

EU.CAP



Advocacy note

2022



EU.CAP Project

Erasmus+



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Recommendations from the EU.CAP project towards real labour inclusion of people with disabilities

1. Written rights, but what is the reality?

The European Union is anchored in the values of equality, social fairness, freedom, democracy and human rights. The **Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)** and the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union** provide the basis for combating all forms of discrimination, establishing equality as the cornerstone of EU policies.

The adoption of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD or Convention) in 2006** marked a turning point in setting minimum standards for the rights of persons with disabilities. The EU and its Member States are parties to the UNCRPD Convention and are taking its implementation forward.

The **European Pillar of Social Rights**, jointly proclaimed in 2017 by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission, serves as a compass for employment and social policies. The principle of the Pillar emphasize that people with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures a life in dignity, to services that enable them to participate in the labor market and society, and to a working environment adapted to their needs.

The **European Disability Strategy 2010–2025** paved the way for a barrier-free Europe, promoting actions supported also by EU funding to make a difference in the lives of the approximately 87 million people in the EU who have some form of disability. Its evaluation notes that the strategy, by putting disability high on the EU agenda, has helped to improve the situation in several areas, in particular accessibility for people with disabilities and the promotion of their rights.

However, people with disabilities continue to face significant barriers in access to health care, education, employment and recreation, and participation in political life. They also have a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion (28.4 %) than people without disabilities (18.4 %). More than half of people with disabilities claim to have felt discriminated against in 2019, moreover, according to European Community estimates, there are approximately 100 million people with disabilities in the European Union who are still deprived of their basic human rights and are hindered on a daily basis from leading an independent life. The pandemic then further amplified the situation of discrimination of



persons with disabilities, although the European Community intervened swiftly to contain the negative consequences.

2. The EU.CAP project – a small brick in the process of real labour inclusion

The EU.CAP project fits within European policies aimed at guaranteeing the rights of people with disabilities as EU.CAP aims to improve the professional profile of people with mild disabilities and their suitability for the labour market. It aims to provide lasting benefits by developing a labour inclusion model based on the best practices observed in terms of employability of the target group. In fact, the term “EU.CAP” means “the direction to take” and is originally a navy term. The project aims to promote and develop the target group’s competences necessary for their effective employability through the observation and analysis of apprenticeships, training and employment.

The EU.CAP project, funded under the Erasmus+ KA2 programme, had an initial duration of 30 months, from November 2019 to April 2022, later extended to October 2022 due to the covid-19 emergency. The project involved four partners from Belgium, Spain, Italy and France.

During the project, the complex topic of the ‘life project towards autonomy’ for young people with disabilities was addressed, highlighting the right to labour market inclusion as an indispensable part of this pathway. In the project a lot of work was done on the figure of the Job Coach as an operator able to help the mildly intellectually disabled person to effectively enter the world of work.

THE REFERENCE CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

The labour market, like any other market, is characterized by competition between the various players active on it. There are, however, people who are naturally disadvantaged because they are in a condition that makes them less competitive than the other participants. If the market rules did not provide for any corrective measures, these people would not have much chance of finding a job and thus of having the free, satisfying and autonomous life that only a job can guarantee. The first part of the project was dedicated to the analysis of the laws, facilities, measures and good practices implemented in the different European countries, at national, regional and local level, aimed at favoring the employment of people with disabilities in both public and private employment. A very diverse and complex situation emerged that only partially guarantees the right to work of the person with mild disabilities.



A POSSIBLE ANSWER: THE JOB COACH

A possible answer for the improvement and facilitation of job placement for people with mild disabilities is the figure of the Job Coach, intended as a bridge between the person and the company.

The figure of the Job Coach is present in all the partner countries, but with different declinations and training, starting from this situation the project partners thought it was fundamental to univocally define the professional profile of the job coach and to create a pedagogical tool aimed at its training.

The tool was tested in Valencia, Spain, by training professionals already working as job coaches or similar roles. The training was evaluated very positively by the participants.

3. Recommendations and future prospects

During the different phases of the project and in particular during the project meetings and dissemination seminars, many elements emerged that are considered important and should be taken into consideration at EU, national, regional and local level to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities.

DEFINING MORE CLEARLY THE FIGURE OF THE JOB COACH

WORKING WITH DISABILITY

In each country the figure of the job coach is declined differently both in terms of competences and activities.

We suggest checking the type of certification the potential coach demonstrates to have, as the largest association of professional coaches in the world (ICF) has for over 25 years certified coaches who have demonstrated rigorous training and experience requirements.

The main confusion, however, concerns what is the role and functions of the job coach compared to e.g. a Labor Market Operator, a Tutor. Clarity in terms of role is important both for the disabled person and for companies.

Hence the need to clearly define at European level this figure by outlining both the training (a starting point could be our handbook by carrying out a possible experimentation) and the competences required for the coach role. Furthermore, there is a need for additional preparation and/or experience of the professional who supports people with disabilities in job search and job placement.



SHARING CLEAR EUROPEAN DEFINITIONS OF WHAT

DISABILITY MEANS

During the various partnership meetings, the difficulty emerged of unambiguously defining what mild disability means, since each country has different methods, parameters, procedures for certifying disability even though there are internationally recognized tools such as the ICF and ICD.

In order to guarantee an effective mobility of workers with disabilities within the European Union it would be desirable for clear indications to be given to all member countries on the criteria for assessing the degree of disability and to provide a facsimile of certification valid for all EU countries.

HARMONISING THE LAWS, TOOLS AND FACILITIES OF DIFFERENT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WITH RESPECT TO THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In each country it has emerged that the legislation with respect to the employment of people with disabilities is very different. One example is the fact that in Italy there is a recruitment obligation for all companies with 15 employees or more, whereas in Belgium there is no such obligation. Still in Italy those who are assessed as fit for work must go to work, whereas in Belgium the person can decide whether to work or stay at home and receive a pension. Subsidies and facilities for companies employing people with disabilities differ from country to country.

With a view to ensuring equal treatment for people with disabilities, it would be helpful if a framework law and/or recommendations were issued at European level that, while respecting the sovereignty of each country, would guarantee conditions that are as similar as possible.



PROMOTE AND TEST INNOVATIVE TOOLS AND METHODOLOGIES TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT INCLUSION

During the various dissemination meetings, many suggestions emerged to improve the social and work inclusion of people with disabilities.

With regard to the employment area, the suggestions were:

- ▶ Finding suitable tools to make the person with disabilities an active protagonist in his or her job search by also giving him or her the opportunity to experiment in several jobs in order to understand which one he or she is best at;
- ▶ Developing tools useful for bringing out the skills of the disabled person developed in informal and non-formal contexts. This would allow a deeper knowledge of the person and a better identification of the most suitable work context for him/her.
- ▶ Enable the job coach to support the person and the company also after the person's employment through monitoring lasting at least one year in order to remove obstacles between employer, employee and colleagues;
- ▶ Create useful tools to raise awareness among the disabled person's colleagues, helping them overcome their prejudices and creating an effectively inclusive environment;
- ▶ Carry out useful actions so that a relationship of trust is created between the person with a disability, colleagues and the employer
- ▶ Urge European countries to promote the introduction of quota restrictions for companies with more than 15 employees. For such a measure to be effective, however, it is also necessary to help companies understand the tools and methods that can be used to effectively integrate people with disabilities into their workforce.

In the area of social inclusion, the suggestions were:

- ▶ Inclusion goes through the family. It is important to find ways and means to support the family in accepting their child's difficulties and in seeing their potential and working on it;
- ▶ Carry out useful actions to ensure that the person with disabilities is seen as a whole person and not only for his or her difficulties;



- ▶ Carry out useful actions to make the different disabilities known. Distrust and non-inclusion arise from fear of what one does not know. Knowledge therefore becomes a fundamental element in enabling people with disabilities to live their social life to the full.

We hope that the EU CAP project can be used to address some of these recommendations. All project outputs are available on our website www.eucap.net.

The EU CAP project partners - UNESSA (Belgium), C'ENTRO (Italy), GEM U SCONTRU (France), XANO CHANNEL (Spain) - are at your disposal for further information.

We hope that all institutions that can positively impact on the inclusion of people with disabilities will make this a priority for action and help to continue to move the agenda in this area.





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Layout: [Ségolène Jacquemin](#) – UNESSA



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