

PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT

Annex of good practices

December 2022



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This document is an annex of the publication *Pathways to employment: Analysis of policies and practices for pathways to the mainstream labour market*, and is to be read in conjunction with it. The main publication can be downloaded here:

<https://www.epr.eu/publications/pathways-to-employment/>

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Good practices

Benefits

In **Finland** full disability is granted to beneficiaries with a work capacity of maximum 40%, while partial pension is given to those with 41-60% of remaining work capacity. If the disability pension has been granted on the basis of permanent blindness or mobility disability, beneficiaries can work without the salary affecting the payment of the pension¹. For self-employed people who earn an income under the self-employed persons' or farmers' pension scheme, Kela continues to pay the disability pension if the monthly income remains below €837.59 (as per 2021)².

For return-to-work programmes, when a disability pension has been suspended for two years and the person continues to work, the disability pension ends³. However, if their health worsens again, they can apply for a disability pension again. Sickness benefits are also made available according to the medical certificate and their amount varies according to the income level. Partial sickness benefits can also be combined with paid work.

In **Israel** a person who receives a disability pension and goes out to work will continue to receive an annuity, which will start to be reduced gradually according to the level of the salary up to the fixed ceiling. For example, for those who receive a full pension, the offsetting starts with a salary of NIS 5,300 gross and they will continue to receive a pension up to a salary of approximately NIS 12,500 gross. If a person who was entitled to a permanent pension exceeds the ceiling due to an increase in his salary and no longer receives a pension, his entitlement to the pension will be maintained indefinitely and he will be able to receive it again at any time if he finishes his job or decreases his salary.

Entitlement to a disability pension may also qualify for certain ancillary benefits, including an exemption from social security contributions, a benefit in the water bill and more. When a person exceeds the wage ceiling and no longer receives the pension, the benefits last for another 3 years and then cease. However, entitlement to them is maintained so that the person can receive them again at any time if he returns to receive a disability pension due to unemployment or a decrease in his salary⁴.

In **Ireland** the Wage Subsidy Scheme allows beneficiaries of Disability Allowance and Blind Pension to keep receiving these payments, even though they are reduced according to their income earned by working. Furthermore, they may also qualify for other work-related income supports, including Back to Work Family Dividend, Working Family Payment and Part-Time Job Incentive, as well as extra benefits such as free travel, Household Benefits package, Living Alone Increase and fuel allowance⁵.

Quotas

In **Italy** the principle of targeted employment was adopted to facilitate the implementation of the quota system and increase the employment rate of people with disabilities. This principle focuses on matching the demand for employment appropriate to the working capacity of the disabled person and the productive needs of the company⁶.

In **Germany** fines for the non-implementation of quotas are gradual according to the percentage of quota filled by the employer. This gradual approach rewards employers who are making an effort to employ severely disabled persons: The closer employers are to the 5% quota, the less they have to pay. The compensatory levy is also index-linked. For example, if the employer reaches an employment quota between 3 and 5% he has to pay 125 euros per month for every unfilled quota place, if he reaches a quota between 2 and 3% he has to pay 220 euros per month and 320 euros per month if the employment quota is below 2 percent. These fines amount to roughly half a billion euros each year⁷. The quota system also includes subsidies for workplace adaptations and assistance to accompany work. The fines paid by employers go to a disability fund which provides financial support to the purchase of equipment to improve workplace accessibility, but also of assistive technologies that jobseekers with a disability can use to find a job, including training in their use⁸.

In **Israel**, penalization doesn't include only fines. Employers who fail to meet the requirements must submit an annual work plan to increase the adequate representation rates that shall include a series of actions to promote employment⁹.

Financial incentives for employers

Germany offers an 'integration' subsidy to support the inclusion of people with disabilities through training. The peculiarity of this subsidy is that once the support has ended, the employer is obliged to keep the person in employment for at least the same period as the subsidy was available¹⁰.

Ireland introduced the Wage Subsidy Scheme in 2005 to provide financial incentives to private sector employers to employ for a minimum of 6 months people with a disability. An employee with a disability on this scheme is subject to the same conditions of employment as other employees. The financial supports available through this scheme are structured under three separate strands: Strand 1 is a wage subsidy payment paid to the employer if an employee with a disability works at least 21 hours a week and has a productivity level of 80% or less compared to other staff; Strand 2 is a 'top-up' payment to companies that employ more than 2 people with disabilities. Depending on the number of employees with disabilities, the employer can get between 10%-50% extra wage subsidy for supervisory, management and other work-based costs; Strand 3 is a 30.000 euros annual grant to companies employing 25 or more people with disabilities which is used to employ an Employment Assistance Officer at the company who takes the role of a job coach and assists employees with their employment needs¹¹. According to the situation, employers can benefit from more than one strand simultaneously.

In the **United States**, employers who have hired or are interested in hiring persons with disabilities can receive support from the State to receive training, technical assistance and consultation regarding the employment of individuals with disabilities, including disability awareness, workplace accommodation and assistive technology. Employers also receive support regarding offering work-based learning opportunities for persons with disabilities such as short-term employment and apprenticeships, as well as for pre-employment transition services in order to recruit, hire, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities who are recipients of vocational rehabilitation services.

Early intervention

In **the Netherlands** the national administrative authority UWV works together with municipalities and employers organisations to provide employment advice, support services and facilitate reintegration for persons with employee-related disability benefits. EPR member Heliomare offers early intervention in vocational rehabilitation to persons with disabilities, unemployed or economically inactive persons and employees with physical and coping disabilities. The program is called Early Vocational Rehabilitation (EVR) and it consists of 4 stages: 1) orientation of the rehabilitation team towards the patient's work; 2) investigating the gap between the patient's abilities and work; 3) work training; 4) finalizing EVR¹². The program uses a tool for a functional capacity evaluation of the individual's capacity to perform work activities to assess their ability to participate in work¹³. This evaluation helps to understand whether the rehabilitation can be accelerated through labour-specific intervention or whether the person needs additional treatment. If a labour-specific intervention is possible, a proposal is made to the company occupational physician, the rehabilitation plan is discussed with the client and employer, and it is implemented. Cooperation among all relevant partners is key to fully adapt the treatment to each individual.

Early intervention is funded by the healthcare provider or health insurance of the service user and partly by the employer (in the country every employer has an occupational physician for the health care of employees in charge of informing them when there is the possibility for vocational rehabilitation services to intervene and support them)¹⁴. If a service user is not employed yet, only the healthcare provider or health insurance funds the program. The EVR is regarded as a success story in the Netherlands and currently it consists of a network of 9 rehabilitation centres¹⁵.

In **France** the network Comète France provides very early vocational rehabilitation for persons with complex medical and social situations, especially with neurological impairments, whilst a person is still hospitalised. The network is a private association which has public supervisors and funders, among which the Ministry of Health, the Office for employment of disabled persons (AGEFIPH) and the Office for employment of disabled public service officers (FIPHFP). At Comète early intervention is considered as a comprehensive approach based on interdisciplinarity and the customisation of the plan according to the wishes and expectations of the patients that have to be reintegrated in the labour market. The plan consists of 4 phases: 1) identification, contact and assessment of the patient by a multidisciplinary team made up of a rehabilitation doctor, an ergonomist, an occupational therapist, a work psychologist and social service assistants; 2) creation of a plan which includes concrete actions, identifies appropriate facilities and partners and checks professional skills in real-life situations. The feasibility and accuracy of the plan are regularly verified; 3) implementation of the actions included in the plan, after the clients has accepted it; 4) follow-up of the plan for 2 years. The methodology developed by Comète France fully involves patients in the implementation of personalized solutions in order to re-introduce them in the labour market. It is applied in 56 rehabilitation settings, both public and private, with more than 450 professionals involved¹⁶. According to the follow-up organised at 2 years, 84% of those who received support are still employed¹⁷.

Supported Employment: examples of supporting legal frameworks

In **Austria** supported employment is part of the Federal labour market programme for people with disabilities¹⁸. It was incorporated in 1994 in the Act on Employment of people with disabilities and was expanded to include a broader target group at national level. Supported Employment is mainly financed at the national level through the Federal Social Welfare Office. Approximately 40% of the funds come from the national budget, 35% from the European Social Fund, and 25% from the Fund

made up of the fines paid by companies that do not fulfil their employment quotas¹⁹. Supported Employment is monitored by a national board for social affairs through individual contracts and auditing. The core of the supported employment scheme are six different services, which support people with disabilities and young people threatened by exclusion in education as well as finding and keeping a job. The scheme is also combined with support measures for people with disabilities such as personal work assistance, transport support, technical aids, special tax deductions or exemptions and preferential access to job vacancies, while benefits for employers include wage subsidy, financial support for workplace adaptation, tax deduction for employers and flexible work arrangements²⁰.

Regarding job coaching, **Finland** has a national job coaching scheme available for 60 days for job seekers who do not receive a disability pension. **France** provides accompanied employment counsellors for all disabled workers, both in protected and ordinary environments, especially through EPR member LADAPT. In **Spain**, regulations require job coaches to have a university degree in order to work. The Spanish Association of Supported Employment (AESE), created in 2016 an online course on job coaching at the end of which professionals receive a certification from the University of Salamanca²¹.

In **Norway** Supported Employment started as a pilot project that lasted from 1992-1995. In 1996, the project was transformed into a state-financed mainstream national Supported Employment programme (Arbeid med bistand). The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) is the organisation responsible for the programme. The national legal framework includes fixed regulations, national rules and general provisions for Supported Employment as is the case with all other labour market schemes. Provisions are enshrined in the Labour Market Act of 2004, which aims to facilitate an inclusive working life and stipulates the basic services and rights disabled employment seekers. In addition, there are local agreements between the public employment and welfare offices (NAV) and Supported Employment service providers. Supported Employment services are funded by national public funding over the State Budget, covering salaries and running costs for the service provider. Jobs acquired through Arbeid med bistand are equally based on permanent work contracts and time-limited contracts. In Norway Supported Employment can be combined with other labour market support schemes including wage subsidies and financial support such as workplace adaptation grants. Parallel support may be given by municipalities according to needs.

Regarding Supported Employment itself, the Arbeid med bistand initiative has recently been substituted by two initiatives named *Oppfølging* (Follow Up)²² and *Utvidet oppfølging* (Extended Follow Up). Both are based on the principles of Supported Employment. The first one is organised by service providers and is subject to competition via tenders, while the Extended Follow Up is the internal service of NAV and it is organised by teams of job specialists. The NAV has developed their own quality criteria for these services.

In order to deliver the Extended Follow Up, job specialists have to gain and apply good inclusion skills. When they start working in this position, they are expected to carry out a training in Supported Employment provided by NAV, as well as 3 days of practical training where they work together with experienced colleagues, either in their own team or as interns. After this and thorough their career they continue to develop their competence through individual guidance, professional meetings and field guidance. Job specialists are expected to have a portfolio of 17 service users each and to apply the the five stages of Engagement, Vocational Profiling, Job Finding, Employer Engagement and On/Off Job Support²³.

Supported employment and job coaching for inactive people

In **Belgium** GTB, a specialised service provision and counselling service for people of working age with disabilities or health problems, has been running a project called “We go to work” since 2019²⁴. The project is subsidised by ESF and will end in December 2023. It aims to reach through an outreach service inactive people who are hindered by an occupational disability or health issue and have a lot of thresholds to find a job. The outreach service is a mixture of information, individual coaching and group empowerment sessions, which aims to reach patients in the phase 'before they are ready to take steps to work'. The GTB-outreach worker plays a key role, as they meet the client directly at their rehabilitation hospital or welfare participation, instead of the client having to come to GTB's job mediation offices. The GTB-outreach worker is a specialist in mediation to work and knows the demands of employers well. As the GTB-outreach worker becomes part of the care-team and together with the client or patient they built on a work recovery action plan in order to integrate the client into the labour market as quick as possible²⁵. By providing insights and coaching, the patient can assess their capacities and interests and gain perspective on reasonable adjustments, learning opportunities, growth jobs, job crafting etc. By properly documenting this at the right moments in the treatment and by focusing on strong mutual communication in which the customer is central, all actors achieve supported treatment goals and results in job coaching and mediation.

Between GTB and the care organisation there is a signed agreement with clear defined objectives. The outreach program is currently 80% financed by the ESF and 20% by the partners themselves. Service users pay nothing to join the outreach activities²⁶.

Individual Placement and Support

In **Belgium**, the National Institute of Health and Disability Insurance (NIDHI) launched in 2016 a 5-year pilot project on the effectiveness of IPS in supporting people with mental health issues to find a job. The NIDHI is responsible for administering the country's compulsory national schemes for health insurance and disability benefits and works under the authority of the Belgian Federal Minister of Social Affairs. The project is based on a randomised control trial of 1200 reintegration interventions, 600 through IPS and 600 through traditional return-to-work methodology²⁷. There are 3 phases: 1) stakeholders identification; 2) return-to-work phase; 3) monitoring and evaluation. Medical advisors select clients based on inclusion criteria and are not aware of which group they will be part of. A key role is played by job coaches who search proactively for employers and communicate with medical advisors to give feedback, while providing support to the client for an undetermined period. 23 job coaches are involved, each one of them following a maximum of 20 clients²⁸.

The project will end in 2022, but preliminary results show an employment rate of 39%, with a higher probability to work part-time and higher earnings compared to the control group using traditional vocational rehabilitation, as well as a 6,5% decrease in monthly disability benefits²⁹. The part-time jobs haven't much affected beneficiaries of a disability allowance, since it is combined with income. Moreover, IPS didn't affect the health and well-being of workers with mental health issues, who have proven able to work. This aspect can help combating stereotypes among employers. In 2021 another study group called IPS 2.0 was added, which so far has led to 35% employment rate for participants³⁰. EPR member GTB is a partner of the project and applies the IPS methodology to its services in Flanders. GTB implements the zero-exclusion principle, with any jobseeker with mental health issues having the possibility to get support, regardless of the diagnosis and severity. The job search is rapid, with the first meeting with employer within 30 days, and based on a place-then-train approach³¹. The job coaches are trained within GTB and establish networks in the region and have

weekly meetings with employers to ask them about their current situations and challenges and find a solution to their problems.

In **Italy** the Emilia Romagna region included IPS in its policy in 2008 and financed a programme to promote the approach after a pilot project carried out in the city of Rimini. Currently 32 out of 41 clinical mental health counsellors in the region offer IPS to their users³². About 50% of all clients were working at any point in time. The IPS regional team has been actively engaged in training for eight more regions (Lombardy, Veneto, Lazio, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Marche, Liguria Toscana, and Sicily) that recently started offering IPS in pilot centres³³.

Transitional workforce model

In **Ireland** this model is widely used by Rehab Group. Rehab has the initial task to identify companies in need for more staff and interested in becoming more inclusive and get in contact with them to get the job descriptions. Rehab then carries out a job analysis and person specification by doing site visits and using job descriptions in order to recruit through employability services and disability support groups people with disabilities interested in the type of job offered and in gaining professional experience. An initial training of a couple of weeks is provided by Rehab and includes health and safety, soft skills and other relevant content related to the role. At the same time Rehab provides disability awareness training and mentor training to staff within the host company as well. The person with a disability then starts working in the employers site for a specific period while continuing to be employed by Rehab Group. The employer is supported by a job coach from Rehab and can decide to employ the person with a disability at the end of the fixed period. On completion of the placement the person with a disability either is offered a permanent contract in the host company or can return to Rehab with job seeking skills, an updated CV and be signposted for further training or a new job. If offered an employment contract, the person with a disability stops receiving the disability allowance from the WSS or receives a reduced amount, depending on whether it is a full-time or part-time contract. In any case, the person will continue to receive secondary benefits for 3 years.

Work-based vocational training

In **Austria** Chance B is offering a service which supports people with disabilities to transition from sheltered work settings to the open labour market. The enterprise cooperates with companies active in the mainstream labour market right from the beginning, providing support to both persons with disabilities and employers. A series of steps are taken to ensure this transition. First, job orientation and work-based training is provided within Chance B in sheltered environments. This kind of training often involves group work. After that, users receive individual work-based training in companies, which leads to a working contract and a certificate of validation of their competencies in line with European and National Qualification Frameworks. The training and the official validation of competencies are provided through an online tool called KomKom. It is a training curriculum developed by Chance B in cooperation with the University of Klagenfurt with the aim to develop non-formal qualifications for educational disadvantaged groups to empower them on the labour market and set standards in non-formal qualifications. KomKom is available free of charge on a non-profit online platform.

In **Israel** the WISE Shekulo Tov has developed a successful model called IUM – Integrative Unit Model for the rehabilitation of persons with psychosocial disabilities in the labour market³⁴. The IUM uses a person- and recovery-oriented approach based on training, skills development and 3 main

steps: preparation, placement and progress. The users are supported by a team of specialists and can choose to work among several social businesses that operate in the open labour market as integrative business units within the community. In Israel there are at least 5 examples of social business units that implement the IUM. Good Coffee for instance is a chain of social cafés that trains people with psychosocial disabilities, strengthening vocational and interpersonal skills and promoting practical experience³⁵. Each café has a vocational rehabilitation team which includes a professional rehabilitation manager, a placement coordinator, and staff members specialised in food service. Another example is TNX, a network of sales points that offers presents, conference give-aways and employee gifts for companies which trains and employs people with mental disabilities. All the products are made by Shekulo Tov's integrative production sites. TNX is a community-based business which helps to fight stigma and social exclusion by showing to customers and suppliers that people with mental health issues can thrive in a positive context.

In 15 years of experience the IUM has increased the placement for persons with psychosocial disabilities by 10 times (from 3% to over 30% by 2019), while halving hospitalisation costs³⁶.

Shekulo Tov also offers online and in-person training courses also to companies and employers on how to open their own integrative units locally based on the IUM and work as social businesses for vocational rehabilitation to place people with psychosocial disabilities in the open labour market. During these courses IUM experts explain the features of the model's social business units, map the organisation's potential through a customised process to select the most suitable units and train the staff to implement the unit.

Inclusive Job Redesign and Customised Employment

In **Malta** Jobsplus (the national Public Employment Service) created in 2017 a partnership with the Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF), which is specialised in the integration of people with disabilities into the labour market, with the aim to promote the job carving approach. LSF created a unit of corporate relations executives who help enterprises in recruiting people with disabilities by identifying existing roles that are potentially suitable. The "carving" of the job is based on the requirements of the business and the competencies and skills of the registered job seekers with disabilities and can be accompanied by training to improve their preparedness and employability. As of April 2018, the job carving approach has led to the creation of 278 suitable jobs. Among the challenges identified was the difficulty to find suitable jobs, since enterprises often require complex qualifications and tasks that overall cannot be met by jobseekers with a disability³⁷.

In Flanders, **Belgium**, the Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship launched in 2020 the ESF project "Disability Inclusive Job Crafting" in collaboration with GTB, Groep Maatwerk, Konekt, Mentor and iDrops. The project aims to increase the employability of employees with a physical and mild intellectual disability by teaching them job crafting skills and how to set concrete goals and achieve them. Those who are less skilled can follow training through various service providers in order to improve their employability and person-job fit. Since job crafting is a very "linguistic" method, with the disadvantage that the low-skilled or people with a mild intellectual disability can have threshold anxiety, this project also includes the development of a new service in which job crafting behaviour is stimulated and guided through micro-interventions (e.g. without individual intensive contact with a coach, but through a five-week online program with brief job crafting exercises and follow up via website, Facebook, WhatsApp etc.) and tailored to people with mild intellectual disabilities.

The project led to the development of an app called JOS³⁸. The app was created for and together with people with an occupational disability, in order to support them in job crafting. It is a digital tool where users complete simple exercises from their smartphone or computer to get more insight into their

work process, possible misfits and talents. Afterwards they receive a personal report with tips to make their job more suitable for their needs and competences. The app can be used in more than 100 languages as it uses the translation feature of Chrome. It was tested among 96 potential users and the results showed a better understanding of themselves and their work, as well as more job crafting behaviour³⁹.

Partnerships with employers

Work & Inclusion (W&I) in **Norway** has a methodology called Ripples in the Water that promotes cooperation between member companies of the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) and W&I service providers. Ripples in the Water aims to increase the level of employment for people with disabilities or disadvantages based on the understanding that the vast majority of people both want and are able to work. The company gets in touch with a service provider, who after an assessment of the company's needs, considers whether they have suitable candidates for the position in question. The service provider may also provide training and coaching to prepare the candidate to become employable. In addition, they provide follow-up support in the workplace, including coaching after the candidate has been permanently employed. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs ordered an evaluation of the program's results, which showed that this method created more than 3 times more people employed than ordinary supportive employment⁴⁰. The evaluation from 2017 shows that 57% of the NHO companies would not have recruited without RIW, 84% of them trust that the service providers propose relevant candidates, 79% believed they got relevant information of the candidates and 77% agreed that the actual candidate matched the needs of the company⁴¹.

In **Ireland** the "EmployAbility Service" facilitates integration into mainstream employment by forming alliance and working partnerships with employers, who are informed about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. Intensive support by local offices and the promotion of high standards ensure satisfactory participation and uptake. Moreover, a format initially called "Job Shadowday" originated here with the goal to establish partnerships between employers and jobseekers with disabilities. In 2010 it was adopted in Flanders as "DUOday" and the idea gradually spread in Europe. DUOday is a particular model where jobseekers with an occupational limitation form a duo with an employee within a company for one day. The aim is twofold: facilitating access to the open labour market of people with disabilities and change the way employers think about and perceive disability. The jobseeker has a chance to discover the profession, show his talents and soft skills. Participation is not mandatory for employers, but it allows them to discover professional and soft skills of people with disabilities and encourages them to reflect on their commitment to social policies. For people with disability DUOday can be a useful opportunity to acquire more confidence on the labour market and test their perception of a certain job against reality.

EPR member GTB has been organising DUOdays in **Belgium** since 2011. On DUOday 2018, 477 businesses all over Belgium took part. 60% of the businesses took part for the first time and 92% of the businesses wish to continue this partnership in the future⁴².

In **France**, DUOday developed locally and since 2018 it has been deployed on a national scale with the support of the State Secretariat for People with Disabilities, which mobilises social and economic partners, including public employment services, training organisations and networks of employers. A hot line managed by the medico-social structure Algeei is also made available to participants in order to provide support and ensure a smooth running of the initiative. In 2020, 10% of the duos formed resulted in internship, apprenticeship and job offers within 3 months. In the 2021 edition, there were

9,110 employers registered on the platform and 30,165 jobseekers with disabilities, for a total of 17,000 pairs⁴³. The French Government supports DUOday and employment of people with disabilities thorough the year, granting aid to private employers when hiring an employee with disability on a permanent or fixed-term contract for over 3 months.

The DUOday format takes place in other 12 countries across Europe including as Germany, Portugal, Ireland and Finland⁴⁴.

In **Denmark** the “KLAPjob” initiative creates jobs for persons with disabilities through nationwide agreements with companies, connecting municipalities, employers and job seekers. Key elements are cooperation with local actors for the provision of matching services and outreach work⁴⁵.

In **Croatia** there is an annual prize for the best employer of persons with disabilities. A key factor is its high visibility in the mass media, which contributed to improved knowledge among the public and employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

In the **United States**, the U.S. Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR, permanent observer member of EPR as of 2022) contributed to the development of a National Employment Team (NET) of vocational rehabilitation counsellors with the aim to better include business partners in the professional preparation and employment of people with disabilities. According to the American framework, the public system of vocational rehabilitation consists of a Federal-State partnership operating a State level, with a total of 78 agencies⁴⁶. The NET is a cross state team consisting of a business relations representative from each of the 78 agencies that aims to provide services that meet the needs of businesses and to bring information from business partners to Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellors and their customers to support their career planning and preparation. It is based on a dual customer approach where both the needs of the individual with a disability and the skills and requirements of a job, the work environment and the culture of a company are taken into account in order to assist persons with disabilities with effective career planning and preparation. Key for the development of NET were also the inputs gathered from 35 business customers during a national employment conference organised by CSAVR, in collaboration with vocational rehabilitation agencies and the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

Among the needs of businesses there was having easier access to a centralized talent pool of candidates with disabilities. To address this challenge, the CSAVR-NET worked with disABLEDpersons, a disability owned small business, to build a fully accessible talent pool of candidates on an interactive platform called the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP)⁴⁷. That platform is currently hosting over 31,000 candidates with disabilities and is being used by over 90 companies⁴⁸.

With the NET, CSAVR was able to drive change in federal legislation, enabling more cooperation between vocational rehabilitation staff and businesses and improving their mutual understanding to promote employment of candidates with disabilities.

Inclusive entrepreneurship

In **Spain** the legislation provides for the possibility of a bonus on their Social Security contributions for young entrepreneurs under 35 with a degree of disability greater than or equal to 33%. ONCE Foundation has been running an Entrepreneurship Support Program since 1988 with the aim to contribute to full social inclusion by offering support to entrepreneurs with disabilities throughout the whole entrepreneurship process⁴⁹. The program addresses the challenges of the Spanish

unemployment context, where only 1 in 4 people with disabilities is employed and the entrepreneurship rate is 5 points lower than the rest of the population due to the lack of accessible training and guidance. The programme is open to any person with a recognized disability. A trained Entrepreneurship Facilitator guides the person through the itinerary programme to gain specific business skills and develop their entrepreneurial ideas and business plans. When business plans are solid, participants can apply for financial grants. In the last 13 years around 5500 people with disabilities have been supported and since 1988 more than 1930 projects have been financed⁵⁰. The programme increases the survival rate of start-ups, creates new synergies and has a multiplying effect, since entrepreneurs with disabilities can then become employers of other people with disabilities. Additionally, in 2018 the ONCE Foundation published a specific methodology for supported entrepreneurship, focused on entrepreneurs with high support needs⁵¹.

Entrepreneurship of people with disabilities is encouraged in **Poland** through financial incentives such as the reimbursement of costs for adapting the workplace and purchases for work or the fund for the creation of a business. **Lithuanian** legislation provides for subsidies and support for the adaptation of the workplace for people with disabilities who start a business, while in **Bulgaria**, the Agency for People with Disabilities provides a grant of up to 10,000 euros to start and develop a business. In **Austria**, the Ministry of Social Affairs offers subsidies for entrepreneurs with disabilities and start-ups, while the PES offers entrepreneurial support to people with disabilities through professional consultants.

In **Latvia** the ‘Support for self-employment’ initiative helps unemployed people with disabilities under the age of 30 to create their own jobs in microenterprises. It provides guidance on drafting a relevant application and (in the case of an award) a subsidy for the creation of a job or of the conditions to perform direct job functions in the created workspace. Consultations, clarity and transparency of rules for granting aid are fundamental to the effectiveness of such a service, which is client-centred and provides personalised solutions. Limited financial resources are the major shortcoming.

Inclusive training and education for people with disabilities

In **France** the national association LADAPT, which provides services to people with disabilities, has developed a Supported Apprenticeship Scheme to develop access to training leading to qualifications for young people with disabilities and to secure their pathway to sustainable employment. The methodology of this scheme is explained in a handbook or “Referential” and, according to the evaluation of the pilot scheme, it ensures a smoother transition into employment, helps to have more secure careers and to prevent contract breaches. The scheme is complementary to ordinary apprenticeship contracts. Unlike other common VETs, apprenticeships or similar schemes, it takes into account and works with the whole ecosystem around the apprentice, providing support to the apprentice, as well as to the training centre and the hosting company⁵². Vocational Integration Counsellors (VICs) work in collaboration with the young people with disabilities in a person-centred way to identify and approach apprentice training centres or schools, trainers, specialised employment organisations, appropriate support person in the company, the employer, public administrative process (financial and administrative process) etc. Each year, around 400 people benefit from this scheme in the four regions of Brittany⁵³.

This approach for supported apprenticeships will be adapted to the different national contexts through the SAS Project, of which LADAPT and EPR are partners. The SAS project started in 2022 and aims to train over the next 3 years 7 partners in 6 European countries (Norway, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Greece and Bulgaria) in the Supported Apprenticeship Scheme⁵⁴. A European training module for

Vocational Integration Counsellors and policy recommendations for a better implementation of Supported Apprenticeship in Europe will be developed in the framework of the project.

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Endnotes

¹ <http://web.archive.org/web/20220308204159/https://www.kela.fi/web/en/disability-pension-and-rehabilitation-working>

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