

Guideline for companies - Inclusive communication and recruitment methodologies

(Our nice visual with logos will be on this 1st page)

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Welcome dear reader!

“No pessimist ever discovered the secret of the stars, or sailed to an uncharted land, or opened a new doorway for the human spirit.” — Helen Keller

You are holding the Guideline for companies - Inclusive communication and recruitment methodologies of the project Career4All - Train The Trainer Academy. Before going any further, let us provide you with some information about our project.

The labour market is changing rapidly due to various factors. The global pandemic has accelerated some of the shifts that were already taking place, such as digitalisation. Not only do existing jobs and tasks need to adapt to changing work conditions, but also new roles and needs emerge regarding employment. Furthermore the rising awareness around sustainability and UN SDGs go hand in hand with comprehensive measures addressing environmental, social as well as governance concerns. In the heart of all these shifts, the workforce stands with a particularly important role. There is one factor that all industries and sectors will always continue to need and be dependent on - human capital. However, some of the biggest challenges regarding Human Resources are the lack of experienced and motivated workers, as well as staff turnover.

At the same time, over 1.8 billion people with disabilities around the world have the potential, motivation and desire to feel fulfilled. They need equal opportunities and support to gain additional skills and accessibility. People with disabilities or chronic illnesses can excel in various responsibilities in diverse fields of work - from marketing, accounting, and customer support services to graphic design, software development, and many more. In this way, they can reach their full potential and bring businesses positive change and productivity. They can help to build a better team spirit, work for more inclusive environments that better address the needs of different groups and stakeholders. This way companies can also read the needs of society better and more inclusively, which also can allow them to act more innovatively in addressing the wider, diverse stakeholders through both their approaches as well as their services or products - making sure their creation of value does not exclude potential customers or stakeholders with disabilities.

It's time for businesses to stop looking at engaging people with disabilities as an act of charity, and to realize how working with them can become a natural process, as it is with other hires. It is the representatives of responsible businesses who identify and create trends for changing attitudes in society. By leading by positive example, raising awareness in the corporate sector and opening doors to talents with disabilities because of their capabilities, more and more companies will start to follow and in the long run, hiring staff with disabilities based on their capabilities will become the absolute norm, as it should be for everyone else.

Career4All Train The Trainer Academy is a project implemented by 3 European partners - Soziale Zukunft Verein zur Förderung der Integration behinderter Menschen (Austria), Social Future Foundation (Bulgaria) and Jamba Hungary Foundation (Hungary), all of them part of the JAMBA - Careers for All project and network. The underlying mission of the consortium organizations is to support PwD to develop soft and vocational skills and, as a next step, to help them find secure and inclusive employment.

Career4All Train The Trainer Academy is a natural extension of our core mission and activities, with which we develop a unified methodology, materials and training program for trainers who will gain the necessary knowledge and skills to empower PwD through accessible training, career guidance and build a bridge between them and businesses so that PwD could find accessible employment. The program and the materials produced will be tested in the framework of international training and capacity building (Train the trainer

Academy) and local practical activities (Mentoring program between trained trainers and PwDs) in the three European countries.

Within the project, as final deliverables, the consortium is also developing a unified toolkit for the program, as well as a guideline for talent with disabilities. These materials remain available for organizations/institutions/companies and anyone else who might wish to implement a similar program at local or national level in a European Union country.

The purpose of this guideline is to provide valuable information and advice to prospective employers, building on successful examples, experiences and advice from others who have already hired people with different capabilities into their teams. Through these materials, you have the possibility to learn more about Career4All Train The Trainer Academy and acquire theoretical and practical background with the help of the methods described in the toolkit and guidelines.

Aims and objectives

- Main objectives

The primary purpose of Career4All Train The Trainer Academy is to collaboratively develop an innovative training methodology and implement it in the partner countries, to enhance the capacity of social and education professionals, volunteer youth workers/activists and HR specialists in Austria, Bulgaria & Hungary. Our idea is to train trainers who will gain the necessary knowledge and skills to empower PwD by implementing a set of accessible training courses. We use the term “trainer” and “mentor” interchangeably. These trainers can then provide career guidance to young people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, women with disabilities, migrants with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities (collectively, PwD). Through this project, we aim to promote equity purposefully, support equal access to vocational qualification programmes and create more opportunities for career development and social inclusion. In addition, trained trainers will build a bridge between businesses and candidates with disabilities and support PwD in finding accessible employment.

The objectives of this project are:

- Share up-to-date data regarding the current challenges unemployed PwD of working age in Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria face when trying to find a job and enter the primary labour market. Reflect on the data and find repeating patterns. Develop an international methodology for successful and inclusive career guidance for PwD, including one toolkit and two guidelines (one for capacity building of talents with disabilities and one for inclusive communication and recruitment methodologies) as the basis for the trainers. The originally produced English materials will be translated into German, Hungarian, and Bulgarian to provide accessibility and allow local implementation.
- Equip 18 trainers between 18 and 45 years of age (6 trainers per country) with the needed know-how so they can promote diversity, equity and inclusion and inclusive recruitment in the workplace on the one hand and on the other hand - to equip them with the needed skills so they can support PwD with career guidance;

- Match trained trainers (6 trainers per country) with mentees with disabilities between 18 and 29 years of age (6 PwD per country) and conduct hands-on activities for PwD by practically applying the gained theoretical knowledge.
- Project impact

The project's main objective relates to the needs of beneficiaries, which is the project's target group. We aim to build the necessary capacity, knowledge and skills in a group of trainers who, in turn, can support PwD in acquiring specific soft skills, assisting with career guidance and the job application process. The ultimate goal is to successfully prepare mentees for a future work environment. On the other hand, upon completion of the training, the trainers will be able to conduct training for employers that will help raise awareness in the corporate sector on the topic of D&I, successful communication and inclusion of people with disabilities in the job market. Jamba uses empowerment-based solutions and actively seeks the opportunity to connect all stakeholders to support the learning and inclusion process of both main target groups.

The primary mission of the three organizations is to support PwD to build key skills and professional competencies and to facilitate their employment. The activities described above are the essential and central focus of the three project partners. Each project partner has expertise in this particular area of activity, with the difference that each partner is an expert for the country in which it operates. Through the three-way exchange, the individuals and organizations from each country will achieve a new and inclusive approach to career guidance for young PwD, engaging young people in inclusion.

General overview, demographic characteristics of the group of people with disabilities and current situation on the topic of diversity and inclusion in the labour market

- Austria

The legal definition of disability referred to by the Austrian Social Affairs Ministry is regulated by the Austrian Disability Employment Act: "the effect of a non-temporary physical, mental or psychological impairment or an impairment of the senses which makes participation in the life of society, particularly in normal working life, difficult. Non-temporary means a period which is more than (or expected to be more than) six months.". The terminology used to refer to the group of PwD in Austria in German is - Menschen mit Behinderungen (und chronischen Erkrankungen). In English it translates as "People with disabilities and chronic illnesses". The "chronic illness" is Jamba Austria's addition, as we prefer to formulate by accounting for chronic conditions, too.

According to a micro census survey carried out in 2015 by Statistics Austria on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs, "18.4% of the resident population over the age of 15 in private households in Austria have – according to their own statement – a permanent disability. This is reported as around 1.3 million people. In this survey, "the most common permanent disabilities" reported were "problems with mobility" which signifies a "projected total of around 1 million persons, or about 14.1% of the Austrian population over the age of 15 in private households".

In Austria, the Arbeitsmarktservice (AMS) reported the unemployed PwD as 13,134 at the end of August 2022 (AMS - Übersicht Aktuell, August 2022). Also, in a broader category, the

same report refers to 59,565 unemployed people with health-related constraints, bringing the total to 72,699 PwD according to our criteria. Current numbers may show a relative improvement in the employment of PwD compared with the previous post-pandemic figures in 2020 and 2021. However, the number of people registered as unemployed (incl. training participants) with health restrictions had almost doubled between 2009 - 2018 from around 44 thousand to 84 thousand (AMS, Spezialthema, August 2019).

- Bulgaria

According to the data from the information system of the Agency for persons with disabilities (AHU), the number of PwD in Bulgaria at the end of 2019 was about 753 204 people. This is about 10% of the country's population, a figure comparable to their share in 2009, when it was just over 9%.

The comparative analysis of the data on PwD, based on two empirical sociological surveys, shows that in terms of their age structure, there is an aging trend - in 2020 the share of people over the age of 60 in this group is 62%, i.e. 12 p.p. higher than in the previous survey. In all other age groups, the proportion of PwD in 2009 was (more or less) higher than in 2020.

People with permanent disabilities of working age (16 - 64 years) are over 227 thousand (according to NSI, 2019), of which 173 200 are economically inactive and 49 800 are in employment. This shows that there is potential for the labour market in the face of inactive PwD, a large number of whom could be targeted for activation policies. The results of the 2020 empirical sociological surveys confirm these data - 45% of the respondents, which include people outside the working age, are inactive, and only 22.7% are employed. The survey highlights another unfavorable trend - according to 78% of respondents, as PwD they are unable to carry out work activities. This result coincides with the NSI data that only about 22% of employed PwD. Therefore, they are a potential contingent for employment services and, if exploited, the share of those finding employment through public employment structures would be significantly higher, without this being a labour market policy objective in itself.

In terms of sources for finding a job, it can be seen that PwD mainly use the national labour office (92.3%), their acquaintances (76.9%) or employers' advertisements (61.5%). A smaller proportion of those resorted to the help of an employment intermediary other than the labour office (15.4%) and NGOs (7.7%). This has its logical explanation - the unemployed are mostly those registered in the Labour agency offices. Apart from the fact that these levels of around 11 - 16 thousand people are stable over the years and the labour office fails to reach the people who are not active, another problem is that very often these people are the same. These are unemployed PwD who become accustomed to participating in programs and projects and whose employment depends entirely on active labour market policies, without leading to their gradual acquisition of independence and their integration into the open labour market.

Regarding diversity in the workplace, employers continue to be very reticent about working with the inactive group of PwD - according to the 2020 survey, the private sector contributes only 54% of their employment compared to an average of 76% for the economy. The introduction of quotas for hiring PwD is not becoming the desired driver for expanding employment among this group because employers are either able to meet their quotas with available workers with disabilities or are simply willing to pay administrative compensation but not actually work with PwD.

- Hungary

Of the various terms - disability, impairment, reduced capacity for work - that we use in Hungary, the one most closely associated with the world of work is the term “person with reduced capacity for work”. This term is approached from the perspective of how the condition of the individual affects his or her employment, and it is to this term that the legal regulation of the employment of PwD can be linked.

According to the labour market survey conducted by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office in 2015, there are 680,713 people of working age (19 - 64) with a disability, which is 11.3% of the total working age population in Hungary.

In terms of employment, 21% of PwD are employed in Hungary, but according to a European survey, 72% of them have no health problems that limit their daily activities and 75% do not need assistance in their daily activities.

A significant proportion of PwD are not in employment, with 75% of PwD being inactive ([KSH, 2015](#)). They also have a higher unemployment rate, 2.5 times higher than the unemployment rate for people without a disability (KSH, 2015).

Those who do work are rarely able to find employment in marketable occupations after leaving the education system due to inadequate education and skills, and therefore mostly work in low-status, low-paid jobs (77% in manual jobs) or in sheltered/accredited jobs. Even for those with relatively high tertiary qualifications, few of them are in jobs that match their qualifications. Thus, they either do not obtain any or have inadequate work experience, which would later be a serious disadvantage if they were to work in more decent jobs.

Their low salary (either from the open labour market or from sheltered employment) makes them vulnerable and dependent on the social assistance system. Subsidies alone are not an incentive for further skills development and the dependent, vulnerable status erodes self-confidence and self-empowerment, often leading to so-called learned helplessness.

Low incomes make it difficult or impossible to finance their independent living (see: personal assistance, dependence on family/parents, higher health costs, transport), which is an additional barrier to successful entry into the labour market, to staying in it and to their visibility in society.

Challenges and needs of the human resources sector

- Austria

The focus of the Soziale Zukunft - Verein zur Förderung der Integration behinderter Menschen is on the inclusion of talents with disabilities in the labour market, primarily in the technology, Information and Communication Technologies and Artificial Intelligence industries. Since the organization was founded in Austria, the team has conducted in-depth research of the Austrian market and enquiries of companies. While PwD fail to cope with finding desired jobs, the market is constantly growing, and demanding qualified, motivated and loyal employees. Moreover, with the progress in technological tools, the “future of work” has become a high-priority area that is considered in a transition towards higher digitalization by various institutions (i.e. OECD, McKinsey), also with expectations that Covid-19 and post-Covid periods are accelerating this process.

The social policy goal in Austria obliges employers to hire PwD in order to integrate them into the labour market, to enable them to lead an independent lifestyle and enjoy social recognition. Also, the United Nations' (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratified in Austria in 2008, underlines the "right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others" that entails "the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities". This UN Convention obliges to protect and "promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation".

Two of the most important sections in this Convention, that relates to our purpose as Jamba:

- d) enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programs, placement services and vocational and continuing training,
- e) promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment.

One of the industries with growing demand is the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector, both globally and in Austria. Software engineering and programming is the largest sub sector within ICT occupations. Despite good career chances and high-income opportunities, a significant shortage of skilled workers has been observed over the last five years. For example, over 65% of employees involved in ICT projects are over 40 years old and around 17% are over 50 years old. In comparison, less than 21% of employees are under 30 years old. Women are still underrepresented among IT professionals. The main reasons for skill shortages relate to insufficient skills supply; increasing demand of ICT skills in other economic sectors (for example, medicine); and, increasing need of professional maintenance of enterprise internal data.

According to Digitalisation in Austria Research published in 2019 by WFO, "Austrian firms have difficulties recruiting ICT specialists", whereas Austrians carry a "quite distant relationship to digital technologies with low educational attainment". Based on findings, the report indicated a change in the "task structure of work" which is because of "digitalisation" as "annual routine jobs are decreasing, and abstract non-routine jobs are increasing in importance". This finding pointed to "reform needs" to promote "ICT skills and competencies of the workforce": "in the short term this calls for a reform of the criteria-based immigration system and a stronger focus on ICT in the education, training and retraining of employees. In the longer term this gap needs to be addressed in the education system".

Furthermore, based on Eurostat statistics, the report highlights that in 2017 about "10% of all Austrian firms recruited or tried to recruit ICT specialists", with 67% of these reporting "hard-to-fill vacancies for ICT specialists", and the large firms had even a higher share (72%).

A similar situation is observed in the field of Artificial Intelligence. According to the Artificial Intelligence Potenzial Österreich: Zahlen, Daten, Fakten Research, conducted by the Austrian Federal Ministry, around 600+ companies in Austria can be identified as active in the AI sector but they also suffer from lack of competent personnel, both AI generalists and

AI specialists. “Current, accurate, and refreshed data” is the key to “continuously train, validate, and maintain agile machine learning models” (RTInsights). It is also the most crucial element of machine learning and without data annotation computers couldn't be trained to see, speak or perform intelligent functions, writes MyKinsey Global Institute. Data Annotation Providers combine Humans and Tech because human labour is essential as part of the work.

Most of the professions related to the field of ICT, AI and ML are really complex, require a lot of training and preparation, many years of experience and expertise in order to develop in the sector. But there are some entry-level positions for which training is less time-consuming and challenging. Such positions are Quality Assurance /QA/ Specialist, Data Collector, Data Annotator and they can be useful to companies which need help with things like data entry, sentiment analysis and data transcription. Such positions would be of interest to our target group of PwD, and would give them the opportunity to enter this field after which the opportunities for development and professional growth could be unlimited. Human potential is “equally distributed” across the Globe, but “opportunity” - unfortunately not (inspired by Samasource’s similar quote). Job creation and economic empowerment are the best ways to break the cycle of poverty.

A very important aspect related to the field of ICT is that it is an extremely flexible sector that offers a wide variety of positions, allows a large number of people to work remotely. Thanks to rising opportunities of the ICT and AI field, as well as an appropriate set of skills that could be acquired through online or offline training, even people living outside the big cities in small settlements and rural areas can be able to find their professional realization as well.

- Bulgaria

Over the past three years human resources professionals in Bulgaria have faced many new challenges. People management processes have changed, new practices and new working models have been introduced, which have been imposed by the reverse migration of skilled staff and by the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic and the fact that unemployment in Bulgaria in 2022 has reached a historic low.

The unemployment rate registered by the Employment Agency in the country reached its lowest ever value - 4.6%. For this reason, competition for staff is intensifying and only companies offering adequate remuneration, attractive benefits packages, development opportunities and work-life balance are winning and retaining talent.

Unfortunately, the unemployment rate of PwD is still high, which shows that the specialized (targeted only at PwD) employment mediation by human resources agencies is insufficient, but it is necessary because inactive PwD have many deficits for integration into the labour market - they are long-term unemployed, have lack of experience and work habits, skills and qualifications. They need comprehensive support like the one we offer at Jamba - Careers for All, but unfortunately there are a few organizations like us in the country.

This challenge of insufficient specialist recruitment is not only seen in the context of disability. Employers are also not being provided with the wide range of specialized services required, such as work process adaptations, coaching, etc., which would ultimately lead to diversity in the workplace.

- Hungary

There are two main challenges the human resources sector needs to face concerning the employment of PwD in Hungary.

First of all, there are no employees with disabilities with appropriate qualifications and skills for open positions in the open labour market.

The effect of this discrepancy is that where employers would otherwise be open to employing PwD, they cannot find people with the right qualifications, so they pay a rehabilitation contribution to the state as a form of “penalty” for not filling the required quota. Diverse jobs are not being created, which would be necessary for a positive change in the social perception of PwD and for the realization of their human rights.

Due to the fact that employers see a few good examples, they stereotype and prejudge workers with disabilities, which can lead to mistrust and alienation. Bad experiences are made after an initial openness if they lack the tools that are a prerequisite for a successful recruitment and integration process. In case an employee with disability does not perform up to expectations, it reinforces stereotypical thinking and reinforces prejudices. A bad experience can cause disappointment and perpetuate exclusion.

PwD are perceived to be less capable. There are very few positive examples that can lead to a realistic image of a person with a disability. Therefore, employers try to promote the cause as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility activities in ways that involve vulnerable people as subjects of charitable services and thereby perpetuate the relationship between the vulnerable and the non-partnered and dependent. This contributes to the perpetuation of the problem by working against empowerment.

This problem naturally has implications for other stakeholder groups such as the state. A significant proportion of PwD who are not educated and able to meet labour market requirements are inactive or looking for work and therefore remain dependent on and vulnerable to social benefits from the state, creating economic inequality. These benefits are used by PwD not as citizens who buy services, but as vulnerable people in need. They do not have the level of income to become real customers and therefore often do not receive adequate care.

The second challenge refers to the lack of information and non-inclusive attitude of the companies. Based on the lived experiences of PwD in contact with Jamba Hungary, our discussions with human resources professionals and our professional experience, it is clear that the prejudiced, non-inclusive attitude and lack of knowledge is also present on the employer side.

PwD are minimally represented in Hungarian society, therefore there is not enough or adequate information and experience about them in the majority society. Accordingly, there is a lack of knowledge and information in the workplace, so that the collegial environment is often hostile to colleagues with disabilities.

One typical example of employers' prejudicial attitudes is the perception that workers with disabilities do not perform as well as their non-disabled colleagues. This bias fuels fears, such as that different performance may create tension in the team or that successful integration requires special and extra resources from the employer.

Another example of the lack of information in the workplace is that human resources professionals do not know how to communicate about disability because of the taboo surrounding it. They do not meet PwD, so they do not have first-hand information that could

help to shade the stereotypical image of them based on prejudices. Typically, they do not know what jobs they are employed in and how they are employed, and therefore do not seek out workers with disabilities. This is the case even if, for example, human resources professionals have an open, inclusive approach that could ensure equal opportunities, but because of the prevailing prejudices, the immediate working environment is closed, distrustful and lacks the tools for successful integration - they may be stuck at the recruitment stage, not knowing where and through what channels to reach them.

The effects of the lack of information and non-inclusive attitude: One of the most important effects of this bias, in terms of career opportunities for PwD, is that employers do not hire PwD. As a result, there will be no good examples, no visibility, no shift in attitudes. It reinforces the perception that PwD can only do few, low-status, low-paid jobs with no career prospects.

The entrenched social attitudes have different practical effects on the way employers operate. A typical manifestation of stereotypical attitudes is when employers focus on what the candidate is not able to do, what his/her disability is (for example, during a job interview). Prejudiced thinking also leads employers to think that "a person with a disability should be happy to get a job at all".

It is common for employers not to see the benefits of removing physical barriers. Even if they are aware of the barriers, they do not consciously address them, they do not have objectives to remove them. "Why?" - one reason may be that they do not see inclusion and diversity as a positive value or objective, preferring to take the "easy" way out and pay the rehabilitation contribution.

Legal frameworks and quota systems

- Austria

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has given the disability movement a strong legal framework to advocate for the rights of PwD. The 33 core articles of the CRPD, which cover all areas of life, must be implemented and monitored. Further institutional support for approaching this societal challenge, is also presented by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, provides a political momentum to push for the realization of the CRPD. In fact, there is a considerable overlap between the articles of the CRPD and the SDGs as the 2030 Agenda was built upon existing international and national commitments such as the CRPD. The inclusion of disability in the SDGs – one of the most comprehensive international development frameworks ever written – is a cause for real hope that more initiatives like Jamba will work for positive change on this issue, and PwD will finally tangibly feel the impact of development progress.

In Austria, together with the Federal Disability Act and the Federal Disability Equality Act, the Disability Employment Act forms the legal basis for disability law. It contains regulations and guidelines that are relevant and very important for the corporate sector in the following fields:

- Legal framework regarding employment of PwD;
- Quota system and compensation tax;
- Special support for PwD in Austria;
- Disabled persons' representatives;

- Protection against discrimination.

Austrian legal frameworks for employment also incorporate inclusion as a rule and according to the Disability Employment Act there is a specific quota system. All companies which employ 25 or more employees are obliged to take on one disabled person with beneficiary status (registered disabled person) for every 25 employees (e.g. if a company employs 200 persons it is obliged to employ eight registered disabled persons).

The following persons, whose employment is particularly encouraged, are counted double in relation to the obligatory figure:

- persons with a visual impairment or blindness;
- wheelchair users;
- disabled persons receiving special support under the age of 19;
- disabled persons receiving special support for the duration of training;
- disabled persons over 50 and receiving special support with a level of disability of at least 70 %;
- disabled persons over the age of 55 receiving special support.

As disclosed by the Federal Ministry¹, employers who employ PwD are “exempted from local authority tax, from payments to the Family Burdens Equalization Fund, from the Chamber of Commerce fee, and in Vienna from the tax to finance the underground system”.

In cases where the employers do not fulfill the requirement to recruit PwD , they have to pay a monthly monetary taxation between EUR 267 and 398 EUR (depending on the size of the company), to compensate for this obligation.

Compensatory tax in 2022²

Company size person	Compensatory tax per month per
25-99 employees	€267
100-399 employees	€375
More than 400 employees	€398

¹ [Federal Ministry of Republic of Austria, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection](#)

² [Replicated here, based on Ministry's disclosures](#)

These payments land in the Compensation Tax Fund, and are utilized “for the support of the integration into employment of people with disabilities”. The Ministry distributes subsidies to “those affected” as well as to their line manager (Federal Ministry, Republic of Austria).

Of course, natural and sustainable implementation of inclusion beyond these policies authentically, requires forming a related mindset. Otherwise, PwD may stay behind both in education and job opportunities. Soziale Zukunft Verein in Austria envisages creating an enduring channel for PwD and health restrictions, to become better included in society, stand on their feet and create and sustain income. With both training for soft and professional skills our solution approach is to teach them how to fish rather than handing them fish. We want to assist those who need support, in increasing their self-confidence and attaining self-sustainable financial status with better access to suitable training formats and jobs.

People with disabilities who can obtain special support (aka. registered disabled persons)

The current framework allows PwD in Austria who have at least a 50% “degree of disability” to apply for an official statement certifying their eligibility for the official special support (also known as “registered disabled persons” - RDP).

RDP can benefit from diverse advantages, as listed by the Ministry as below:

- Special protection against dismissal and redundancy: Employers have to obtain the agreement of the Disabled Persons Committee before they can make a person redundant;
- Subsidies in relation to working life: The range of offers extends from financial benefits via technical working aids to special training courses;
- Additional holidays: This is permitted insofar as it is provided for in the respective collective agreement, civil service employment regulations or company agreement;
- Income tax allowance: Tax allowances can be applied for at the local tax office from a degree of disability of 25 percent;

There is a difference between the disability pass (also issued by the Social Ministry) and the above-described beneficiary status that requires a separate application. Therefore, persons who have a disability pass are not “automatically recipients of special support”, as listed above (Federal Ministry, Republic of Austria).

Special protection against dismissal and redundancy

Section 8 of the Disability Employment Act also brings a higher “protection against dismissal and redundancy” for PwD, alongside the obligation to employ PwD.

Organizations can dismiss a registered disabled person only with a notice period of at least four weeks, and with the permit of Disabled Persons Committee under the provincial offices of the Sozialministeriumservice. Some cases may allow the receipt of this permit “retrospectively”, yet to make the dismissal official and effective, this confirmation from the Ministry is necessary.

As the Ministry is also aware, not only representatives of PwD but also job providers regard this “special protection against dismissal” as a barrier or discouragement to hiring disabled

persons. For this reason, the Ministry modified this special protection clause in accordance with the “social partners and the associations of people with disabilities”. This additional protection layer became the only effective for recruitment as of January 2011, and only after four years of employment except some “statutory exceptions” (Federal Ministry, Republic of Austria).

Disabled persons’ representatives

All companies with at least five PwD receiving special support, must have an election process for a disabled persons’ representative (and deputy). In companies with at least 15 PwD receiving special support, two deputies must be elected for the PwD’ representative, and from 40 RDP onwards three deputies must be elected. The representatives must themselves be PwD. The office period of the representatives is four years (Overview of the horizontal issue of disability in Austria, Bundesministerium, 2020).

Financing of the support

In order to promote the professional integration of PwD, each country has different frameworks and programs. In Austria, funding for these programs comes from the Ministry of Social Affairs, which reserves a large part of the fund for compensation fees, the federal budget, including the inclusion package, and the European Social Fund (ESF).

These funds are used to finance the Social Welfare Office's proven programs to support PwD to participate in employment and to further develop offers and new offers within the Inclusion Package. These offers are continuously improved strategically in order to respond to the dynamically changing labour market conditions and are then implemented in all provinces by the Sozialministeriumservice. The instruments include subsidies for projects as well as for individuals whose aim is to obtain or secure long-term employment in the primary labour market.

Companies that would like to include PwD in their teams can benefit from support from the some of the following programs:

- Work assistance scheme - Assistants are also available to the employer in the induction phase - up to 3 months. Employers can get support from the work assistance scheme on issues of the legal framework, and obtain help in case of problems in the firm.
- Job Coaching - Direct and individual support in the workplace for up to 6 months. Provide support to enable women and men with disabilities to cope with their everyday working life independently.
- Technical work aids - Subsidies are offered for technical aids and for training in their use in existing and newly-created jobs.
- Training costs - In the case of ongoing employment relationships, the costs of external or further training will be covered by the Sozialministeriumservice.
- Integration subsidy “Come Back” - Arbeitsmarktservice supports employers for employment relationships of long-term unemployed persons who:
 - have been registered as unemployed for least six months (in the case of persons under 25), or

- for at least twelve months (in the case of persons over 25).
 - Inclusion bonus for trainees - Supports companies when they hire apprentices/trainees who are registered PwD and can be obtained during the entire period of training. No age restrictions.
 - Wage subsidy - for already existing employment relationships.
 - Job safeguarding subsidy - In case when the person with disability's job is threatened, employers can be granted subsidies towards wage and training costs for the period during which the threat persists (maximum 3 years, in exceptional cases up to a maximum of 5 years).
- (Overview of the horizontal issue of disability in Austria, Bundesministerium, 2020).

- Bulgaria

According to the Disabled Persons Act in Bulgaria and its Article 38, employers are obliged to hire employees with permanent disabilities according to a quota as follows:

- Employers with 50 to 99 employees - one permanently disabled person;
- Employers with 100 or more employees - two per cent of their average workforce.

Employers are exempt from this obligation when:

- There are specific factors in the working environment that prevent the employment of people with permanent disabilities;
- Absence of people with permanent disabilities referred by the directorates of the Labour Office or by employment intermediaries with a certificate of registration for carrying out employment intermediary activities. This circumstance is certified by the Executive Agency "General Labour Inspectorate".

The circumstances referred to in Art. 3(1) of the Disability Act shall be justified in writing by the employer in cooperation with the occupational health service in accordance with the functions laid down in Article 25(2) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The presence of specific factors in the working environment is also subject to certification by the General Labour Inspectorate. Such factors are presumed to be present in establishments whose workers are employed in first and second category working conditions and specific adverse factors are present. Documented measurements, test results or other documents issued by medical institutions or laboratories must be attached to the justification.

Similarly, the obligation to fill the quotas does not apply to employers who apply alternative measures for the employment of people with permanent disabilities as defined by the regulations for the implementation of the law.

Employers other than those referred to in Art. 3 of the Disability Act are exempted from the obligations under Art. 1 of the Disability Act when they apply alternative measures under Articles 30, 31 and 32.

These articles provide for the employer to purchase from specialized enterprises or cooperatives of PwD, directly from PwD, or from Group A social enterprises their goods or services. The monthly amount of the funds for the purchase of the goods or services shall not be less than twice the monthly minimum wage established for the country for the calendar year concerned for each unfilled job for a person with a permanent disability, until the quota is met.

Those employers who do not meet the quota or alternative measures are liable for a monthly compensatory contribution of 30 percent of the national minimum wage for each vacancy for a person with a permanent disability. Administrative and criminal liability is also provided for employers who violate the legal provisions, with penalties in some cases up to BGN 10 000.

- Hungary

The Labour Code defines who is considered a person with reduced working capacity in Hungary. The preamble of the Labour Code emphasizes that the main objective of the Code is to provide the necessary services for the rehabilitation of PwD, so that the person with a disability can use his or her remaining abilities to regain his or her place in the community and thus become a valuable member of society. A person is considered as a person with a reduced capacity for work within the meaning of the legislation:

- A person whose health status is at or below 60% according to a complex assessment by the rehabilitation authority;
- who has a health impairment of at least 40% during the period covered by the relevant expert opinion, statement by a specialist authority, official certificate or qualification,
- who has a reduction in working capacity of between 50% and 100%, within the period of validity of the relevant opinion, or
- who is in receipt of a disability allowance or a personal allowance for the blind and whose daily working time under his contract of employment is 4 hours or more.

An employer is obliged to pay a rehabilitation contribution to facilitate the occupational rehabilitation of PwD if the number of persons he employs exceeds 25 and the number of persons with a disability he employs is less than 5 % of the number of employees (compulsory employment level).

The rate of the rehabilitation contribution is nine times the compulsory minimum amount of the basic wage established for a full-time employee on the first day of the year in question per person per year. The annual amount of the rehabilitation contribution is the product of the number of employees missing from the compulsory employment level and the rehabilitation contribution.

Prejudices and myths

By definition, the word "disability" represents a limitation in a person's ability to interact with the surrounding environment creating social, intellectual, physical or moral difficulties. A person may have a physical or intellectual impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out daily activities.

Business representatives can make a difference by simply being aware of the specifics of the disability group. Disabilities are diverse - physical, sensory, cognitive, and permanent health impairments. This means that PwD are not a homogeneous group. They all have different needs, interests and views of life and the world. Accordingly, when working with representatives of different groups, specific steps and guidelines should be taken into account in order for communication and inclusion to be fully successful.

- Prejudices

One of the main barriers preventing employers from employing someone with a disability is prejudice. In the most general case, it is believed that the employee will not be able to cope with the daily activities that he/she should have. When an applicant who is PwD who has the beneficiary status appears for a job interview, this automatically labels him/her "unsuitable." This is therefore one of the reasons why many PwD are reluctant to share about their condition and needs, as they fear they will never be called for a job interview and therefore move on.

Other reasons that stop applicants from saying they have a disability are the worry that it will get them into trouble, reluctance to share something so personal, the possible chance that the disability has been diagnosed very soon and others.

- Myths

A risk factor is the lack of sufficient information and awareness on the topic of inclusion of PwD in the labour market. Society and employers are of the opinion that many people cannot perform specific activities because of a particular type of disability. For example:

- Blind people cannot use computers and the internet. - On the contrary, there are web accessibility softwares which can change fonts, colors, letter sizes, and screen readers which are software applications that enable people with severe visual impairments to use a computer. Screen readers work closely with the computer's Operating System to provide information about icons, menus, dialogue boxes, files and folders. Visually impaired people can be excellent programmers, office assistants, operators in outsourcing companies and others.
- Hearing impaired people do not use sites like YouTube, etc. - This is also not the case as such sites offer closed captions of content and this helps to solve the problem.
- Persons with physical disabilities cannot do any work. - Again, this is a myth. A large number of people with physical disabilities have exceptional intellectual capacity that remains completely intact, even in the wake of an accident or illness that is causing the functional difference. Accordingly, the person can handle any intellectual activity, as well as various occupations, tailored to his level of mobility.

Accessibility assessment - online and offline infrastructure

It is essential that the organization's policy on employing PwD focuses on overcoming the barriers faced by employees with disabilities and that it not only communicates their commitment to the issue at the company level, but also promotes it to customers, users of the company's services and products and other stakeholders. In this way, colleagues with disabilities can feel equally included. It is inevitable that the company will actively promote the diversity policy and accordingly create an inclusive workplace that is accessible to all.

- Offline infrastructure

Jamba in Hungary uses a complex methodological framework called Inclusivity Health Check (hereinafter IHC) to assess the accessibility of a company that is open to employ a person with disability.

The overarching goal of the process is to explore the extent to which diversity and acceptance as values are embedded in the organizational culture and processes, and the extent to which teams feel that they are implemented in their daily work. After the assessment, we provide concrete tools and expertise to help the company become more inclusive and diverse in its own business environment, together identifying entry points where the onboarding of colleagues with disabilities can begin.

The main steps of the IHC are the following:

- **Preparatory meeting** to better understand the needs and together review the organizational structure, floor plan and attitude survey process operationally.
- 60 minutes with the Client.
 - **Office site visit** - to assess physical accessibility by an inclusive team.
- 120 minutes led by a colleague delegated by the Client.
 - **Attitude survey:** to measure the attitude of the whole team towards the company's core values, to assess how they are perceived by the staff. The aim is to understand the team's attitude and gather individual experiences.
- Each colleague completes it online, within a time limit of 10 - 15 minutes per person.
 - **Management interviews:** based on the preparatory meeting, interviews with managers individually whose teams have been identified as having positions that could be suitable for PwD.
3-5 managers in general, incl. HR, 60 minutes per manager.
 - **Report:** written summary on inclusion and accessibility, advice & suggestions. Includes the results of the attitude survey and suggestions on the current inclusiveness of the workplace.
 - **Presentation** of results, detailed discussion of suggestions and issues, identification of next steps in a final meeting.
60 minutes, with client, HR manager, and other relevant team members present.
-
- Key examples to enhance online infrastructure & digital accessibility

For visually impaired and blind people, the webpage content is read in Hungarian by text reading software (Jaws, NVDA - these softwares are also available and supporting other languages). The speed and volume of the speech synthesizer can be adjusted and the user only uses a keyboard to navigate. It is important that the page has a list of links which is a kind of short, easy to understand tree structure of the page. The list allows the user to quickly and easily see what main page and submenus of the website is made of. It is essential that images are captioned, which is not a caption under the image, but a so-called alt attribute, i.e. a short, concise description of the image in the image. This is invisible to the average user, only the text reader software can see it and read it.

For the hearing impaired and the deaf, a text description or captioning of videos is a basic criterion, as not everyone can read lips and in many cases the video does not show the mouth movements of the person or narrator. It's fine if the text is only available by turning it on or off, the important thing is that it is clear to use.

For people with physical disabilities, motor function impairment, and eye or head impairment, navigating with the full keyboard is a basic criterion. In such cases, the use of a mouse is a secondary option and it is important that there is no moving, floating, disappearing text, icons or banners because they make keyboard navigation difficult. Attention should be paid to the so-called tab traps from which the user cannot navigate when using a tab key and is "trapped" in a kind of cell forever.

For users with autism, attention deficit and psychosocial disabilities, the aim should be to create a simple, clear, easy to understand, not too colorful, but at the same time contrasting, and using larger icons. There should not be any moving, floating icons or windows that might distract the attention.

Some links for autism-friendly web page design:

- <https://livingautism.com/autism-friendly-digital-world/>
- <https://scholar.smu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=datasciencereview>

For older and younger users, it is recommended to use plain text with the option to enlarge text and images clearly indicated at the top of the page. It is important to have the possibility to return to the main page immediately, e.g. by marking a house icon, it is not sufficient to return to the main page by clicking on the main logo only, because this is not a clear route to return to the main page.

How to reach the disability community

If there are no other available options on the market (e.g. accessible job platforms), PwD would seek employment through standard applications via mainstream online job platforms. Generally people do not declare that they have a disability on their CV. When they eventually meet with a human resources manager and find out they have a disability, they are not given a chance for a follow-up meeting. This has led to an extremely high level of isolation from the public and also to people isolating themselves. Lack of equal access to quality education and accumulation of skills and competencies also leads to insecurity and embarrassment.

Businesses need to encourage the development of PwD and, in addition to jobs, offer training opportunities to provide additional qualifications for job applicants.

The methods that can be used to engage the attention of PwD vary according to the type of disability they have. It is important to remember that each individual country has its own cultural specificities, which have an impact on the channels of communication but below you can find some good examples and tips that can be adapted according to the local reality:

	Online advertising, social media, job sites, career forums	Use a Recruitment Agency	Direct recruitment	Print / Television / Radio Advertising
Possible barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Advertising may not be fully accessible and may not be readable by the visually impaired; * The use of videos that do not have subtitles are not accessible to the hearing impaired. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Working with a third party does not always guarantee that the recruitment agency has experience in working with PwD; * It is not necessary for the third party to really enter into your in-house recruitment policy regarding the topic of disability, due to lack of expertise in the field, and not at all to consider and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The company's teams may not be fully prepared and aware of the specifics of working with PwD; * Inaccessible advertising materials; * Ability to refer to online sources/ applications inaccessible to applicants with dyslexia, visual impairments and intellectual disabilities. 	<p>There is a risk that any of these materials may not be fully accessible to any of the groups of PwD. For example, radio can be a challenge for the deaf or hard of hearing. Print ads - make it difficult for visually impaired people.</p>

		pay attention to the needs for providing an accessible work environment.		
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * All job advertisement sites where you want to advertise must comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines international standard; * Advertise your positions only on accessible sites for PwD; * Make sure that all promotional materials are fully accessible and compatible with text-to-speech softwares and that the video content is subtitled or with sign language interpretation; * Stand firmly behind the conviction that you have a commitment and you are open to recruiting employees with disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Keep your priority on hiring PwD; * Take the time and look for channels of communication with PwD yourself; * Revise the work of the recruitment agency to ensure that it handles the right mechanism for hiring PwD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Make sure that your recruiting team has the necessary knowledge, experience and flexibility to facilitate the successful representation of candidates in the process; * All online advertisements need to be positioned on sites that meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines international standard; * Advertise on job posting sites that also target candidates with disabilities; * Make sure your ads are fully accessible and compatible with text-to-speech software and all videos are subtitled or with sign language interpretation; * Stand boldly behind your beliefs that you have a commitment and are open to recruiting employees with disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Make sure you only use traditional media ads that are in accessible formats. For example, subtitled videos and text files of audio material.

Of course, it is important again to keep in mind the cultural aspect and the differences in each country, as well as the level of social and economic development. From the experience of the consortium partners so far, it can be concluded that Bulgaria and Hungary are quite similar in terms of cultural aspect and level of development, but Austria is quite different. Accordingly, the ways in which the disability community can be reached in a successful way differ markedly. For example, in Bulgaria one of the successful channels to reach PwD is through social networks, e.g. Facebook groups and pages with thousands of members and followers with disabilities who actively know and use them. In Austria, this method does not work in the same way as such groups either do not use social media that widely or have a more closed system and engagement with participants.

Recommended ideas and channels that could be considered in principle and accordingly should be tested in each individual geographical location to find the most appropriate mix of channels:

- Partnership with local and national representative Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs);
- Partnership with active NGOs and social enterprises offering a range of services and support to PwD at local and national level;
- Social networks - Facebook groups and pages, LinkedIn groups and pages, Instagram, YouTube channels, TikTok, Twitter, etc;
- Contact with role models and influencers in the disability community who have a large community of followers;
- Awareness Campaigns;
- Marketing/PR campaigns;
- Partnership with media outlets, magazines, newspapers, etc;
- Partnership with the Employment Agency and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs;
- Others.

Successful cooperation and communication with people with different types of disabilities

PwD comprise a very diverse group. Members generally have more challenges concerning inclusion in society. They often face discrimination on many societal levels, including education, labour market inclusion, accessibility, accommodation, and transportation.

"Discrimination on the basis of disability" means any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation." (UN-CRPD, Article 2)

Hence, we would like to provide information on how to prevent discrimination of people with various needs by adopting the human rights approach in this curriculum. However, each disability and condition has its specifics; therefore, when communicating with PwD in a fruitful and mutually pleasant way, it is important to have both general awareness and specific information about the individual needs of a person. We always recommend actively seeking the accessibility needs of an individual you connect with and not being afraid of asking specific questions.

As a ground rule, it is important to remember not to talk to people through an intermediary or facilitator. Always contact the person directly and speak directly to them. Below are some general guidelines for communicating with certain groups of PwD, particularly at the first instance you meet them³.

³ In addition, the following section will provide some further inputs for successful maintenance of communication with PwD

- People with physical disabilities

Physical disabilities can vary widely concerning which body parts are affected, and the severity and the eventual mobility challenges one faces. Some might lead their life autonomously while others might need personal assistance in some or all fields of their lives.

People with physical disabilities often face barriers in and around buildings - entrances, ramps, lifts, door widths, thresholds, and inadequate toilets. These make it challenging for them to access and work in some offices.

When meeting, it is important to shake hands and then sit down on a chair for a chat to get on the same level. That way, no one will feel uncomfortable.

Don't feel awkward, if someone is missing a hand - replaced by a prosthesis. Greet the person verbally or ask if they are fine with a handshake.

Some people might be unable to fill in or sign a form. In this case, you should offer help to them and ask them how you could specifically support them.

- People with visual impairments

Visual impairment and vision-related diseases often pose a barrier to the transmission of information.

Some people may find it challenging to navigate in an unfamiliar place on their own. They may not be able to fill in an admission form at check-in. In such cases, the assistance of someone, like security guards/receptionists may be needed not only to fill in the form but also to help them find their way around the building.

When you greet someone with a visual impairment, after the handshake, it may be necessary to explain the location of other people in the room and how the space is organized.

Also, in meetings, you are often advised to describe yourself and your physical attributes, clothes and features, such as, for instance, you have glasses. This kind of description gives a proper introduction to the person with a visual impairment.

- People with hearing impairments

Hearing impairment might be partial or full. Some people use hearing devices to understand speech, while others might use sign language. Out of respect for people with hearing loss, never call them deaf-mutes, as this is not an appropriate definition.

In most cases it would be impossible to conduct a telephone conversation, as a small percentage of deaf people can use mobile devices. It is advisable to arrange a face-to-face meeting with a person with hearing impairment and for a sign language interpreter to be present to ensure that no information is lost in the communication.

You can ask the person about the most appropriate communication method. Only one person must speak at a time. Otherwise the conversation may become confusing and unintelligible. There should be no distracting noise in the room.

Finally, you as a conversation partner have to be illuminated by light and should never speak with your back turned so that the person with hearing impairment can read your lips.

- People with speech and language barriers

Speech impediments or language difficulties often arise when communicating parties do not understand each other. This situation can also occur, when a physical disability makes verbal communication challenging to a person with hearing impairment, whose mother tongue might be sign language.

In such cases, the person with disability might misunderstand something and may need repetition of what was said.

If you are not sure if you have understood what you have heard, try to repeat in your own words, and ask if everything is clear to avoid information getting lost.

- People with intellectual disability

Intellectual disabilities are quite diverse and vary in a wide spectrum from autism to Down syndrome. When interacting with a person with an intellectual disability, depending on the type of disability, you may experience their lack of interest or attention.

In general, what works best with most types of intellectual disabilities, is a quiet environment, free from unnecessary light and sound, as this can cause anxiety and make it difficult for them to pay attention. A positive attitude is helpful, as they are sensitive. Talking to strangers can make some people with intellectual disabilities anxious. If you create an emotionally safe and well-structured, predictable situation, they will be best able to show their strengths.

Telling them what will happen, and how long the meeting/situation will last, can help them to orient themselves in time and space. Use easy-to-read communication, expressing yourself in simple, short sentences. Try to refrain from abstract expressions, and to use more concrete and clear language.

If you feel that the person you are talking to may not have understood what you are saying, ask them and repeat if necessary.

- People on the autism spectrum

According to a new study (Zeidan et al., 2022), ca. 1 in 100 children (or 100 in 10.000 children) around the world are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Compared to 2012 global average, that is an increase from 62 in 10000; which is interpreted as the result of public awareness and efforts on "identification" and "diagnosis" (Autism Speaks).

When communicating with people with autism, we must convey clear and precise messages. They may find it difficult to answer theoretical questions that require imagination. They tire easily and need to rest or find a place where they can relax.

People with autism might become anxious and act shy in front of strangers and avoid eye contact, because they might be overwhelmed with information in social situations.

- Psychosocial disabilities

Anxiety, depression, and many mental health concerns can be categorized as psychosocial disabilities, recognizing the actual or perceived impairment these concerns produce in daily life. Such disabilities manifest in relation to a diversity of mental, emotional, or cognitive experiences. (...) Psychosocial disabilities also frequently go hand-in-hand with physical health conditions and disabilities, and this co-occurrence can produce a more complex experience of disability relative to those who have only mental or physical health concerns (Ringland et al., 2019).

According to a WHO report (2010), “mental and psychosocial disabilities are associated with rates of unemployment as high as 90%”. Moreover, people with such disabilities often lack “educational and vocational opportunities to meet their full potential.” What is dramatic is that studies also indicate that an “estimated one in four people globally will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime”. Such conditions may often result in mortality and disability, corresponding to “8.8% and 16.6% of the total burden of disease due to health conditions in low- and middle-income countries, respectively”. Depression is also assessed to be “the second highest cause of disease burden in middle-income countries and the third highest in low income countries by 2030” (WHO, 2010).

After this glimpse at different types of disabilities, we are now equipped to move forward with how to further build and maintain effective communication with people with disabilities.

Adaptation of the whole recruitment process

The recruitment process is long and sometimes involves many different stages. When it comes to working with PwD, you need to know the needs of the different groups so that you can tailor the whole process /tasks, questionnaires, criteria/ to their needs so that they can give their best and show what they are capable of. Only in this way will you be able to assess their real skills.

In order for the recruitment process and inclusion of talent with disabilities to be successful, you need to keep a few specific steps in mind and try to adapt them to your own company processes.

- Current talent/skills demand of the company

Discuss with the head of the human resources department what the company's current needs are, what talent and specific skills it needs. Prepare a job advertisement and promotional materials to advertise your needs in the appropriate channels. Adapt all materials to be accessible (use accessible files, record a video ad in sign language, or add subtitles).

- Accessibility assessment of the working environment

Based on the prepared job postings, the next step is to assess what talents would be suitable for the specific position. For example, a person with a hearing impairment might do well in an activity such as graphic design, but it would be very difficult or impossible for him/her to work as a customer support specialist because talking on the phone would be nearly impossible.

Apart from this aspect, you also need to consider the accessibility of the office space or online accessibility of the company website or the work and communication softwares used by the company. It is important that the company is fully aware of the needs of PwD in order to plan the type(s) of adaptations that are needed - ramps, toilets, softwares, etc.

When a new employee with a disability is about to start work, it should be checked what accessibility devices the company currently has in place, to what extent the environment is accessible and the needs of what disability it can provide and what further adaptations might be needed. Each disability or chronic illness has its own characteristics, disabilities are not universal and therefore people with different types of disabilities need different adaptations.

This assessment of the environment will be able to guide the company on what kind of disability people can be successfully included in, and will therefore show what profiles the recruitment team can target specifically at the time, but can also take into account what else can be done in the future in order to gradually ensure full accessibility.

A mandatory step is to assess effectiveness - to what extent will ongoing adaptations remove the challenge for the person, therefore how long will implantation take and is there a need for training to work with the enhancement? If touch-up changes and adaptations are needed, what would be the investment required, can the company afford it? All of this also needs to take into account the working environment of the rest of the company's employees so that their health and comfort is not compromised.

- Recruitment process

Once the company is clear on what skills it is looking for and talent with what kind of disability is ready to successfully accommodate, the actual recruitment process follows. After distributing the prepared accessible job postings and materials to advertise the positions, the human resources team should begin the initial communication with candidates about the postings.

You shouldn't be embarrassed to ask about disability, as it is important to provide everything your prospective employee needs to feel comfortable and fulfilled in the work environment. In most cases, candidates are very open to telling their stories and can speak freely on this topic. The exception is people with intellectual disabilities. It is necessary to approach them more delicately as it may unleash negative emotions.

- Feedback

Once you've chosen specific candidates, take the time to give constructive feedback to unsuccessful ones. Some may not be the right fit for your company at the time, but with your guidance they may improve and develop themselves and therefore start their career development elsewhere soon.

- Inclusion

For a large number of PwD, starting a new job means being assigned to the first position ever in their entire life. This brings a lot of uncertainty and worry for them as they have to face a series of unfamiliar challenges. Individuals need a different period of integration in which support and understanding from the employer and the team is important. PwD have a great motivation and desire to get things done, but they need some time to get used to the work dynamics and culture in the office. Therefore, when starting a job, it is important for the new worker to go through an onboarding process, and it is also good to have a mentor to help them through the processes.

- Training for company staff

Sometimes challenges may arise from current employees of the company - they might not feel completely confident how to communicate with the new person who will join the team because of lack of any previous experience with PwD, and this may make the current employees feeling uncomfortable, resentful, etc. This is the reason why it is important for the company to turn to an organization or experts in the field of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion or corporate psychologist to conduct training for the team and team leader that the newly hired employee with disabilities joins. This onboarding period is very important so that the inclusion process can be fully successful. These are perfectly normal reactions as, due to lack of experience and information, people often react rashly, anxiously and need assistance to deal with a situation.

- 10 key components

Based on the experience gained in working with companies so far, we have been able to form ten key components valid for employers supporting the inclusion of PwD in the labour market. These components help to underpin a culture of diversity in the workplace:

- Engagement - how your organization promotes its commitment to PwD and removing barriers for them, both internally among your employees and externally to your customers, consumers and other stakeholders;
- Know How - how your organization trains its employees in advance to make sure they will feel at ease and confident knowing how and what to do when communicating with PwD;
- Adapting the work environment - how your organization meets and responds to the needs of PwD; How the process of making necessary adaptations becomes an effective example in itself;
- Recruitment - how your organization attracts and recruits PwD, giving access to the widest range of talent at every level;
- Retention - how your organization values its employees, including those who have disabilities or have acquired a disability as a result of a particular work process; How you would engage with them in their retention and development;
- Products and services - how your organization values its customers and users with disabilities and meets their needs when developing and delivering new products and services;
- Suppliers and partners - the way your organization engages with its suppliers and corporate partners to reflect and enable you to deliver on your commitment to best practice in the use of inclusion for PwD.
- Communication - how your company is as inclusive as possible when communicating with PwD and even when necessary - are you making individual communication decisions for individuals;
- Premises - how accessible are the organization's premises for PwD and, where necessary, do you make adjustments for individuals;

- Information and communication technology - how do you ensure that your organization's ICT is accessible and usable by PwD, and that you make adjustments for them where necessary.

Workplace diversity and its benefits

The golden rule for success in business is to look for the best candidates who are also the best fit for the required positions in the company. Whether the potential employee has a disability or not, each person has diverse qualities, interests, skills, experience and potential. It is diversity that is key to a company's success in several different aspects.

- Employee qualities

In addition to the preliminary training that candidates go through to build key skills and competencies to meet the demands of their future employers, they possess exceptional motivation and a desire for development. PwD are much more loyal and turnover is much lower, as they find it extremely rewarding that someone has supported the start of their career development. In this way the company reduces its recruitment costs and builds human capital much more easily and sustainably. We should not forget that employees with disabilities are as productive and reliable as employees without disabilities, and even many of them do not need training as they come with experience from similar fields of work.

- Diversity in the workplace

Based on the past 5 years of experience of the Consortium partners in integrating employees with disabilities, diversity in the workplace leads to many positive aspects towards team cohesion. Other members become more cooperative, rally around the newcomer colleague, approach with understanding and start to accept life in a more positive way. Team members have the opportunity to get up close to their new colleague's skills and knowledge, to his/her world. In this way, they can experience, for example, the beauty of deaf culture and sign language, get their own nickname in sign language and learn some signs that will help them communicate even more easily with their new colleagues. Another example is of course that they can get to know Braille and many more.

- Good company reputation

By hiring PwD, the company demonstrates integrity and a willingness to promote and reinforce workplace diversity policies. In doing so, it becomes a socially responsible business, a pioneer in spreading a meaningful cause nationally and internationally.

Good practices from the corporate sector

- Bulgaria

Open Mind is one of the most sustainable and long-term employer initiatives that supports the inclusion of people with disabilities in Bulgaria. Launched 7 years ago by the telecom Telenor, this year the program was inherited by Yettel. Over the past seven editions, more than 30 PwD have participated in the program, all of whom have been successfully included in the labour market, and eight of them have been hired on a permanent contract in the company. The program has led to excellent results in the inclusion of PwD and is a

contribution to a significant segment of the labour market in the country, where both the state and businesses are increasingly focusing their efforts.

Open Mind's unique design not only enables the formation of competitive professionals among PwD, but also creates a work environment that encourages diversity in the workplace, and thus teams are enriched and brought together by embracing people with different skills, mindsets and perspectives.

The Open Mind program features three key elements that complement and build on each other. These are: Open Mind - aimed at jobseekers with disabilities; Open Mind Academy - for those needing support to improve their professional qualifications; and Open Mind Workshops - designed for different businesses with a sustained interest in employing PwD and with a focus on sharing best practice.

In its 2022 edition, Yettel will give participants the chance to work in many different areas. Employees are being sought in marketing, finance, human resources, sales, and customer service. The two-year program provides training, work on real business projects under the mentorship of leading experts in their respective fields, at a competitive salary and the opportunity for flexible working hours. Pre-selection of candidates is done with the help of JAMBA - Career for All.

- Hungary

One of the most successful IHC-processes led by Jamba Hungary was implemented for Kifli.hu, Central Europe's leading online grocery store. This company has been growing very dynamically and it is deeply committed to operate in a socially responsible manner, and also to increase the diversity of their staff by employing PwD as well.

After Jamba Hungary completed the IHC and delivered the closing presentation for the representatives of the company, Kifli started to implement some of the proposals very quickly: they fixed a bathroom according to the accessibility standards, and bought some new tables that are specially adapted for wheelchair-users.

Today there are already 3 Jamba Heroes who work for Kifli.hu in positions, such as: marketing assistance, quality assurance and helpdesk.

Success stories and testimonials

- Austria

Rea Strawhill is a young woman from Austria who had to leave her job as a teacher, which was not easy at all, due to her chronic illness. She accepted her new life meant a need for flexibility. Not only was she unsure where to go professionally, but also how to adjust to her new life. Rea took part in the Digital Marketing Course organized by Talent Garden Vienna as part of their partnership with Jamba.

A bit hesitant at first, Rea realized that the program provided her with the flexibility she needed. She also noticed the potential of a future career in digital marketing. A way to combine her passion with a career of many possibilities while still maintaining her health. The course went so well and was exciting for her, she was part of the winning team who won the closing strategy competition. The program helped her understand her capabilities and

potential, and also gave her hope. Soon after that Rea started work as a Marketing Specialist at an Austrian nongovernmental organization.

"I am so grateful that I could be part of the growth- and digital marketing online program, organized by JAMBA and Talent Garden in Vienna! It was a very fun, hands-on, and practical experience and I really learned a lot! I particularly enjoyed the Zoom sessions and the group project. It felt so good to be a part of a team and to be able to be creative and learn new things. The teachers were all so nice and knowledgeable, and since the program was 100% online, it was also really accessible to me. I can recommend it 100% and I am very thankful for the opportunity!"

- Bulgaria

Borislav Staykov is a young person with eyesight deficit since his birth. He is a self-learner and with the services, provided by Jamba – he further developed his skills in the IT and Customer Service fields. Now he works as a QA Engineer for a growing startup company.

"After graduating school – it took 3 years of trial and error in the education system, as well as more than 100 job interviews for me to start as a Systems Support Specialist in a financial company. After 4 years of experience, I decided to move with my family away from the big city, believing that companies will hire me, based on experience, but that was not true. After 2 years of skill improvement with Jamba's courses – I managed to land a position as QA Engineer and finally feel like an active and fully fledged part of society again!"

- Hungary

Gábor Bocskai is a young professional with a special interest in cognitive neuroscience and his dream was to find a job in this field. He lives with a physical disability and uses a wheelchair. With the support of Jamba he is currently working in a cognitive lab as a scientific researcher and has started his PhD. As he summarizes his experiences:

"I am most proud of my perseverance. I think about a problem until I figure out how to solve it. My motto is: don't think, do! I have been working at the Beta Lab of Pázmány Péter Catholic University for more than 1 year. The key to successful integration of people with disabilities is to get to know and understand each other."

His supervisor is also very satisfied with his performance:

"I really like working with Gábor because I feel that he is always listening and that behind his extraordinary attention is a huge motivation and desire to do something. It's actually much smoother working with Gábor than with most colleagues. He completes his tasks quickly and accurately and always adds what he can independently. I feel that his presence in our group meetings motivates the other colleagues and enhances the harmony of the group." (Ilona Kovács).

Partner organizations

- Austria

Soziale Zukunft Verein zur Förderung der Integration behinderter Menschen/JAMBA - Karriere für alle is part of the international JAMBA network and supports persons with disabilities and chronic illnesses in Austria to attain soft skills, English and professional skills in the fields of Information and Communication Technology and Artificial Intelligence sectors. As a follow-up step, the organization acts as a bridge between talent and employers so that way they begin their professional development and find a flexible, secure and inclusive tech job.

Our project empowers people with disabilities with digital skills & qualifications for emerging job fields. We support real social & economical inclusion. A 360° approach involves all stakeholders: people with disabilities, business sector, non-profits, academia & public sector.

- Bulgaria

"JAMBA - Career for All" was established and started by the team who created the Social Future Foundation in Bulgaria in 2017. We are a non-profit organization that supports people with disabilities to gain key competencies, soft and professional skills, as well as language skills. As a next step, our team acts as a bridge between them and businesses so that talents with disabilities can start their professional development, find jobs and businesses can access a large group of people with previously untapped human capital. Thanks to our intermediary activity we have managed to train 700 people with different capabilities and 400 of them are now working in more than 60 Bulgarian and international companies, they feel fulfilled, competitive and of course economically active. Our team supports the real social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities in Bulgaria.

Our organization is a licensed employment agency with specialized expertise in working with people with disabilities, providing supported employment for both them and employers who welcome diversity in the workplace.

- Hungary

Jamba in Hungary, as part of the international Jamba Network, aims to include persons with all types and degrees of disabilities in the open labour market from 2019 to contribute to the implementation of their rights to work and employment (Art. 27, UN-CRPD, 2006) by reducing systemic and systematic discrimination against them. They provide unique and accessible training and career development opportunities for people with disabilities, as well as innovative, inclusive services, counseling and training development opportunities for open employers. Through empowerment of both parties Jamba's work in Hungary can have an exceptional social impact by contributing to the fair treatment of 440.000 Hungarians with disabilities who lack relevant education and are marginalized in Hungarian society.

Meanwhile their employment provides a yet unused, economical benefit, direct savings for all Hungarian employers up to a yearly amount of 258 million EUR (92,3 billion HUF), decreases turnover rate and while creating innovation enhances the performance of teams.