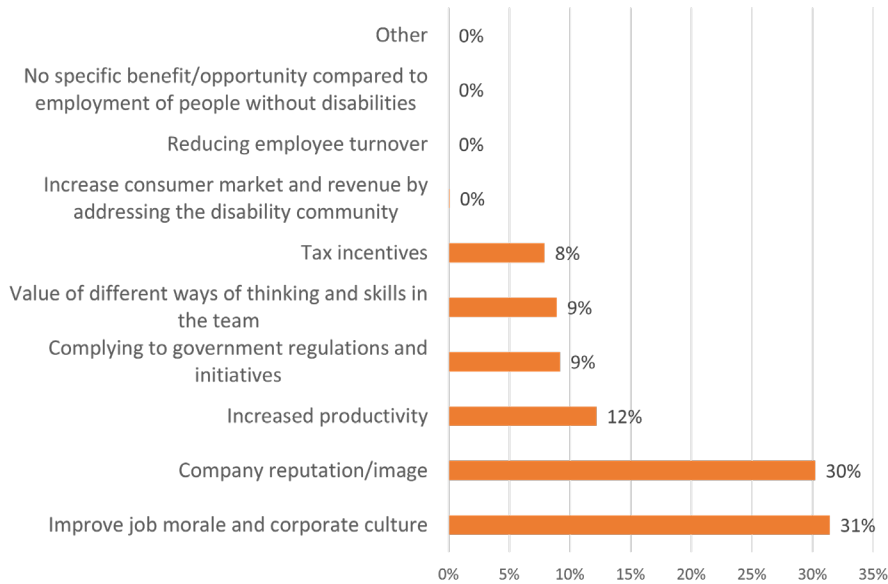
Our respondents were asked to select top three answers from the offered options, and this way to give us the feedback on the topic of removing barriers to the retention of persons with disabilities according to their company/organisation's experience.

The answer which gained the most votes (278) was “promoting flexible ways of working” with 25 % of preferences. The second most voted option, “providing specific training for persons with disabilities” gained 234 votes which is 21 %. The third most successful was “increase use of hardware and software specifically designed for persons with disabilities or following the principles of universal design” which received 226 votes (21 %). The option “other” got 20 preferences (2%) but remained without further comment.

Answer	Count	%
Promoting flexible ways of working	278	25%
Providing specific training for persons with disabilities	234	21%
Increase use of hardware and software specifically designed for persons with disabilities or following the principles of universal design	226	21%
Providing specific training for the co-workers of persons with disabilities	156	14%
Developing a strategy for the inclusion of persons with disabilities	117	11%
Awareness raising of employers, HR staff and employees	67	6%
Other	20	2%

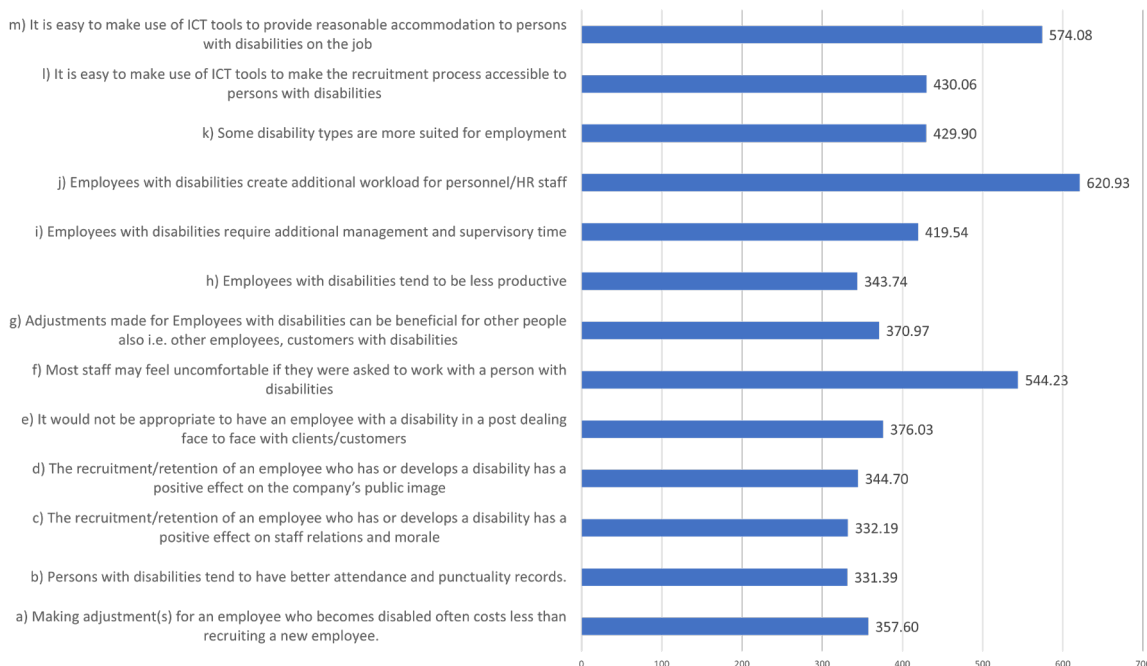
Employing persons with disabilities may carry certain obstacles, but let's give a look at the brighter side of the problematics – the benefits and opportunities of hiring persons with disabilities according to the opinions of the survey participants. These are three most voted benefits in the opinions of the respondents: “Improve job morale and corporate culture” (345 preferences, 31%), “company reputation/image” (332 respondents, 30%) and “Increased productivity” (134 participants, 12%).

The answer “increase consumer market and revenue by addressing the disability community” received one vote (0%), while the options “reducing employee turnover” and “no specific benefit/opportunity compared to employment of people without disabilities” did not receive any vote.



The methodology employed to analyse data gathered from this issue simply gave a weighted average to each option which requested a rate for the measures provided. Respondents were asked to state how strongly they agree or disagree with each statement. The weighted average each statement received is shown in the chart.

We can see that the answer with the highest weighed average of 620.93 is “Employees with disabilities create additional workload for personnel/HR staff”. With the weighted average of 574.08 follows “It is easy to make use of ICT tools to provide reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities on the job”. The third one ranked the statement “Most staff may feel uncomfortable if they were asked to work with a person with disabilities”, which received the weighted average of 544.23.



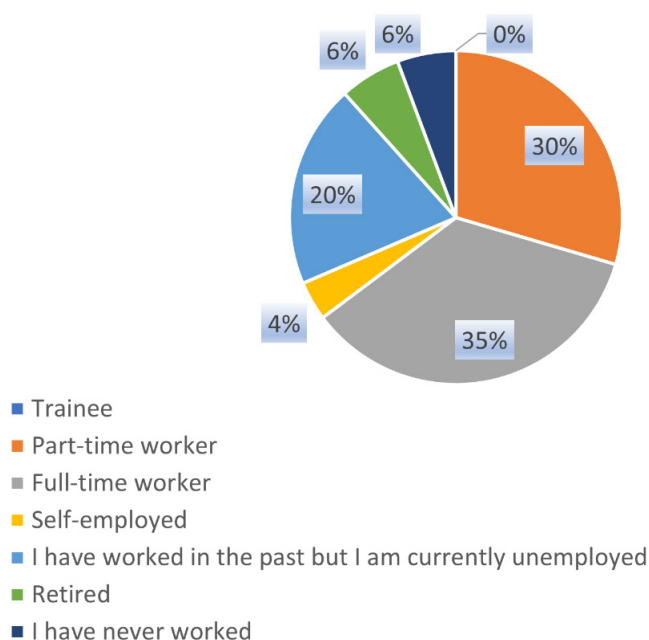
2.2 A person with a disability

The second group of people who participated in this survey consisted on persons with a disability.

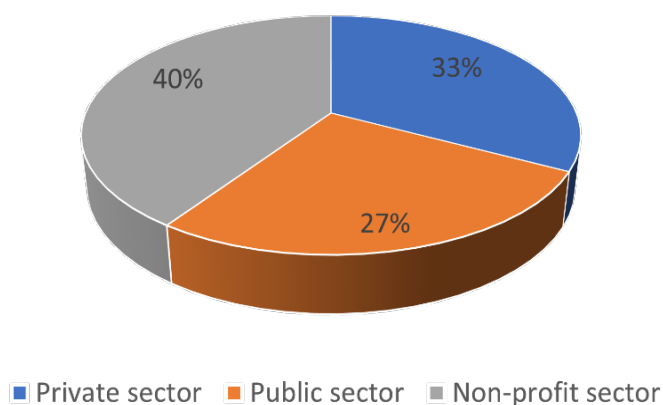
Persons with disabilities and their jobs

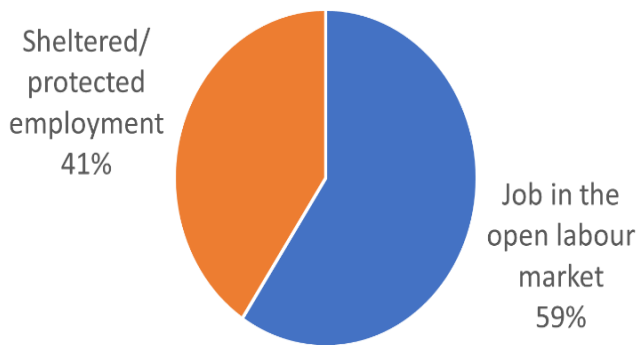
Among the respondents of this survey the most of persons with disabilities are those who work full-time. They create 35 % (278 persons). The second largest group is “Part-time worker” which makes 30 % with 233 votes. The third one ranked the answer “I have worked in the past, but I am currently unemployed” which was chosen by 156 respondents (20%).

Retired people make 6% the respondents and the same percentage belongs to those who have never worked. Self-employed respondents represent 4 % of survey participants. Among the respondents there is no trainee.



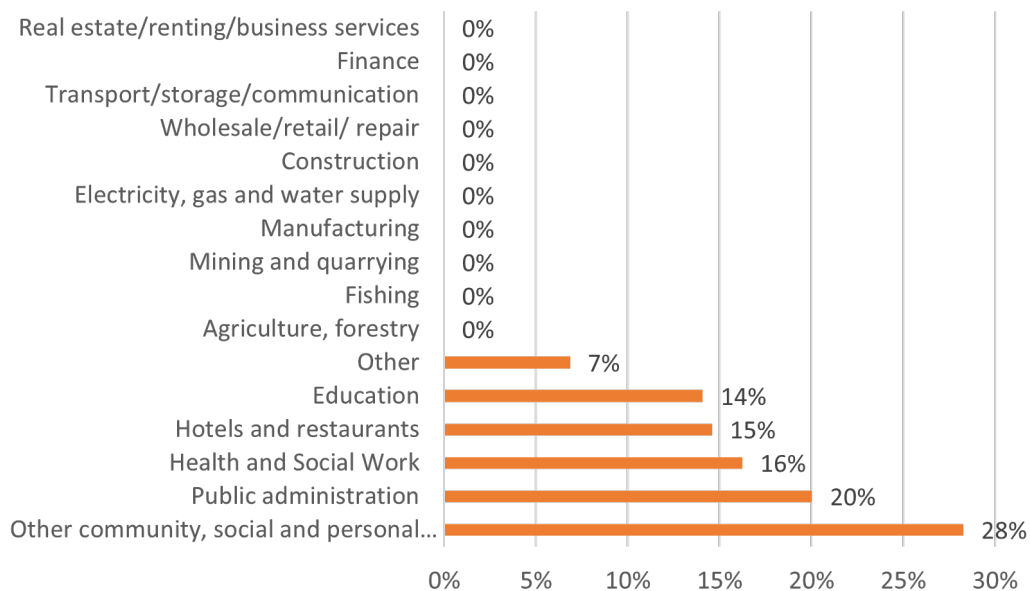
The non-profit sector seems to be the most welcoming for persons with disabilities, as it was chosen by 319 participants and with 40% it makes the biggest part of the answers it is followed by private sector which gained 33 % (258 participants) and the least voted with 27 % is the public sector, which employs 212 of the respondents.





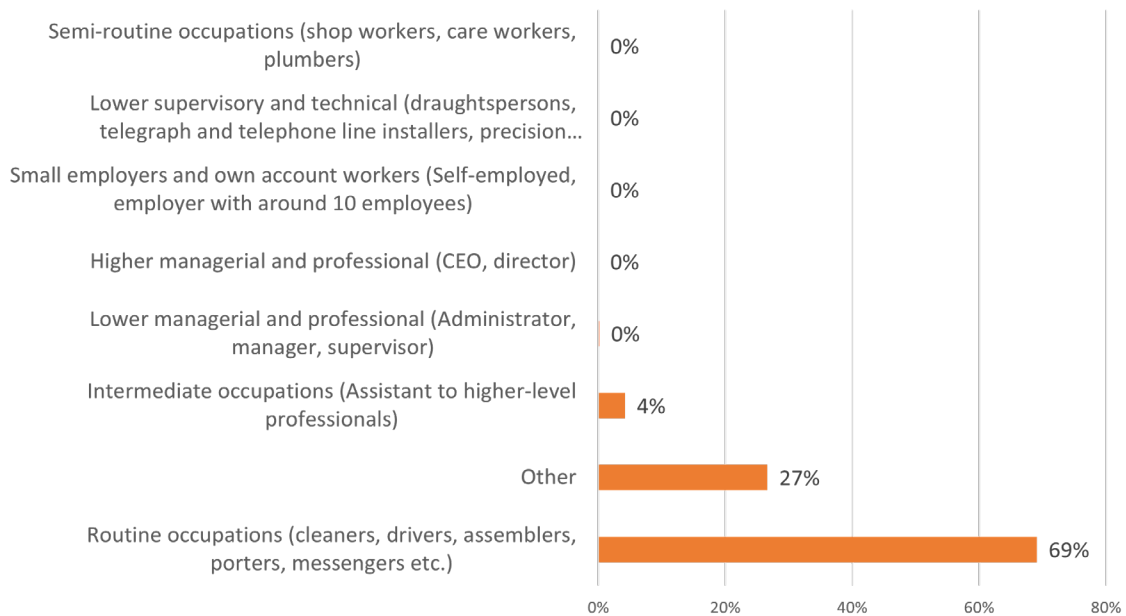
The respondents from the group of persons with disabilities told us what kind of job they had. In the case of being retired or unemployed, we asked them to refer to their last experience. The results show that 59 % (468 participants) have or had job in the open labour market and 41 % (321 participants) have or had sheltered/protected employment.

We also asked them about the job which they do. If retired or unemployed, they referred to their last experience. “Other community, social and personal services” was the most voted option by 223 respondents (28%). The second most voted is “Public administration” with 158 preferences (20 %) and the 3rd is Health and Social Work with 128 votes (16 %).



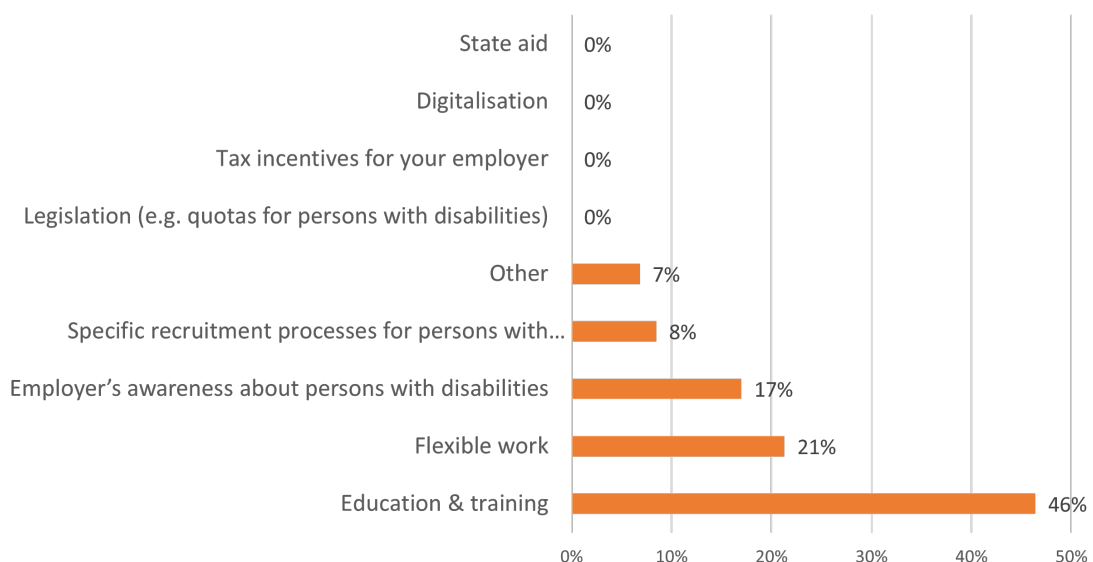
Concerning the job position that they had, the routine occupations, such as cleaners, drivers, assemblers, porters, messengers etc., ranked the first position among the answers with 69 % (545 participants). The second most common was the answer “Other” which gained 27 % and was voted by 210 respondents. The third one ranked “Intermediate occupations (Assistant to higher-level professionals)”, it is the job position of 33 respondents (4%).

One respondent chose the answer Lower managerial and professional (Administrator, manager, supervisor) which represents 0 % among other answers. Job positions of “Higher managerial and professional (CEO, director)”, “Small employers and own account workers (Self-employed, employer with around 10 employees)”, “Lower supervisory and technical (draughtspersons, telegraph and telephone line installers, precision instrument makers, electronic fitters etc.)” and “Semi-routine occupations (shop workers, care workers, plumbers)” were not voted by any respondent.



As it is important to know what makes the difference and helps the persons with disabilities to get the jobs, we asked the participants about their own experiences. In case of being retired or unemployed, we asked them to refer to the last experience. The most effective according to the respondents is Education and training, for this answer voted 46 % (366 respondents). The second most helpful is Flexible work with 168 preferences (21 %). The option “Employer’s awareness about persons with disabilities” received 134 preferences (17 %) and ranked on the third position.

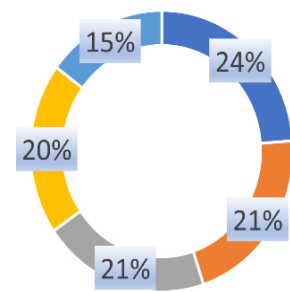
Follows the “Specific recruitment processes for persons with disabilities” (67 preferences, 8 %) and the answer “Other” (54 preferences, 7 %). The options “Legislation (e.g., quotas for persons with disabilities)”, “Tax incentives for your employer”, “Digitalisation” and “State aid” did not receive any vote.



When we asked them what helped them on the job or to keep the job, the “Legislation (e.g., quotas for persons with disabilities)” was the main help for the respondents – persons with disabilities, on their job. This answer chose 137 participants (17 %). “Other” was the answer with 124 preferences (16 %) and the third one ranked “Specific recruitment processes for persons with disabilities” with 120 preferences (15 %). The table below shows the complete summary of the answers.

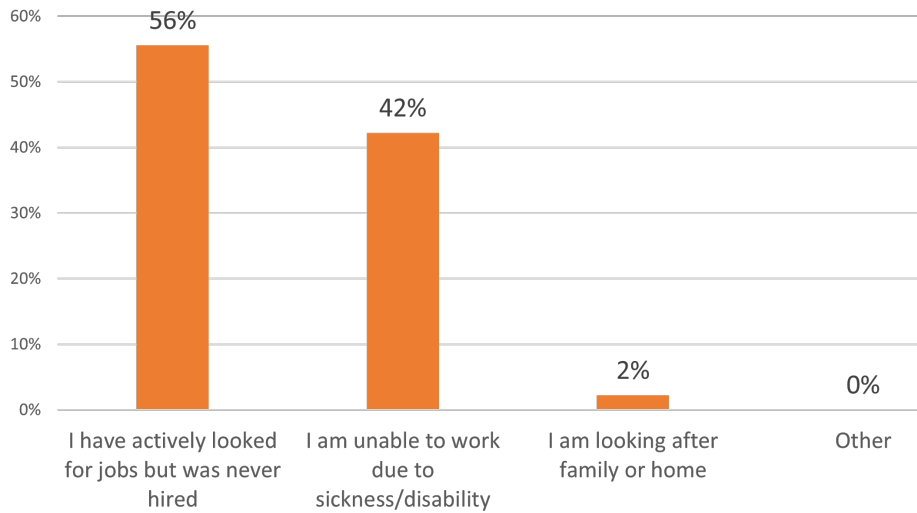
Answer	Count	W
Legislation (e.g., quotas for persons with disabilities)	137	17%
Other	124	16%
Specific recruitment processes for persons with disabilities	120	15%
Education & training	106	13%
Employer’s awareness about persons with disabilities	89	11%
Flexible work	78	10%
Digitalisation	56	7%
State aid	45	6%
Tax incentives for your employer	34	4%

Regarding whether their job is coherent to their CV or qualifications, 24% of the respondents (188 preferences) consider their jobs very much coherent with their qualifications. “Not at all was” the second most voted answer by 166 respondents (21%) and only four less votes received the answer “rather much” (162 preferences, 20.5 %). 156 preferences (20%) received the option “To some extent” and “Only a little” chose 117 respondents (15 %).



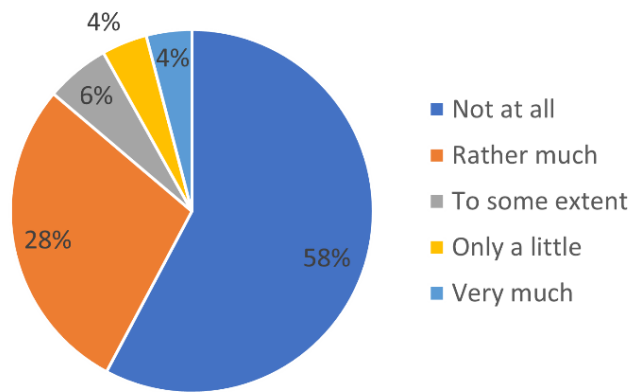
- Very much
- Not at all
- Rather much
- To some extent
- Only a little

To those respondents who did not find a job coherent with their CV/qualifications, we asked about the reasons for this situation. The most of them stated that they have actively looked for jobs but was never hired (25 votes, 56 %). The second reason, “I am unable to work due to sickness/ disability”, makes 42 % of answers (19 votes) and the answer “I am looking after family or home” was voted only by one participant (2%).

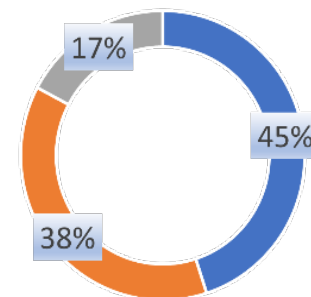


The visibility of persons with disabilities in the labor market

Awareness of the respondents concerning their international and national frameworks about the employment rights was the topic of this question. The result shows that more than half of them have no such knowledge at all (58 %, 456 respondents). 28 % (224 respondents) stated that they know rather much about their rights. The graph shows that these two answers together create most answers, leaving the rest of the options only with much smaller numbers.

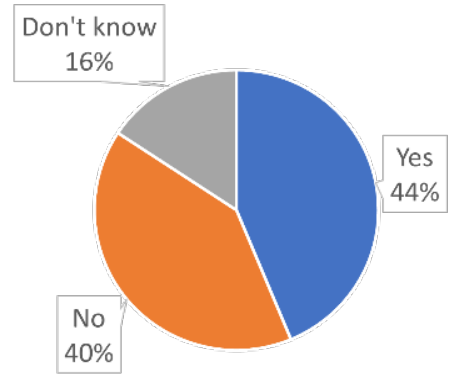


45 % of the respondents (355 preferences) consider their disability as a visible one, while smaller number of them, 38 % (298 preferences) as invisible disability. 136 participants (17 %) stated they did not know the answer.

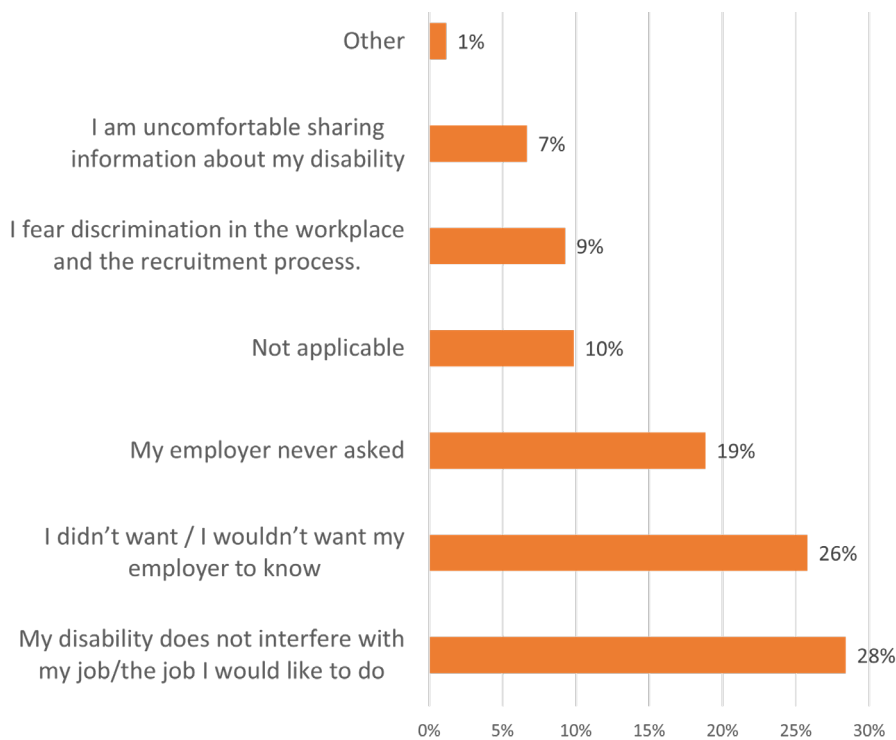


■ Visible ■ Invisible ■ Don't know

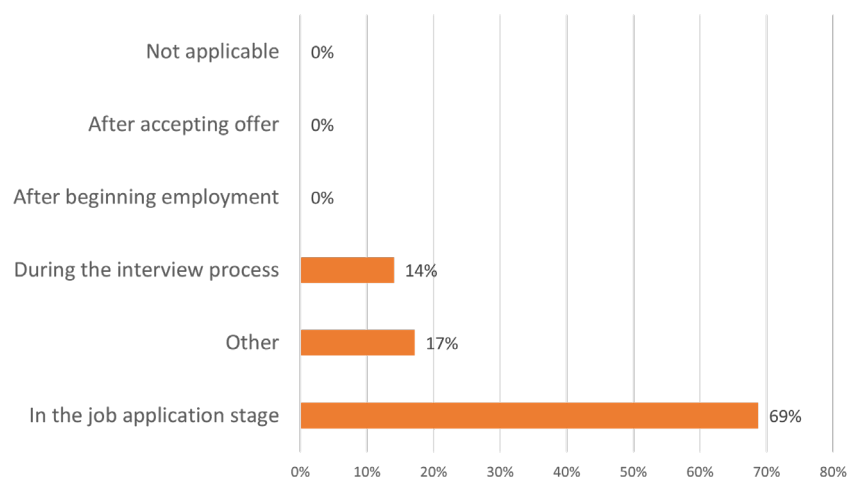
When we asked them if they had ever hidden their disability from their employer, or if they would ever do so, the answer “Yes” made the biggest part of the answers with 44 % and 345 preferences. It is followed by “No” with 320 preferences (41 %). 124 respondents chose the answer “Don’t know” (16%).

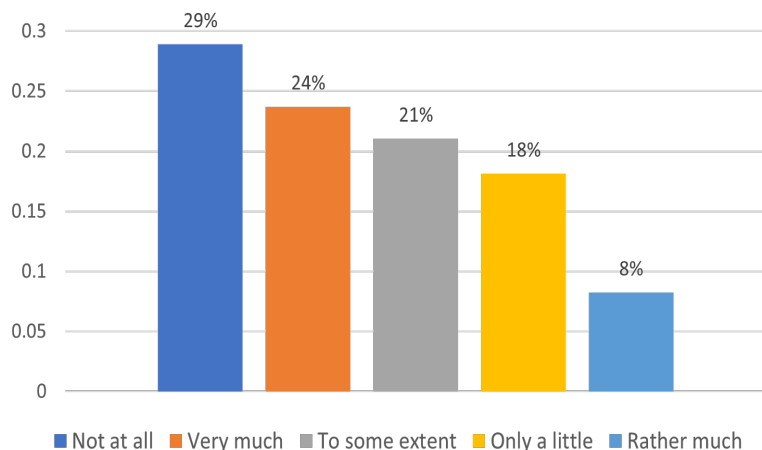


We wanted to know not only whether they did or did not hide their disability, but also what were their reasons for doing so. As it resulted, the most common reason was that the person’s disability does not interfere with my job/the job a person with disability would like to do. This option chose 28 % and gained 98 preferences. “I didn’t want / I wouldn’t want my employer to know” answered 89 respondents (26%). The third most voted reason was “My employer never asked” chosen by 65 respondents (19%). Four respondents voted for option Other but did not leave other comment.



For those who responded that they had not hidden their disability, we asked them when they would like to talk about their disability for the first time. “In the job application stage” was the most voted option (69 %, 220 preferences). “Other” chose 17 % (55 preferences) and the third ranked the option “During the interview process” with 14 % (45 preferences). These were the only answers which gain votes.

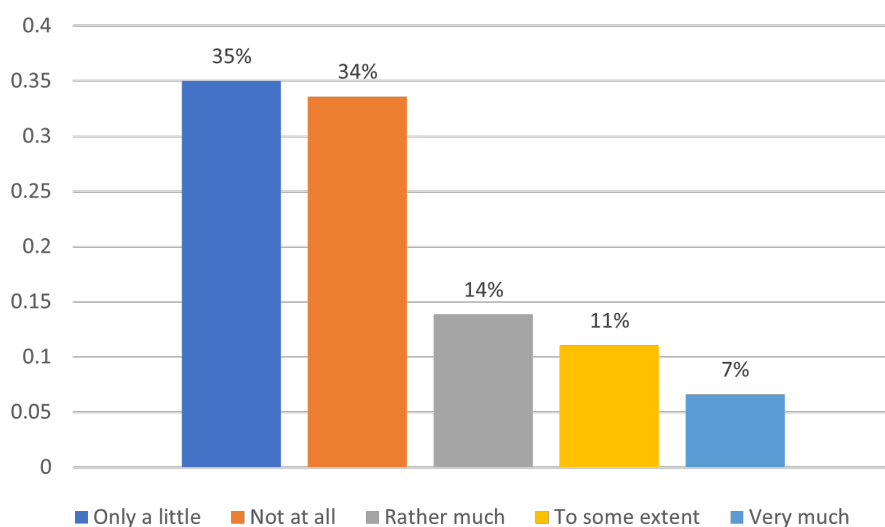




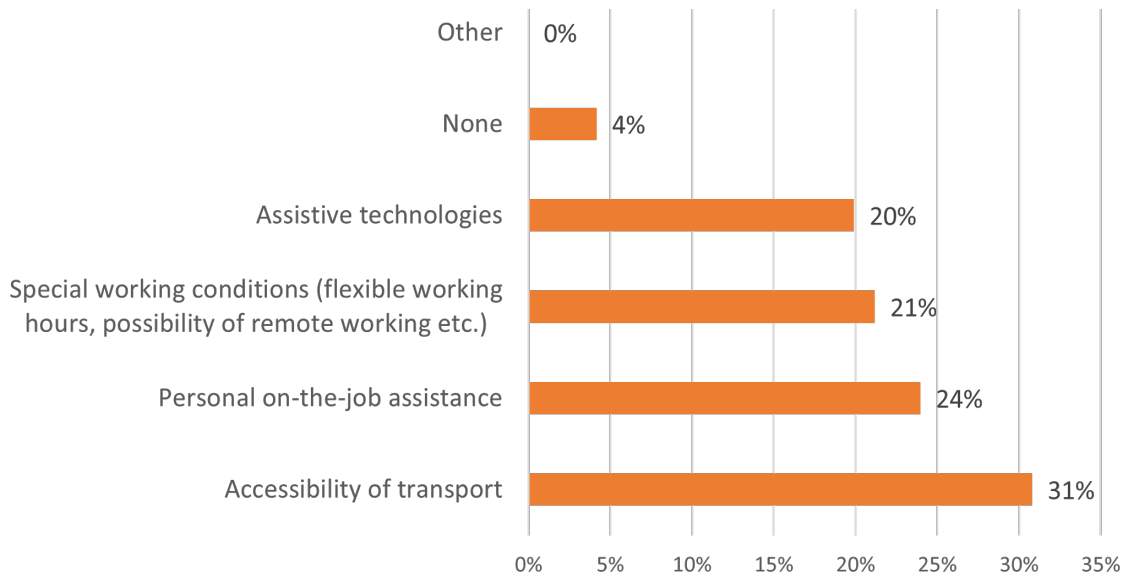
The length of the working hours and its compatibility with the needs of a person with disability was another question. The respondents replied in 29 % (228 preferences) “Not at all” which means that the average number of hours for full-time work in their country is not compatible with their disability at all. The second ranked the option “Very much” with 24 % (187 preferences) and the third most voted was “To some extent” with 21 % and 166 preferences.

We wanted to know from the participants their experience, specifically whether their job duties take into account their disability. We received these answers:

- The most preferences, 276, received the option “Only a little” and makes 35 %,
- The second one ranked the answer “Not at all” with 265 preferences (34 %),
- “Rather much” chose 109 participants (14 %),
- “To some extent” preferred to choose 87 participant (11 %) and
- The least voted option is “Very much” with 52 preferences (7%).



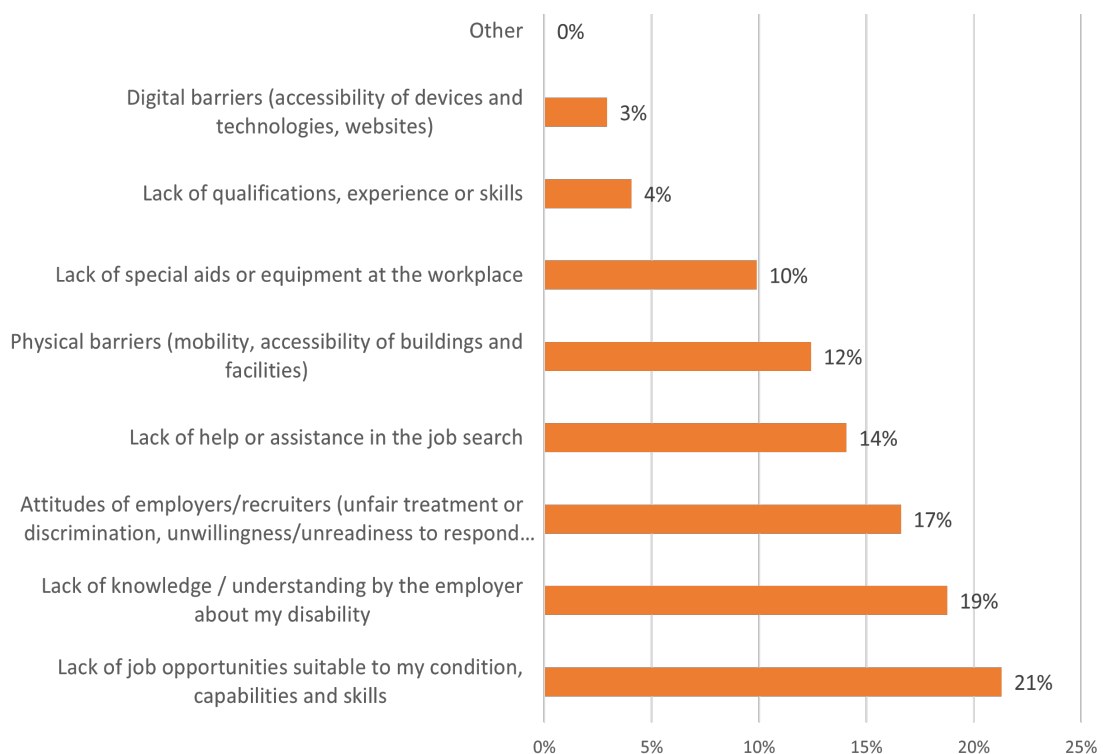
We also asked them what type of accommodation they need or they would need to do their job. “Accessibility of transport” is the most voted answer with 243 preferences (31 %), followed by “Personal on-the-job assistance” (189 preferences, 24%) and the third most chosen with 167 preferences and 21 % is “Special working conditions (flexible working hours, possibility of remote working etc.)”. “Assistive technologies” received 157 preferences and for the option “None” voted 33 respondents.



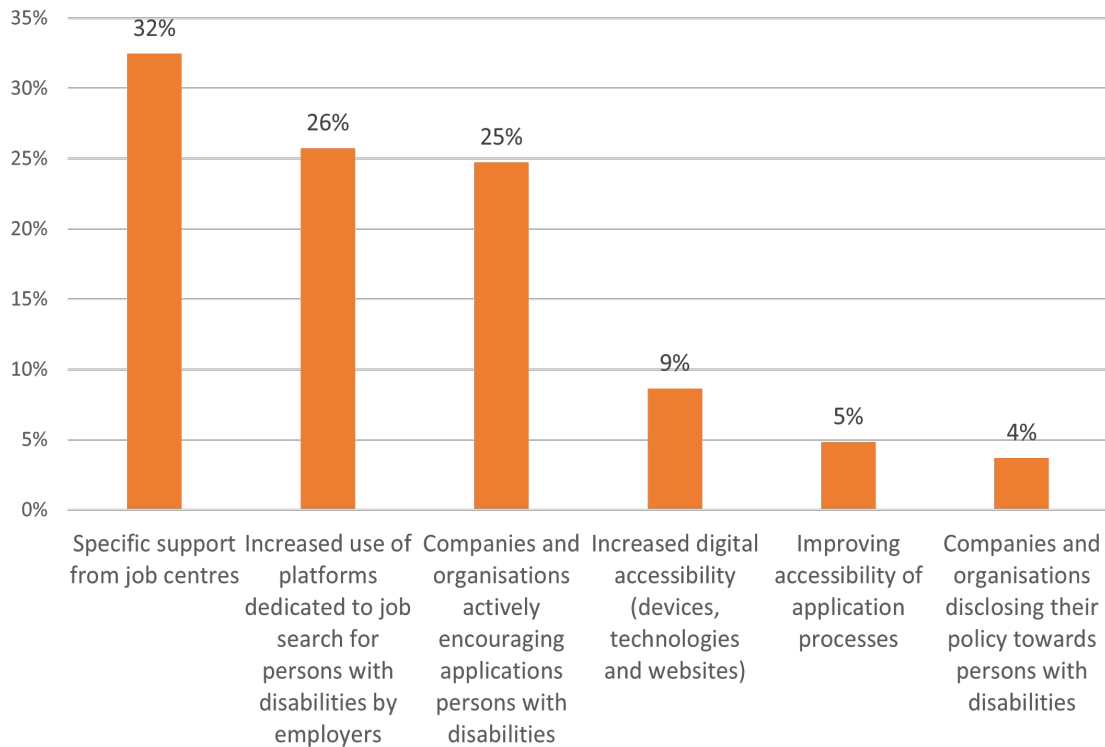
What barriers, if any, did you face during the job search?

“Lack of job opportunities suitable to my condition, capabilities and skills” with 168 preferences gained 21% of all the answers and ranked the first position. The second barrier pointed out by the respondents was the “Lack of knowledge / understanding by the employer about my disability” which had to face 148 of respondents (19 %). The third one was “Attitudes of employers/recruiters (unfair treatment or discrimination, unwillingness/unreadiness to respond to reasonable accommodation requests)” which effected 131 respondents (17 %).

The chart also shows the answers that ranked lower and caused issues in less cases. However, we can say that the job opportunities for the persons with disabilities together with the majority population’s knowledge, edification and understanding toward people with disabilities are the main area to improve.



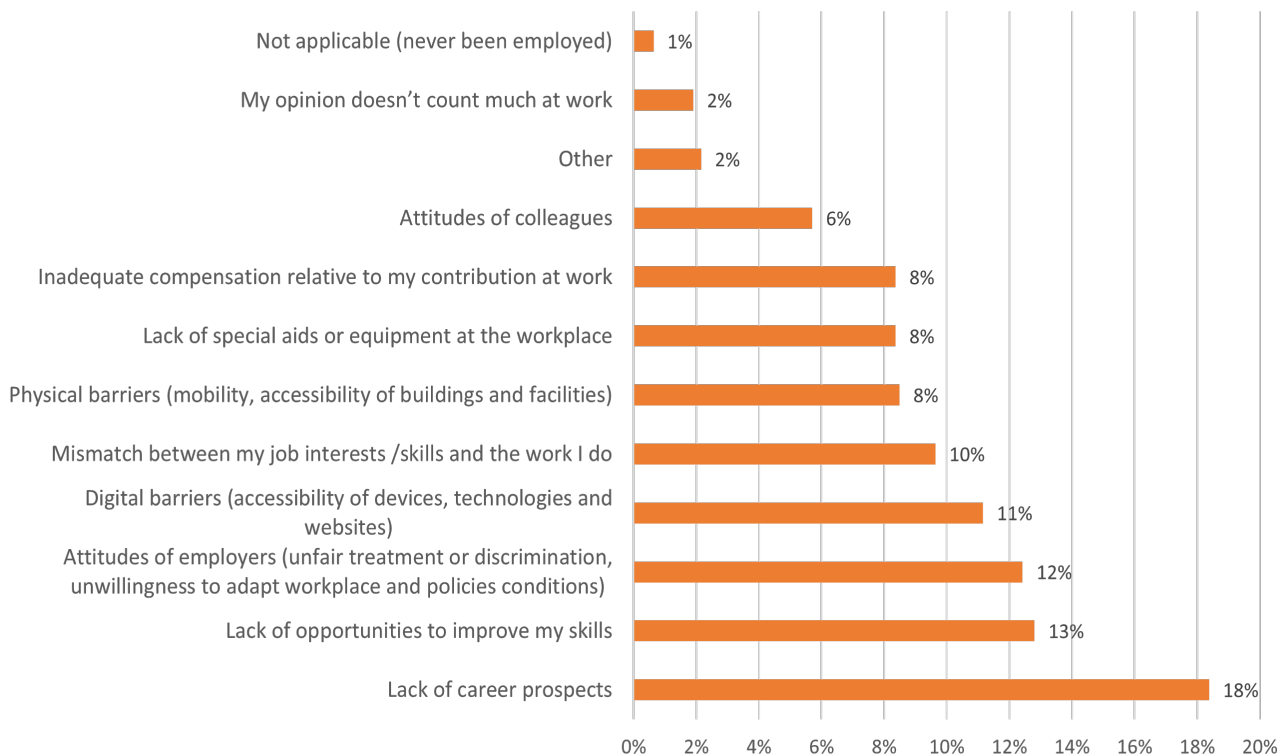
The respondents shared with us their experiences and opinions on what would make it easier to go past obstacles in the job search before the job interview. The first ranked the answer “Specific support from job centres” with 256 votes and 32%. With 203 preferences gained the answer “Increased use of platforms dedicated to job search for persons with disabilities by employers” 26 % and ranked the second. On the third position is the option “Companies and organisations actively encouraging applications persons with disabilities” which received 195 preferences and 25 %.



We wanted to hear their opinions on the improvements with potential to overcome barriers which stand between persons with disabilities and their chances to get employed. “A better understanding of the company’s policy regarding the persons with disabilities and the provision of reasonable accommodation” was chosen by 226 respondents and makes 29%, which is the highest result among the answers. Follows “Ability to speak to other employees with a disability in the company” with 165 preferences and 21 % and “A better understanding of accommodation resources and process” with 123 votes and 16 % which ranked third. The summary of the answers you can find in the following chart.



We also wanted to know which barriers they faced at the workplace. The participants voted the “Lack of career prospects” to be the most common barrier at the workplace (145 votes, 18%). The second one ranked “Lack of opportunities to improve my skills” with 101 votes and 13%. Here we can see again the “Attitudes of employers (unfair treatment or discrimination, unwillingness to adapt workplace and policies conditions)” to be the main barrier for 98 respondents (12%), this is the third most voted answer. “Digital barriers (accessibility of devices, technologies and websites)” was the issue for 88 respondents (11%).



We collected the opinions of the respondents regarding the potential help in removing obstacles affecting workplace job satisfaction. In the table below we can see the summary of all the answers. The most helpful would be according to the participants “Increased awareness of employees and employers on how to work with persons with disabilities”. For this answer voted 123 participants (16 %). The second most preferred was “Specific company policies for inclusion of persons with disabilities” with 111 preferences and result of 14%. The third most chosen is the “Increased flexibility about when and how people work” with 109 preferences and 14 %.

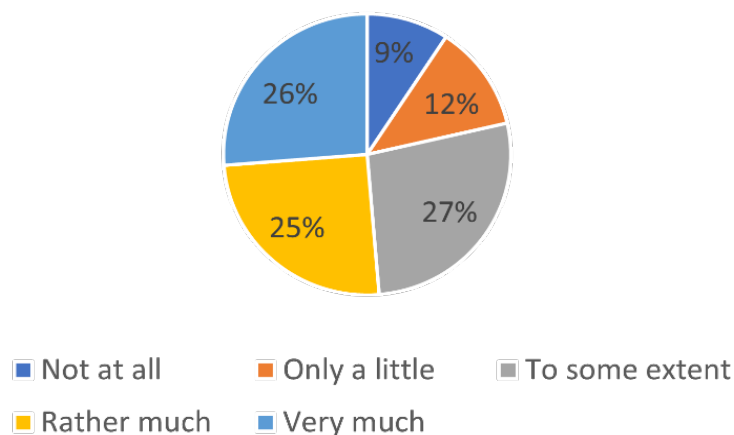
Answer	Count	%
Increased awareness of employees and employers on how to work with persons with disabilities	123	16%
Specific company policies for inclusion of persons with disabilities	111	14%
Increased flexibility about when and how people work	109	14%
Fair compensation relative to my contribution at work	89	11%
Fair recognition of skills and opportunities for professional development	77	10%
Increased use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and ICT tools	76	10%
Improved digital accessibility (devices, technologies, websites)	66	8%
Improved physical accessibility of buildings and facilities	63	8%
Having a mentor	56	7%
Other	13	2%
Not applicable (never been employed)	6	1%

We asked them about the added value that they could offer to their employer. “Adaptability” (125 preferences, 16%), “Specialised knowledge and skills” (123 preferences, 16%) and “Positive contribution to company’s public image” (113 preferences, 14%) are three most successful answers. The chart below collects all the answers and their results. Despite the option “Other” gained 51 votes, remained without further comment.

Answer	Count	%
Adaptability	125	16%
Specialised knowledge and skills	123	16%
Positive contribution to company's public image	113	14%
Soft skills	112	14%
Productivity	98	12%
Positive contribution to staff relations & morale	88	11%
Positive contribution towards company's relation with persons with disabilities (customers, stakeholders)	56	7%
Other	51	6%
Reliability and punctuality	23	3%

The use of technology in the workplace for persons with disabilities

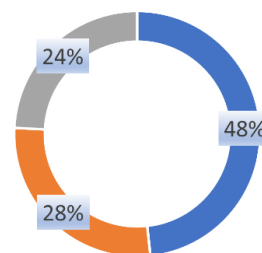
One of the questions of the survey was: "How much does the use of information and communication technology (ICT) tools facilitate your daily activities and tasks?". "To some extent" was the most preferred answer with 215 votes (27%). The second one ranked "Very much" with 207 preferences and 26%. ICT tools facilitate one's daily activities and tasks "Rather much" according to 198 respondents (25%). "Only a little" they help to 96 respondents (12%) and "Not at all" replied 73 of them (9%). In the following table we will learn about the reasons why ICT tools were not able to provide help to the respondents who chose to answer "not at all/only a little".



For those who said “not at all” or “only a little”, we asked them why they answered that. Too high prices of the assistive technologies create the main problem for 36 % of participants of this group. Tightly after follows the lack of knowledge on their usage (32 %). “Low level of accessibility” chose as the answer 17 participants (23%). 10 % of participants do not feel the need to use ICT tools. All the data regarding this question are summarized in the following table.

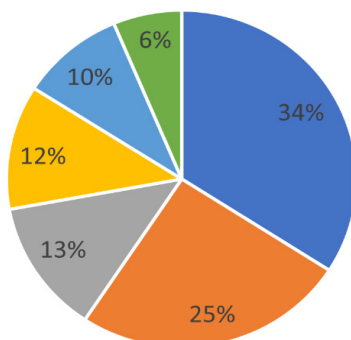
Answer	Count	%
The assistive technologies I need are too expensive	26	36%
I don't know how to use them	23	32%
Low level of accessibility	17	23%
I don't need them	7	10%
Not applicable	0	0%
Other	0	0%

381 of the participants of the survey (48 %) use the mainstream technologies while special technologies (i.e. a braille terminal) need 217 (28%) respondents. Both kinds use 191 participants (24 %).



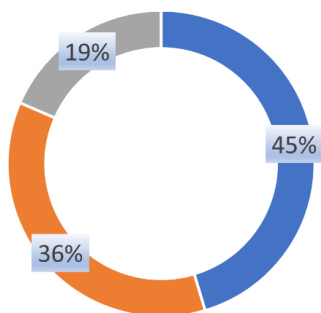
■ Mainstream technologies ■ Special technologies ■ Both

The next question that we asked was “Do you think the price of digital assistive technologies is affordable for individuals?”. 269 of participants (34%) answered “Not at all”. “Only a little” is the answer on the second rank with 25% (199 preferences) and “Rather much” is the third most chosen answer by 13 % of participants (101). Follow “Don't know” (94 votes, 12 %), “To some extent” (76 votes, 10 %) and finally “Very much” (50 votes, 6 %).



■ Not at all ■ Only a little ■ Rather much
 ■ Don't know ■ To some extent ■ Very much

When asking about their level of digital skills, intermediate level of digital skills was the most voted answer by 358 participants (45 %). “The basic level” received 285 preferences (36 %) and advanced level of digital skills have 19 % of participants (146 preferences).

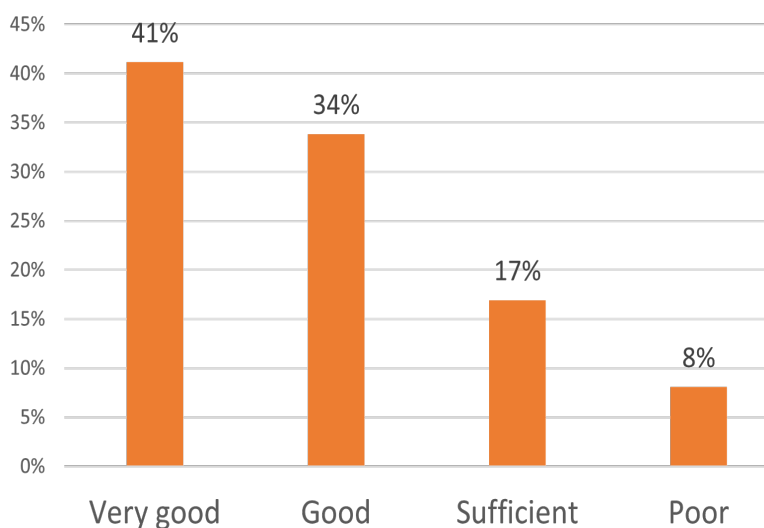


- Intermediate (shopping online, using social media, using graphics and multimedia)
- Basic (using an internet browser, sending and receiving emails, word processing)
- Advanced (advanced used of databases, programming, and scripting)

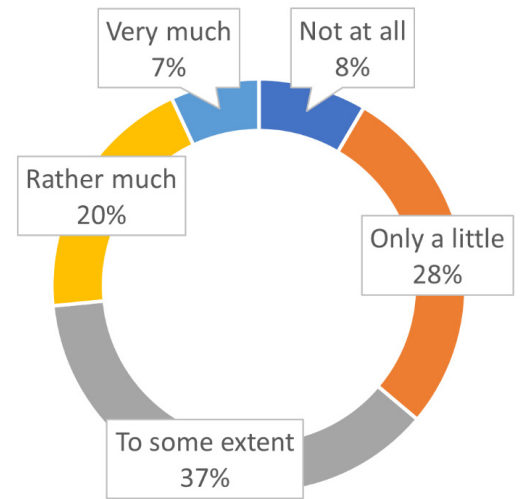
2.3 An expert of EU policies on disability and employment

The last group of people that participated in this survey is a group of experts of EU policies on disability and employment.

The respondent from the group of experts of EU policies on disability and employment shared with us their knowledge of expertise in the mentioned topic. 101 participants (41 %) have very good knowledge, while second one ranked the answer “Good” chosen by 88 respondents (34 %). The third most common answer is “Sufficient” with 44 preferences (17 %). “Poor” knowledge of EU policies on this topic have 21 respondents (8 %).



The respondents expressed their opinions whether according to them EU is doing enough to address the issue of reducing obstacles to hiring persons with disabilities. The first rank belongs to the answer “To some extent” with 97 preferences (37%). “Only a little” is the second most voted answer with 72 preferences (28%) and the third one is “Rather much” (51 preferences, 20%). “Not at all” would say 22 respondents (8%) and “Very much” is the answer of 18 participants (7%).



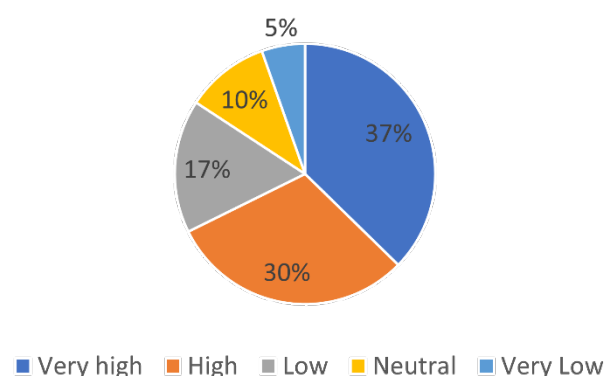
The areas of EU policies which have been most successful to help persons with disabilities in opinion of the participants of the survey were mainly “Accessibility” with 79 preferences (30%), “Public employment services” with 47 preferences (18%) and “Workplace adaptations” with 31 preferences (12%). “Education and training” ranked fourth with 27 preferences (10%). The least voted options were “Financial incentives” which received only 7 votes (3%) and “EU funding” with 6 votes (2%). The complete summary of the answers is in the table below.

Answer	Count	%
Accessibility	79	30%
Public employment services	47	18%
Workplace adaptations	31	12%
Education and training	27	10%
Equal treatment in employment and occupation	23	9%
Awareness raising on the living conditions of persons with disabilities	14	5%
Mobility	13	5%
Digitalisation for social inclusion	13	5%
Financial incentives	7	3%
EU funding	6	2%
Other	0	0%

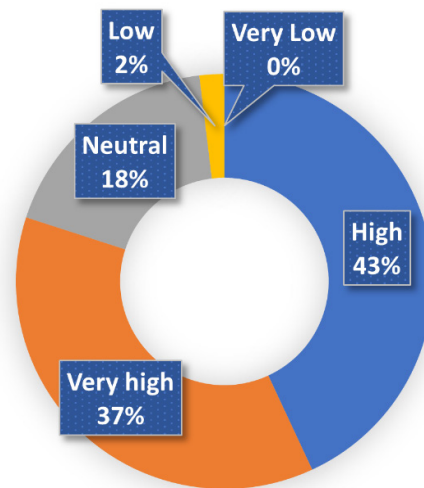
We asked the respondents also about topics, in their opinion, which should be addressed at the EU level more thoroughly. 30 % of participants believe it should be “Accessibility”, this option received 77 preferences and ranked at the first position. The second most voted option is “Education and training” with 44 preferences (17%). The “Digitalisation for social inclusion” received 43 votes which is 17 %, too. Follows “Equal treatment and non-discrimination in employment and occupation” with 38 votes (15 %). Considering financial help while “EU funding” did not receive any vote, “Financial incentives” with 27 votes, which is 10.4 % of all votes, is the 5th most voted answer. The complete list of answers and the votes is in the table below.

Answer	Count	%
Accessibility	77	30%
Education and training	44	17%
Digitalisation for social inclusion	43	17%
Equal treatment and non-discrimination in employment and occupation	38	15%
Financial incentives	27	10%
Workplace adaptations	13	5%
Public employment services	9	3%
Mobility	8	3%
Other	1	0%
EU funding	0	0%
Awareness raising on the living conditions of persons with disabilities	0	0%

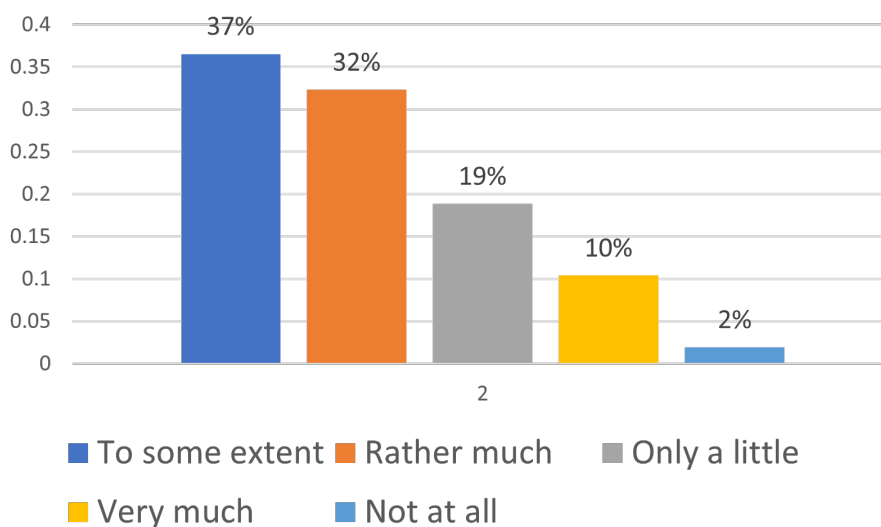
The next question that we asked was: “According to your experience, what is the potential of digitalisation in relation to the employability of persons with disabilities?”. The potential of digitalisation to help persons with disability to be suitable for paid work is “very high” according to opinion of 37 % of respondents (97 preferences). 79 votes received the answer (30 %) received the option “High” and ranked the second most voted. In contrary, “Low” potential chose for their answer 43 participants (17 %). 27 participants remained neutral and “Very low” was the answer with 14 preferences.



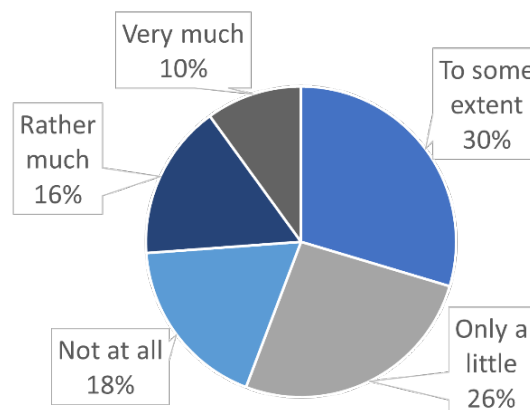
When asking about the potential of the EU digital agenda in relation to employability of persons with disabilities, “High” (112 votes, 43%) and “Very high” (96 votes, 37 %) were the two answers which together make vast majority of votes. “Neutral” chose 47 respondents (18 %) and “Low” voted only 5 respondents (2 %). The option “Very low” did not receive any preference. The potential of the EU digital agenda in relation to employability of persons with disabilities is clearly significant and so deserves the attention of the leaders.



The European accessibility act is a directive that intends to improve the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services, by removing obstacles created by Member States’ divergent rules. We asked the participants whether, in their opinion, its implementation will help the employability of persons with disabilities. The first ranked the answer “To some extent” with 95 preferences (37 %), the second follows the option “Rather much” with 84 votes (32 %) and “Only a little” chose 49 respondents (19%).



The organisations of the respondents make efforts to understand whether digitalisation can contribute to the employability of persons with disabilities “To some extent”, as expressed by 77 participants (30%). “Only a little” is the answer of 68 respondents (26 %) and no efforts are being made in organisations of 47 participants (18 %). Despite it seems quite a negative result, last two options “Rather much” (42 preferences, 16 %) and “Very much” (26 preferences, 10 %) give a good sign for persons with disabilities.



3. Conclusions

In the previous sections we have analysed in detail the quantitative and qualitative results of the survey, the demographic data of the participants and then we addressed three – sectors, groups of participants. In this section, we will try to draw the conclusions on the base of a cross analysis among the sectorial results and finally formulate our recommendations.

We have started the analysis with the sector of employers, managing directors and HR directors. They create the largest group of the respondents and their organisations and companies, mostly from private sector, mostly active in health and social work, education, finance, hotels and restaurants business. Their answers together with the smaller group of respondents – persons with disabilities, confirmed that there are indeed common issues which influence employability of the persons with disabilities. These are mainly **education and training** which persons with disabilities should have to develop the **skills and capacities** to not only get a certain job which an employer can find useful, but also to be able to retain it. The obstacle uses to be not only a lack of skills, but also the **mismatch between work demands and skills and capabilities**. Indeed, this fact is shown also in the statistics obtained where quite big number of participants confirmed that their job is not coherent with their qualification.

Another part which has, in the eyes of the participants from both sectors, big influence on employment of persons with disabilities is the **accessibility of recruitment channels and processes**, both standard and specific. The **physical accessibility** is another issue where companies and employees see the space to work on.

As resulted from the survey, **legislation**, which helps to create job opportunities for persons with disabilities and the work conditions including flexible work, is one of the biggest motivators for organisations and companies to create such work positions.

The third sector of the survey were the experts of EU policies on disability and employment who also contributed with an overview of the issue, enriching it with the topic of **digitization**. Despite the digitalisation did not resonate in high numbers in the answers of the respondents from the first two sectors, the experts expressed the certitude that digitalisation for social inclusion of persons with disabilities should be more thoroughly addressed at EU level. They see the high potential of digitalisation in relation to the employability of persons with disabilities. At the same time, they realize that there are only certain, mostly little, efforts being made to understand how digitalisation could contribute to employability of persons with disabilities.

The results of all three sectors highlighted the need for gaining more connectivity also through digital channels between employers and persons with disabilities. The digital means and skills can contribute to better communication and understanding between the parts. It was the issue of understanding which the respondents pointed out when being asked, specifically a lack of knowledge and understanding by the employer about one's disability. They also feel that the attitudes from employers and/or recruiters are the barrier, which often results in unfair treatment or discrimination, unwillingness or unreadiness to respond to reasonable accommodation requests. On the other side, employers who have already employed persons with disabilities, confirmed that there are indeed the advantages of hiring such persons. The benefits manifest in improving job morale and corporate

culture, helping the company image and reputation, or increasing productivity. Inclusivity also may bring the disadvantages, according to employers, like additional workload for personnel/HR staff or the feeling of discomfort of the staff if asked to work with a person with disabilities.

The general results give us the opportunity to reflect on various issues that are influencing employability of persons with disabilities, not only those personal like level of skills, capacities and education, but the issue is determined also by the rules set in society – legislation, digitalisation and opportunities, public view on persons with disabilities and the level of general understanding of the matter. Therefore, we strongly believe that all these aspects must be reviewed, analysed closely and constantly, addressed and supported, thus to allow adjustments and improvements.

From these conclusions and through the analysis of the quantitative results of the three sectors we draw the following recommendation which has been categorised as transversal – i. e., thru for all the sectors, and specific – i. e., true for a certain sector.

4. Recommendations

Overall, we recommend to **improve communication** between organisation/companies and persons with disabilities by enabling the accessibility of recruitment channels and processes. We also suggest to **improve digital accessibility** (devices, technologies, websites) and use of information and communication technologies and tools.

When it comes to work, we recommend to **support cooperation** to match the work demands with education and training of persons with disabilities. Therefore, it would be beneficial to **adjust the training of persons with disabilities to give them possibility to gain the needed skills and capabilities**.

Last but not least, we recommend to **support the awareness and knowledge of public about the topic of disabilities** and people who are affected by them to build up and support the set of the best values in society and in companies and organisations.

4.1 Employers/Managing Directors/HR Directors

Pay attention to company's culture, your set of values, attitudes, goals, and practices that make up the organisation and to prepare the staff for the situation when a person with disability become an employee

Consider the creation of work positions where a person with the need of the flexible ways of working can participate

Providing a specific training for a person with disabilities can enable such person to participate in the reaching the goals of the company and contribute with their work

Improve physical accessibility of work environment and facilities

Count in your plans with the possibility of increasing the use of specific hardware and software which employers with disability may use, designed either for persons with disabilities or following the principles of universal design

Develop a strategy applicable for a person with disabilities for their inclusion and to be able to retain their work position, e.g., plan training opportunities, adapting workplace, provide assistive technologies, better exploiting use of the information and communication technologies and ICT tools also to provide reasonable accommodation

Get training about ways how to be inclusive during recruitment process and on-the-job period

Learn about the ways how to make recruitment process accessible for persons with disabilities, make specific requests to job centres/careers offices and use job advertisements welcoming persons with disabilities, increase use of platforms dedicated to job search for persons with disabilities

Set up dedicated recruitment processes for persons with disabilities actively encouraging applications of persons with disabilities

4.2 A person with a disability

Explore your chances to find the right work position actively contacting the possible employers

Speak about your issues with staff who manages the accommodation resources and process

Look for the possibilities to gain new skills and capacities which you can offer to the companies/organisations when looking for an employment

Learn about the main international and national frameworks about the employment rights of persons with disabilities to be aware of your rights in work environment

Look for ways to be in contact with other employees with a disability in the company to share your experiences and possibilities

4.3 An expert of EU politics on disability and employment

From your position support the awareness of the problematics in the public to help to create a friendly atmosphere and understanding toward persons with disabilities in work environment

Consider the way how to help the job centres to support the effective communication between employers and persons with disabilities

Encourage the stakeholders who can influence the legislation regarding employability of persons with disabilities to take more action toward improving the work conditions of them, e.g., quotas for employment, or number of working hours, tax incentives

Initiate a discussion on the level of municipalities how to make more available the means of public transportation for the persons with disabilities

Support the discussion on digitalisation and the need to push toward exploitation of possibilities of information and communication technologies and ICT tools



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