

HOW TO ENGAGE ENTERPRISES AND SUPPORT REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION?

Peer Learning event on employment
of persons with disability

Warsaw, 4-5 November 2025



Hiring barriers – evidence at a glance

- **Persistent employment gap:** ~24 pp in 2024 in the EU — the **largest** among disadvantaged groups.
- **Field-experiment pattern:** applicants disclosing disability receive **fewer callbacks** across countries and disability types.
- **Wheelchair users:** **markedly lower** odds of interview invitations (most consistent penalty).
- **Mental health conditions:** in several studies the penalty is as **large or larger** than for physical impairments.
- **Subsidy eligibility signals:** **neutral to negative** effect on callbacks — likely read as a cue of perceived severity/complexity.
- **Implication:** not just information gaps — **stereotypes and prejudice** shape early hiring decisions.

Key elements shaping employer behaviours

Main negative factors:

- Believing customers will respond negatively
- Worrying about spending more time to assist
- Believing people with disabilities are not productive
- Lacking internal and external support
- Experiencing administrative burden
- Expecting negative safety consequences
- Believing co-workers will respond negatively
- Not encountering qualified people with disabilities applying
- Expecting costs

Main positive factors:

- Having pro-social motivation
- Believing people with disabilities have unique advantages
- Expecting a competitive advantage
- Expecting financial gains
- Working in an organisation with a policy for inclusion
- Getting financial incentives
- Working in a large organization
- Being willing to take a risk

Key tools aimed at promoting employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities

Support for job creation

- Employer incentives
- Quotas
- Entrepreneurship, self-employment, and social economy
- Public procurement/works

Support for employing organizations

- Adaptation and assistance
- Guidance and retention support
- Awareness raising

Support for the institutional environment

- Matching services and placement
- Legal frameworks and regulations
- Capacity building
- Dismissal protection

Which of those intervention are effective?

Evidence base

- Most rigorous evidence comes from high-income countries (OECD/EU).

Key outcomes to measure

- New employment (recruitment)
- Sustained employment (retention)
- Reduced sickness absence / faster return-to-work
- Improved health and job quality, e.g., higher job satisfaction, income, and appropriate hours worked.

Which of these interventions prove to be effective?

What the evidence says

- **Anti-discrimination laws:** mostly neutral or negative on employment outcomes.
- **Job accommodations:** generally positive—especially for retention; effects on working hours unclear; mixed for return-to-work.
- **Managers' knowledge & attitudes:** mixed, but leaning positive.
- **Quota systems:** results vary by design/enforcement—positive in some countries (e.g., Austria, Japan) and negative in others (e.g., France).

Which of these interventions prove to be effective?

What the evidence says

- **Part-time sick leave:** supports return-to-work and shortens time on sick leave (strongest evidence from Nordic countries).
- **Graded return-to-work:** positive for return-to-work.
- **Active RTW** measures: increase return-to-work rates.
- **Wage subsidies** - mixed effectiveness—helping some groups (e.g. older workers, those already employed) and improving job stability in some contexts, but often failing to increase overall employment rates for persons with disabilities.

Effective strategies as identified by the OECD:

Policy instrument

Wage subsidies & hiring incentives

Job coaching & supported employment

Accommodation funds & advisory support

Awareness & anti-discrimination enforcement

Inclusive HR / High-Performance Work Practices

OECD finding

Can raise hiring, **if targeted and temporary**; risk of “deadweight”

Most cost-effective measure for sustained jobs and productivity.

Reduce employer anxiety over costs and procedures.

Improve compliance and attitudes but **need practical support** to change behaviour.

Embedding flexibility, mentoring and learning benefits **all workers**, not only those with disabilities.

Key to success

Focus on severe disabilities; link to job coaching; clear exit rules.

Cooperation with employers; long-term funding.

Simple, fast, SME-friendly systems.

Combine information with audits and guidance.

Leadership commitment; mainstream HR integration.

Key takeaways

- **Move from specialized to mainstream systems** – integrating inclusion across all employment services.
- **Prioritize early investment** – focusing on prevention and support for youth with disabilities transitioning into work.
- **Integrate incentives, skills development, and accountability** – rather than relying on one-time subsidies.
- **Consider the entire policy framework:** social protection, active labor market measures, and labor laws interact to create complex systems with multiple effects.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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