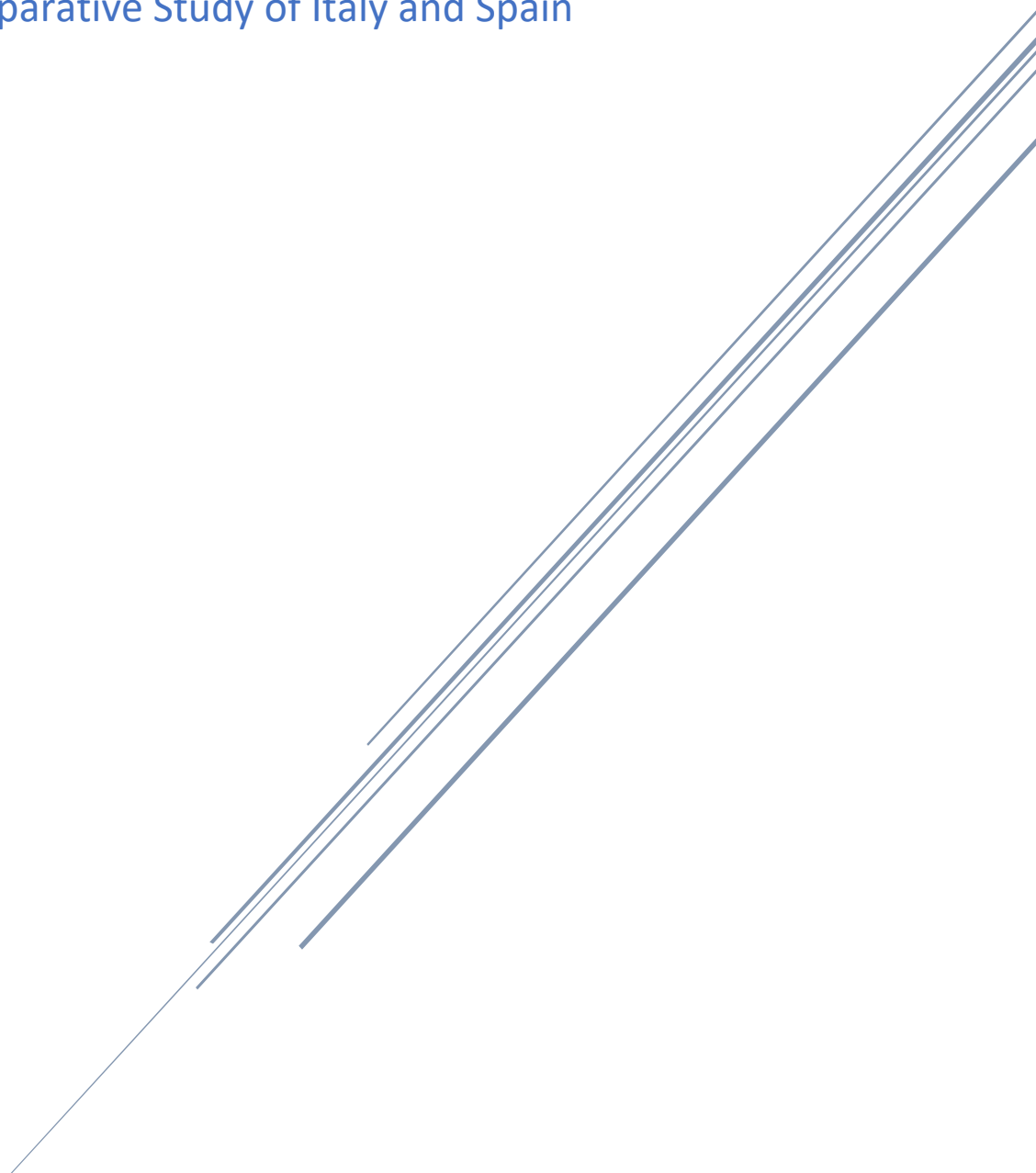


# ENHANCING LABOUR MARKET INCLUSION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH VET

A Comparative Study of Italy and Spain



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## List of Abbreviations

- **CRPD:** Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- **LGDPIS:** General Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities and Their Social Inclusion
- **SEN:** Special Educational Needs
- **VET:** Vocational Education and Training
- **SAS:** Andalusian Health Service
- **EFP:** Education and Vocational Training
- **ECHO:** Educational and Psychopedagogical Orientation Team
- **FSIE:** Federation of Independent Teaching Unions
- **CCOO:** Workers' Commissions
- **CEE:** Special Employment Centre
- **COVID-19:** Coronavirus disease 2019
- **UNCRPD:** United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- **EDS:** European Disability Strategy



# The Situation in Italy and Spain: A Comparative Report

## Executive Summary

The Skills for All project aims to enhance the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market through Vocational Education and Training (VET). This report presents a comparative analysis of the situation in Spain and Italy in this respect, based on desk research, interviews with people with disabilities, focus groups with experts, and surveys of trade union representatives and disability organisations.

## Key Findings

- **Similarities:** In both countries exists strong and well-established legal frameworks in line with international standards, it is recognised the importance of VET, and similar barriers to inclusion are faced, such as lack of awareness and prejudice.
- **Differences:** The Spanish report is more focused on legal analysis and includes a survey of union representatives, which brings to the table the workers' perspective. The Italian report highlights the variability of employers' practices and the need for customised support services, as well as the importance of support programmes.

## Recommendations

- **Policy and Legislation:** Enhance legal frameworks, increase incentives for employers, and monitor policy effectiveness.
- **Vocational Education and Training (VET):** Design inclusive programmes, improve accessibility, and align training with employer needs.
- **Employers:** Adopt inclusive practices, launch awareness campaigns, and foster supportive environments.
- **Service Providers:** Tailor support services, enhance coordination, and increase service quality.
- **Disability Advocacy Organisations:** Advocate for policy change, raise awareness, and support individuals with disabilities.

In this report, the Skills for All partnership calls for collaborative action from policymakers, employers, VET providers, service organisations, and disability advocates to create a more inclusive labour market for people with disabilities in both Spain and Italy.



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## Introduction

The Skills for All project is a collaborative research initiative between the Training Academy (Italy) and the Fundación Docete Omnes (Spain), co-funded by the European Union. The project's core mission is to enhance the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market through Vocational Education and Training (VET). Recognising the persistent challenges faced by people with disabilities in accessing and benefiting from VET programs, the project partners aim to identify and address the systemic barriers that hinder their full participation in the workforce.

The project brings together a diverse group of organisations committed to promoting disability inclusion in VET across the region. By combining their expertise, resources, and networks, the Skills for All project seeks to drive positive change and foster socio-economic inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

Through a multifaceted approach encompassing consultation, capacity building, and advocacy, the project aims to empower individuals with disabilities, equip educators with the necessary tools and knowledge, and engage stakeholders in constructive dialogue. By addressing the root causes of discrimination and exclusionary practices, the project strives to create a more inclusive and equitable VET landscape.

This report presents the findings of comprehensive studies conducted in both Spain and Italy, examining the current state of disability inclusion in VET and employment. The research employed a multi-faceted methodology, including desk research, interviews with people with disabilities, focus groups with experts, and surveys of trade union representatives and disability organisations. The report identifies key challenges and opportunities in each country and provides tailored recommendations to policymakers, VET providers, employers, service providers, and disability advocacy organisations.

The limitations of this study should be acknowledged when interpreting the results and formulating recommendations. The scope of the research may not encompass all regions or sectors, and the findings are based on a limited sample size. Additionally, the study may have been influenced by participant biases and the availability of data. Some areas of disability inclusion and employment may not be fully represented, and the evolving nature of policies and practices means that findings could change over time.

Ultimately, the Skills for All project and this report aim to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society where individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in the workforce and achieve their full potential.



## Comparative Analysis of Spain and Italy

Both Spain and Italy have made significant strides in creating a legal framework that supports the rights of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. Both countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and have implemented national laws and policies to promote inclusion. However, the implementation and effectiveness of these measures vary.

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### Policy and Legislation

- **Similarities:** Both countries have robust legal frameworks that align with international standards. These frameworks mandate the integration of individuals with disabilities into the workforce and provide for measures such as quotas, incentives, and specific recruitment procedures.
- **Differences:** The Spanish report focuses more on the analysis of the legal and political framework, while the Italian report emphasises the description of existing support programmes and services. The Spanish report also highlights the need for updating legislation regarding incentives for companies hiring people with disabilities, a concern not explicitly mentioned in the Italian report.

### Vocational Education and Training (VET)

- **Similarities:** Both reports acknowledge the importance of VET in preparing individuals with disabilities for the labour market and emphasise the value of dual training programs.
- **Differences:** The Spanish report reveals a mixed perception of the effectiveness of VET programs, while the Italian report highlights the need for improved accessibility and adaptation of programmes to individual needs. The Italian report also identifies a lack of awareness among employers and individuals with disabilities regarding available support programmes, which is not explicitly mentioned in the Spanish report.

### Employer Practices and Attitudes

- **Similarities:** Both reports identify common barriers to hiring and retaining employees with disabilities, such as lack of awareness, prejudice, and concerns about costs and productivity.
- **Differences:** The Spanish report includes a survey of trade union representatives, providing additional insights into the challenges and opportunities from the workers' perspective. The Italian report emphasises the variability in employer practices, with larger organisations generally being more inclusive than smaller businesses.

### Social Dialogue and Support Services

- **Similarities:** Both countries have job search support programmes for individuals with disabilities, but their accessibility and awareness are limited.



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- **Differences:** The Italian report highlights the need for personalised support services and better coordination between service providers. The Spanish report emphasises the importance of raising awareness among employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

## Comparison between national recommendations

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- **Similarities:** Both reports recommend enhancing legal frameworks, increasing incentives for employers, designing inclusive VET programs, improving accessibility, and raising awareness about disability rights and inclusion.
- **Differences:** The Spanish report provides more specific and detailed recommendations, such as creating a national observatory and developing guidelines for good practices. The Italian report focuses on a top-down solution, based on strengthening collaboration between stakeholders and promoting a culture of diversity and inclusion.

In conclusion, both Spain and Italy have made progress in promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market through VET. However, challenges remain in terms of policy implementation, awareness, accessibility, and employer practices. By learning from each other's experiences and adopting best practices, both countries can further enhance their efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable workforce for all.

## Skills for All Recommendations

Based on the findings of the studies conducted in Spain and Italy, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market through Vocational Education and Training (VET):

### For Policymakers

1. **Enhance Legal Frameworks:** Strengthen and update existing laws to address gaps in disability rights and employment. Ensure that legal provisions are comprehensive and include clear guidelines on accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and anti-discrimination measures.
2. **Increase Incentives:** Expand financial and non-financial incentives for employers who hire individuals with disabilities. This could include tax breaks, subsidies for workplace modifications, and funding for disability awareness training programmes.
3. **Monitor and Evaluate:** Implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of existing policies and identify areas for improvement. Regularly review and update policies based on feedback from stakeholders and changes in the employment landscape.

### For VET Providers

1. **Design Inclusive Programmes:** Develop VET programmes that are inclusive and tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities. This includes creating flexible training options, integrating assistive technologies, and providing individualised support.

2. **Improve Accessibility:** Ensure that VET facilities and materials are physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with diverse disabilities.
3. **Align with Employer Needs:** Regularly collaborate with employers to ensure that VET programmes align with current and future job market demands.

## For Employers

1. **Adopt Inclusive Practices:** Implement inclusive hiring practices, provide reasonable accommodations, and foster a supportive workplace environment for employees with disabilities.
2. **Launch Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct awareness campaigns to educate employees and the broader community about the value of hiring individuals with disabilities.
3. **Foster Collaboration:** Partner with disability organisations and service providers to access resources and expertise on disability inclusion.

## For Service Providers

1. **Tailor Support Services:** Offer personalised job search and career support services that address the specific needs of individuals with disabilities.
2. **Enhance Coordination:** Improve coordination between different support services to provide a seamless experience for job seekers with disabilities.
3. **Increase Service Quality:** Invest in staff training and development to enhance the quality of support services and ensure that providers are knowledgeable about disability issues.

## For Disability Advocacy Organisations

1. **Advocate for Policy Change:** Actively engage with policymakers to advocate for stronger disability employment policies and legislation.
2. **Raise Awareness:** Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate society about disability rights and the benefits of an inclusive workforce.
3. **Empower Individuals:** Provide resources and support to individuals with disabilities to help them navigate the job market and advocate for their rights.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work together to create a more inclusive and equitable labour market for people with disabilities, benefiting both individuals and society as a whole.



## Annexes

**Annexe 1:** Assessment of Inclusion of People with Disabilities in the Labour Market in Italy

**Annexe 2:** Assessing Labour Market Inclusion for People with Disabilities in Spain

**Annexe 3:** Results of the desk research in Italy

**Annexe 4:** Results of the desk research in Spain

**Annexe 5:** Guiding Questions for the Focus Groups

**Annexe 6:** Guiding Questions for the Interviews

**SKILLS FOR ALL**  
**PROJECT 2023-2-IT01-KA210-VET-000180038**

# ASSESSMENT OF INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE LABOUR MARKET IN ITALY



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## Executive Summary

Improvements in educational possibilities notwithstanding, people with disabilities still have significant obstacles to surmount when it comes to accessing vocational education and training (VET) programs. The Skills For All Project is an answer to this problem, focusing on systemic challenges that hinder the involvement of disabled individuals in VET activities. This project aims at fostering inclusivity and equal opportunities thus making it easier for persons living with disability get the necessary skills and qualifications.

The project is a conglomeration of organizations that are working towards ensuring disability inclusion in VET across the region. Combining their knowledge bases, resources and connections, Skills For All Project intends to ensure positive change while promoting social economic inclusion among people with disabilities.

It's a multifaceted effort via consultation, capacity building and advocacy aiming to empower persons with disabilities, equip educators with relevant tools and knowledge as well as engage stakeholders for constructive discussions. In doing so, the project attempts to deal with the origins of discrimination by targeting exclusionary practices that cause a more restricted.

### Key findings:

**Differences in Employer Practices:** The focus group implementation has identified that employers have varying practices in supporting the participation of individuals with disabilities in VET programs. While some employers adopt inclusive practices, others fail to provide the necessary accommodations and support, negatively impacting the integration of disabled individuals into the workforce.

**Lack of Legal Knowledge:** The social dialogue has revealed significant gaps in legal knowledge regarding the rights and support available for individuals with disabilities, both among employers and the disabled individuals themselves. This lack of information acts as a barrier to accessing VET programs and participating effectively in the workforce.

**Variability in Disability Levels:** The interview has found that the varying levels of disability among individuals create different needs for vocational education and training. Ignoring these diverse needs can make it challenging for disabled individuals to succeed in VET programs.

**Access and Accommodations:** Many VET programs are deemed to be poor in their accessibility, with the group also identifying gaps in digital accessibilities as well as shortfalls regarding reasonable accommodations. This restriction prevented people from participating fully in educational content and classrooms.

**Capacity building:** Educators and employers are often found wanting in that they do not have the right amount of knowledge or skills to most work with those who carry disabilities. This leads to the fact that students with disabilities do not have adequate assistance necessary in VET programs and perform poorly on educational settings. Educators and employers are clearly in need of more extensive capacity-building programs.

### Top Recommendations:

**Collaboration:** Partnerships between all departments of government, business entities, non-profits and disability organizations to create a collaborative strategy for employment of individuals with disabilities. Supporting the Sharing Centre and Employment programs will ensure we maximize return on services.



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**Cultural Change:** Drive cultural change within the organization that embraces diversity and inclusion culture while creating awareness amongst employees about the contributions made by people with disabilities. Introduce programs to educate the workforce and management about unconscious bias.

**Funding Resources:** Invest money to help people with disabilities so they can get on-the-job training, find appropriate jobs and pay for accommodations in the workplace. Projects should generate jobs for and bring people with disabilities into the mainstream workforce.

**Enhanced Community Knowledge:** Increase community awareness and understanding of disability issues through educational programs and training sessions. Provide resources and workshops to both employers and the public to enhance knowledge about disability rights, accessibility, and inclusive practices.

The purpose of this report is to contribute to overcoming social, cultural, and societal barriers for individuals with disabilities in Italy and to serve as a means of removing obstacles to their participation in the workforce by organizing training and activities that enhance their skills. Specifically, the activities carried out for the report included interviews, surveys, and dialogues conducted with individuals with disabilities, vocational training experts, and labour unions.



## 1. Introduction

The goal of this research is, particularly in the field of vocational training, to ensure that individuals with disabilities who have received or are receiving vocational education can participate in the workforce without social, cultural, and societal barriers, with the support of relevant laws, and to improve working conditions. Additionally, the aim is to enhance behavioural approaches between employers and employees with disabilities and to encourage employers to properly uphold the rights of individuals with disabilities. Another objective is to raise awareness about the presence of individuals with disabilities in society and to promote the understanding that they have the same rights to work and social security as everyone else. A society can only develop by including individuals from all sectors. Furthermore, the report aims to contribute to strengthening the connections between employers of individuals with disabilities, experts, educators, labour unions, and policymakers, and to support the participation of vocationally trained individuals with disabilities in the workforce and to increase collaboration through direct field activities in Italy and Spain as a comparative study.

## 2. Methodology:

The project employed a multi-faceted approach to gather and analyze data, which included desk research, interviews, focus groups, and social dialogue. Desk research was conducted to enhance the project team's understanding of the legal and policy frameworks regarding disability inclusion in the workforce. This was followed by an internal survey among Training Academy staff to assess their knowledge and gather opinions on disability inclusion. Direct interviews were carried out with five individuals with disabilities, alongside a focus group involving five experts in vocational education and training (VET) and disability advocacy. These methods aimed to identify needs, barriers, and effective practices related to disability inclusion.

## 3. Participant Number and Profile:

The study involved a total of ten participants: five individuals with disabilities, including two direct interviews and three additional interviews; and five experts, comprising three VET specialists, two representatives from disability organizations, and one from a national employment center. The participants were selected to provide a broad range of perspectives from those directly affected by disability and those involved in policy and training related to disability inclusion.

## 4. Data Analysis:

Data analysis was conducted through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Surveys provided numerical data on attitudes and awareness levels, while face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions offered in-depth qualitative insights into personal experiences and expert opinions. The desk research helped in identifying relevant policies and ongoing initiatives, while the focus group contributed to understanding barriers in vocational training and legal frameworks. Overall, the data highlighted both systemic issues and practical challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

## 5. Limitations:

Several limitations affected the study. Privacy and data protection concerns impacted the data collection process, and the Training Academy's limited experience with disability-focused projects presented challenges. Additionally, difficulties in engaging with trade unions and bureaucratic delays extended the analysis phase. These issues resulted in findings that were more reflective of regional and institutional contexts rather than providing a comprehensive national overview.

## 6. Activities

### 6.1 Desk Research Analysis

#### a. International Legal Framework for Disability Rights and Employment

Italy was among the list of initial countries that did sign the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities UNCRPD adopted by the United Nations General assembly in the year 2006. It was also the first country to provide Guidelines on disabilities in relations to the Convention. Signed in 2009, this international convention requires Italy to promote and protect the rights of the disabled. It supports and strengthens domestic laws and policies because of non-discrimination, accessibility and equal opportunities.

#### b. European Legal Framework for Disability Rights and Employment

At EU level specific actions have been taken to increase the employment rate and the qualification level of the persons with disabilities. EDS 2010-2020 contained the general framework for the promotion of the accessibility of various spheres of social life, including employment. This strategy stressed on functional workplaces, equal employment opportunities, and the issues with regards to disability that people encounter in exploring employment opportunities. EU primary legislation such as the European Accessibility Act further seek to facilitate provision of goods, services and public facilities to people living with disability to allow them equally to participate in society and economy. Moreover, the European Pillar of Social Rights alongside principle 17 also supports the right to effective access of persons with disabilities to labour market and in social life, and to workplaces and working conditions suitable to their needs. The European Union has also profited itself in the funding of different programmes and measures for the implementation of policies regarding the disabled. Some of them include the employment opportunities for persons with disability, awareness on disability issues and rights, and statistical information on disability and employment using EU funds. Nevertheless, some issues persist when it comes to the achievement of the intended objectives of employment rates and closing the gap among persons with disabilities. It is still pursuing them in its current policies and animates to make the labour market and society more inclusive for all people with disabilities.

**Alignment with EU Policies:** Italy implements its domestic measures in relation to social and legal initiatives, following the EU Disability Strategy and other legislative acts. This means that the member countries need to implement national laws as well as policies that are in line with the EU objectives which include the rights of people with disability to access employment and experience non-discrimination.

**Funding and Initiatives:** Italy also seeks to address disability issues through employment of EU funds that is used to fund employment services, education and vocational training and barrier free accessibility. These funds are used to coordinate the execution of EU policies taking place at the national level and tackle some of the issues that people with disabilities encounter.

**Collaboration with EU Institutions:** In Italy there is support from the country and EU institutions in relation to the European policies regulating disability. These entail; engaging in consultations that are at EU level, being involved in the making of policies, and sharing of the best practices.



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**Monitoring and Reporting:** Regarding the progress of disability inclusion and employment, initiatives and their results, Italy is the country that needs to pay attention. This way the independence, and thus accountability for the application of EU directives and strategies can be maintained.

### c. National Legal Framework for Disability Rights and Employment

In addition to international regulations, Italy has specifically tailored its national laws to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workforce within the framework of the European Union. Moreover, Italy has structured its policy measures with reference to the European Disability Strategy and has established a comprehensive integration plan. Notably, the concept of "persons with disabilities" is not distinguished in terms of social rights, and some laws use the term "everyone" to address social security and employment matters. The legal and policy measures identified in the literature review can be classified as follows:

**Law No. 68/1999: "Law on the Right to Work for Disabled People":** This foundational law mandates the integration of persons with disabilities into the workforce. It establishes the obligation for private companies with more than 15 employees to hire individuals with disabilities. It also provides for measures to support the employment of disabled persons, including quotas, incentives, and specific recruitment procedures.

**Law No. 104/1992: "Framework Law for the Assistance, Social Integration, and Rights of Disabled Persons":** This comprehensive law sets out the rights and services for persons with disabilities, including provisions for employment, education, and social integration. It outlines the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and accessibility in various spheres of life, including the labour market.

**Law No. 276/2003: "Regulations on Employment and Labor Market Policies":** This law governs labour market policies and includes specific measures for the integration of persons with disabilities into the labour market. It supports vocational training, job placement services, and other initiatives aimed at improving employability.

**Legislative Decree No. 151/2015: "Consolidated Act on Maternity and Paternity Leave":** While primarily focused on parental leave, this decree also includes provisions for the protection of employees with disabilities and ensures their rights in the workplace, contributing to a supportive employment environment.

**Law No. 92/2012: "For a More Equitable Labor Market":** This law introduces various measures aimed at promoting job opportunities and fair treatment for disabled workers. It complements existing legislation by addressing issues related to job retention, accessibility, and workplace adjustments.

### d. Regulatory Framework

**Ministerial Decree No. 149/2011: "Regulations on Employment Services for Persons with Disabilities":** This decree sets out the guidelines for employment services specifically tailored for persons with disabilities. It establishes standards for job placement, vocational training, and support services provided by public and private employment agencies.

**Ministerial Decree No. 165/2001: "Regulations on the Hiring of Persons with Disabilities":** This decree outlines the procedures and requirements for the recruitment of persons with disabilities. It includes provisions for job quotas, application processes, and necessary adaptations in the workplace.

**Decree-Law No. 76/2020: "Urgent Measures for the Economy and Health":** This decree includes emergency measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, with specific provisions addressing the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the labour market during the pandemic.



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### e. Policy Framework

In policy regulations, especially in Italy, we see significant influence at the EU level. Additionally, the rights of individuals with disabilities have been safeguarded and monitored in regional regulations and national development plans. However, our literature review, particularly in the Lazio region, indicates that while regional strategic plans include cooperation with local employment centres to integrate individuals with disabilities into the workforce, there is still room for improvement.

**National Action Plans:** Italy periodically issues national action plans that outline strategic goals and actions for improving employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. These plans integrate legislative measures with practical initiatives aimed at enhancing vocational training, job placement, and workplace accessibility.

**Regional Legislation and Policies:** In addition to national laws, Italian regions may have their own legislation and policies tailored to local needs and priorities regarding the employment and support of persons with disabilities. These regional frameworks must align with national laws and EU directives.

## 6.2. Desk Research Findings

### ***Effectiveness of Existing Laws and Policies in Promoting Employment for People with Disabilities:***

Italy's legal framework for promoting the employment of people with disabilities is robust and aligns closely with both international and European standards. Key laws, such as Law No. 68/1999 and Law No. 104/1992, mandate the integration of persons with disabilities into the workforce and ensure equal opportunities through quotas, incentives, and specific recruitment procedures. Law No. 276/2003 and other legislative measures further support vocational training and job placement. However, while these laws provide a solid foundation, there are still policy gaps. Despite the comprehensive nature of the Italian legal framework, challenges persist in fully closing the employment gap between individuals with and without disabilities, indicating that additional measures or more effective implementation of existing policies may be necessary. In addition, as observed in the focus group discussions, some employers have been noted to hire individuals with disabilities solely to benefit from tax breaks, without employing them.

### ***Level of Awareness Among Stakeholders of Disability Rights in the Workplace:***

Awareness of disability rights among stakeholders varies significantly. Both the European and Italian legal frameworks, including the European Disability Strategy and national laws, have played a role in raising awareness about disability rights. Notably, in the focus group and social dialogue sessions, it was observed that Article 68 of the Italian law is well-known among experts. However, this is not always the case for employers. While there is substantial knowledge among experts and some employers, our findings indicate that awareness is not consistently high across all sectors. For example, smaller businesses and some public sector entities still show gaps in understanding. This uneven level of awareness affects the effectiveness of policy implementation and the overall inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

### ***Use of Incentives or Alternative Measures by Employers:***

Employers in Italy are encouraged to use various incentives and alternative measures to promote the employment of people with disabilities. Legislative measures such as Law No. 68/1999 provide for financial incentives and support



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measures for companies that hire individuals with disabilities. Additionally, Ministerial Decrees outline guidelines for job placement and vocational training tailored to the needs of disabled employees. Despite these incentives, the uptake varies, and not all employers fully utilize the available support. This suggests that while incentives are in place, there may be insufficient uptake or awareness about how to effectively leverage these measures, which impacts their overall success in promoting disability-inclusive workplaces.

## Interviews

**VET for People with Disabilities:** The integration of vocational education and training (VET) for people with disabilities is supported by both European and national frameworks. In Italy, several laws and policies aim to enhance the participation of individuals with disabilities in VET programs. However, our findings indicate that while there are established guidelines and legislative support, the practical application and accessibility of these programs vary.

**Accessibility (Physical and Programmatic) of VET Programs:** The accessibility of VET programs for individuals with disabilities is a critical concern. Although there are regulations in place to ensure physical accessibility and programmatic inclusion, implementation is inconsistent. Focus group discussions revealed that while larger institutions may have the resources to offer accessible facilities and accommodations, smaller training centers often struggle to meet these requirements. Programmatic accessibility, including tailored support and adaptive technologies, is sometimes insufficiently addressed, leading to barriers for participants.

**Alignment of VET Skills Training with Employer Demand:** The alignment of VET skills training with employer demand remains a mixed picture. While there are efforts to match training programs with the needs of the labor market, particularly through collaboration between educational institutions and employers, gaps persist. Our research found that in some sectors, VET programs are not fully aligned with current job market requirements, which can affect the employability of graduates with disabilities. This misalignment results in a mismatch between the skills acquired during training and those demanded by employers.

**Employment Outcomes for VET Graduates with Disabilities:** Employment outcomes for VET graduates with disabilities show varying results. On one hand, there are success stories where graduates secure meaningful employment and achieve earnings comparable to their peers. On the other hand, the overall job placement rates and earnings for these individuals often lag behind those of non-disabled graduates. The challenges include ongoing discrimination, inadequate job matching, and limited opportunities for career advancement. Data from our study highlight that despite completing VET programs, many individuals with disabilities face difficulties in securing employment or achieving equitable earnings.

**Perceptions of Adequacy of Support Services During and After VET Programs:** Support services during and after VET programs are perceived as unevenly adequate. While some institutions provide comprehensive support, including career counseling, job placement assistance, and post-training follow-up, others fall short in delivering these essential services. Our findings suggest that graduates with disabilities often receive inconsistent levels of support, impacting their transition from education to employment. There is a general consensus that while some support services are beneficial, there is room for improvement to ensure that all individuals with disabilities receive the necessary assistance to succeed in the job market.

## 6.4 Focus Group Findings



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**Employer Attitudes and Practices:** The focus group findings reveal a complex landscape regarding employer attitudes and practices towards individuals with disabilities. Generally, there is a recognition of the legal obligations and moral imperatives to include people with disabilities in the workforce. However, attitudes can vary significantly among employers. Large organizations, particularly those with dedicated diversity and inclusion programs, tend to show more progressive attitudes and practices. They are more likely to actively recruit individuals with disabilities and implement comprehensive accommodations. Conversely, smaller businesses often exhibit less enthusiasm or awareness, which can result in fewer opportunities for disabled individuals.

#### **Knowledge Levels on Disability and Inclusion:**

Knowledge levels regarding disability and inclusion among employers vary widely. The focus group discussions highlighted that while some employers are well-informed about disability rights and inclusive practices, others lack detailed understanding. For example, many employers are familiar with the basics of legal requirements such as Law No. 68/1999, but their grasp of nuanced issues like effective accommodation strategies or disability etiquette can be superficial. This gap in knowledge contributes to inconsistent implementation of inclusion practices and can hinder the overall effectiveness of disability inclusion efforts.

#### **Common Misconceptions or Biases About Potential Employees with Disabilities:**

Common misconceptions and biases about potential employees with disabilities were prominent topics in the focus groups. Some employers expressed concerns about the productivity and reliability of employees with disabilities, often influenced by stereotypes rather than actual experience. Misconceptions such as the belief that all disabilities are visibly apparent or that employees with disabilities require excessive accommodations were noted. These biases can lead to reluctance in hiring and contribute to a less inclusive work environment.

#### **Extent of Workplace Accommodations Made and Successes/Challenges in Implementation:**

The extent of workplace accommodations made for employees with disabilities shows both successes and challenges. On the positive side, several employers have successfully implemented reasonable accommodations, such as modified workstations, flexible working hours, and assistive technologies, leading to positive outcomes in employee performance and job satisfaction. However, there are significant challenges as well. Some employers struggle with the cost and complexity of implementing necessary accommodations, while others face logistical difficulties or lack the expertise to provide appropriate support. The focus group also revealed that successful implementation often depends on the commitment of individual managers or the presence of internal champions for disability inclusion.

## **6.5 Social Dialogue Findings**



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### Support Services:

**Accessibility and Awareness of Job Search Support Programmes:** The findings from the social dialogue discussions indicate that while job search support programmes for individuals with disabilities are available, their accessibility and awareness vary. In many regions, there is a general lack of awareness about these programmes among both job seekers with disabilities and employers. This lack of awareness often results in underutilization of available resources. Accessibility issues also persist, particularly for those in rural or less developed areas, where support services are less prevalent or harder to reach. Additionally, the complexity of navigating these programmes can be a barrier for many individuals with disabilities.

**Quality and Effectiveness of Services Offered to Job Seekers with Disabilities:** The quality and effectiveness of job search support services for individuals with disabilities also showed a mixed picture. Some services are highly regarded for their tailored support, such as personalized job coaching, skills training, and employer engagement. These services have demonstrated positive outcomes in helping individuals with disabilities secure and retain employment. However, there are notable deficiencies in other areas. For example, some programmes struggle with limited resources, inadequate staff training, and a lack of specialized support. This variability in service quality can impact the overall effectiveness of job search assistance and contribute to uneven employment outcomes for job seekers with disabilities.

**Experiences of Participants with These Services:** Participants' experiences with job search support services reveal both successes and areas for improvement. Many individuals with disabilities have reported positive experiences with services that offer personalized support and practical job search assistance. Success stories include enhanced job placement rates and better alignment of job matches with individual skills and preferences. However, participants also highlighted several challenges. Issues such as delays in service delivery, insufficient follow-up support, and a lack of understanding of specific disability needs were commonly mentioned. These challenges often lead to frustration and reduced confidence among job seekers, impacting their overall job search experience and outcomes.

In summary, while there are valuable support services available for individuals with disabilities, improvements are needed in both accessibility and service quality. Enhanced awareness, better resource allocation, and more tailored support can help address existing gaps and improve the effectiveness of job search assistance for this population.

## 7. Recommendations

### 1. Policymakers (Legal Frameworks, Incentives):

- **Enhance Legal Frameworks:** Strengthen and update existing laws to address gaps in disability rights and employment. Ensure that legal provisions are comprehensive and include clear guidelines on accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and anti-discrimination measures.
- **Increase Incentives:** Expand financial and non-financial incentives for employers who hire individuals with disabilities. This could include tax breaks, subsidies for workplace modifications, and funding for disability awareness training programs.
- **Monitor and Evaluate:** Implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of existing policies and identify areas for improvement. Regularly review and update policies based on feedback from stakeholders and changes in the employment landscape.

### 2. VET Providers (Programme Design, Accessibility):



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- **Design Inclusive Programmes:** Develop vocational education and training (VET) programmes that are inclusive and tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities. This includes creating flexible training options and integrating assistive technologies where necessary.
- **Improve Accessibility:** Ensure that VET facilities are physically accessible and that all program materials are available in formats that accommodate various disabilities. This may involve providing accessible online learning platforms and adapting physical training environments.
- **Align with Employer Needs:** Regularly collaborate with employers to ensure that VET programmes align with current job market demands. Update curricula and training methods to reflect the skills required by employers and enhance the employability of graduates with disabilities.

### 3. Employers (Inclusive Practices, Awareness Campaigns):

- **Adopt Inclusive Practices:** Implement inclusive hiring practices and workplace accommodations to support employees with disabilities. This includes developing clear policies on diversity and inclusion, as well as providing training for staff on disability awareness and accommodations.
- **Launch Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct awareness campaigns to educate employees and the broader community about the value of hiring individuals with disabilities. Highlight success stories and create a culture of inclusion within the organization.
- **Foster a Supportive Environment:** Create a supportive workplace environment by establishing employee resource groups, providing mentorship opportunities, and ensuring that disability-related needs are met effectively and respectfully.

### 4. Service Providers (Tailoring of Support):

- **Personalized Support Services:** Tailor job search and career support services to meet the specific needs of individuals with disabilities. This could involve offering personalized career counseling, job matching services, and targeted skills development.
- **Enhance Coordination:** Improve coordination between different support services to provide a seamless experience for job seekers with disabilities. Ensure that service providers work together to offer comprehensive support that addresses all aspects of the job search and employment process.
- **Increase Service Quality:** Invest in staff training and development to enhance the quality of support services. Ensure that service providers are knowledgeable about disability issues and equipped to offer effective assistance.

### 5. Disability Advocacy Organisations:

- **Advocate for Policy Change:** Work with policymakers to advocate for the development and implementation of more effective disability employment policies. Use data and evidence from advocacy efforts to influence legislative changes and improve the overall legal framework.
- **Raise Awareness:** Lead initiatives to raise awareness about disability rights and employment issues. Develop campaigns, workshops, and educational materials to inform the public, employers, and policymakers about the importance of disability inclusion.



- **Support Individuals:** Provide resources and support to individuals with disabilities to help them navigate the job market and access available services. Offer guidance on rights, job search strategies, and workplace accommodations to empower individuals in their employment journey.

## 8. Conclusion

### 7. Re-emphasize the Importance of Disability Inclusion in the Labour Market

Disability inclusion in the labor market is not merely a matter of social justice but also a critical factor in driving economic growth and innovation. Embracing a diverse workforce, including individuals with disabilities, enriches organizations with a range of perspectives, skills, and talents. This inclusivity promotes equal opportunities, fosters a culture of respect, and contributes to the overall productivity and success of businesses. As the workforce demographics shift and the demand for diverse skills increases, integrating individuals with disabilities into the labour market becomes increasingly essential. It is imperative for all stakeholders, including policymakers, employers, VET providers, and service organizations, to actively support and implement strategies that ensure equitable access to employment for people with disabilities.

#### 2. Acknowledge the Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the current state of disability inclusion in the labour market, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The scope of the research may not encompass all regions or sectors, and the findings are based on a limited sample size. Additionally, the study may have been influenced by participant biases and the availability of data. Some areas of disability inclusion and employment may not be fully represented, and the evolving nature of policies and practices means that findings could change over time. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results and formulating recommendations.

#### 3. Suggestions for Future Research Avenues

Future research could expand on the findings of this study by exploring several areas:

- **Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of disability inclusion policies and practices on employment outcomes. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how changes over time affect individuals with disabilities.
- **Sector-Specific Research:** Investigate disability inclusion within specific industries or sectors to identify unique challenges and opportunities. Tailored research could help in developing targeted strategies for different fields.
- **Regional and Cultural Differences:** Examine the effectiveness of disability inclusion practices in various regions and cultural contexts. Understanding how local factors influence disability employment can help in designing more effective policies.
- **Impact of Emerging Technologies:** Explore how emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and automation, affect employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Assessing the potential benefits and challenges of these technologies can inform future strategies.
- **Employee and Employer Perspectives:** Conduct in-depth interviews and surveys with both employees with disabilities and employers to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences, needs, and perceptions. This approach can provide more nuanced insights into the barriers and facilitators of disability inclusion.



# Assessing Labour Market Inclusion for People with Disabilities in Spain

A SKILLS FOR ALL PERSPECTIVE

FUNDACIÓN DOCETE OMNES



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# Assessing Labour Market Inclusion for People with Disabilities in Spain

## 1. Executive Summary

*Skills for All* Project's main objective is to improve the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market through Vocational Education and Training (VET). This report presents the results of an exhaustive study carried out in Spain, which is complemented by another with similar characteristics carried out in Italy, which combines desktop research, interviews with people with disabilities, focus groups with experts and surveys to union representatives and organisations of people with disabilities.

### Main findings:

- **Solid legal framework, but with challenges in implementation:** Spain has laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities, but despite significant progress, challenges persist in their effective application, such as the lack of updated tax incentives for companies that hire people with disabilities.
- **Vocational Training with potential, but in need of improvement:** VET is key to labour inclusion, but greater curricular adaptation is required, more support in the transition to employment, more human resources and more specialised training for teachers.
- **Barriers in the work environment:** Lack of awareness, prejudices and difficulties in adapting jobs are considered important obstacles to hiring people with disabilities.
- **Inclusive companies as an example:** There are companies in Spain that have successfully implemented inclusive policies and practices, demonstrating that inclusion is possible, fair and beneficial.
- **Need for coordination and resources:** Greater coordination is required between the actors involved and greater investment in resources to ensure effective inclusion.

### Key recommendations:

- **Strengthen legislation and policies:** Review tax incentives, establish more effective sanctions and promote inclusive public procurement.
- **Improve Vocational Training:** Implement individualised curricular adaptation plans, train teachers in disability and inclusion, strengthen dual training and establish transition to employment programs.
- **Raise awareness and train:** Carry out awareness campaigns and offer specific training to employers on disability and inclusion.
- **Improve coordination and support services:** Establish more effective coordination mechanisms, have specialised professionals, and continuously monitor programs and services.
- **Promote the social economy:** Promote the creation and consolidation of social companies, encourage the hiring of people with disabilities in this type of company and encourage this group to undertake in this area.
- **Create an observatory and good practice guides:** Establish a national observatory to monitor inclusion and develop good practice guides for educational centres and companies.





With this report, we call on all actors involved to work together towards a more inclusive labour market in Spain (and Europe), where people with disabilities have the same training and employment opportunities as their compatriots.

## 2 . Introduction

### 2.1 The Skills for All Project

Skills for All is a project co-financed by the European Union, a collaborative research initiative between the Training Academy (Italy) and the Docete Omnes Foundation (Spain). Our main objective is to improve the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market through Vocational Training (VET). Within the framework of this project, an exhaustive study has been carried out in Spain and Italy to analyse the current situation of the inclusion of people with disabilities in VET, the transition to the labour market and employment, identify the existing challenges and obstacles and propose recommendations to improve their participation and facilitate their access to the labour market.

For this study, a qualitative methodology has been used that combines desktop research, interviews with people with disabilities who have obtained a vocational training degree, a discussion group with experts in Vocational Training and disability, and surveys of syndicates and representatives of organisations of people with disabilities (particularly those specialised in supported employment and career guidance). In Spain, 7 interviews were carried out, a discussion group with 4 experts and 15 responses to the survey were collected.

### 2.2 Purpose of the report

This report focuses on the analysis of the situation in Spain, with two aspects:

1. **Assess the current situation:** Examine the current legal and policy framework, VET programs, employer practices and support services regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market.
2. **Identify areas for improvement:** Based on the results of the study, propose concrete and viable recommendations to improve the inclusion of people with disabilities in vocational training and employment, thus contributing to a more equitable and diverse labour market.

### 2.3 Relevance

The labour inclusion of people with disabilities is a fundamental human right and a social and economic imperative. The lack of job opportunities for this group not only perpetuates inequality and social exclusion but also deprives society and companies of valuable human capital.

In Spain, despite legislative advances regarding the rights of people with disabilities, important barriers remain that limit their full participation in the labour market. In this report, we will try to highlight these barriers and propose solutions that allow the potential of people with disabilities to be harnessed and promote their contribution to the constitution of a fairer and more inclusive labour market.



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## 2.4 Legal and political framework

Spain has a solid legal framework regarding the rights of people with disabilities, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and EU legislation. The General Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities and Their Social Inclusion (LGDPSI) is a fundamental pillar, which establishes rights of non-discrimination, accessibility and support measures for labour integration.

In Spain, there are other important laws and policies such as the General Social Security Law, which establishes benefits and aid for people with disabilities, and the Employment Law, which promotes equal opportunities and non-discrimination in access to employment.

At the European level, the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030 establishes a framework for action to promote equal opportunities and the *active* participation of people with disabilities in all areas of life, including employment.

This legal and political framework provides a robust basis for the labour inclusion of people with disabilities in Spain. However, as will be seen throughout this report, there are still important challenges in the effective implementation and compliance of the aforementioned laws and policies.

## 3. Theoretical framework: Summary of the main laws, policies and international conventions relevant to the inclusion of people with disabilities in VET

The theoretical framework of the report is based on human rights and international and national legislation that promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities in all areas of life, including employment and education.

### 3.1 International Framework

- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD):** This international treaty, ratified by Spain in 2008, establishes the rights of people with disabilities and requires signatory states to adopt measures to guarantee their full inclusion in society. Article 24 of the CRPD recognises the right to education of people with disabilities, without discrimination and on equal terms, which means that states must provide the reasonable accommodations necessary to facilitate their access to and participation in education. In Spain, regarding VET centres, this translates into the obligation for them to adapt their facilities, materials and methodologies to guarantee that students with disabilities can participate on equal terms. Article 27 recognises the right to work, also under equal conditions.



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## 3.2 European Framework

- **European Disability Strategy 2021-2030:** Establishes a framework for action to promote equal opportunities and the active participation of people with disabilities in all areas of life, including employment. It focuses on key areas such as education, employment, accessibility and non-discrimination.
- **European Pillar of Social Rights:** This set of 20 key principles includes the right to equal opportunities and treatment in employment, training and education, regardless of disability.
- **EU Directives:** Various EU directives, such as the Framework Directive on Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation, prohibit discrimination on the grounds of disability and require member states to take measures to ensure equal opportunities in the workplace.

## 3.3 National Framework

- **Spanish Constitution (1978):** The Spanish Constitution guarantees the equality of all Spaniards and establishes in its article 49, the obligation of the state to carry out social integration policies for people with disabilities, which allow them to enjoy a dignified and full life.
- **General Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities and Their Social Inclusion (LGDPSI, 2013):** This is a comprehensive law that establishes the rights of people with disabilities in all areas of life, including (of course) education and the job. The LGDPSI develops measures to guarantee accessibility, non-discrimination and the support necessary for full participation in society. In the particular case of Vocational Training, this law establishes the obligation of vocational training centres to have a diversity attention plan that includes support guidelines and reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities. These plans must be individualised and adapted to the specific needs of each student.
- **Royal Decree 1/2013:** In which the right to inclusive education of people with disabilities is developed, establishing the principles, criteria and procedures to guarantee their access, participation and learning under equal conditions. The decree establishes the principles of universal design for learning, which must be applied in VET to ensure that learning materials and environments are accessible to all students, including those with disabilities.
- **Other laws and regulations:** There are other specific laws and regulations that regulate aspects such as employment quotas for people with disabilities, reasonable accommodations in the workplace, and specific training and employment programs.

This legal framework establishes the right of people with disabilities to access and participate in Vocational Training on equal terms. However, in the following sections, we will analyse the obstacles that prevent the effective development of these laws and policies, which is accompanied by the need for continuous attention and a joint effort by all the actors involved, which guarantees full inclusion in VET.



## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Research design

This report is based on a qualitative field study that combines different data collection methods to obtain a complete and multidimensional view of the situation of the inclusion of people with disabilities in Vocational Training (“Formación Profesional”, in Spanish terminology) and employment in Spain. The study draws on four main sources:

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1. **Desk Research:** An exhaustive review has been carried out of the existing legislation, policies and programmes in Spain related to the inclusion of people with disabilities in vocational training and employment. This review has been based on the guide "Skills for All - Consult the National Strategy/Policy on Disability" prepared for this project.
2. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews have been carried out with people with disabilities who have obtained a vocational training degree. The questions have focused on their experiences and perspectives on VET, the transition to employment and the barriers they had to face. The guide used for the interviews is titled "Guiding Questions for the Interviews".
3. **Discussion group (Focus Group):** A discussion group has been organised with experts in vocational training and disability in Spain. The goal was to obtain a broader and deeper vision of the challenges and opportunities in this area. The activity was configured following a guide entitled "Focus Group with experts in people with disabilities VET training and job-seeking".
4. **Survey:** A survey has been carried out among union representatives and organisations of people with disabilities in Spain. The survey sought to understand their perspectives on the effectiveness of current policies, the obstacles and/or challenges that people with disabilities face in employment, as well as possible solutions. The guide used for the survey is titled "Social Dialogue: Guiding Questions for Syndicates / Trade Union Representatives".

### 4.2 Participants

- **Interviews:** 7 people with disabilities who have obtained a vocational training degree in Spain.
- **Discussion group:** 4 experts in vocational training and disability:
  - 2 people from the project team in Spain.
  - 1 Vocational Training teacher (and psychologist) from the *La Blanca Paloma* VET Centre.
  - 1 Occupational Therapist and 1 Psychologist from the *Padre Villoslada* Occupational Centre for people with functional diversity.
  - 1 Employment Technician of FEGRADI COCEMCE (Granada Federation of People with Physical and Organic Disabilities).
- **Survey:** 15 union representatives and organisations of people with disabilities in Spain.



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## 4.3 Data analysis

The qualitative data collected through the interviews and the focus group have been analysed through a process of coding and thematic categorisation. The key themes that emerged in each data source have been identified and connections have been made between them.

The quantitative data from the survey have been analysed using descriptive statistics, calculating frequencies and percentages for each response (see attached documents).

## 4.4 Limitations

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. Firstly, the number of participants in the interviews and the focus group is limited, so the results cannot be generalised to the entire population of people with disabilities in Spain. Secondly, the survey was carried out on a small number of union representatives and organisations, which may limit the representativeness of their opinions.

Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable information on the current situation of the inclusion of people with disabilities in VET and employment in Spain and lays the foundation for future research and actions in this area.

## 5. Results of the study

### Perceptions about the effectiveness of policies and legislation

The study reveals a nuanced view of the effectiveness of policies and legislation in Spain for the inclusion of people with disabilities in Vocational Training (FP) and employment.

- **Legislative progress:** It is recognised that the recent amendment to the VET Law has introduced improvements by allowing students with special educational needs (SEN) to work at their own pace and receive individualised reinforcement plans. However, the unions point out that the law has not been updated in terms of incentives for companies and that better aid should be offered with a commitment to duration and preparation: *"In the event that politicians show any real interest in the issue, I would tell them that they will update the laws, offering better aid to the company with a commitment to duration and preparation"* (Survey of unions).
- **Dual training:** The crucial role of dual training in preparing for the world of work is highlighted, and it is positively valued that all educational centres offer it starting next year.
- **Lack of knowledge and stereotypes:** Despite legislative advances, lack of knowledge and stereotypes regarding disability persist, both in the educational and workplace fields. This is evident in real cases, reported by experts, such as the attempt to prevent the enrolment of a student with a disability on the assumption that he could not achieve the required skills.



- **Barriers to accessing quality jobs:** The results of the survey indicate that the lack of sensitisation and awareness in companies, as well as the need for adaptations in jobs, are important barriers to access to quality jobs for people with disabilities. Added to this is the perception that people with disabilities tend to be hired for "low-skilled" jobs, such as cleaning or access control, instead of positions that require higher qualifications: *"...There is a lot of choice for contracts in sectors in which the workforce is 'low-skilled' like cleaning, access controllers... Qualified profiles have more difficulty accessing the labour market (at least in the environment in which I operate)"* (Survey of unions ).

### Experiences in Vocational Training

- **Curricular adaptation:** Both the focus group and the interviews highlight the importance of adapting VET programs to the individual needs of students with disabilities. However, it is noted that this is not always done effectively. The unions also point out that vocational training does not adapt training to people with disabilities, and that only transition programs to adult and working life are effective: *"Vocational training does not adapt training to people with disabilities, so Only the transition programs to adult and working life are effective, but this only opens doors to the special employment centre that belongs to the same association where the training programme was carried out"* (Survey of unions).
- **Support in transition to employment:** All participants agree that it is essential to provide adequate support to VET graduates with disabilities in their transition to employment. This includes career guidance, support in the job search and on-the-job monitoring. *"Yes, very useful. Among them, I used Andalucía Orienta"* (Interviews).
- **Barriers to access and participation:** The interviews reveal that some students with disabilities have encountered difficulties when accessing or participating in VET programs due to physical barriers, lack of curricular adaptations or lack of support. *"Yes, quite a bit. I didn't stick with what was written on the blackboard. In both theory and practice, I wasn't up to par with my classmates. Ángel (the teacher) told me: you calm down, you go at your own pace otherwise you can keep up with your classmates"* (Interviews).
- **Temporality of support programs:** Both the focus group and the interviews point out the problem of the temporality of many support programs, which leaves users helpless when the subsidy ends. *"But there is also the handicap of temporality. The rotation of workers... You disappear and another counsellor comes. That link is lost, with the information. That also happens"* (Discussion group).

### Employer perceptions and practices

- **Knowledge of the rights of people with disabilities:** The survey shows that the majority of employers and consultants have a medium or high knowledge of the rights of people with disabilities, although some have more basic knowledge.
- **Barriers to hiring:** Both the survey and the focus group highlight lack of awareness and prejudice as important barriers to hiring people with disabilities. Concerns about the costs of accommodations,



lack of experience managing employees with disabilities, and perceived lower productivity are also mentioned.

- **Strategies to promote inclusion:** Hiring subsidies, the supported employment programme, awareness campaigns and company training are mentioned as effective strategies. The discussion group also highlights the importance of the role of the job coach and the support of specialists for adaptations. *"The figure of the job coach, and his support for people with disabilities"* (Survey of unions).

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In summary, the results of the field study show a complex picture of the situation in Spain. The progress made is recognised, but important shortcomings are also identified that must be addressed to achieve full inclusion of people with disabilities in vocational training and, especially, in their transition to the labour market.

## 6 . Current situation in Spain

### 6.1 Policies and Legislation

Spain, as seen before, has a solid and robust legal framework regarding the rights of people with disabilities, aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and EU legislation. The General Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities and Their Social Inclusion (LGDPSI) is a fundamental pillar, establishing rights of non-discrimination, accessibility and support measures for labour integration.

However, despite these advances, there are certain limitations, such as the fact that the survey of union representatives reveals that, although the majority have medium or high knowledge of the rights of people with disabilities, some have little or insufficient. Furthermore, there is a perceived lack of updating regarding incentives for companies that hire people with disabilities, which suggests a need to review and improve existing policies.

### 6.2 Vocational Training (*Formación Profesional*)

Vocational Training (VET) plays a crucial role in preparing people with disabilities for the labour market. In Spain, there are various vocational training modalities, including public and specialised programmes, as well as dual training programmes that combine classroom training with practice in companies.

However, the results of the study show that vocational training in Spain still has to face unresolved problems regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities. Both the interviews and the focus group highlight the need for greater curricular adaptation and more effective support in the transition to employment. Furthermore, the survey of unions reveals a disparate perception about the effectiveness of Vocational Training Programmes, pointing out the need to improve teacher training and the adaptation of programmes to different disabilities.

## 6.3 Employer Perceptions and Practices

The attitudes and practices of employers are a determining factor in the labour inclusion of people with disabilities. Although the majority of people surveyed state that employers (and also the syndicates) have medium or high knowledge about disability rights, significant barriers to hiring remain.

Lack of awareness and prejudices are the most mentioned barriers, both in the survey and in the focus group. Our study also reveals that there are concerns in the placement field about the costs of accommodations and a lack of experience in managing employees with disabilities. Additionally, the interviews reveal that some people with disabilities have experienced discrimination in the job search process, which makes their access to the labour market even more difficult.

Despite these obstacles, there are numerous companies in Spain that have successfully implemented inclusive policies and practices. These companies often go beyond regulatory compliance, fostering a culture of inclusion and offering individualised support to their employees with disabilities.

## 7. Recommendations to improve inclusion

1. **Strengthening the legal and political framework:**
  - **Review and update of legislation:** Include more attractive tax incentives for companies that hire people with disabilities, as well as more effective sanctions for those who fail to comply with the regulations.
  - **Greater budget and resources:** Allocate a greater budget to programmes and services to support the employment of people with disabilities, ensuring their continuity and long-term stability. *"Human resources are fundamental"* (Discussion group).
  - **Promotion of inclusive public procurement:** Establish public procurement criteria that favour companies that demonstrate a real commitment to the labour inclusion of people with disabilities.
  - **Greater flexibility in hiring:** Make hiring modalities more flexible to facilitate the incorporation of people with disabilities into the labour market, considering their individual needs and capabilities. *"Greater flexibility when hiring temporarily"* (Survey of unions).
2. **Improving Vocational Training:**
  - **Curricular adaptation:** Promote the creation of VET programmes adapted to the specific needs of each disability, including accessible materials, flexible methodologies and individualised support.
  - **Teacher training:** Provide continuous and specialised training to VET teachers in matters of disability, inclusion and curricular adaptations. *"Specialisation of teachers"* (Survey of unions).
  - **Strengthening dual training:** Expand and strengthen dual training programmes, guaranteeing accessibility and the necessary support for students with disabilities in companies.
  - **Transition to employment:** Establish individualised support and accompaniment programmes in the transition from Vocational Training to employment, including job guidance, internships in inclusive companies and on-the-job monitoring.
3. **Awareness raising and attitude change:**





- **Awareness campaigns:** Aimed at both employers and society in general, to dismantle stereotypes and prejudices about disability and promote a culture of inclusion.
  - **Inclusion training:** Offer specific training to employers on the benefits of diversity, managing inclusive teams and adapting jobs to the needs of people with disabilities.
  - **Visibility of good practices:** Disseminate successful examples of companies that have implemented inclusive policies and practices, highlighting the benefits for both people with disabilities and companies.
4. **Strengthening support services:**
- **Greater coordination:** Establish more effective coordination mechanisms between guidance services, educational centres and companies to guarantee comprehensive care and continuous support for people with disabilities in their training and work career. *"Incorporate employment for this group in the social dialogue tables. Have the associations in these tables"* (Survey of unions).
  - **Specialised resources:** Have professionals specialised in disabilities in guidance and employment services, as well as in companies, to provide adequate and personalised support.
  - **Monitoring and evaluation:** Conduct continuous monitoring and evaluation of support programmes and services, to identify areas for improvement and adjust interventions based on changing needs.
5. **Promotion of the social economy:**
- **Support for the creation and consolidation of social businesses:** Facilitate access to financing, training and advice for entrepreneurs with disabilities who wish to create social businesses. *"We believe that the social economy can be a real pillar... of integration and inclusion"* (Discussion group).
  - **Promotion of hiring in social companies:** Encourage the hiring of people with disabilities in social economy companies, which usually offer a more inclusive and adapted work environment.
  - **Dissemination and awareness:** Make known the advantages and benefits of the social economy for the labour inclusion of people with disabilities, both to employers and to society in general.

With these recommendations, based on the results of our study, we seek to address the problems and challenges identified, as well as promote a real change in the situation of people with disabilities in the Spanish labour market. We are aware that the implementation of these measures would require a firm and coordinated commitment from all the actors involved: government, companies, unions and organisations of people with disabilities.

## 8. Conclusions

We hope that this study, recognising its limits, has provided a detailed view of the current situation of the inclusion of people with disabilities in Vocational Training and employment in Spain. Through desk research, interviews, focus groups and surveys of union representatives and associations, we have identified both progress and persistent challenges and opportunities for improvement at different levels.



### Advances:

- **Solid legal framework:** Spain has a solid legal framework that protects the rights of people with disabilities and promotes their labour inclusion.
- **Expanding dual training:** The expansion of dual training offers opportunities for students with disabilities to gain practical experience and improve their employability.
- **Companies committed to inclusion:** There are companies in Spain that have successfully implemented inclusive policies and practices, demonstrating that inclusion is possible and beneficial.
- **Support programs:** Various programs and services offer support to people with disabilities in their educational and work careers, although their scope and effectiveness may vary.

### Challenges:

- **Barriers to access to FP:** Barriers to access to FP for people with disabilities persist, such as the lack of curricular adaptation, resources and specialised support.
- **Transition to employment:** The transition from VET to employment continues to be a challenge, due to the lack of coordination between the actors involved and the temporary nature of many support programmes.
- **Prejudices and stereotypes:** Prejudices and stereotypes about disability continue to be a significant barrier to hiring and employment inclusion.
- **Lack of awareness:** Both employers and society in general need greater awareness of the rights, capabilities and potential of people with disabilities.

### Importance of inclusion:

The inclusion of people with disabilities in VET and employment is not only a human rights issue but also an opportunity to enrich society and the economy. People with disabilities bring a diversity of perspectives, experiences and talents that can drive innovation and growth.

To achieve full inclusion, a joint effort by all actors involved is necessary. The government must strengthen policies and investment in resources, companies must adopt inclusive practices, unions must promote equal opportunities and organisations of people with disabilities must continue to raise their voices and defend their rights.

We hope that this report represents an important step on this path towards inclusion. By highlighting difficulties and proposing concrete recommendations, we hope to contribute to a future in which all people, regardless of their disability, have the same opportunities to train, work and develop fully.

# Skills For All

Project: 2023-2-IT01-KA210-VET-000180038

Consultation with Employment

Services

Desk Research Report

Prepared by

Training Academy SRL



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to explore and analyze the policies and legislation enacted by national and international institutions and organizations concerning people with disabilities. It aims to provide a comprehensive examination of employment rates of people with disabilities, disaggregated by age, gender, and disability type. Additionally, the report will delve into the dynamics between employers and employees with disabilities, highlight innovative programs created for people with disabilities, and showcase success stories from these programs. The ultimate goal is to present a detailed overview of how these policies and practices impact the employment and overall well-being of individuals with disabilities.

### 1.2 Scope and Objectives

This report focuses on the rights and integration of people with disabilities, particularly in the context of the labor market. Key objectives include:

- **Examining National and International Legislation:** A comparative analysis of regulations and laws from national (Italy) and international bodies (United Nations, European Union, European Commission).
- **Analyzing Employment Statistics:** Assessing the employment rates of people with disabilities, broken down by age, gender, and disability type.
- **Understanding Employer-Employee Dynamics:** Investigating the relationships and dynamics between employers and employees with disabilities.
- **Showcasing Innovative Programs:** Highlighting successful initiatives and programs aimed at improving employment prospects for people with disabilities.
- **Presenting Success Stories:** Sharing real-life examples and success stories from various programs to illustrate effective practices.

### 1.3 Methodology

The report employs a multidisciplinary approach, utilizing a range of data sources including statistical figures, articles, and legislation. The methodology involves:

- **Literature Review:** Comprehensive review of existing literature, including academic articles, policy documents, and reports from international organizations such as the ILO.
- **Statistical Analysis:** Detailed examination of employment statistics for people with disabilities, with data disaggregated by age, gender, and disability type.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Comparison of national legislation (focusing on Italy) with international standards and policies, particularly the UN CRPD and relevant EU legislation.

- Case Studies: Analysis of case studies and success stories to illustrate effective practices and innovative programs.
- Stakeholder Interviews: Conducting interviews with key stakeholders, including policymakers, employers, and representatives from disability advocacy groups to gain diverse perspectives.

By combining these methods, the report aims to provide a thorough and nuanced understanding of the current state of disability rights and employment, identify gaps and challenges, and offer recommendations for future improvements.

## 2. Policies and Legislation

### 2.1 National Disability Rights Laws

#### Overview of Major National Disability Rights Laws

Italy has enacted several significant laws over the years to protect and promote the rights of individuals with disabilities:

- 1-Law No. 118 of 1971:** Established special education services for disabled individuals.
- 2-Law No. 381 of 1981:** Promoted the full integration of disabled individuals into society by providing equal opportunities in education, employment, and social participation.
- 3-Law No. 104 of 1992:** Focused on the education of disabled children, ensuring their integration into mainstream schools.
- 4-Law No. 68 of 1999:** Provided incentives to employers to promote the employment of disabled individuals.
- 5-Law No. 13 of 1989:** Established accessibility standards for public and private spaces for disabled individuals.
- 6-Law No. 328 of 2000:** Regulated the provision and management of social services, including those for disabled individuals.
- 7-Law No. 112 of 2016:** Aimed to strengthen the rights of disabled individuals and promote their social inclusion.



## 2.2 Employment Promotion Policies

### Specific Policies Aimed at Promoting Employment

- Law No. 68 of 1999: Key legislation promoting employment of disabled individuals through a quota system.
- Quota Systems: Employers with 15 or more employees must hire a certain percentage of disabled individuals (e.g., at least one disabled person for employers with 15-35 employees).
- Financial Incentives and Tax Breaks: Provided to employers who hire people with

To help people with disabilities find jobs, public and private employment agencies cooperate and organize vocational rehabilitation and training programs. Social cooperatives support the integration of persons with disabilities into society by providing suitable work environments for them. In addition, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies runs various national and local level programs to increase the employment of persons with disabilities and organizes job fairs and career events for persons with disabilities.

These policies aim to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the labor force and encourage employers to employ persons with disabilities. They support the full participation of persons with disabilities in economic and social life by enabling them to find jobs that match their skills and capacities.

## 2.3 Alignment with International Standards

The commonalities between the legal regulations regarding the rights of persons with disabilities in Italy and the legal regulations of the UN CRPD and EU legislation are shown in **Table-1** below.

*Table-1*

UN CRPD	EU LEGISLATION	ITALIAN LEGISLATION
1- Non- Discrimination and Equality	1- Non-Discrimination and Equality  Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC)	1- Non- Discrimination and Equality  Legge 104/1992



<p>Article 5 (Equality and non-discrimination)</p>		
<p>2- Accessibility</p> <p>Article 9 (Accessibility)</p>	<p>2- Accessibility</p> <p>European Accessibility Act Directive (EU) 2019/882</p>	<p>2- Accessibility</p> <p>Legge 13/1989</p> <p>Decree of the President of the Republic 503/1996</p>
<p>3- Right to Education</p> <p>Article 24 (Education)</p>	<p>3- Right to Education</p> <p>Web Accessibility Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/2102)</p>	<p>3- Right to Education</p> <p>Legge 104/1992</p> <p>Decree-Law 66/2017</p>
<p>4- Employment and Economic Participation</p> <p>Article 27 (Work and Employment)</p>	<p>4- Employment and Economic Participation</p> <p>Employment Equality Directive 2000/78/EC)</p>	<p>4- Employment and Economic Participation</p> <p>Legge 68/1999</p>



<p><b>5- Participation in Political and Public Life</b></p> <p>Article 29 (Participation in political and public life)</p>	<p><b>5- Participation in Political and Public Life</b></p> <p>EU Charter of Fundamental Rights</p> <p>Articles 21 and 26</p>	<p><b>5- Participation in Political and Public Life</b></p> <p>Legge 17/2003</p>
<p><b>6- Independent Living and Social Inclusion</b></p> <p>Article 19 (Living Independently and being included in the community)</p>	<p><b>6- Independent Living and Social Inclusion</b></p> <p>EU Disability Strategy 2021-2030</p>	<p><b>6- Independent Living and Social Inclusion</b></p> <p>Legge 104/1992</p>

### 3. Labour Market Statistic

#### 3.1 Employment Rates

##### Comparison of Employment Rates Between People with Disabilities and Those Without

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Italy's labour market has experienced significant fluctuations from 2020 to 2024. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a dramatic increase in unemployment rates, peaking at 9.2%. However, through various government interventions and economic recovery efforts, Italy managed to reduce the unemployment rate to 7.8% by the end of 2023. The employment rate also saw improvement, rising from 57.6% in 2020 to 59.8% in 2023. In contrast, the broader European Union had an average unemployment rate of 6.5% in early 2024, with countries like Spain and Greece facing higher rates, whereas Germany and the Netherlands maintained lower unemployment levels.

##### Breakdown by Gender, Age, and Type of Disability

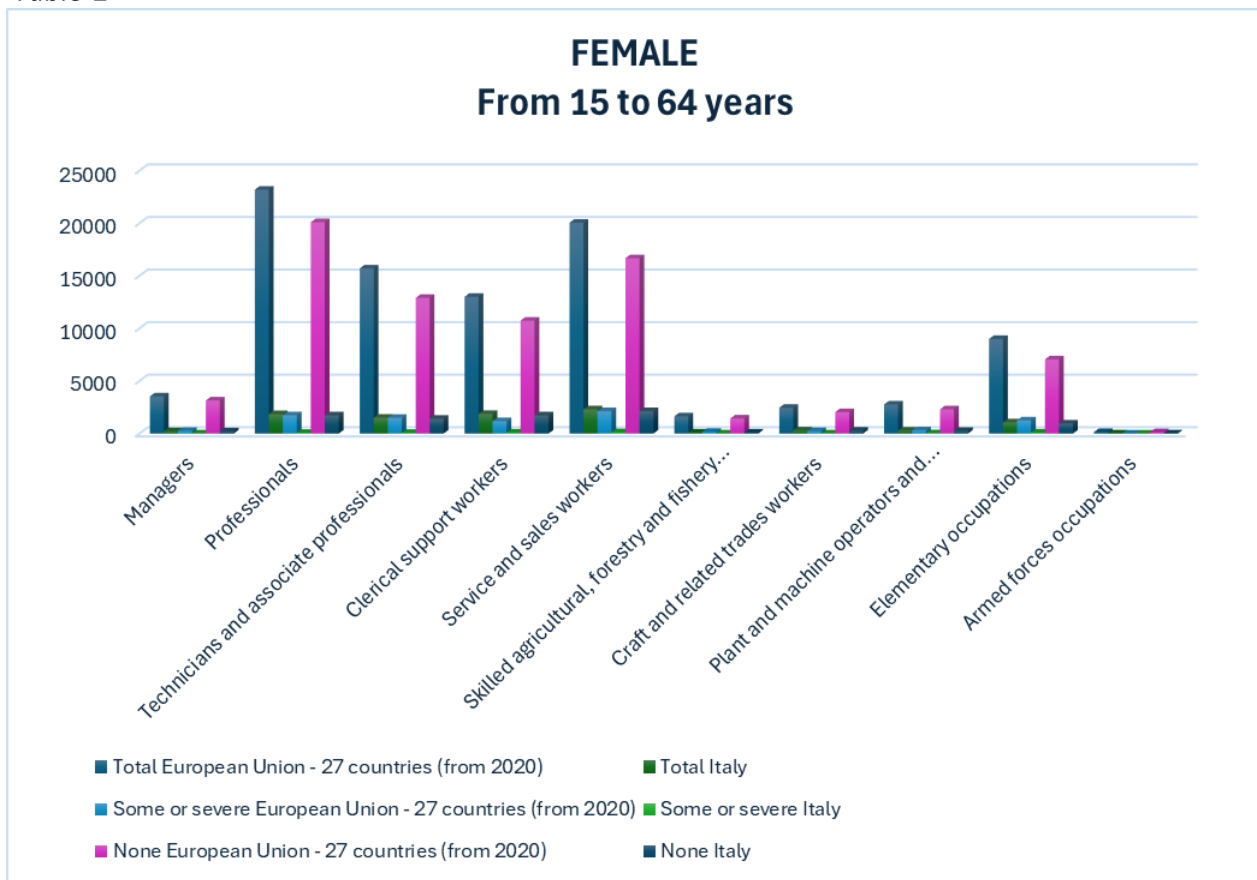
The labour market statistics of people with disabilities, based on the Eurostat data set “Employment by the level of disability (activity limitation) and occupation”, provide a detailed breakdown of occupational group distributions, disability levels, gender, and age ranges. This data set, which includes information from 196,908 participants, highlights several key trends:

- Occupational Group Distributions: The data reveal distinct patterns in the types of occupations held by people with disabilities.
- Disability Levels: Employment rates vary significantly by the severity of disability, with higher levels of activity limitation generally correlating with lower employment rates.
- Gender: There are notable differences in employment patterns between men and women with disabilities.



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Table-2



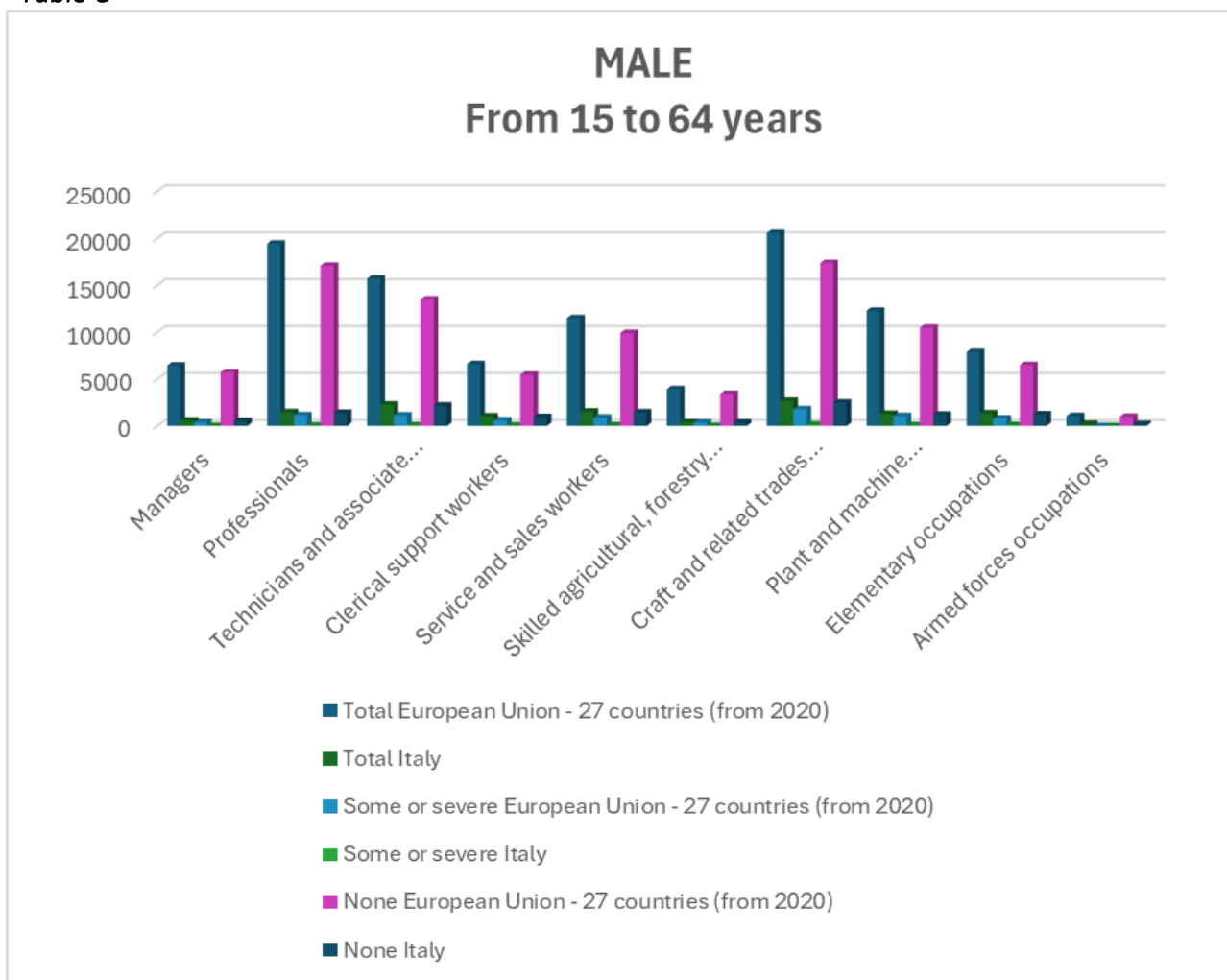
(EUROSTAT DATA BASE,2024)<sup>1</sup>

### Female Participants (Table-2)

Age Bracket 15-64: The highest concentration of employment among female participants is in the field of professionals, followed by service and sales workers. For women with disabilities, the highest concentrations are in service and sales workers, professionals, and clerical support workers. This trend is observed both in Italy and across Europe.

<sup>1</sup> Eurostat. (2024). *Employment by sex, age and professional status (1 000)* [Dataset]. [https://doi.org/10.2908/lfsa\\_egaps](https://doi.org/10.2908/lfsa_egaps)

Table-3



(EUROSTAT DATA BASE,2024)

### Male Participants (Table-3)

Age Bracket 15-64: Among male respondents, the highest concentration is in the fields of professionals and crafts and related trades work. For men with disabilities, significant concentrations are found in craft and related trades work, and technicians and associate professionals.

## 4. Employer Attitudes and Practices



## 4.1 Knowledge about Disability Rights and Inclusive Hiring Practices

### Extent of Employer Knowledge

In Italy, the level of awareness and knowledge about disability rights and inclusive hiring practices among employers is relatively low compared to some other EU countries. Despite the existence of legislation such as Law No. 68/1999, which promotes the employment of people with disabilities through quotas and incentives, many Italian employers remain uninformed about their legal responsibilities and the potential benefits of inclusive hiring. This lack of awareness is partly due to insufficient implementation of training and resources on disability rights and inclusive practices.<sup>2</sup>

A qualitative study focusing on a single region in Italy highlighted this gap, revealing that many companies struggle to integrate people with disabilities into their workforce effectively. The study's findings, while not representative of the entire country, reflect a broader national trend.

### Training and Resources

The availability of training programs and resources that educate employers on disability rights and inclusive hiring practices is limited. This inadequacy contributes to the ongoing challenges in achieving full compliance with the laws and promoting a truly inclusive work environment.

## 4.2 Common Misconceptions and Biases

### Common Misconceptions

Across Europe, including Italy, there are prevalent misconceptions and biases among employers regarding hiring people with disabilities. These include:

- **Perceived Productivity:** Many employers mistakenly believe that individuals with disabilities are less productive than their non-disabled counterparts.
- **Cost of Accommodations:** There is a common misconception that accommodating employees with disabilities is excessively costly.

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<sup>2</sup> For the full text of Targeted placement for people with disabilities in Italy: a perspective from Lombardian companies by Matteo Moscatelli, see; <https://publires.unicatt.it/en/publications/targeted-placement-for-people-with-disabilities-in-italy-a-perspe>

- Absenteeism Concerns: Employers often assume that individuals with disabilities will have higher rates of absenteeism due to their health conditions.

These biases are typically rooted in a lack of understanding and experience with inclusive practices. Such misconceptions can perpetuate discrimination and exclusion within the workplace, hindering the employment prospects of people with disabilities.

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### Existing Support Systems

Despite the challenges, some companies in Italy and across Europe have implemented innovative and supportive practices to foster an inclusive work environment for people with disabilities. These practices include:

- Accessible Work Environments: Ensuring that physical and digital workspaces are accessible to all employees.
- Reasonable Accommodations: Providing necessary adjustments and supports, such as flexible working hours, modified equipment, and assistive technologies.
- Diversity and Inclusion Programs: Promoting awareness and understanding of disability issues among employees and management through training and initiatives.

### Examples of Innovative Programs

Several companies have developed exemplary programs to support the employment and inclusion of people with disabilities:

- Enel (Italy): Enel's "Diversamente Abili" (Differently Abled) program focuses on creating accessible work environments, providing reasonable accommodations, and raising awareness about diversity and inclusion among employees.
- Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) (Italy): FCA supports disability inclusion by improving accessibility in its facilities and manufacturing processes. The company collaborates with disability organizations to promote employment opportunities and provide training and support for disabled workers.
- TIM (Telecom Italia Mobile) (Italy): TIM's disability inclusion program aims to create an inclusive workplace culture. The company offers accessibility accommodations, flexible work arrangements, and training programs to increase awareness and understanding of disability issues among employees and managers.
- Unilever (Netherlands/UK): Unilever's Disability Confidence Program promotes disability inclusion across its global workforce. The program includes accessible workplace accommodations, disability awareness training, and partnerships with disability advocacy organizations to support the recruitment and retention of disabled employees.



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- Vodafone (UK): Vodafone's Equal Approach program focuses on diversity and inclusion. The company provides accessibility resources, flexible working options, and inclusive leadership training to create a supportive environment for employees with disabilities.

## 5. Conclusion

In this desk research report, extensive investigation and analysis have been conducted as part of the Skills for All project, comparing Italy's national disability rights and regulations with those of other European countries. The research highlights Italy's robust legal framework, including key legislation aimed at promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Labor market data reveals ongoing challenges for disabled individuals, such as higher unemployment rates and underemployment compared to their non-disabled counterparts. The report also identifies significant barriers in the workplace, including discrimination, lack of accessibility, and misconceptions about the capabilities of people with disabilities. Employer knowledge about disability rights and inclusive hiring practices is relatively low in Italy, further complicating the employment landscape. Despite these challenges, several companies in Italy and Europe, such as Enel, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, TIM, Unilever, and Vodafone, have developed successful programs and initiatives to support employees with disabilities, demonstrating that inclusive practices can be beneficial for both employees and employers. Overall, the report underscores the need for increased efforts in employer education, better enforcement of disability rights laws, and the promotion of best practices to ensure full labor market participation for people with disabilities.



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# Skills for All – Consult the Spanish strategy/policy on disability

## Research Questionnaire result

### Core Research Questions

#### 1. Policies and Legislation:

##### What national disability rights laws exist, and how effectively are they implemented?

###### Key Laws in Spain:

- **Spanish Constitution (1978):** The foundation for anti-discrimination rights. Article 14 establishes equality for all Spaniards, while Article 49 specifically emphasises public efforts to promote social integration and rehabilitation of citizens with disabilities.
- **General Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion (Ley General de derechos de las personas con discapacidad y de su inclusión social - LGD, 2013):** This comprehensive law is central to Spain's disability rights framework. It establishes:
  - Definition of disability
  - Non-discrimination rights in employment, education, health, access to goods and services, etc.
  - Obligations to promote universal accessibility
  - Support measures for work integration
- **Royal Decree on Equal Opportunities, Non-Discrimination and Universal Accessibility of Persons with Disabilities (2007):** Further regulates aspects of the LGD and focuses on the concept of universal accessibility.
- **Additional Regulations:** There are specific laws and regulations related to employment quotas, reasonable accommodations, and other aspects relevant to employment and disability.

###### Implementation and Challenges

- **Progress:** Spain has robust legal foundations protecting the rights of people with disabilities. The country is a signatory to the UN CRPD and generally shows commitment to disability inclusion.
- **Challenges Remain:** Despite the legal framework, implementation and enforcement can be uneven. Challenges include:
  - Persistent discrimination based on disability
  - Insufficient accessibility in some areas, including within the built environment
  - Limited awareness of disability rights among some employers and members of the general public



## Regional Variations (Autonomous Communities)

- In Spain, the responsibility for developing and implementing the Strategy lies with the Directorate-General for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, attached to the State Secretariat for Social Rights of the Ministry of Social Rights and the 2030 Agenda, which coordinates policy relating to disability at the central State level. However, the responsibility for developing and implementing disability-related strategies and policies is shared between the central government and the Autonomous Communities. Each Autonomous Community has the authority to supplement the national disability laws established by the Government, with additional provisions specific to their regions. This can lead to some variations in:
  - **Specific Provisions:** Regions have additional laws or regulations that address specific areas of disability rights or support.
  - **Tax deductions:** Each Autonomous Community implements and manages its tax deductions quota for people with disabilities.
  - **Program Implementation:** The design and accessibility of employment support programs can vary regionally.
  - **Enforcement:** Enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation may have varying levels of rigour between regions.

## Sources:

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- <https://www.equalitylaw.eu/component/edocman/es-19-disability-law>
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**Are there specific policies that promote the employment of people with disabilities, such as quota systems or financial incentives for employers?**

## National Policies

- **Quota System:** Spain mandates the following quota: Companies with 50 or more employees must reserve at least 2% of their workforce for people with a recognised disability of 33% or more.



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- **Financial Incentives for Employers:** Businesses hiring people with disabilities can benefit from various financial incentives and subsidies, including:
  - Reductions in social security contributions
  - Grants for workplace adaptations to improve accessibility
  - Support for job coaching or specialised training programs for employees with disabilities
- **Alternative Measures (Medidas Alternativas):** If a company cannot directly meet the employment quota, they might apply for “alternative measures”. Options include:
  - Contracting goods or services from Special Employment Centers (Centros Especiales de Empleo), which are businesses primarily employing people with disabilities.
  - Donations or sponsorships to organisations supporting disability employment.
- **Supported Employment Programs:** There are government-funded and non-profit programs focused on supported employment. These programs provide job training, placement assistance, and ongoing support to both employees with disabilities and their employers.

### Possible Regional Variations

While the core quota system and financial incentives are national, the implementation and specific programs might exhibit some regional differences:

- **Added Incentives:** Autonomous Communities may offer additional incentives or tax breaks to supplement the national framework.
- **Program Focus:** Regions may prioritise specific types of support programs (e.g., focus on adapting workplaces, job coaching, or promoting entrepreneurship among people with disabilities).
- **Outreach:** Awareness campaigns about employer incentives and access to support programs might vary between regions.

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## How do policies align with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and other relevant EU legislation?

### Alignment with the CRPD

- **Ratification:** Spain is a signatory to the CRPD, having ratified it in 2008. This demonstrates a strong commitment to the principles of the convention.
- **Legal Framework:** Spain's General Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (LGD) was specifically designed to align with the CRPD and incorporate its principles into national law.
- **Focus Areas:** Spanish laws and policies reflect the CRPD's emphasis on:
  - Non-discrimination
  - Accessibility (both physical and digital)
  - Independent living and community inclusion
  - Work and Employment (Article 27 of the CRPD focuses on the right to work)

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### Alignment with EU Legislation

Spain, as a member state of the European Union, is bound by EU legislation that promotes disability rights and inclusion including:

- **The European Pillar of Social Rights:** Principle 17 specifically addresses the right to inclusive labour markets, income support, and appropriate services for people with disabilities.
- **The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (and its successor):** Provides a framework for EU and member state actions to improve accessibility and participation.
- **Directives:** EU Directives like the Framework Employment Directive prohibit discrimination based on disability.

**Continuous Improvement:** While Spain shows a strong alignment with CRPD and EU principles, there is always room for continuous improvement and monitoring to ensure effective implementation of these principles across all areas of society.

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## 2. Labour Market Statistics:

**What is the employment rate of people with disabilities in comparison to those without disabilities? Disaggregate this by gender, age, and disability type if possible.**

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In 2022, only 35.3% of people aged 16 to 64 with officially recognised disabilities were active in the Spanish labour force (Source: INE - Labour Force Survey). This represents a slight increase from the previous year. However, a significant gap persists compared to the employment rate for those without disabilities, which stands at 51.28% for the same year.

- **Gender Disparity:** Women with disabilities face a slightly lower employment rate (33.3%) compared to men (34.6%). While this gender gap is less pronounced than for the general population, it highlights ongoing barriers specific to women in the workforce.
- **Age-Related Challenges:** Employment rates vary with age. Young people with disabilities (16-24) have the lowest rate (27.8%), followed by an increase for those aged 25-44 (35.3%). People aged 45-64 demonstrate a similar employment rate (34.6%), suggesting that barriers to entering the workforce early in life may have long-term consequences.
- **Impact of Disability:** The type and severity of a disability significantly influence employment prospects. Those with more severe impairments, across all disability categories, often encounter greater challenges in finding and maintaining employment.
- **The Private Sector:** The majority of salaried positions held by people with disabilities are within the private sector. This suggests that public sector entities might need to step up their efforts regarding inclusive hiring practices.

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### Key Takeaways:

- **Persistent Gap:** Despite some progress, Spain must significantly improve labour market inclusion for people with disabilities to match the employment rate of their counterparts without disabilities.
- **Intersectionality:** Strategies must address the intersecting factors of gender, age, and disability type to create targeted interventions that dismantle specific barriers.



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- **Employer Engagement:** Alongside inclusive policies, proactive efforts to increase employer awareness and support for hiring people with disabilities are crucial.

#### Recommendations:

- **Targeted Programs:** Implement initiatives designed to address the unique needs of women with disabilities and young job seekers with disabilities.
- **Accessibility as a Priority:** Mandate workplace accessibility standards for both private and public sector employers, with enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Promote success stories of inclusive businesses to change employer perceptions and encourage hiring practices focused on abilities rather than limitations.

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### Are there sectors of the economy where people with disabilities are more or less represented?

In Spain, people with disabilities demonstrate a strong over-representation within the health and social work activities sector. This can be attributed to factors such as high demand for care services, inclusive hiring policies, personal motivation, and a legal framework emphasizing equal access to support. They hold positions like nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, home health aides, and disability support workers.

Beyond this important sector, people with disabilities make contributions in a variety of fields:

- **Education:** Individuals with disabilities work as teachers, administrators, and support staff, playing a crucial role in inclusive education.
- **Public Administration:** Government agencies at various levels actively employ people with disabilities in roles ranging from administrative positions and customer service, ensuring diversity in public service.
- **Social Services:** Roles in social welfare and community support are common, with people with disabilities working as social workers, counsellors, case managers, and outreach coordinators, directly supporting vulnerable populations.
- **Manufacturing and Retail:** Individuals with disabilities can be found in manufacturing or retail positions like assembly line workers, warehouse staff, or retail sales associates. Accessibility and accommodations are essential for success in these sectors.
- **Information Technology (IT):** While opportunities are growing in the IT and tech sectors, they remain less common than traditional sectors. People with disabilities can excel as software developers, quality assurance specialists, technical support personnel, and accessibility experts. Breaking down physical and digital barriers is vital to increasing inclusion.

### Challenges and Opportunities



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Despite the progress made, significant disparities in representation persist across economic sectors in Spain. To achieve a truly inclusive economy, there's a need to focus on:

- **Targeted Training:** Equipping people with disabilities with skills aligned with high-demand sectors where they are currently underrepresented.
- **Employer Awareness:** Proactive campaigns across all sectors to showcase success stories and address unconscious biases in hiring practices.
- **Universal Accessibility:** Mandated accessibility standards in all workplaces, encompassing both physical and digital environments, remove barriers and promote wider participation.

7

#### Conclusion:

Spain's experience demonstrates the positive impact and valuable contributions made by people with disabilities in a range of roles. Fostering a truly inclusive economy where everyone has opportunities to fulfil their potential requires continuous efforts to break down barriers, improve accessibility, and value the unique skills and perspectives of all its citizens.

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- <https://disabilityin.org/country/spain/>
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### What are the main barriers to employment for people with disabilities (e.g., discrimination, lack of accessibility, lack of skills/education)?

People with disabilities in Spain face a complex web of interconnected barriers that significantly hinder their full participation in the workforce. Key among these challenges are:

- **Discrimination and Stigma:** Negative attitudes and stereotypes about the capabilities of people with disabilities persist among some employers. This bias can manifest in subtle or overt forms, from reluctance to hire to unequal treatment within the workplace.
- **Physical Accessibility:** Inadequate accessibility in workplaces, public transport, and the built environment pose significant obstacles. Inaccessible buildings, lack of adapted workstations, and transportation limitations prevent qualified individuals from even accessing job opportunities.



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- **Skills Mismatch:** Existing education and vocational training systems might not always equip people with disabilities with the skills highly demanded in the current labour market. This mismatch contributes to unemployment and underemployment.
- **Lack of Information and Awareness:** Both employers and job seekers with disabilities may be unaware of support programs, financial incentives, or legal rights. The absence of accessible information channels creates missed opportunities.
- **Attitudinal Barriers:** Deep-seated misconceptions about the productivity and reliability of people with disabilities remain a barrier. These preconceived notions can lead to underestimating potential contributions and discourage inclusive hiring practices.

### Initiatives and Policies

The Spanish government recognises these challenges and has enacted policies and programs to address them. Notable initiatives include:

- **Spanish Strategy on Disability 2012-2020:** This comprehensive strategy outlines a vision of equal opportunities and social inclusion, with a specific focus on employment.
- **LIONDAU (Law on Social Integration of Disabled Persons):** This law establishes rights, accessibility standards, and anti-discrimination protections across various spheres of life, including the workplace.
- **Mandatory Employment Quota:** Companies with 50 or more employees have a legal obligation to reserve at least 2% of their workforce for qualified individuals with disabilities.
- **Skills Development and Training Programs:** Specialised vocational programs help equip people with disabilities with the skills and qualifications needed for in-demand jobs.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Efforts to sensitise employers and the general public aim to dismantle negative stereotypes and foster an inclusive work culture.

### The Way Forward

Despite these efforts, the persistent employment gap for people with disabilities indicates that overcoming these deeply ingrained barriers necessitates a multifaceted and sustained approach. Key recommendations include:

- **Strengthening Anti-Discrimination Enforcement:** Robust implementation of existing laws, coupled with proactive measures to address subtle forms of bias, is crucial.
- **Universal Accessibility Mandate:** Prioritise accessibility as a non-negotiable standard in all public and private workplaces, as well as in transportation systems.
- **Targeted and Responsive Training:** Ensure vocational education programs align with evolving labour market needs and are easily accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Dissemination of Rights and Resources:** Proactive campaigns ensuring everyone is aware of their rights, support services, and the benefits of inclusive hiring.
- **Shifting Mindsets:** Continuous efforts to showcase positive narratives of capable employees with disabilities, celebrating their successes and contributions.



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### 3. Employer Attitudes and Practices:

#### To what extent are employers knowledgeable about disability rights and inclusive hiring practices?

Employer attitudes towards hiring and retaining people with disabilities in Spain fall along a spectrum, ranging from proactive inclusion to hesitant uncertainty, and sometimes, even resistance. Here's a breakdown of the key trends:

- **Committed Champions:** A growing number of Spanish employers recognise the value of a diverse workforce and are actively committed to inclusive hiring. They implement practices like inclusive job advertisements, and accessible interview processes, and provide reasonable accommodations within the workspace.
- **Open but Unsure:** Many employers express a willingness to hire people with disabilities but may lack knowledge about disability inclusion, available support programs, or how to provide necessary accommodations. Targeted awareness campaigns and accessible guidance can help bring them on board.
- **Misconceptions Persist:** Unfortunately, some employers still harbour misconceptions about the abilities and work ethic of people with disabilities. These biases can lead to underestimating potential contributions and hesitancy in offering employment opportunities.
- **Varying Practices:** Even among open-minded employers, the implementation of inclusion strategies varies. While some have robust accommodation policies and inclusive recruitment processes, others may take smaller, less consistent steps.

#### Positive Drivers and Obstacles

- **Legal Framework:** Spain's legislation promoting non-discrimination and the employment quota system encourage some employers to consider inclusive hiring.
- **Financial Incentives:** Such as Social Security Reductions, Grants for Workplace Adaptations, Support for Job Coaches, Alternative Measures..) Subsidies and tax breaks can motivate some businesses to hire people with disabilities.



- **Changing Mindsets:** Awareness campaigns and success stories of inclusive workplaces gradually shift perceptions, encouraging more employers to embrace inclusive practices.
- **Lingering Concerns:** Some employers express concerns about the cost of accommodations, productivity uncertainties, or simply a lack of familiarity with working alongside people with disabilities.

### Some examples of Inclusive Workplaces in Spain

- **Ilunion:** A conglomerate of companies with a strong social purpose, Ilunion focuses on employing people with disabilities across various sectors like hospitality, retail, and laundry services. They prioritise accessible workplaces and emphasise skill development.
- **Fundación ONCE:** This foundation acts as a bridge between employers and job seekers with disabilities. Their initiatives include offering training, promoting inclusive hiring practices, and actively advocating for diversity in the workplace.
- **Large Companies with Inclusion Programs:** Multinational companies like Repsol (energy sector), Telefónica (telecommunications), and IKEA Spain increasingly embrace inclusive initiatives. These often involve partnering with disability organisations, sensitisation programs for employees, and adapting job profiles to accommodate diverse needs.

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### Recommendations

To foster positive employer attitudes and inclusive practices, targeted actions are needed:

- **Showcase Success Stories:** Promote companies leading the way in disability inclusion, highlighting the business benefits and positive outcomes.



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- **Accessible Support and Information:** Provide centralised platforms offering clear guidance on disability legislation, accommodations, and available resources to support employers.
- **Proactive Outreach to Employers:** Disability organisations and government agencies should actively engage with businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, to address misconceptions and offer practical support.
- **Early Intervention:** Integrate disability awareness and inclusive practices into business education and management training programs.

## Conclusion

Spain is on a positive trajectory towards a more inclusive labour market. However, overcoming lingering biases and ensuring consistent implementation of inclusive practices requires continuous engagement. By addressing gaps in knowledge, promoting positive narratives, and making inclusion a practical reality for employers, Spain can unlock the full potential of its workforce and create a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

## What are common misconceptions or biases that employers hold about hiring people with disabilities?

### Misconceptions and Biases

While attitudes are shifting towards inclusion, some employers may still harbour misconceptions that can create barriers to hiring people with disabilities. Here are some of the most frequent ones:

- **Productivity Concerns:** A misconception exists that people with disabilities are inherently less productive or reliable workers. However, studies show that with reasonable accommodations, people with disabilities can be just as productive, and sometimes even more, due to factors like loyalty and strong work ethic.
- **Increased Costs:** Employers may worry about the expense of providing accommodations. Government incentives and support programs can help offset these costs, and in many cases, accommodations can be relatively simple and inexpensive.
- **Safety Risks:** Some employers might have unfounded safety concerns related to specific disabilities. These concerns can be addressed through open communication, conducting proper risk assessments, and collaborating with the job seeker to identify necessary accommodations.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Limited knowledge about disability rights, available support programs, or the actual capabilities of people with disabilities can lead employers to make assumptions that hinder inclusion.
- **Fear of the Unknown:** Unfamiliarity with the process of hiring and managing employees with disabilities can make some employers hesitant. Providing employers with clear guidelines, practical resources, and success stories can alleviate these anxieties.



## Impact of Biases

These misconceptions and biases can have a significant negative impact on employment opportunities for people with disabilities. They can lead to:

- **Resume Screening Bias:** Qualified candidates with disabilities might be overlooked based on their disability alone, even before their skills and experience are considered.
- **Unconscious Bias in Interviews:** Unconscious stereotypes about abilities can influence interview decisions, even if the employer is unaware of their own biases.
- **Failure to Provide Reasonable Accommodations:** Without understanding the specific needs of an individual, employers might not offer necessary accommodations, hindering their ability to perform the job successfully.

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## Conclusion

By challenging these misconceptions and fostering an inclusive workplace culture, employers can unlock the full potential of a diverse workforce. Promoting awareness through training initiatives, showcasing success stories, and partnering with disability organisations can all play a vital role in dismantling these biases.

## Do companies have support systems and reasonable accommodations in place for employees with disabilities?

### Support Systems and Accommodations: A Spectrum of Practices

The situation across companies in Spain varies. While some organisations have robust support systems and readily provide reasonable accommodations, others may fall short due to various factors. Here's a breakdown:

- **Leading Companies:** These progressive companies prioritise inclusion and have implemented comprehensive support systems. This might include dedicated disability inclusion teams, accessible communication channels for requesting accommodations, and proactive measures to identify potential barriers.



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- **Making Strides:** Many businesses are actively working towards creating a more inclusive environment. They may offer some accommodations but might still be developing policies and procedures.
- **Limited Support:** Some companies, particularly smaller ones, may lack the resources or knowledge to implement comprehensive support systems. This might result in a reactive approach to accommodations, offered on a case-by-case basis.
- **Lagging Behind:** Unfortunately, a minority of companies may still have limited awareness of disability rights or fail to prioritise inclusion. This can lead to a lack of support systems and reluctance to offer accommodations.

### Types of Support Systems and Accommodations

Companies that prioritise inclusion offer various forms of support:

- **Accessibility Measures:** Physical accessibility adjustments (ramps, accessible restrooms), accessible technology (screen readers, adapted keyboards), and communication accommodations (sign language interpreters, transcripts of meetings).
- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Options like flexible work schedules, telecommuting opportunities, or compressed workweeks can benefit employees with disabilities who might require adjustments to their work routines.
- **Training and Mentoring:** Programs to equip managers and colleagues with knowledge about specific disabilities and how to best support their inclusion in the workplace.
- **Ongoing Support:** Regular check-ins, access to disability specialists or counsellors, and open communication channels to address any arising difficulties with accommodations.

### Challenges and Gaps

Despite progress, significant challenges persist:

- **Lack of Awareness:** Some managers or colleagues might lack the understanding required to recognise the need for accommodations or how to effectively implement them.
- **Limited Resources:** Smaller companies might struggle to allocate resources for accessibility measures or specialised support professionals.
- **Standardised Approach vs. Individual Needs:** A "one-size-fits-all" approach to accommodations can overlook the specific needs of each employee.

### The Importance of Getting It Right

Effective support systems and reasonable accommodations are crucial for:

- **Employee Retention:** Feeling supported and valued leads to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates.
- **Performance and Productivity:** When employees have the necessary accommodations, they can perform their jobs effectively and reach their full potential.



- **Diversity and Innovation:** Inclusive workplaces benefit from a wider range of perspectives and experiences, fostering a more creative and innovative work environment.

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- <https://sid-inico.usal.es/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/ES-EDE2022-Employment-of-persons-with-disabilities.pdf>

### Conclusion

Spain is moving towards a more inclusive labour market, but the landscape for support systems and accommodations is evolving. Leading companies demonstrate what's possible, while others are at various stages of implementing effective practices. Continuous efforts to promote awareness, share best practices, and ensure accessibility will be instrumental in creating a truly inclusive work environment for all.

## 4. Support Services for Job Seekers:

### What kind of vocational training and employment preparation programmes are available to people with disabilities?

Spain offers a range of vocational training and employment preparation programs specifically designed to support people with disabilities in entering the workforce. Here's a breakdown of the various types available:

#### Types of Programs:

- **Public Vocational Training Programs:** These government-funded programs are delivered through public institutions and offer training in a variety of technical and professional skills relevant to current job market demands. They cater to individuals of all abilities, with specialised adaptations and support services for participants with disabilities.
- **Specialised Vocational Training Programs:** Offered by disability organisations or NGOs, these programs focus on equipping individuals with disabilities with the specific skills and knowledge needed for particular professions. They might target individuals with certain types of disabilities or cater to those who have completed regular education but require additional job-specific training.



- **Supported Employment Programs:** These programs combine skills training with job placement assistance. They provide participants with personalised support in areas like resume writing, interview preparation, and workplace accommodations. This holistic approach helps individuals with disabilities not only acquire skills but also build confidence and navigate the job search process.
- **Workplace Pre-employment Training:** Some companies or industry associations might offer training programs specifically designed to prepare people with disabilities for roles within their sector. This allows individuals to gain relevant job-specific skills and experience while potentially securing employment opportunities within the participating companies.

#### Program Features:

- **Accessibility:** Programs are designed to be accessible to people with different disabilities, offering adapted learning materials, alternative teaching methods, and accessible facilities.
- **Individualised Support:** Participants receive personalised guidance and support from qualified professionals, including career counsellors, job coaches, and disability specialists.
- **Focus on Soft Skills:** In addition to technical skills, programs often emphasise developing essential soft skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, crucial for success in any workplace.

#### Finding Programs:

- **Government Agencies:** Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, regional employment departments, or disability agencies might offer directories of vocational training programs.
- **Disability Organisations:** Organisations like ONCE or CERMI often have information and resources about relevant programs in their areas.
- **Employment Services:** Local employment offices can provide guidance and connect individuals with suitable training opportunities.

#### Challenges and Considerations:

- **Limited Availability:** Demand for these programs might outpace the number of available slots, especially in high-demand sectors.
- **Geographic Barriers:** Programs might be concentrated in urban areas, leaving individuals in rural regions with fewer options.
- **Skills Mismatch:** Program offerings might not always align perfectly with current labour market needs, requiring flexibility and continuous adaptation.

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### Conclusion:

Spain's vocational training and employment preparation programs play a vital role in equipping people with disabilities with the skills and support they need to secure meaningful employment. Addressing accessibility challenges, ensuring program diversity, and fostering strong collaborations between government agencies, disability organisations, and employers are crucial for continued progress in promoting inclusive employment practices.

### Are there government-funded or non-profit agencies that offer job search support, career counselling, or skills training for people with disabilities?

#### Government Agencies:

- **National Employment Service (Servicio Estatal de Empleo - SEPE):** SEPE offers a range of employment services, including dedicated programs for people with disabilities. These might include career guidance workshops, job search assistance, and support in requesting workplace accommodations.
- **Regional Employment Departments:** Each autonomous community in Spain has its own employment department that offers similar services tailored to the specific needs of the region. They usually collaborate with disability organisations on specialised programs.
- **Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030:** This ministry oversees policies related to disability and might work with other agencies to fund or promote relevant initiatives.

#### Non-Profit Organisations:

- **ONCE (Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles):** This organisation, focused on supporting people with visual impairments, offers a wide range of services, including vocational training, job placement assistance, and entrepreneurship programs.
- **CERMI (Comité Español de Representantes de Personas con Discapacidad):** This umbrella organisation representing people with disabilities advocates for inclusion and might provide directories or information on relevant services available in different regions.
- **Federations and Associations:** Spain has numerous federations and associations representing specific disabilities (COCEMFE, PREDIF, FADEM, FSC, FEAFES, CNSE...). These organisations often offer support services and programs tailored to the needs of their members, including career counselling or job search workshops.



### Services Offered (include but not limited to):

- **Job Search Assistance:** Resume writing, interview preparation, navigating online job boards, and connecting with potential employers.
- **Career Counselling:** Guidance on career paths, exploring suitable options based on skills and interests, and identifying training needs.
- **Skills Training:** Programs to develop job-specific skills, computer literacy, soft skills training like communication and teamwork, and adapting existing skills for the current labour market.
- **Support Groups and Workshops:** Opportunities to connect with other job seekers with disabilities, share experiences, and build confidence.
- **Advocacy:** Providing information on labour rights, helping navigate legal aspects of job search and employment with a disability.

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### Finding Support:

- **Websites of Government Agencies:** Both national and regional employment services often have dedicated sections on their websites outlining services for people with disabilities.
- **Disability Organisations:** Websites or local offices of ONCE, CERMI, or relevant disability-specific associations might offer program information and contact details.
- **Local Public Employment Services:** Visiting your local employment office can connect you with a counsellor familiar with available support resources.

### Challenges and Considerations:

- **Language Barriers:** Not all resources might be readily available in languages other than Spanish.
- **Geographic Reach:** Services might be concentrated in urban areas, requiring outreach to ensure accessibility for people in rural regions.
- **Program Availability:** Demand for certain services may exceed resources, requiring waitlists or prioritising individuals with the most significant needs.

### Conclusion:

Government agencies and non-profit organisations play a vital role in supporting job seekers with disabilities in Spain. These entities offer a range of valuable services, equipping individuals with the tools and confidence to succeed in the labour market. By working together, they can contribute significantly to building a more inclusive workplace culture for all.

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## Are these services accessible and sufficient to meet the needs of job seekers with disabilities?

Sain offers various support services designed to help job seekers with disabilities navigate the employment landscape. While these programs demonstrate a commitment to inclusion, achieving full accessibility and sufficiency remains an ongoing challenge.

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### Accessibility

- **Language Barriers:** Language barriers present a significant obstacle. While some resources exist in multiple languages, many job seekers with disabilities who don't speak Spanish fluently are left underserved.
- **Physical Accessibility:** Efforts have been made to ensure physical accessibility of services. However, challenges may persist for individuals with specific mobility impairments or sensory needs.
- **Digital Accessibility:** While online resources expand the reach of services, not all platforms or materials are fully optimized for people with disabilities, such as those using screen readers or requiring closed captions.

### Sufficiency

- **Geographic Reach:** Support services are heavily concentrated in urban areas. This leaves job seekers with disabilities in rural regions with significantly fewer options, often forcing them to travel long distances to access essential services.
- **Program Availability:** Demand for specialized services often outpaces availability. This can lead to extended waitlists, or the prioritization of individuals with the most immediately employable skills, leaving others with complex needs waiting longer for support.
- **Customization:** Providing highly tailored services to meet the diverse needs of people with disabilities presents a challenge within the current resource landscape. Ensuring individualized support in areas like career counselling and skills training is crucial.

### Recommendations

- **Increased Funding:** Boosting government support would enable service providers to hire more specialized staff, expand to underserved regions, and invest in technology to improve accessibility.
- **Collaboration Model:** Develop a clear framework for collaboration between non-profits, businesses, and government agencies to offer targeted training programs, internships, and mentorship opportunities.



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- **Awareness and Advocacy:** Continuous awareness-raising campaigns and strong advocacy efforts are essential to combat remaining accessibility barriers and push for fully inclusive support systems.

### Conclusion:

Despite these challenges, Spain has made strides in supporting job seekers with disabilities. To ensure equal opportunities, ongoing efforts must focus on expanding accessibility across all service areas, prioritizing underserved regions, and fostering collaboration between government agencies, disability organizations, and employers.

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## 5. Good Practices and Success Stories:

**Identify companies with strong inclusive hiring and retention policies for people with disabilities. What factors contribute to their success?**

### Companies Known for Inclusive Hiring in Spain

- **Ilunion:** A conglomerate of companies with a strong social purpose, Ilunion focuses heavily on employing people with disabilities across various sectors like hospitality, retail, and laundry services. They prioritize accessible workplaces and emphasize skill development programs.
- **Fundación ONCE:** This foundation acts as a bridge between employers and job seekers with disabilities. Their initiatives include offering training, promoting inclusive hiring practices, and actively advocating for diversity in the workplace. They often collaborate with other companies for inclusion projects.
- **Large Companies with Inclusion Programs:** Multinational companies like Repsol (energy sector), Telefónica (telecommunications), and IKEA Spain increasingly embrace inclusive initiatives. These often involve partnering with disability organizations, sensitization programs for employees, and adapting job profiles to accommodate diverse needs.
- **Mahou San Miguel (Beverage Sector):** They have partnered with disability organizations and have programs focused on inclusive hiring



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- **Accenture Spain:** The global consulting firm has a strong diversity and inclusion focus, often collaborating with organizations focusing on disability employment.
- **"Disjob" Platform:** While not a company itself, this platform helps connect job seekers with disabilities to inclusive companies. Exploring the companies featured there might reveal good examples.

### Factors Contributing to Success

These companies don't just have policies in place; they take action:

- **Beyond Compliance:** They don't see disability inclusion simply as a legal obligation, but rather as a strategic advantage. This leads to a proactive approach rather than just meeting minimum quotas.
- **Open Communication:** Active dialogue with employees with disabilities is key to identifying potential barriers and implementing effective accommodations. Companies value this input throughout the process.
- **Flexible and Adaptive Mindset:** They recognize one-size-fits-all approaches don't work. They demonstrate a willingness to tailor solutions on a case-by-case basis, demonstrating commitment to the individual.
- **Leadership Driven:** Inclusion initiatives are championed from the top down, not just delegated to HR departments. This ensures the message is clear throughout the company culture.
- **Support Networks:** Companies may have dedicated disability inclusion teams, or foster strong employee resource groups where people with disabilities connect with colleagues and offer insights.

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### Highlight innovative programmes or initiatives that have improved workplace accessibility for people with disabilities.

There are several innovative programmes and initiatives in Spain that have improved workplace accessibility for people with disabilities:

1. **Accessibility Plans in Companies:** Many companies in Spain are developing and implementing comprehensive accessibility plans. These plans go beyond basic legal requirements and aim to create a truly inclusive work environment. They often include measures such as:
  - Conducting accessibility audits of workplaces and digital platforms.
  - Providing assistive technologies and adaptive equipment.
  - Offering training and awareness programs for employees on disability inclusion.



- Establishing clear communication channels for employees with disabilities to request accommodations.
- 2. **Technological Innovations:** Technological advancements are playing a crucial role in enhancing workplace accessibility. Some examples include:
  - **Screen reader software and voice recognition tools:** These tools enable individuals with visual impairments to navigate computers and digital platforms effectively.
  - **Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices:** These devices facilitate communication for individuals with speech or language difficulties.
  - **Smart home technology:** This technology can be adapted to create more accessible living and working environments for people with disabilities.
- 3. **Collaboration between Stakeholders:** Successful initiatives often involve collaboration between government agencies, disability organizations, and employers. This collaborative approach ensures that accessibility solutions are tailored to the specific needs of individuals with disabilities and the requirements of different workplaces.
- 4. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Raising awareness about the importance of workplace accessibility and the rights of people with disabilities is crucial. Public awareness campaigns can help to change attitudes and promote a more inclusive work culture.
- 5. **Training and Education:** Providing training and education to employers and employees on disability awareness and inclusive practices is essential. This can help to create a more welcoming and supportive work environment for everyone.

#### Some specific examples of such initiatives are:

- **Plan ADOP Empleo:** This program, promoted by the ONCE Foundation, focuses on promoting the employment of people with disabilities through personalized support, training, and job placement services. It also works with companies to create more inclusive workplaces.
- **Inserta Empleo:** Another program by the ONCE Foundation, Inserta Empleo, offers comprehensive support to job seekers with disabilities, including training, job coaching, and assistance with workplace integration.
- **Programa Incorpora:** This program, run by the "la Caixa" Foundation, aims to facilitate the labor integration of people at risk of social exclusion, including those with disabilities. It provides training, job placement, and support services to both individuals and companies.
- **Programa de Empleo con Apoyo:** This program, implemented by various organizations and funded by the government, provides personalized support to people with disabilities in finding and maintaining employment. It includes job coaching, workplace accommodations, and ongoing support.
- **Plan de Empleo Individualizado (PEI):** This is an individualized employment plan developed by employment services in collaboration with the person with a disability. It outlines the individual's employment goals, necessary support, and training needs.
- **Accessibility Plans in Companies:** Many companies in Spain, such as Repsol, Telefónica, and IKEA, have developed their own accessibility plans. These plans often include measures like accessibility audits, assistive technology provision, and employee training on disability awareness.



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# Focus Group with experts in people with disabilities VET training and job-seeking

## Introduction

**This focus group aims to gather insights from experts like yourselves on the current landscape of employment for people with disabilities in [Country].** We will delve into the effectiveness of existing policies, the role of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in preparing individuals for the workforce, and the challenges faced by both employers and job seekers. Your expertise will be invaluable in identifying gaps, highlighting successful practices, and formulating recommendations to create a more inclusive labour market. **This discussion will be confidential**, and your insights will directly contribute to shaping policies and programs that empower individuals with disabilities to reach their full potential in the workforce. Participants will be asked to sign the participant list for session justification.

## Section 1: National Context Analysis

- **Policy Effectiveness:**
  - How effective are current national policies and legislation in addressing the skills gap for people with disabilities? Are there specific gaps or areas where policies could be improved?
  - Are there any regional variations in policies or programmes that impact the skills development and employment opportunities for people with disabilities?
- **Labour Market Statistics:**
  - What are the most in-demand skills in the current labour market, and how well do VET programmes for people with disabilities align with these demands?
  - Are there specific sectors where you see a greater need for skilled workers with disabilities?

## Section 2: Study of the Situation of VET Graduates with SEN

- **VET Program Effectiveness:**
  - How well do existing VET programmes equip students with disabilities with the skills and qualifications needed for successful employment?
  - What are the main challenges faced by VET providers in delivering effective training to students with diverse disabilities?
  - Are there any innovative or promising practices in VET that have shown success in bridging the skills gap for people with disabilities?
- **Transition to Employment:**
  - What support systems are currently in place to help VET graduates with disabilities transition smoothly into the workforce? Are these systems adequate?
  - What additional support or resources could be implemented to improve the transition process?





## Section 3: Key Recommendations

- **Priority Areas:**

- What are the most critical areas for investment and improvement to address the skills gap for people with disabilities in the labour market?
- What specific recommendations would you make to policymakers, VET providers, and employers to enhance skills development and employment opportunities for this population?

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### **Additional Questions for Focus Group Discussion:**

- **Employer Engagement:**

- How can employers be better engaged in the design and delivery of VET programmes to ensure that training aligns with their needs?
- What incentives or support mechanisms could encourage employers to hire and retain more employees with disabilities?

- **Collaboration and Partnerships:**

- How can collaboration between VET providers, disability organisations, employers, and government agencies be strengthened to address the skills gap more effectively?



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## Guiding questions for interviews

The following questions have been extracted and adapted from the “Guidelines for partners’ research” questionnaire to understand the vision of VET graduated SEN students during their training and job search experience. This multi-perspective approach will enable the partnership to avoid biases, identify gaps and raise targeted recommendations based on the real-world challenges.

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### VET-Specific Questions

- **Impact of VET:**
  - How has your participation in VET programmes impacted your ability to find and secure employment?
  - Did your VET programme effectively equip you with the skills and qualifications you needed for your current or desired job?
  - Has your VET training had any impact on your earning potential?
  - How satisfied are you with your job and career opportunities since completing your VET programme?
- **Challenges of VET:**
  - Did you encounter any challenges accessing or participating in your VET program due to your disability? If so, what were those challenges?
  - How well did your VET programme cater to your individual learning needs and style? Were there any adjustments or accommodations made for you?
  - What kind of support did you receive (or wish you had received) in transitioning from your VET programme to the workforce?
  - Do you feel that there were sufficient financial resources available to support the quality of your VET programme?

### Additional Questions (adapted from other sections):

- **Labour Market Statistics:**
  - What were the biggest challenges you faced when looking for a job after completing your VET programme?
  - Have you experienced any discrimination or stigma related to your disability in the job search or workplace? If so, could you share an example?
- **Support Services for Job Seekers:**
  - Did you utilise any support services (e.g., job coaching, career counselling) during your job search? If so, how helpful were they?
  - What additional support services do you think would be beneficial for VET graduates with disabilities who are seeking employment?
- **Employer Attitudes and Practices:**
  - Have you encountered any positive or negative attitudes from employers regarding your disability during the job search or in the workplace?



What recommendations would you give to employers to make the hiring process and workplace more inclusive for people with disabilities?

