



STUDIES AND  
STATISTICS



# Employment of people with disabilities

OVERVIEW, ISSUES  
AND PERSPECTIVES

JULY 2022

## CONTENTS

Editorial	P.3
① Context and issues	P.4
② Diversity of strategies in the European Union	P. 8
③ European typology of policies on the employment of people with disabilities	P.10
④ Agefiph's qualitative survey on employment and disability: the main findings	
A – The view of institutions and civil society	
B – The view of companies	
C – Good practices	
D – Business performance	
E – Participants and methodological reminders	P. 14
Appendix - ILO Charter	P. 26
Bibliography	P. 27

## EUROPE, EMPLOYMENT AND DISABILITY: WHERE DO WE STAND ?

The French Council of Disabled People for European and International Affairs emphasizes that access to work is an essential component of citizenship.

This statement refers to the right claimed by the international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities ratified by the Member States of the European Union, which in its article 27 emphasizes the right to work of people with disabilities on the basis of equality between men and women. While France currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Agefiph has decided to contribute by exploring the place of disability in the current reflections, and the commitment of Member States and private companies facing the diversity of public policies in Europe.

While in France, the first traces of attention paid by governments to their fragile populations go back to the Middle Ages, Europe, with its more recent political constitution, formalized its first intentions on the subject only when it developed a common social policy (mid-1970s). Since then, France has put in place legislative regulations that provide a framework for the employment of people with disabilities. These regulations are organized in particular around the obligation for companies to hire disabled workers with a minimum rate of 6% of the payroll. In this respect, Agefiph which was created at the same time as this obligation, took up the mission of helping disabled people in their professional lives and supporting companies in the development of their disability policies (recruitment, maintaining employment, career path for disabled people). Agefiph is thus a major player in employment and disability policies in France. Europe is made up of 27 countries, with a diversity of cultures, with different ways to understand their social realities and implement responses to develop and secure employment. Europe has issued a mixed statement on its 2010–2020 strategy for people with disabilities. All the same, let us note that in 2017 disability was integrated into the European set of social rights (article 17) and a new 2021–2030 European strategy for the rights of people with disabilities was launched. Agefiph has set itself a target: to increase the employment rate of disabled workers in France to a figure above 4% (it is currently at 3.5%), which translates into a minimum of 150,000 jobs for people with disabilities.

Many levers can be exploited: promoting employment of people with disabilities, encouraging their mobility, developing mobility, developing skills and securing employment, providing employers with tools and improving mainstream services to take into account the needs of people with disabilities. This is a mission that should break down walls, creating a network for all and with all: employers, social partners, services for employment, occupational health and training services, associations, the State, local authorities and integration funds (Agefiph and FIPHFP). Thus, staying as close as possible to the people in the regions with regional delegations at the heart of actions, Agefiph's mission is to remain invested in the realities on the ground and committed to people with disabilities, supporting all public and private stakeholders, ensuring true equal opportunities to all talents in tomorrow's truly inclusive company. Agefiph is committed to achieving these cross-cutting goals, thus supporting France's contribution to the European Union's objectives.



**CHRISTOPHE ROTH**  
President of Agefiph

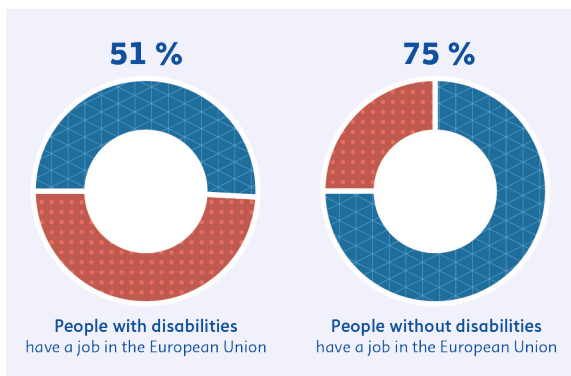
# 1

## CONTEXT AND ISSUE

### People with disabilities in Europe

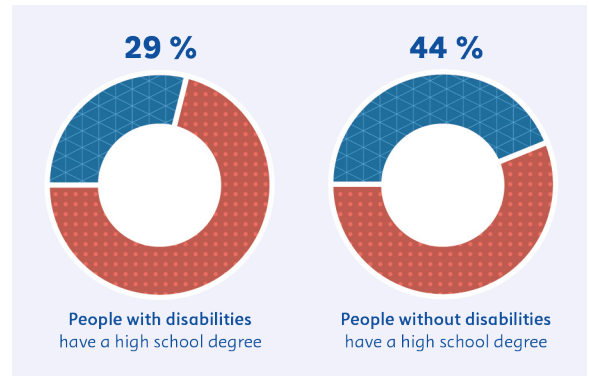
87 million people with disabilities aged 16 to 64 are registered in Europe. They represent 18% of the population in this age bracket. When coming into working age, they have long been calling on public authorities to develop programs aimed at their inclusion into the heart of society, more specifically into the workplace and employment.

The activity rate of people with disabilities in Europe is lower than that of the general population: only 51% of people with disabilities are employed, compared to 75% of people without disabilities. And the unemployment rate of working age people with disabilities is at least twice as high as for people without disabilities.



**51% of people with disabilities have a job in the European Union compared to 75% of people without disabilities. They are over-represented in precarious and low-paid jobs<sup>1</sup>.**

Barely one third of people with disabilities have a high school degree compared to nearly half of the general population.



**29% of people with disabilities have a high school degree, compared to 44% for people without disabilities<sup>1</sup>.**

Overall in Europe, as in France, people with disabilities are over-represented in precarious and low-paid jobs. The employment rate of people with disabilities can also vary within the same country, depending on age, gender and type of disability.

According to a Commission working document, some age groups are particularly concerned by disability, mainly because most people with disabilities become disabled at a certain stage of their working lives. For example, the employment rate of people with disabilities aged 50 to 64 is considerably lower than that of younger age groups. With regard to gender variation, employment rate of men with disabilities is slightly higher than that of women with disabilities.

<sup>1</sup> – European Commission - November 2020

The type of disability has an impact on the employment rate of people with disabilities. Similar to the employment rate, the unemployment rate of people with disabilities can also vary according to age, gender, education level and type of disability.

---

## **More than one person in two in a situation of disability states that they have felt discriminated against.**

---

When taking these population data into consideration, it is essential to consider linguistic, cultural and political factors specific to each EU Member State. This does not make comparison or data collection easier.

There is no common definition of either "disability" or the notion of "disabled worker". Indeed, the term "disability" symbolically unifies a heterogeneous social group and mobilizes a very varied lexical field, whether it is on a national or European scale. Despite the long-term efforts of international organizations to produce and release legal (United Nations) or medical-social (World Health Organization – WHO) definitions with a global scope, the semantic field of disability remains fragmented with variations from one language to another and official definitions and social representations that vary according to national context", says Jay Rowell<sup>1</sup>.

In 1980, the WHO produced a classification system for disability with a global scope. This so-called "social" definition, refined in 1999, has been widely circulated and adopted by other international organizations (International Labour Office (ILO), EU) and academic circles. It distinguishes between impairments, defined as the loss or abnormality of a physiological, psychological or anatomical function or structure; disability defined as a significant limitation resulting from this impairment in the performance of activities considered as normal in a given social context; and disability, which refers to a social disadvantage resulting from the limitations of the realization of the normal role of a person at a given age, gender, culture or social situation. Disability is thus partly de-medicalized and becomes contextual in the sense that it is the interaction with the environment that produces disabling situations (ILO, 1998).

<sup>1</sup> – Jay Rowell (2016)

## Reference texts in Europe

Several texts structure Europe's commitment for the employment of people with disabilities.

As early as the 1970s, but especially from 1996 onwards the European Union (EU) began to develop and structure a policy for people with disabilities. The European institutions, the Commission in particular, have produced a significant number of action plans, communications reports, statistical indicators, directives and recommendations. In 2011, Europe ratified the international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, adopted two successive ten-year strategies on the rights of persons with disabilities (2010-2020, 2021-2030) and in 2017 included in Article 17 of the European Charter of Social Rights its concern for the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Adopted in November 2006, **the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** is a powerful basis for the inclusion of disability and the elimination of discrimination against persons with disabilities. It forms the basis for the current international and European disability policies in force. All the Member States of the Union, and the European Union as a legal entity, ratified the Convention, inviting the EU to take this text into account in the development of their policies. Noting the limited effects of the previous strategy, the European Union included the question of employment in its new strategy, adopted in March 2021 so as to enable more people with disabilities to make a living on the mainstream labour market.

### European employment policy for people with disabilities

- **Article 27** of the United Nations Convention
- **2006** Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities
- **1996** Communication on equal opportunities
- **1997 Article 13** Article 13 on the clause of non-discrimination against disability (Amsterdam Treaty)
- **27 November 2000** Framework Directive (which introduces the right to compensation in the field of employment and the concept of reasonable workplace layout)
- **2010/20 and 2021/30 European strategies** (which set out guidelines for Member States to help them in the development of their employment policies)
- **Article 17** of the European basic set of social rights

The 27 Member States are responsible for the proper implementation of the European Union policy.

**The 2021–2030 European strategy** for the rights for people with disabilities sets new employment targets. The proportion of people with disabilities without employment is twice that of people without disabilities. The aim is to increase the proportion of employed people with disabilities in the Union. The strategy aims at strengthening equality and non-discrimination towards people with disabilities.

## Focus

### article 27 - The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities

States that the Parties shall recognize the right for persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others, including the opportunity to earn a living through freely chosen or accepted work on an open labor market and work environment accessible to people with disabilities. They will safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who have acquired a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation.

### article 17 - European basic set of Social Rights (2017)

Inclusion of persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities are entitled to income support enabling them to live in dignity, to services enabling them to take part in the labor market and in society, and to a suitable work environment adapted to their needs.

It provides for a series of actions and initiatives and sets the following priorities:

- **Accessibility:** to be able to move and reside freely wherever they choose, and also to participate in the democratic process
- **Decent quality of life and independent living:** the the strategy focuses on the process of de-institutionalization, social protection and, non-discrimination at work

- **Equal participation:** the strategy aims to effectively protect people with disabilities from all forms of discrimination and violence, to guarantee equal opportunities and access to employment, justice, education, culture, sport, tourism, health services...
- **Role of the EU,** the institutions must be exemplary
- **Willingness of the EU** to implement the strategy
- **Promotion of the rights** of people with disabilities on a global scale

The participation of people with disabilities in the labor market is still hampered by many obstacles, including persistent stereotypes, lack of adequate workplace layout and insufficient training opportunities.

---

« **The lack of accessibility, multiple and repeated discrimination and prejudice hinder their access to to quality jobs or studies.** »

Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality (March 10, 2022)

---

This new reinforced strategy takes into account the diversity of disabilities, and in particular the so-called "invisible" ones (long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments). It also draws particular attention to the risks of "compounded disadvantages" or "discriminations", facing women, children, the elderly and refugees with disabilities, as well as people suffering from socio-economic challenges. This strategy is thus promoting an intersectional approach<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> – See Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comments No. 6 (2018) on equality and non-discrimination and No. 3 (2016) on women and girls with disabilities.

## 2 DIVERSITY OF STRATEGIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION<sup>1</sup>

European countries, all of which are faced with the issue of integrating people with disabilities into the workforce, have tried to find answers, each in their own way. In the absence of a common definition at the European level Member States have established their own criteria and methods of implementation in each of the national legislations.

Disparities in the approach to disability, in the management and implementation of public policies are also reinforced by the more or less decentralized organizations chosen and set up by the Member States. In France, for example, policy is more centralized, in the Netherlands decentralization has become the norm, municipalities have freedom of choice in the implementation of employment policy for disabled people. Another example is Italy, where regions are responsible for the funds.

Member States deploy consultative bodies (e.g. France or Italy) advisory bodies (e.g. France or Italy), national public (e.g. Sweden) or very local bodies (e.g. Netherlands), dedicated funds (e.g. France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, etc.).

In most Member States, this issue is the responsibility of the ministries of labor and the national agencies in charge of the issue.

In European countries, the promotion of employment of people with disabilities takes various forms.

It can take the form of reduced social security contributions (Spain, Italy, Austria, etc.), subsidies for the planning of work environment (Austria, Finland, Denmark, etc.), or wage compensation in the form of public subsidies

(Belgium, Netherlands, etc.). In the Netherlands, assistance relating to the salary of newly employed disabled persons runs for the period of six months after hiring. In Bulgaria, several programs provide for a wage subsidy. It is also provided in Denmark and Cyprus.

Member States provide for varying degrees of compensation for these subsidies.

Other tax benefits are also provided for in national legislations to encourage hiring. These include the reduction or exemption of social security contributions payable by employers. This is notably the case in German, Spanish, Dutch and Bulgarian legislations.

---

**« An inclusive labor market - offering opportunities and quality work for all – is our goal. A coordinated action at both national and European level will be essential to achieve these goals. »**

*Helena Dalli (10 March 2022)*

---

Finally, some states are offering financial participation or co-financing alongside the company in the realization of reasonable workplace facilities such as in Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Malta, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, France.

<sup>1</sup> – Sources:

- CFHE, handbook on the employment of people with disabilities in the European Union (March 2022)

- FIPHP, the employment of people with disabilities in Europe (June 2018)



Many aim to act :

1) on the cost of labor at the time of recruitment or in connection with a decrease in productivity: integration subsidies, subsidized wages over varying periods (from 16 to 48 months), temporary reduction in social security contributions,

2) on the cost of adapting workstations. The most common is the subsidy for the recruitment of a disabled worker. In Germany, this subsidy is valid for the first two years and amounts to 70% of the worker's salary. It is valid for four years in Sweden.

Each country has its own logic linked to:

- the history of the issue of disability in the country in question,
- the establishment of social protection in the Member States (State, social insurance, private insurance),
- the influence of the different ministries (health, education, employment, social assistance...), the ways in which disability is recognized according to circumstances (war injuries, work accidents and occupational diseases, disabling diseases, accidents of life, congenital or precocious impairments),
- the methods used to assess the severity of the disability.



### 3

## EUROPEAN TYPOLOGY OF POLICIES ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES<sup>1</sup>

To make their labor market more inclusive and, in addition to the incentive schemes aimed at labor cost or wages, the Member States have put in place legislations of varying degrees based on different philosophical approaches:

- either a rights-based approach,
- or a quota and employment obligation approach.

In fact, the latter approach prevails today in Europe, even if it can take different forms.

These two approaches are intimately linked to the cultural and social environments in which they are implemented.

Some countries (Finland, Sweden, etc.) put more emphasis on a rights-based approach, while others (Spain, Germany, Italy, France, etc.) are implementing quota policies. Three categories of countries can be distinguished.

**The first group**, the historical and prevailing group is the one that is in favor of legislations for companies. All of these countries have chosen to introduce quotas to oblige public sectors, as well as some private sectors, to reach a rate of employment of people with disabilities, or face a penalty. If the quota is not reached, the employer must pay financial compensation. In general, it is paid to the fund set up for this purpose, as in France and Germany. This fund is made up of 16 European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the Czech Republic).

The rates and thresholds for application can vary. These policies are not always implemented with strict compliance in the concerned States (non-application of the voted provisions, non-control, non-application of penalties for non-compliance, non-achievement of objectives).

**The second**, which is opposed to the concept of quotas is based on the principle of non-discrimination. This group favors the implementation of incentives rather than the imposition of sanctions. The employer has the obligation to make reasonable adaptation of the workstation and conditions of employment.

This group includes mainly the Anglo-Saxon countries as well as the countries of Northern Europe. Some researchers speak in this regard of the the Nordic model, characterized by strong state intervention through financial compensation. It includes, among others, Denmark and Sweden.

It should also be noted that when we refer to employment, we do not always talk about the samethings at the European level, whether in terms of quality of employment (part-time, sustainability, etc.), or in terms of the population accessing employment (e.g. the most severely disabled people excluded from employment, for example). In any case – and this is demonstrated by the unemployment rates of people with disabilities in Europe – whatever the situation, none of the existing solutions allows for full employment for people with disabilities.

<sup>1</sup> – Source CFHE, handbook on the employment of people with disabilities in the European Union (March 2022)

**The third group** stands out because it has a hybrid scheme: countries with little or no quotas and that do not formally apply the principle of non-discrimination. These countries decide to implement incentives such as subsidies when companies hire people with disabilities or adapt working conditions. They also choose to take binding measures, such as the introduction of quotas. The countries that have adopted this hybrid method are Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands and Portugal.

**The historical and prevailing group in favor** of a binding legislation for companies: introduction of quotas for the public and private sectors and penalties for non-compliance

→ 16 countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the Czech Republic)

**The group based on the principle of non-discrimination:** checks only the compliance with the principle of non-discrimination, prefers incentives rather than imposition.

→ Denmark and Sweden

**The hybrid group:** imposition of low quotas and non-formal application of the principle of non-discrimination, implementation of incentives, such as incentives to hire disabled workers, and financial help for the adaptation of working conditions and workstations.

→ Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands and Portugal

## OVERVIEW OF EMPLOYMENT AND DISABILITY POLICIES IN EUROPE

 With quotas

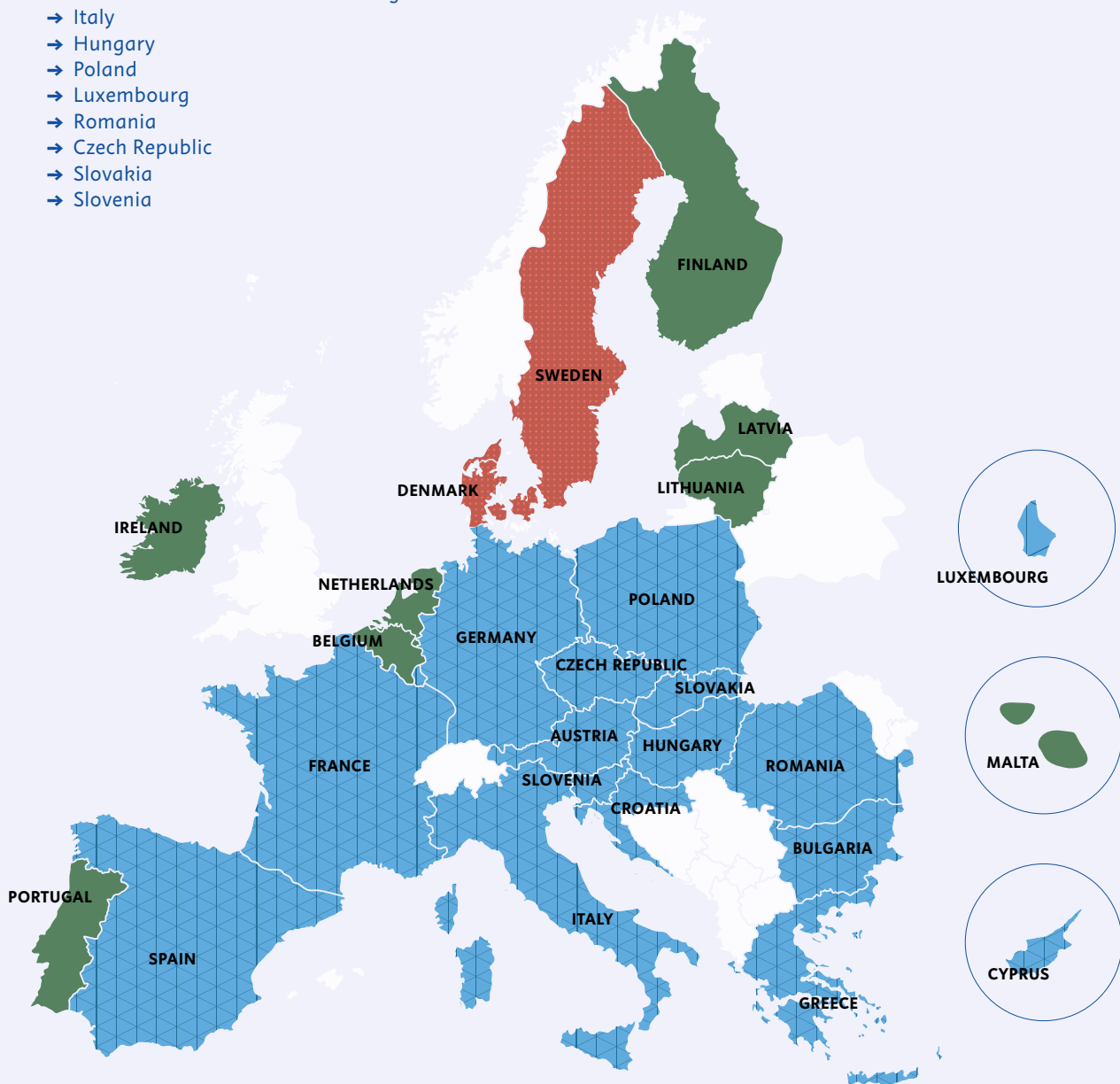
- Germany
- Austria
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Spain
- France
- Greece
- Italy
- Hungary
- Poland
- Luxembourg
- Romania
- Czech Republic
- Slovakia
- Slovenia

 Hybride

- Belgium
- Finland
- Ireland
- Lithuania
- Latvia
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Portugal

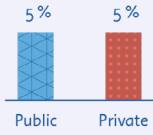
 Sans quotas

- Denmark
- Sweden



# EMPLOYMENT QUOTAS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES APPLIED IN THE MEMBER STATES

## Germany



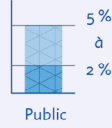
companies with more than 20 employees

## Austria



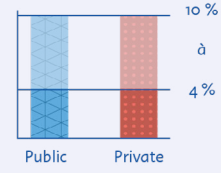
companies with more than 25 employees

## Belgium



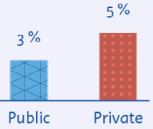
The rate varies from 2 to 5 % depending on the public company or the public administration concerned

## Bulgaria

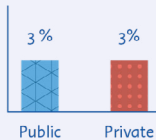


The rate varies from 4 to 10 % for companies with 50 employees and more

## Cyprus

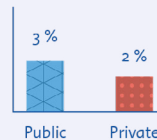


## Croatia



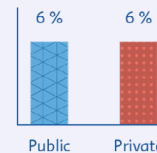
companies with more than 20 employees

## Spain



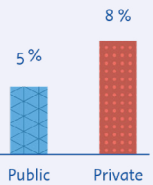
companies with more than 50 employees

## France

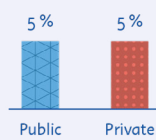


companies with more than 20 employees

## Greece



## Hungary

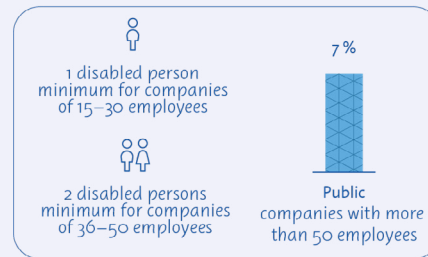


## Ireland

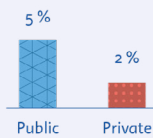


on a voluntary basis

## Italy

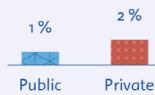


## Luxembourg

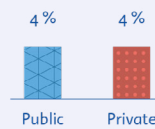


companies with more than 50 employees

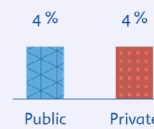
## Portugal



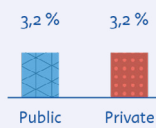
## Czech Republic



## Romania

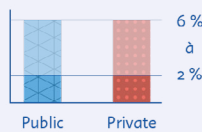


## Slovakia



companies with more than 20 employees

## Slovenia



# 4

## AGEFIPH'S QUALITATIVE SURVEY ON EMPLOYMENT AND DISABILITY: THE MAIN FINDINGS

### A - The view of the institutions and European civil society

#### A social awareness of disability in all Member States, but a still insufficient impact on the reality of employment of people with disabilities

The findings of the European institutional stakeholders and those of the European civil society are the same:

- the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is still much higher (often almost double) than that of the rest of the population in the Member States,
- the insufficient increase in the employment rate of people with disabilities,
- and the still too numerous difficulties they encounter in accessing and maintaining themselves in a stable, sustainable quality employment that matches their skills.

---

« The framework and tools have evolved, but the changes have not been significant over the last ten years, and are not visible in the statistics. »

European Commission, Employment General Directorate, Social Affairs and Inclusion

« But the attention, both political and private, paid to people with disabilities is much stronger than it was 30 years ago. The difference between then and now is like between night and day. »

International Labor Organization

---

#### Key points addressed

- a shared social awareness but unsatisfactory results
- a need for monitoring and steering good practices
- insufficiently identified statistical data
- targeted actions to be carried out
- a change of approach focusing on skills
- a strong and necessary commitment of top management
- telework: a new deal to be assessed

#### A discrepancy between this reality and the ambitions of the European institutions

The survey reveals a discrepancy between, on the one hand, the declarations of principles and proclamations of values on the part of European institutions - which are essentially based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) - and, on the other hand, their ability to embody them in user cases, good practices, etc., whether they be public policies or private initiatives.

---

« The new European strategy is ambitious and the result of a good process of consultation. However, it does not result in many binding actions and recommendations for the Member States. The EU must be there to set a minimum framework so that reluctant members may "move up the scale". »

European Disability Forum

---

### **The need for monitoring and steering of experience and good practices**

Beyond integration into employment and the quantitative dimension of the employment rate, it is urgent – according to the interviewees – to emphasize on job retention and the qualitative dimension of jobs, so that people with disabilities can have access to quality, sustainable jobs.

This issue raises the question of developing training for people with disabilities throughout their lives, particularly in view of the the proportion of disabilities that occur in adulthood (80%).

---

**« There is a real demand from associations to know what is happening elsewhere. »**

French Council of Disabled People for European and International Affairs

---

### **SMEs are a strategic target that requires special support and awareness-raising**

While many large companies have made efforts and progress in terms of hiring people with disabilities, the "small bosses" remain less well informed, even though they are the source of the largest number of jobs. The margin of progress must be made on the VSEs and SMEs according to the interviewees (in particular the representatives of civil society), working on convincing them to hire people with disabilities by discussing benefits, raising their awareness, dispelling their fears, and bringing clear communication on possible assistance and services they can mobilize.

---

**« Companies need to understand the interest of keeping disabled people in employment for their image, but also for the quality of life at work for all employees. »**

European Economic and Social Committee

**« We need to dispell the fear of difference and stop seeing disability through the prism of health but rather through the lens of human rights. »**

International Labour Organization

---

**According to all interviewees, an evolution in the approach to employment of people with disabilities is needed to create a more significant impact: for example, focusing on initial skills and informal know-how, identifying tasks and skills, that are appropriate for each individual.**

This approach would make it possible to make the economic, social and human contributions of people with disabilities more visible to companies - and their employees. In this regard, the interviewees focused on the sectors and professions in demand, particularly the digital sector which, in addition to offering numerous job opportunities, often recruits specific skills.

---

**« We have started to explore the focus on skills and know-how, particularly for intellectual disabilities. There is still a lot of reluctance among the Member States. »**

European Commission, General Directorate for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

---

---

« We must move towards the French vision that people with disabilities have special skills that must be supported. »

European Economic and Social Committee

---

**The commitment of top management is clearly identified: companies are more committed to the employment of people with disabilities when their manager feels involved and concerned with the subject.**

This involvement at the highest level is recognized as essential by all representatives of civil society. On the other hand, several interviewees - including trade unions - stressed the need to strengthen the involvement of trade union organizations on the issue of employment of people with disabilities, in particular at the European level.

---

« Trade unions have a specific role to play in monitoring investment in terms of training. »

International Labour Organization

---

**Telework is seen as both an opportunity and a risk for people with disabilities.**

Telework meets aspirations of employees with disabilities, as it does for other employees, and can represent benefits in terms of workstation adaptation, reduced travelling, balance of life, etc. On the other hand, all interviewees stressed the particular risk of exclusion (physical and psychological) that its widespread use may bring to people with disabilities. Telework should not be automatically offered to them and should not result in lost or reduced integration within the company. The French Council of Disabled People for European and International Affairs also stresses that several software and professional tools developed in recent months are not sufficiently accessible to certain types of disabilities (blind

people, dyslexics...). The European Confederation of Trade Unions is launching a monitoring committee on telework.

---

« The issue of remote work changes the situation and deserves further work in Europe. »

French Council of Disabled People for European and International Affairs

---

Following the ministerial conference held in March 2022 as part of the French Presidency of the EU (PFUE), the topic of the Committee's "European spring package" (European semester) on the employment of people with disabilities was mentioned in order to increase accessibility and inclusion on the labor market for people with disabilities.



## B - The view of companies

**For French companies, the diversity policy is part of a "world" policy rather than a European one, and is primarily driven at country levels.**

Representatives of the Diversity and Inclusion – or Disability – departments of companies who were interviewed, stress the fact that their policies for the integration of people with disabilities are primarily viewed from a global perspective. It is on a "global" level that the principles are defined (in particular with the guidance of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities and the ILO Charter on Business and Disability**) for all the subsidiaries of the company. These principles are then deployed at the country level in which the subsidiary operates, and where actions of hiring and retaining people with disabilities are managed, implemented and assessed. All company representatives keep reminding of the diversity of regulations and approaches to disability in different countries (differences in terms of definitions of disability, cultural approaches, degree of "maturity" related to diversity and inclusion issues etc.). Sometimes these policies are carried out in an even more decentralized manner, and are in the hands of the various "houses" in the respective countries (as it's the case for LVMH, for example). It thus appears that the question of the European level, as being a specific level on its own, deserving special "treatment" for companies in defining and managing their disability policies does not really arise.

---

« Every year, we ask our international human resources managers about their actions in terms of disability, and they all say they are impressed by France on this point... »

Groupe Up

### The key points addressed are

- a process that integrates basic international texts
- a rallying of all players/the company's managerial line and the commitment of top management
- the importance of engaging, training and professionalizing a network of internal players
- sourcing as a cornerstone and investment
- entry through skills
- job retention
- the development of telework. Monitoring and steering experiences and good practices

---

« Our role is to provide solutions for HR functions, pass on what works and help with the implementation of actions. »  
LVMH

### The need for monitoring and steering experiences and good practices

If actions of disability inclusion are deployed at country level, coordination is ensured in a flexible manner by the "parent company" in France (all the companies interviewed are headquartered in France). In most cases, this coordination takes the form of tracking the various implemented actions, ensuring their assessment when possible, and coordinating human resources networks by reporting and sharing best practices and successful experiences (through deliverables, workshops or seminars). Those interviewed emphasize the difficulty of this coordination, given the diversity of "offices" or work places. It is indeed at the European level (and, more broadly, on the scale of continents or large geographical areas) that this coordination makes more sense, as the cultural differences and degrees of maturity between these countries are smaller than with

countries of other continents - apart from the United States. In this regard, the diversity/disability coordinators have expressed their recurrent need for quantified and updated information on the situation in countries / EU Member States in terms of disability and employment, which would help them improve their coordination role. Thus, the European disability portal mentioned by civil society players, could also be useful for companies.

---

« The head office sets an overall trend but each subsidiary is responsible for the operational implementation of the of the inclusion strategy, depending on the country and culture... Everyone is moving forward in their own way. »

TotalEnergies

---

**The involvement and support of management through awareness, training, operational support and the sharing of best practices are essential.**

People in charge of integration within the large companies interviewed also confirmed the need to conduct ongoing in-house awareness-raising efforts especially among managers, and in particular on invisible disabilities, which are still often overlooked.

Thus, the disability or diversity advisors carry out a very thorough job of supporting managerial lines (at a minimum, in France) through simple and recurring training sessions or collective initiatives. The objective is to reassure them about the possibility of including a disabled person in their team, reminding them that they will be accompanied to do so and to keep them in employment, and convincing them of the benefits of these hirings, for these people but also for the Group.

For example, Orange in France has put in place a comprehensive system for listening to and supporting managers and is planning to set up a dedicated internal coaching unit to support people with disabilities to integrate in the group.

Similarly, Total Energies in France, in addition to conducting individual and group training sessions, also organizes group sessions, "ropes" of volunteer managers on disability and diversity. Moreover the company approaches and presents diversity management as a skill in its own right. This is also the purpose of "Handi-manager", the certified training and label set up with Companieros.

These initiatives remain "siloed" between countries. The managers interviewed underlined the discrepancies in "degrees" and themes of awareness between subsidiaries, depending on the countries, and the different paths taken depending on the context. As an example shared by Total Energies, their offices in the United Kingdom are very knowledgeable about issues relating to mental and psychological disabilities, burnout and its prevention, whereas awareness-raising efforts in African subsidiaries, are focused on the issue of accessibility and workstation adaptation.

---

**« We all come to the same observation, with our peers and our partners such as Agefiph: awareness raising is a continuous process. We must never give up on this subject, especially on invisible disabilities and chronic illnesses, which still suffer from a great lack of recognition. »**

Apicil

**« The great step forward will be made when the disability missions no longer exist ! »**

Orange

---

### **Recruitment, the stumbling block to the inclusion process for companies**

Several of the companies involved in this study said that recruitment remains the most complex step in the integrating process of people with disabilities.

The first and most time-consuming issue for human resources concerns the sourcing of resumes from job seekers with disabilities, to ensure that enough resumes are received and to identify the most relevant profiles before initiating interview processes.

On this point, company strategies often consist in outsourcing the search and selection of CVs to specialized recruitment firms (always national ones), without resulting in any systematic impact on recruitment. Some companies, such as Orange, state that they regularly choose to go beyond the job profiles initially requested, so as not to miss interesting candidates. Others, such as BNP Paribas dedicate up to two full-time resources to the recruitment of people with disabilities, while still others, such as TotalEnergies and Apicil, set up "disability" training programs for their HR staff.

According to several executives interviewed, this step is all the more complex when it comes to sensitive or "heavy" disabilities. Thus, depending on the candidates they are looking for, the entire recruitment process must often be reviewed in order to adapt to the type of disabilities, profiles and skills required and presented.

Beyond the difficulty linked to the investment of resources and time required to recruit people with disabilities, several disability coordinators point out that the complexity, for them, lies above all in the acceptance of the very principle of this recruitment, by managers who anticipate possible future difficulties and must be convinced of its feasibility. In any case, no action in this area is being thought through on a supranational scale.

---

**« When we spot an interesting profile for a target job, we recruit them without any forward planning of employment and skills. We have recruited about ten employees with disabilities using this method. »**

Orange

---

### **Tailor-made solutions to promote job retention**

The issue of job retention immediately appears as being a priority for the companies interviewed, figuring at the same level as the issue of hiring people with disabilities. But solutions in this area seem to be implemented on a case-by-case basis, ranging from the adaptation of the workstation to that of the work contract or the working hours, as well as reskilling programs towards more suitable jobs, etc. The companies interviewed are large groups, thus budgetary constraints do not arise, and everything is done to encourage, as much as possible, job retention.

On the other hand, all companies emphasize the decisive role of managers in the employment of disabled people and therefore set up training programs for them, which often cover several types of "diversity" topics, but also specific disabilities (such as invisible and/or psychological ones).

---

« Everything that is requested is granted... The difficulty is industrializing the methods so that things may become easier for employees and human resources. We also have to reassure managers on the topic of job retention issues, which they often find complicated to manage... »  
Orange

---

**The importance of top management is clearly identified: companies that are more committed to the employment of people with disabilities have a top manager who is involved and concerned by the subject.**

The companies that have been surveyed confirm that a strong commitment from top management is essential to ensure a ripple effect within the company and with its partners, but also to get the necessary funds to implement large-scale inclusion initiatives. Nevertheless, all companies emphasize that this commitment must be expressed through very concrete positions and actions throughout the year. But they also insist on the need to involve all levels of management, with local managers playing an essential role in informing employees and raising their awareness.

---

« The commitment of the General Management is essential to make progress on this issue. The inclusion policy must also be deployed at all levels of the company through training sessions and awareness-raising programs for all employees. »

BNP Paribas

« The commitment of the manager is key. The signing of the ILO Charter is a powerful lever to illustrate this. »

TotalEnergies

« If the Executive Committee doesn't make a commitment, all remains wishful thinking. The disability policy needs to be promoted at all levels, most of all by local managers. »

LVMH



## Training level and the entry through skills

For the companies that took part in the survey the evolution of recruitment processes is already in progress. The entry through skills analysis, handled beyond CV scrutiny, is getting developed, and interview methods are being adapted to the special profiles and in particular to neurodevelopmental disorders, Dys disorders and psychological disabilities.

LVMH is currently conducting an ambitious program in its logistics centers in France, inspired by the experience of Sephora in the United States, to encourage the hiring of disabled people. Another program includes a renewed recruitment process, without analysis of CVs, based on "assessment centers", to encourage the analysis of individual and collective skills, know-how and interpersonal skills in real time, through role-playing exercises. This new process is accompanied by HR training.

In addition, companies also emphasize the limits of their role and ability to act in terms of hiring and retaining people with disabilities. They point out that the subject of disability must be addressed more broadly by national governments, even before the European institutions.

In terms of inclusion of disability, they expect stronger positions and measures, for example schools setting up sandwich degree programs and professional retraining (85% of disabilities occur in adulthood) or companies changing their way to look at part-time jobs (especially for managers who have difficulty getting part-time contracts accepted in-house). They also call for the training of tomorrow's managers in diversity, and for more awareness-raising programs in business schools, etc.



### **Over-burdening HR functions can be detrimental to their management of disability inclusion.**

All the managers interviewed stressed the fact that the issue of disability requires constant awareness-raising work among employees. Therefore dedicated resources are needed who are well informed on the subject in all its complexity. While in France, the positions of disability advisors (the law on the freedom to choose one's professional future provides for the appointment of a disability advisor in any company with over 250 employees, who is "responsible for guiding, informing and supporting people with disabilities", article L5213-6-1 of the French Labour Code) enable headquarters to have resources dedicated to the subject, this is not always the case in other countries in which a specific Group is established. In these other countries, the issue of disability may be handled among other diversity and inclusion matters (which, moreover, have "exploded" and become complexified in recent years and have increased the pressure on HR functions). The interviewees feel that the generalization of the disability policy or the role of a disability advisor in their offices outside France, seems like a good idea so that sufficient time to deal with the subject of disability could be allowed. But at this stage, none of the companies interviewed has implemented it yet.

---

**« We need to have disability coordinators abroad. »**

Groupe Up

**« The inclusion of mental disability presupposes a high degree of HR maturity... However, HR today is already facing the mental difficulties of their own employees and do not have time to deal with this issue fully. »**

LVMH

---

### **A trend towards a common policy of teleworking for all employees, with flexibility and special attention for people with disabilities**

The issue of teleworking is analyzed by the people in charge of the integration of people with disabilities, as an opportunity and a risk. This is also the perception of the institutions having been interviewed. The choice of a common teleworking agreement for all employees-whether disabled or not- is adopted by the companies but with special flexibility adjusted to each case, always after medical advice and on medical prescription.

Several companies stated that they were very vigilant on the "long-term" telework prescribed to some of their disabled employees, in that it does not allow them to support them properly nor make the right working time arrangements, nor give them the listening time they may need and exchanges with other employees, etc.

In addition, as may be expected, companies address teleworking issues on a national level, or even at the level of individual "houses" or subsidiaries, and never on a European or international level.

---

**« Since March 2020, we have implemented regular monitoring of people with disabilities on the subject of teleworking. To date, we have a few employees who have not as yet come back to the office. We are working on getting them back under good conditions. »**

Apicil

---

## C - Good practices

◀◀ At BNP Paribas, we have a team of employees who are active in the field of disability, the "Ability network". This group operates at European and international levels. It is supported by the Group's "Missions Handicap" in France, sponsored by one of the members on the Executive Committee. These teams set up meetings to discuss a given theme on disability, which can be either related to their professional environments or their personal problems. The objective is to bring the subject of disability into the company, to get people talking freely about disability. ▶▶

BNP Paribas

◀◀ At LVMH, we believe in the methodological approach of supported employment. We have therefore set up a program with the association VETA - Vivre et Travailler Autrement - on the inclusion and retention of severely autistic people in the workplace, which aims at integrating eight permanent hires in production. This program, under the guidance of autism experts supporting these employees on a daily basis, has made it possible to train managers and hire (part-time) three people with severe autism at our Guerlain plant in Chartres. Three other companies in our group are already interested in reproducing the experience. Beyond the figures, what is important is the incredible "progress" made by these people, in terms of ease, communication and autonomy.

They are fully aware and proud of their contribution to the company. And the other employees are very proud of their inclusion in the teams. LVMH also has another program for mental disability: in cooperation with Siemens, its aim is to bring people with mental health problems (via a secondment contract to an ESAT and then an employment contract) into support function roles, data management, digital process analysis, etc. It allows people with mental disabilities to place themselves at the service of others, support others on their mental health issues, and it helps them build up their confidence. This program has helped to gently overcome fears about mental disability both for these people themselves, and for the other employees and also for HR staff. We plan to reproduce this program on other jobs. We are working on a better coordination between the protected sector and the mainstream employment world to integrate specific disabilities. ▶▶

LVMH

◀◀ We have a specific recruitment target on neuro-atypical people in France. This "Neuroteam project", which is quite cross-functional, has resulted in the setting up of a working group that helps managers understand better these profiles and their potential skills. It also includes a complete review of the recruitment process, thanks to the support of recruitment firms specializing in "atypical" people, in order to renew our approach and unlock our thought patterns. ▶▶

Orange

## D - Business performance

Beyond the driving force that companies play in their respective societies, all of those who took part in the survey and who have roles of social responsibility remind us that **to deprive oneself of people with disabilities is to deprive ourselves of talent**. In this sense, each disabled person or each person from a diverse background is in a position to make a contribution in a very concrete way to the company that hired them, just like any other employee.

But beyond this individual view related on skills, the systematic link between diversity inclusion and performance is not clearly mentioned or established by the companies that have been interviewed - for some, it even seems inappropriate or hazardous to highlight this topic.

On the other hand, all members interviewed stress the fact of the obvious contribution of diversity, and disability, to the "good health" of their company, emphasizing its role in creating cohesion and pride among employees - which can ultimately translate into improved collective performance.

---

**« Talking about disability in the workplace means to address the human issue. It is a factor of cohesion and humanity. »**

TotalEnergies

---





## E - Participants and methodological reminders

- › The qualitative study conducted by Agefiph focuses on the policies connecting disability and employment at the European level, from the point of view of institutions and organizations representing civil society and French companies present in several Member States.
- › A first part was conducted with nine institutions and organizations representing European civil society, in February and March 2022. Its objective is to better know, understand and be able to draw inspiration from public policies, orientations and operational actions likely to accelerate access to employment for people with disabilities in Europe or through European levers. The analysis of the elements collected within the framework of this first part was presented at the conference on disability policies in Europe at the 3rd University of the Agefiph's Network of Disability Advisors, on March 29, 2022.
- › A second part of the study was conducted in April 2022 with six large French companies located in at least two other European Member States. Its objective: to complete the first part of the study from the "field" point of view by bringing to light the organization of the disability and employment policies of these companies in their various European locations, identifying possible levers or obstacles to the implementation of those policies (depending on the countries) and to demonstrate the best practices rolled out by these companies.
- › The methodology used is that of the qualitative approach, which translates into a process of individual interviews with members of these institutions, organizations and companies (18 in total, in some organizations interviews were conducted with several members). These interviews were carried out using semi-open-ended questions, to structure the discussions while leaving room for dialogue.
- › The comments and statements have been voluntarily anonymized, in compliance with the commitment made before the interviews. This anonymity guarantees a trustworthy sharing of information within the framework of the interviews.

### Organizations and companies that took part in the study

- › European Commission / General Directorate Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (Unit of Disability and Inclusion and European Social Fund Plus)
- › European Parliament
- › European Forum of People with disabilities (EDF)
- › French Council for disabled people for European and International Affairs (CFHE)
- › European Economic and Social Committee
- › European Confederation of trade unions
- › International Labor Organization
- › Business Europe (via transmission of contents)
- › Apicil
- › BNP Paribas
- › Up Group
- › LVMH
- › Orange
- › TotalEnergies

## Appendix

### ILO Charter:

- › Promote and respect the rights of people with disabilities and fight the stigmas and stereotypes to which they are subjected;
- › Develop policies and practices that protect persons with disabilities from discriminations of all kinds;
- › Promote equal treatment and opportunities for people with disabilities;
- › Progressively make company premises and communication with other employees accessible to hires with disabilities;
- › Implement appropriate measures to enable employees who become disabled to retain or return to their jobs;
- › Respect confidentiality and personal information regarding disabilities;
- › Take into account the needs of people with disabilities who face difficulties in accessing the market, including people with mental or psychosocial disabilities;
- › Promote the employment of people with disabilities with the company's partners and other companies, and collaborate with business networks and organizations working to advance the rights of people with disabilities;
- › Regularly review the company's policies on the inclusion of people with disabilities and work to ensure their effectiveness;
- › Report on the company's progress, promote the employment of people with disabilities with the relevant stakeholders, and share information and experiences with our members.

## Bibliography

- › Velche D. (2012), **"The employment of people with disabilities in Europe: where the adopted policies reflect cultural differences"**, Scientific Bulletin for Social Sciences and Disabilities, n° 4, MSSH, February.
- › FIPHFP, **The employment of people with disabilities in Europe**, 2017
- › The employment of people with disabilities in Europe The role of quantification in a new public failure **<https://www.cairn.info/publications-de-Jay-Rowell--1828.htm>**  
Jay Rowell  
**<https://www.cairn.info/revue-geneses.htm>**  
Genesis  
**<https://www.cairn.info/revue-geneses-2016-2.htm>**  
2016/2 (No. 103), pages 96–116
- › **The employment of disabled workers in Germany Taking into account their aspiration for equality**, Brigitte Lestrade  
**La Documentation française | « Revue française des affaires sociales »** 2015/4 | pages 107 to 127.
- › Union of Equality: the strategy for the rights of people with disabilities **<https://eur-lex.europa.eu>**
- › CFHE, **The employment of people with disabilities in the EU**, 2022



Find the publications  
of the Employment and Disability Observatory  
on [www.agefiph.fr/centre-de-ressources](http://www.agefiph.fr/centre-de-ressources)

Publication Director: Didier Eyssartier,  
Managing Director of Agefiph  
Layout: In medias res Agency  
Photo credits: Istock  
July 2022