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# Employability of young people with mental disabilities in local communities

Why to employ people with disability?

How? What to take into consideration?

Steps, tips and best practices for employers

2023

# Introduction

Dear employers and representatives of local communities,

We have created the present tool in order to support you in recruiting and helping young people with mental disability on their way to successful employment. It can be useful for you when you are just considering this possibility, have some challenging experience already, start planning the first steps or want to get more knowledge and recommendations to the existing practice in your company.

We believe that our society can be really successful and prosperous only if it is inclusive and different people feel valued and accepted. It is in our power to change not only the lives of potential employees and their families, but to make our organisations more socially responsible, emphatic and profitable by discovering people's strengths and abilities. We can contribute to equity and be agents of change.

Values  
we  
share

- 
- Respect and recognition of each person
  - Trust in relationship
  - Freedom of choice
  - Positive support/communication
  - Empathy

On these pages you can find some practicalities and tips based on the authors' expertise as well as inspiring examples demonstrating that successful employment of people with disabilities is possible and beneficial for all sides.

We will be grateful for your feedback, best practices and cases, which can contribute to improving employability of young people with mental disability in local communities!

Team of the project

# Foreword

by PhD Litsa Charalambous

“Human-human interactions are of central relevance for the success in professional and occupational environments, which also substantially influence quality of life” European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience, volume 263, pages 197–203 (2013). This is especially true in the case of individuals with high-functioning disabilities (HFD), including impairments and autism who experience deficits in social cognition that often lead to social exclusion and unemployment.

The specific needs of people with disability with respect to their working environment are largely unexplored and it remains an open question how support systems and employment can in fact provide them a good job in order to keep it.

Health and social care systems must adequately be prepared for conventional support of this population. This leads us to suggest that supported employment programmes should be specifically developed for people with HFD to meet their needs and requirements. It is also important for the support employment to offer diversity and motivation thus, to meet the needs of a wider custom base.

An employer besides exceptional employment skills, requires to recognise the individual needs of each employee, support and motivate them to reach to their higher potential, that will both benefit economically and psychologically the individual and the company/industry as well.

# Why to employ people with mental disability?

L'Oréal: *We believe that stronger companies and stronger communities are created when people of every culture, background and lifestyle are accepted and valued.*

**Here are some answers from the organisations, which already do that:**

## Value for business

- Benefits from the state (e.g. tax covering)
- Some operations can be performed more thoroughly
- Companies get experience to adapt their products for people with disabilities and expand their customer base
- Improving business results through/with discovering untapped potential
- People with disabilities are often willing to do and enjoy jobs that others are not
- Eligible for financial incentives
- Meeting national contractor requirements

## Value for company culture

- Team is more diverse, better social environment
- Improving moral values in the company and raising the organisational overall culture
- More empathy and better atmosphere in the company
- Better relations in the team

# Value for relations with the partners and community



Recognition and  
promotion as a  
responsible enterprise



Increasing the  
business reputation  
of the company



Association of economic  
performance with a  
positive social impact

## Impact for society and sustainable development goals

- Empowering people with disabilities and their families
- Opportunity to contribute to personal, social, cultural and global development

## Go for it! Tips for the successful process

### Steps of the successful process

- 1 Analyse your organisation
- 2 Announce the vacancy
- 3 Select the new employee
- 4 Organise the adaptation period
- 5 Evaluate, adjust, review

## 1. **Analyse your organisation**

- Analyse if your organisation is ready for inclusion and employing people with disability. Does the company have an adaptation program for new employees? Are there or have there been special projects for the adaptation of new employees (for example, students, people with disability, seniors, and so on)? If not, are you ready to pilot the adaptation individually for an employee with a disability? Are you ready to change the space and organise the workplace (if special equipment is required)? Is the company ready to organise training for mentors (training on understanding disability, communication etiquette, features of assisted employment, etc.)? Does anyone in the team have an interest in developing inclusion?
- Job analysis – prepare a job description (template link). What are your vacancies/needs of employees?

Job analysis is the process of gathering and analysing information about the content and the human requirements of jobs, as well as the context in which jobs are performed. This process is used to determine placement of jobs, important to think about the duties the person will have and the support they would have.

Some questions can help here: Where is the staff shortage? Which department needs to be strengthened? What vacancies are starting in the company? Is this a permanent or seasonal job? Are there routine / monotonous tasks in the company that can be separated into functionality for an individual employee and thereby free up highly qualified personnel? Is it possible to open vacancies with simpler functionality, with a gradual increase in the volume of tasks / areas of responsibility? Can there be jobs in the company with individual working hours (part-time, flexible start and end of the working day, adjustable breaks, including lunch time, etc.)?

- Specific duties (draft list)
- Think of the appropriate coach and mentor (share with employees the proposal to employ someone with disabilities, explore their motivation to be part of the process)

Are you open to create a new post to match task and new worker on a personalise way? – prepare a list of tasks that could be part of a new job (link to information about personalised employment)

At this point it is a good moment to explore support opportunities from the national or local institutions (salary funding, taxes reduction, etc.)

## 2. **Announce the vacancy**

In the job description (done in the previous phase) you will be specific on the information and way of contacting your company.

- Present the company offer/vacancy to your team/ workforce (link “benefits of doing this”)
- Use your ordinary ways of publishing vacancies (e.g. job centre, employment webs, etc.)
- You can also contact specific employment support services for people with mental disabilities. This is especially recommended if you are open to collaborating for a personalised employment and/or you as employer would like to have support on the process.

### **3. Select the new employee**

You can do your own selection process, or you can send your vacancy information to specific organisation/support services for employment of people with mental disabilities. They would make a first selection and present you with some suitable candidates who meet the criteria of the profile.

Tips for the interview:

- Define the most appropriate way of communication. Ask the potential employee and, if necessary, their support person, what the best way of communication is and if everything is clear during the conversation.
- Keep respectful and effective “adult to adult” style of communication.
- “When you label - you limit” - try to see the person behind disability and learn about their competences, interests and expectations.
- Use simple and direct language.
- Keep main eye contact with and address the candidate, not their support person.
- In some cases it is reasonable to send a list of questions and introduction to the interview to the potential employee or their support person in advance.

### **4. Organise the adaptation period**

- Find the support person to collaborate with a new employee and resolve practical issues, help to learn new tasks, and prevent setbacks (link to document). Preferably the support person is



also involved in the adaptation process - they and the mentor can solve the difficulties of adaptation together immediately in order to avoid them in the future. It is most effective when the employee has a mentor in the workplace who interacts with the contact person from the organisation that sent the candidate (assisted employment consultant, social worker, etc. - support person).

- You can organise a guided and accompanied visit to the workplace before joining.
- Provide written information if needed. The support person can after prepare with the person an adapted guide with the key/more useful information.
- Allocate some time for the colleague directly supporting the person in the company (mentor) and the new worker to know each other, talk and resolve doubts. Possibility to ask for consultation and help is also important for the mentor to prevent stress or burning out.
- Draw up a clear action plan step by step: what operations the employee will need to perform, in what sequence, what the result should be (you can use simple words or pictograms, photographs).
- If necessary, prepare the workplace (consider the possibility of funding).

## **5. Evaluate, adjust, review**

- Interim evaluation: Think about the possibility that, after a short period (after the first 15 days), an external professional (from the school, job office or other supporting organisation) spends a day with the new worker helping to detect difficulties and their possible solutions.
- Reflection: Are you satisfied with the employer? Have expectations been met? How do you relate to your colleagues, supervisors...? How have you responded to any difficulties? How do co-workers relate to them? What have been the strengths that you have observed in them? Discussion with the new employer and their support circle can be very helpful at this stage.
- Decision: finishing after the trial period / giving feedback and helping learn (to both new employee and mentor)/ planning further steps.

## Checklist for supporting people with mental and intellectual disabilities in the workplace

This memo is designed to ensure that the adaptation of a new employee goes as quickly as possible, and your company can maintain and increase efficiency, while being socially responsible.

Tick the activities done	Ways to support a new employee	Examples
	Meeting with the family / support person and including them at different stages (it can help you learn about personal traits of the new employee, interests, strengths, how to communicate more effectively, etc.)	<a href="#">Here you can find templates and examples you can use</a>
	Depending on regulations in your country you can get some benefits from national or local institutions (salary, taxes, physical adaptation of the workplace)	You can check at your local employment service
	You can invite a specialist of working with young people with mental disabilities to prepare other employees, help them feel more comfortable with a new colleague and spread awareness	Specialists in support of young people with disabilities work in public services, local municipalities, employment services, NGOs, schools for young people with disabilities, etc.
	By drawing up a clear action plan step by step and choosing the right and appropriate operations you can get better results	What operations the employee will need to perform, in what sequence, what should be the result (you can use simple words or pictograms, photographs)
	In the beginning, the provision of a mentor or instructor is essential and it help in adaptation greatly	It is important that this person would treat a new person calmly and friendly
	Following positive communication with the new employee with support them in the adaptation process and improve the results	Even simple actions can work: giving your hand and smiling, saying supportive words, welcome meeting, encouraging, providing positive feedback (to employee and mentor), helping the new employee be a part of the company (team work, common events), personal conversation
	Focusing to strengths and even small success will empower the employee and make them want work better	Recognition, making records of achievements

It is important to understand: with your support, such an employee can learn to perform tasks clearly

and efficiently, can like their work, become dedicated and you then can always rely on them! BUT: their disabilities will not go away, so adaptation and acceptance are needed from all sides.

## Possible setbacks and solutions

Here we have collected some setbacks which can occur during the adaptation period and possible solutions that can help.

Setbacks	Solutions
The new employee doesn't know how to get to work and arrives late	Provide the user with the route(s) of the urban or private bus that they can use to get to their job. Customise to the maximum taking into account the level of the worker. You may even want to make the accompaniment during the days that are necessary to make sure that it is comfortable for them to do it independently. Provide information on whether there is internal transportation of the company for round trip.
"I have fallen asleep, I have a doctor, I feel sick, I have lost my money or bus card"...	Talk to the person, involve the support circle, set clear boundaries and procedures, involve external specialists if necessary. Talk to the professional in charge of the person to provide them with relevant information about the future worker and the basic tools to effectively accompany them in the performance of their tasks. For example: if you need to repeat information several times, where they have the greatest difficulties, what their strengths are, how they tolerate frustration, relevant medical issues, how to approach them or give them instructions, make sure that they have understood instructions, if they need support when managing time, etc.
The new employee doesn't orient or gets lost in the organisation	It is important to organise a guided and accompanied visit to the workplace before joining. It can be for several days. This way the new employee will know the company in general, the departments, their job, functions, schedules... It will be useful to visualise the procedures graphically, focusing only on the main and essential information and eliminating the least relevant.
The new employee forgets some tasks or operations	Do not implement all the tasks to be performed at once. Give the person the security that they will be able to face them by giving them tasks progressively and depending on the level of difficulty. It will give confidence to both sides. Make sure there is a colleague who is aware of the new employee during the adaptation period and who can remind them of some relevant information of the day.
The new employee is not successful in convenient tasks	Use modelling as a learning methodology. The professional performs the task and immediately monitors how the new worker does it. It is time to make corrections over and over again until you reach the goal set. Establish a time at the end of each working day to resolve doubts, analyse difficulties, ask about their feelings, and return the positive contributions

	<p>of the supervisor to the worker. The worker should not be expected to spontaneously consult doubts or resolve setbacks. Anticipate such situations and ask direct questions.</p>
<p>The new employee does not follow safety regulations</p>	<p>Explain, clarify, and give very specific guidelines on the whole subject related to occupational safety and risks. Specific information that really affects the person in the performance of their duties. You may want to use activity logs. For example: sequencing of actions, schedules of activities, needs.</p>
<p>The new employee feels unhappy, isolated and lonely</p>	<p>Pay attention to breaks and spare time. Is the person isolated? not looking for alternatives? It is about facilitating their relationship with co-workers and not excluding them from aspects related to leisure. Ask the family what they say about their work, how they perceive it, etc. Enrich their environment. Promote the person to talk to co-workers to make them see that it is not because the new worker is a person with a disability they have to act in a special way, but naturally. Make clear that the new worker does not always need help. Offer them support, but not constantly. Help the person be independent but connected with the working community. Give them information about whether there are other people with disabilities in the company so that they can talk to them and receive first-hand information about how they adapted to the company. If after all the attempts made, you understand that the employee is not suitable for you, finish the contract with them as with any other employee of the company. The employer and the support person can work together to make the separation so that the employee benefits for the future employment through constructive feedback and support.</p>

# Guidelines/recommendations for establishing local networks

This chapter is meant for representatives of local municipalities as community leaders and a link between organisations that take care for people with disability and employers.

Possible solutions:

- Determination of steps, procedures and rules for the operation of the local network (professional coordination is needed)
- Promotional activities for encouraging employability of people with disability (presentations of examples of good practices, workshops, discussions, open days, etc.)
- Establishment of an information office in the town hall
- Establishment of cooperation between local environment (support services) and national institutions and decision-makers
- Involvement of public institutions (school, library, cultural centre, sports institute, tourist information centres, events, ind.), non-governmental organisations (societies, clubs, associations) and private organisations
- Job fair – presentation of local public institutions/organisations, NGO and private companies that take care of people with disabilities in the local environment (schools, institutions, day care centres, associations, social enterprises etc.); presentation of examples of good practices (local and foreign)
- A range/list of potential work placements /jobs for people with disability in the local area + a range/list of potential employees
- Implementation of trainings for potential employers and training of mentors in organisations
- Promotion of support organisations and employers in the local newspaper, on websites, social networks and other media
- Providing legal assistance and consultancy for employers and support organisations that take care for people with disability (legal framework, rules of cooperation/ inclusion in the local network, regulations on remuneration for work)

- Enabling/Assurance of financial incentives for the employment of people with disabilities
- Establishment of a fund for the co-financing of employment of people with disabilities
- Public tender for the co-financing of measures to encourage the employment of people with disability in the local community for the current year
- Establishment of a work incubator
- Award/prize for a company - employer of the year / disability-friendly company of the community, etc.

# Common terminology

**Assisted employment** - the term refers to service provisions wherein people with disability, including intellectual disabilities, mental health, and traumatic brain injury, among others, are assisted with obtaining and maintaining employment. It is often co-funded by the state or local municipality or international funds.

**Circle of support** - a group of people that share a common goal: to contribute to the wellbeing of another person. They can be family, friends, neighbours, support specialists from local municipalities, NGO employment service, etc.

**Inclusion** - the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities and members of other minority groups.

**Mental disability** - in this project we focus on people with a mental illness or psychiatric disorder, a behavioural or mental pattern that causes significant distress or impairment of personal functioning as well as people with intellectual disability.

**Mentor (or supervisor, on-the-job instructor)** - an employee of the organisation, responsible for the adaptation of a person with disability, who helps them master job skills within a specific vacancy and master social norms and rules accepted in the company.

**Personalised employment** - a workplace is created according to the potential employee's strengths, interests, dreams and competences.

**Support person** - a specialist who helps a person with disability in their life management activities.

# Inspiring examples of successful employment

[L'Oréal Groupe: More details about the L'Oréal Solidarity Sourcing Program \(loreal.com\)](#)

[L'Oréal Groupe: Promoting Diversity, Equity & Inclusion \(loreal.com\)](#)

[Example of personalised employment - Carlos Lopez from Spain](#)

[Example of personalised employment - Yasmina Ahmed from Spain](#)

[The difference between us – Second violin from Slovenia](#)

[Pri našem delu \(What We Do\) – Second violin from Slovenia](#)

[Social enterprise Brinjevka, Employment center Zavod Bodika - Institute for Food Processing and Tourism, Kraški Lonec, Kraški Kotiček, Kavarna Integrali - Sežana, Slovenia](#)

Film [“I am Sam”](#)

Film [“Beautiful minds”](#)

TV series [“The good doctor”](#)



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