

Joint Message to EU policymakers

Policy outcome of the Hearing on Employment

The [European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities](#) (EASPD), the [European Disability Forum](#) (EDF), the [European Network of Social Integration Enterprises](#) (ENSIE), the [European Platform for Rehabilitation](#) (EPR), the [European Union for Supported Employment](#) (EUSE) and [Workability International](#) join forces to call on the EU to act on the employment of persons with disabilities.

We call on the European Union to ensure that every citizen has the right to decent work in an open and inclusive labour market.

This must particularly apply to persons with support needs such as persons with disabilities who continue to be [hugely underrepresented in the workforce](#). The economic inclusion and effective support of persons with disabilities, have to be central to any sustainable development strategy.

In taking steps to give persons with support needs decent work the EU will be promoting:

- the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) as these give priority to including those who are left 'the farthest behind'.
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and its vision of an inclusive labour market that actively includes and supports workers with disabilities.

Our Vision of Inclusive Market & Decent Work

An inclusive labour market requires a reversal of traditional assumptions that simply equates disability with an inability to work. Rather, future policy should be based on an assumption that all human beings have a capacity to engage in economic activity with the right kind of personalised supports for the workers and their employer. Indeed, the focus should shift from the disabilities to the abilities of the person concerned.

An inclusive labour market requires a renewed emphasis on personalised supports and tailored measures to ensure that individuals have the necessary means to learn job roles and develop a career. This is already legally required in the EU Framework Directive that requires 'reasonable accommodation' to enable a worker with a disability to perform his/her job-related tasks. It also requires:

- a focus on career progression and development instead of an assumption that workers with disabilities will remain rooted in one job throughout their career.
- important supporting measures such as an adequate and accessible transport system to ensure mobility to work.
- an inclusive education and training programme that prepares workers with disabilities for an inclusive labour market.
- a close study of, and elimination of, known and hidden poverty traps in social protection systems that sometimes hinder access to work.
- a clear understanding that disability often entails extra costs and that these costs must continue to be met to enable meaningful access to the right to work.
- an understanding that disabled people are not a homogeneous group, therefore different measures will be required to meet individual needs. Considerations should be made for people at risk of double discrimination, such as women with a disability.

Decent work entails a fair and liveable wage. It entails fair and just working conditions and the adjustment of health & safety measures to optimise work opportunities and not create additional barriers to work. It entails increased interest on the part of trade unions in the working conditions of employees with disabilities.

New Opportunities and New Dangers in The Transformation of Work

The transformation of work in the 21st century offers many challenges for all workers and requires an appropriate policy response. We urge that the many reflections on the policy challenges now taking place should explicitly include the support needs of all workers. Further, the introduction of new technologies and methods of work may reveal new opportunities for workers with disabilities which should be proactively identified, and measures put in place to optimise them.

Toward New EU Additionality

The EU has a role to play in ensuring economic and social inclusion especially in times of massive economic transformation. We call on the EU to

- Incentivize innovation in building an inclusive labour market,
- Boost the generation of opportunities for people with more support needs in the mainstream labour market
- Support employers, and especially small and medium sized employers, to encourage the co-production of policies based on the active involvement of persons with support needs,
- Stimulate the growth of knowledge, research and data all aimed to enhancing employment options,
- Work with member states to foster the re-engineering of social protection systems to genuinely protect all workers as well as open new opportunities,
- Support the creation of a facilitating ecosystem for support services with sustainable funding, stable legal frameworks and structural involvement of all stakeholders at both EU and national level.

For our part, Service Providers pledge to support all policy moves by the European Union and its institutions that promote these aims.

In our own networks we shall work with our members in the direction and to develop new approaches and business models that promote co-production and respond to the individual needs of the people they support. The steps that we take will contribute to the achievement of the goals of the UN SDGs and the UN CRPD in our common European home. We therefore also encourage all stakeholders to follow the recommendations of the [Vienna Declaration](#).

It is particularly crucial that these recommendations are taken into account even in times of economic instability, to ensure no workers are left behind or disproportionately impacted.

The interests of people with support needs and these recommendations must therefore be taken into account in any economic stimulus measures and policy decisions related to the current COVID-19 crisis.

Signatories:

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