

GUIDE OF GOOD PRACTICES in the field of inclusion of people with disabilities



Chisinau, 2025

GUIDE OF GOOD PRACTICES

in the field of inclusion of people with disabilities

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union (EU) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in the frame of the project “Strengthening Citizen Participation in Azerbaijan”, implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Alliance INFONET and do not necessarily reflect the views of the EU or the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.



INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of persons with disabilities represents a fundamental objective in the context of human rights and social cohesion in a modern democratic society. In an increasingly diverse and interdependent world, ensuring equal access to opportunities for social participation, education, employment and public life is essential not only for individuals, but also for the well-being and development of communities. This guide aims to present, synthesize and inspire through concrete examples the most effective practices for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, based on the experiences of states with varying levels of social and legislative development: the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Finland, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Germany, Azerbaijan, Portugal, Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

Country context

The cultural, social and economic differences among the analyzed states offer valuable perspectives on how public policies and civic initiatives respond to the needs of persons with disabilities. In Western and Northern Europe, the well-established tradition of social policies often favors integrated and sustainable approaches to inclusion, while in Central and Eastern European countries, recent progress reflects legislative commitments and active reforms. At the same time, examples from Azerbaijan bring to the forefront experiences from the Caucasus region, where the dynamics of legislative change and the reorganization of social services are in continuous evolution. The analysis of the country context thus provides essential reference points regarding the factors that influence the access of persons with disabilities to full participation in society.

Legal framework

The foundation of any inclusion policy is based on a solid legal framework that guarantees equal rights and protection against discrimination. Countries such as Sweden, Germany or the United Kingdom place emphasis on the implementation of international directives such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, integrating them into national legislation and effective monitoring mechanisms. The legal framework is addressed in this guide through the lens of international principles, exemplary legislative practice and legal instruments that have led to visible improvements in accessibility, non-discrimination and civic-social participation.

Education

Inclusive education is an essential pillar in the process of personal and professional development of persons with disabilities. Integration into the education systems of the compared countries reveals varied strategies of curricular adaptation, teacher training and dedicated support services. Successful models encountered in Finland, Ireland or the Netherlands highlight personalized programs and intersectoral collaborations that reduce barriers to learning and promote equal opportunities starting from the preschool stage and continuing through higher education.

Employment

Participation in the labor market represents not only a source of income, but also a factor of social inclusion, autonomy and dignity. The analyzed states present a diversity of innovative practices — from tax incentives and protected employment schemes in Germany and Denmark, to mentoring programs and public-private partnerships in Sweden or the United Kingdom. The guide thus explores approaches

that have yielded quantifiable results in increasing the employment rate of persons with disabilities and in facilitating the transition to competitive jobs.

Success stories

The real-life stories of persons with disabilities and of the organizations that support them represent living proof of the impact of inclusive practices. This section brings to the forefront inspiring examples from all included countries, illustrating how barriers can be overcome when there is political will, adequate resources and collaboration among social actors. These stories are not only examples of good practice, but also sources of motivation for decision-makers, civil society organizations and citizens.

1. Country context: United Kingdom

Total population reached an estimated 69.3 million people (69,281,400) in 2024¹ Around 16.8 million people in the UK have a disability, making up roughly one in four (25%) of the total population, according to 2023/24 data from sources like the Family Resources Survey² and Leonard Cheshire³. This number has increased over the last decade, with significant rises seen in disabled children and working-age adults.

2. Legal framework

The UK ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ⁴(CRPD) in July 2009, committing to promote, protect, and ensure the human rights of disabled people. The UK undergoes periodic reviews by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with its first review in 2017 and subsequent follow-ups, though it has faced scrutiny and reviews from the UN Committee on its implementation.

The UK's main law for people with disabilities is the Equality Act 2010⁵, which protects against discrimination in key areas like work, education, services, and housing, defining disability as a long-term, substantial impact on daily activities. It mandates reasonable adjustments, requiring service providers and employers to proactively remove barriers. This Act, along with other laws like Children and Families Act 2014⁶, Inclusive Britain plan⁷, Inclusive Britain strategy ⁸, ensures disabled individuals have equal rights and access, supported by financial help like Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment (PIP), and Disability Living Allowance (DLA).⁹

3. Education

The UK aims for inclusive education for children with disabilities, legally requiring mainstream schools to support them under the Children and Families Act 2014¹⁰, with provisions like Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, yet challenges remain, including high numbers of pupils needing support, segregation concerns, and debates over mainstream versus special school provision, all while adhering to UN Convention principles but reserving some rights, notes the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE)¹¹.

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2024>

² <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9602/>

³ <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/about-us/what-we-do/facts-and-figures>

⁴ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2022-0040/CDP-2022-0040.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

⁶ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7dc4b0e5274a5eb14e7114/Young_Person_s_Guide_to_the_Children_and_Families_Act.pdf

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-britain-action-plan-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/inclusive-britain-summary-of-recommendations-and-actions>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-landmark-inclusive-britain-strategy>

⁹ https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/resources/equality-act-and-disabled-people#:~:text=The%20Equality%20Act%20protects%20people%20with%20physical,Goods%20*%20Services%20*%20Facilities%20*%20Transport

¹⁰ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7dc4b0e5274a5eb14e7114/Young_Person_s_Guide_to_the_Children_and_Families_Act.pdf

¹¹ <https://csie.org.uk/>

Main types of support:

- Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) framework, governed by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Code of Practice¹², provides support for children (0-25) with learning difficulties/disabilities, offering two main support levels: SEN Support¹³ (within settings like schools/colleges)
- and the Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs)¹⁴ for more complex needs, often involving autism spectrum disorder, linking education, health, and social care, coordinating education, health, and social care with Local Authorities responsible for assessment and provision. The framework emphasizes early identification, parental involvement, and aims for inclusive education, though it faces challenges like funding and inconsistent implementation, leading to ongoing reforms and inspections. The framework continuously updated based on which schools provide targeted support for needs like speech, language, and communication.

4. Employment

Employment inclusion means creating workplaces where everyone feels valued, respected, and can thrive, legally backed by the Equality Act 2010 (protecting age, disability, race, sex, etc.) and driven by initiatives:

- a. **Inclusion at Work Panel**^{15 16}, focusing on evidence-based practices to overcome bias, improve belonging, and ensure fair opportunities, moving beyond just diversity stats to genuine culture change and accountability. The Inclusion at Work Panel was established in June 2023, under action 69 of the Inclusive Britain plan¹⁷, to tackle bias, ensure fairness and promote inclusive workplaces. Made up of leaders from the private and public sector, and advised by a leading Harvard academic, the Panel set out to identify effective and ineffective D&I practice, explaining what works, why, and how.
- b. **Access to Work**¹⁸ is a programme run by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) which provides grants and supports to people with disabilities or health issues to start and maintain employment. Funding covers: support workers, specialist equipment, psychological counselling, adapted transport and communication support (e.g. British Sign Language interpretation). The programme applies to England, Wales and Scotland and is the main employment support mechanism for workplace adaptation. Can help people to get or stay in work if you they have a physical or mental health condition or disability. The support they get will depend on the needs. Main types of support provided:

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/special-educational-needs-support>

¹⁴ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england/2024-25>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusion-at-work-panel-report-on-improving-workplace-diversity-and-inclusion>

¹⁶ <https://www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk/about/what-is-workplace-inclusion/>

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-britain-action-plan-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/inclusive-britain-summary-of-recommendations-and-actions>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

- Workplace support workers/coaches – provide direct help with training, personal assistance or integration support.
- Special equipment and aids – for example, assistive software, ergonomic furniture, adapted workstations.
- Mental health support services – vocational counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy, occupational coaching.
- Transport to and from work – for people who cannot use public transport due to disability.
- Communication support – BSL interpreters, real-time captioning, assistive communication devices.
- Applicants are assessed individually and may receive grants or direct services. There are rules on the maximum amount covered and the transferability of support between employers.

- c. **Levelling Up the United Kingdom**¹⁹ is a moral, social and economic programme for the whole of government. The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how we will spread opportunity more equally across the UK.
- d. The UK's **Inclusive Britain strategy**²⁰ is a government action plan, launched in 2022, responding to the report by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, aiming to tackle racial and ethnic disparities through 74 actions focused on building trust, promoting opportunity, and fostering belonging in education, jobs, health, and justice. It's a major step in the Levelling Up agenda, introducing reforms like policing changes and new history curricula to create a fairer, more cohesive society by encouraging institutional change and individual empowerment.
- e. The law obliges employers to consider reasonable accommodations, but good practices go beyond the legal framework and contribute to the retention and integration of employees with disabilities, by implementing:
- Auditing recruitment processes for accessibility (forms, interviews, platforms).
 - Offering flexible and hybrid working options.
 - Allocating a budget for minor accommodations and using the Access to Work program for complex ones.
 - Training managers in disability awareness and empathetic communication.
 - Creating flexible roles (job carving) for neurodivergent candidates.
 - Monitoring data on diversity and pay equity, while respecting confidentiality.
- In the financial year ending March 2025, the Access to Work programme approved support for around 61,670 people (a 10% decrease on the previous year), while actual payments were made to around 74,190 beneficiaries (a 10% increase)²¹. The most frequently approved types of support were: support worker, special equipment and mental health services.
 - Official data (DWP/ONS) shows a steady increase in the employment rate among people with disabilities compared to the 2010s²², but the gap between the employment of people with and without disabilities remains significant. At the same time, the number of people identifying

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-landmark-inclusive-britain-strategy>

²¹ <https://www.learningdisabilitytoday.co.uk/news/access-to-work-over-17000-people-sign-letter-urging-government-to-reform-the-scheme/>

²² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-employment-of-disabled-people-2024/the-employment-of-disabled-people-2024>

with mental health-related disabilities or chronic conditions is increasing, which influences public policy priorities.

- Recent Recovery: Data from 2022-2024 shows a return to positive trends, with increases in the number of employed disabled people and a narrowing gap compared to 2023 and even pre-pandemic (2019) levels, though some short-term changes aren't always statistically significant.
- The longer-term trend remains positive, with more disabled people in the workforce, suggesting a fundamental shift over the decade.

5. Success stories

Inclusion success stories span among community, education, and digital spaces, featuring initiatives like:

- **Motability Foundation & the Motability Scheme²³** – Its core purpose is to enable people with significant mobility needs (because of disability or long-term health conditions) to lease a new car, a wheelchair-accessible vehicle (WAV), a scooter or powered wheelchair. Since it began in 1978, the Motability Scheme has helped millions of disabled people and their families to travel for work, education, healthcare and more.

For those who cannot drive or need to travel while seated in a wheelchair, the scheme offers WAVs (Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles). These allow people to be transported in their wheelchair (rather than transferring out). The Foundation offers grants (means-tested) for complex driving solutions: for example, vehicles where the driver remains in the wheelchair, or others where high-tech controls are needed. The scheme also acknowledges that many customers live in rural or poorly-connected areas, or have low household income.



²³ <https://www.motabilityfoundation.org.uk/about-us/our-strategy/>



- **Sheffield's Rainbow Kids**²⁴ creates supportive spaces for children from diverse backgrounds and with disabilities through multicultural events, fostering understanding. With 'Do Something Now' fund it supports people in north Kirklees with complex needs, including learning disabilities and autism. 'Super Tuesdays', run at Jo Cox House in Batley and have proved to be a vital lifeline for those who attend, including people who often find mainstream groups stressful to join but are not funded to attend activities funded via direct payments or state funding of other types. 'Super Tuesdays', offer a safe space that reduces feelings of isolation, boosts confidence and offers opportunities to learn new activities, including crafts and life skills, such as cooking and eating well. The sessions are fully subscribed and generated examples of people talking about their worries, creating a space where safeguarding concerns can be detected, such as exploitation.
- **Inclusive Playgrounds for Accessible Play** includes the Playground Accessibility Map²⁵ - and a Guide on Inclusive playgrounds²⁶. Transforms play areas to be accessible for all abilities, building friendships across diverse groups according to the Social Model of Disability²⁷, a way of viewing the world, developed by disabled people. The model says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or condition. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets. Or they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people can't do certain things.



Playground Accessibility Map
Find out how inclusive playgrounds near you are

Activati Window
Anarati Cat5ti nanta

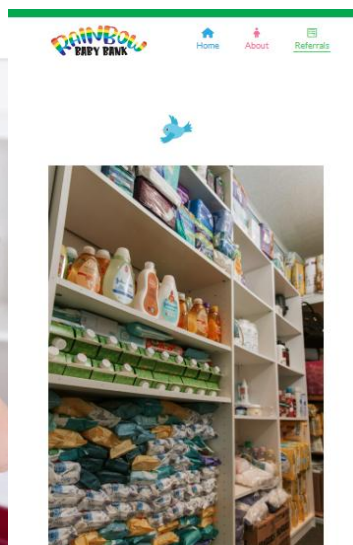
²⁴ <https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/inclusion-and-diversity-annual-report/key-success-stories.aspx#:~:text=Rainbow%20Baby%20Bank%20was%20the%20winner%20of,September%202022%2C%20recognising%20their%20impact%20and%20achievements>.

²⁵ <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/lets-play-fair-16ef55/playground-accessibility-map>

²⁶ <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/lets-play-fair-16ef55/campaigning-for-inclusive-playgrounds-guide>

²⁷ <https://www.scope.org.uk/social-model-of-disability>

- **Rainbow Baby Bank** winning awards for supporting diverse families, families with very small children and many needs, vulnerabilities and disabilities, families that fled wars, all by joining local efforts together and in short time it has become an important local resource²⁸.



- Digital inclusion efforts by **Age UK** help older adults gain tech skills²⁹.

Helping older people get online



We're helping more older people make the most of the digital world through programmes that increase skills and confidence.

- Businesses like **Stowe Family Law** transform workplace culture, showing inclusion benefits all ages and sectors through practical, community-focused, and innovative approaches³⁰. Stowe worked with Inclusive Employers to:
 - Inclusive language talk, delivered at the Stowe all-employee conference, sparking meaningful discussions on the importance of language in fostering an inclusive environment.
 - Yearly calendar of awareness-raising activities, created using Inclusive Employers' resources and real colleague stories, such as a Jewish employee sharing how they celebrate Chanukah.
 - Employee diversity data collection: Established a baseline for future progress by collecting diversity data for the first time.
 - Inclusive Recruitment Audit, conducted to assess and enhance Stowe's hiring practices.

²⁸ <https://www.rainbowbabybank.org.uk/about-us/>

²⁹ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/programmes/digital-skills/>

³⁰ <https://www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk/blog/stowe-family-law-turning-intentions-into-impact-with-inclusive-employers-membership/>

- Senior Leadership Training: equipping managers with the knowledge to lead inclusion efforts effectively.
- Created a Network of Professionals dedicated to Inclusion³¹.



- The leading NGO is ALLFIE³² who is a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO), led by and for Disabled people, campaigning to abolish all systemic barriers to their participation in mainstream education. For over 30 years, ALLFIE has demanded equality and equity in education for Disabled people, and their families. They know inclusion works. They believe that an inclusive education system that meets the needs of all Disabled people from childhood, and supports life-long learning, is the foundation to an inclusive society. Their work is underpinned by **the Social Model of Disability**, which states that people are “disabled” not by the impairments (such as blindness or autism) but by society's failure to take different needs into account. ALLFIE recognises the everyday reality for Disabled people is one of exclusion and human rights abuses. Professionals, services and charity organisations have tended to dominate ‘expert’ knowledge about Disabled people. This abuse of power usually adopts a scientific discourse rooted in negative and deficit assumptions about Disabled people. ALLFIE is committed to advocating and advancing the lived experiences of Disabled people, addressing unequal power relations, and adopts the slogan „**Nothing About Us Without Us**”³³.



- **Manchester's Cultural Village:** it's a series of activities promoting cultural capital via trips and play-based learning. These programs use hands-on activities and cultural immersion to foster creativity,

³¹ <https://www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk/services/membership/>

³² <https://www.allfie.org.uk/other-resources/manifesto-2024-inclusive-education-for-all/>

³³ <https://www.allfie.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/>

empathy, and understanding of diverse perspectives in children, aligning with the goal of building cultural sensitivity³⁴.



- **Oxford Mencap:** runs volunteer-led holiday schemes near Oxford, where volunteers provide 1-on-1 support to people with learning disabilities, enabling meaningful, life-changing experiences for guests during summer weeks at residential centres³⁵.



³⁴ <https://kidztivity.com/exploring-cultural-diversity-through-childrens-activities/>

³⁵ <https://studentsunionucl.org/volunteering/organisation/oxford-district-mencap>

1. Country context: The Netherlands

The population of the Netherlands is about 18.2 million people in 2025³⁶, with 2 million people with disabilities in the Netherlands, with figures also citing around 600,000 depending on the context and definitions, roughly 31.3% of population aged 16 and older reporting limitations in general activities³⁷.

2. Legal framework

The Netherlands ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on June 14, 2016 making it a binding human rights treaty aimed at ensuring persons with disabilities enjoy full and equal rights and participation in society, with ongoing efforts and challenges in implementation³⁸. The ratification arrives 10 years after the UN officially adopted the Convention. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS)³⁹ is responsible for the implementation of the treaty and The Institute for Human Rights⁴⁰ functions as a watchdog for the enforcement and implementation of the Convention.

The Netherlands has an institutional and legislative framework aimed at maintaining the autonomy and social participation of people with disabilities, so called *Participation society*⁴¹ is a major policy shift since 2013, moving from a strong welfare state towards greater individual and community responsibility, emphasizing citizens contributing through work, volunteering, and local engagement, combining national legislation with local (municipal) enforcement.

A key pillar is the Social Support Act⁴² through which municipalities must provide support through integrated local networks (as a result of coordination between the municipality, schools, employment institutions and NGOs for personalized service packages (e.g. a local “one-stop shop” for inclusion)⁴³ so that people can live independently, have access to social services and participate in community life (home help, housing adaptations, transport, social assistance). This decentralization aims to adapt services to local realities and places emphasis on prevention, inclusion and participation in the community⁴⁴.

In addition, employment and social protection policies (e.g. Participation and Quota Act for the public sector⁴⁵, Jobs agreement⁴⁶ and other schemes for young people with long-term disabilities offered by the Employee Insurance Agency⁴⁷) encourage integration into the labour market through support and reinsertion measures; at the same time, there are ongoing debates and reforms regarding the transition from sheltered work models to inclusive forms of employment.

The implementation of the treaty has ushered in some positive changes in Dutch society. The Dutch government have since put the civil and political rights from the UN disability treaty into practice. For

³⁶ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/netherlands-population/>

³⁷ Statistics on Persons with Disabilities, Master tables concerning EU 2020: year 2018, Prepared for the European Disability Expertise (EDE) By Stefanos Grammenos (in collaboration with Mark Priestley), Sept. 11, 2020.

³⁸ <https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/the-netherlands-ratifies-un-persons-with-disabilities-treaty-sn-13285/32145>

³⁹ <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-health-welfare-and-sport>

⁴⁰ <https://www.mensenrechten.nl/en/node/2262>

⁴¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19406940.2017.1381636>

⁴² Social Support Act (Wmo 2015) | Care and support at home | Government.nl

⁴³ Care and support at home | Government.nl

⁴⁴ (PDF) The realisation of the participation society. Welfare state reform in the Netherlands: 2010-2015

⁴⁵ <https://business.gov.nl/regulations/participation-act/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/werken-met-arbeidsbeperking/meer-banen-mensen-arbeidsbeperking>

⁴⁷ <https://www.uvw.nl/en>

example, the right not to be discriminated against and the right to easily access polling stations during voting season. There's also the right to quality medical and sex care.

On July 12, 2025, the **Working agenda UN Convention on Disability 2025-2030**⁴⁸ was presented to the House of Representatives. This agenda stems from the National Strategy⁴⁹ and contains concrete measures, including:

- The statutory right of hearing for students with support needs (effective date: Aug. 1, 2025). Schools are required to actively engage students' opinions in a way that reflects their preferences.
- Improve accessibility of physical and digital environments, such as buildings, digital learning environments and testing formats.
- Strengthening participation and empowerment of people with disabilities in educational policy and decision-making.

3. Education

Since 2014, the Netherlands has introduced the principle of «passend onderwijs» (Inclusive education)⁵⁰, which obliges schools to provide a suitable place for each student and to cooperate with each other to ensure adequate support for children with special needs. The model promotes inclusive education in mainstream schools, but retains the possibility for parents to choose specialized schools when very specific services are needed. Successful practices include local support teams (counselors, therapists, mobile educational assistants), individualized learning plans and continuous training for teachers. These measures reduce stigma and increase socialization opportunities for children. Appropriate education must ensure that every child gets the best out of themselves. Schools therefore offer extra help to pupils who need it, such as children with learning or behavioural problems⁵¹.

The government has introduced new laws and several pilots to enhance job opportunities especially for young people with disabilities. The new scheme is aiming for a positive effect for two thirds of the young people with disabilities reaching the age of 18. That would be 10.000 young people with disabilities each year. A central part of the schema is the law that came into effect as of January 2010. According to this law, young people with disabilities benefit from an individual participation plan, stating available assistance to find a job or vocational training⁵².

4. Employment which specifies the assistance available

Inclusion means that people with a disability fully participate in and belong to Dutch society. In an inclusive society, people with disabilities can do the same things as people without disabilities. For example, they can independently use public transportation and access polling stations and also decide for themselves where to live, work and attend school.

⁴⁸ <https://ecio.nl/en/inclusion-is-not-a-choice-education-on-the-move-with-working-agenda-un-convention-on-disability/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.doeonbeperktme.nl/nationale-strategie-en-werkagenda/nationale-strategie>

⁵⁰ [Appropriate education | Government.nl](https://www.doeonbeperktme.nl/nationale-strategie-en-werkagenda/nationale-strategie)

⁵¹ <https://www.expatica.com/nl/education/children-education/dutch-education-system-100816/>

⁵² https://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/empl_portal/ede/NL-10-ANED%202009%20Task%206%20Request-08B-Country%20update%20Employment%20-%20report%20-%20final.pdf

An important part of participating in society is participation in the labour market. Since people with a disability often have difficulty finding a job, the Participation Act⁵³ was created to ensure modified workplaces, wheelchair-friendly spaces, special agencies and talent development training or a sign interpreter at meetings. The Participation Act has been drawn up to guarantee everybody's right to access to work, to make sure that work-disabled people also can find a job. The Jobs agreement⁵⁴ is part of the Participation Act. According to it, employers in the market sector must supply 100,000 jobs for work-disabled people by 2026.

Companies also get support from regional work organizations and employers service units⁵⁵. Municipalities work together with institutions such as the Employee Insurance Agency, employers, unions, and educational institutions. The Employee Insurance Agency and the municipal authorities offer job coaches⁵⁶ and Labour Costs Compensation (LKV)⁵⁷.

Employers service units assist in placing employees with companies and offer work station supervision, calculating the employee's wages. If the company pays them more than the statutory minimum wage, the difference will be subsidized with the Labour Costs Compensation (LKV).

To help matching the jobs, the Employee Insurance Agency has created a List of potential employees⁵⁸, potential candidate's details with regard to schooling, acceptable travel distance, and the number of hours they are able and willing to work, and unemployment benefits is part of the Participation Act as well as financial assistance for self-employed professionals⁵⁹. As means to support people to work how much they are able too.

There are both sheltered workshops and initiatives for transitioning into the regular labour market⁶⁰ – including social enterprises and work integration social enterprises (WISE) projects. There is a strong emphasis on individual assessment and the provision of long-term coaching, not just immediate placement, to ensure job sustainability.

Supported Employment (SE) was introduced in 2004 as a collaboration between the government and private agencies who are striving to assist people with an intellectual disability, a psychiatric disability and a chronic disease with finding employment⁶¹. Netherlands uses a dual system with municipalities (social assistance) and the UWV (disability insurance), each with different SE funding streams.

This type of support shows mixed but promising results, with studies finding around 46-57% of participants with mental illness secured competitive employment within 30 months, especially with strong agency experience in Individual Placement & Support (IPS)⁶². Key findings point to effective individualized coaching (like Individual Placement & Support), most obtained jobs were in elementary, clerical support, and service/sales roles. The success factors (Facilitators) were the presence of skilled,

⁵³ <https://business.gov.nl/regulations/participation-act/>

⁵⁴ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/werken-met-arbeidsbeperking/meer-banen-mensen-arbeidsbeperking>

⁵⁵ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/werken-met-arbeidsbeperking/meer-banen-mensen-arbeidsbeperking>

⁵⁶ <https://business.gov.nl/subsidies-and-schemes/subsidy-internal-job-coach/>

⁵⁷ <https://business.gov.nl/subsidies-and-schemes/labour-costs-compensation-employment-older-disabled-persons/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.werk.nl/werkgevers/wervingsadvies/personeel-subsidies/participatiewet/#:~:text=naar%20boven-,Werving,-Plaats%20uw%20vacature>

⁵⁹ <https://business.gov.nl/subsidies-and-schemes/financial-support-self-employed-bbz/>

⁶⁰ <https://disabilityin.org/global-directory/the-netherlands>

⁶¹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/30492051_Supported_employment_in_The_Netherlands_for_people_with_an_intellectual_disability_a_psychiatric_disability_and_a_chronic_disease#:~:text=Although%20some%20stigma%20is%20still%20attached%20to,explained%20and%2C%20to%20a%20certain%20extent%2C%20normalized.

⁶² <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9284733/>

committed vocational teams, the integration of mental health and vocational staff, the experience of mental health agencies with IPS and the Pay-for-performance funding models tied to good outcomes.

5. Success stories

Action Plan for more people with disabilities in Dutch politics and a better inclusion of people with disabilities in decision-making procedures. An estimated two million people with a disability live in the Netherlands, and only around 0.5% of them are political officeholders.

On July 4, 2019 in The Hague an Action Plan was created with the purpose for there to be more people with disabilities in political and administrative functions. On June 17, 2019, 33-year-old Rick Brink from Hardenberg was elected the first-ever Minister of Disability Issues in the Netherlands. Rick is in a wheelchair and has been active for years in municipal politics in Hardenberg. He has said that he is mainly committed to the integration of children with disabilities in Dutch society.



Participation society. De Pleats is family restaurant that has been in business for 27 years⁶³, actively recruits and supports autistic employees and other people with neurodivergent conditions. This practice has been in place since the organisation started, with a formal approach to social responsibility since 1999. The initiative was inspired by the owner's commitment to inclusivity and a family tradition of supporting individuals with additional needs. The owner has an autistic child and a background in entrepreneurship and advocacy for autism. They made special accommodations in the workplace, such as sound and noise cancelling floors and ceilings as well as providing tailored tasks for people with mental conditions. The organisation also uses tools like colour codes and pictures for employees who cannot read or have other specific needs. De Pleats avoids segregation by integrating neurodivergent employees into the regular workforce and providing discreet support. Clear communication, internal rules (e.g. no cursing, zero tolerance on bullying), an online and offline onboarding programme, on-the-job coaching, learning-by-doing, tasks tailored to the individual's interest and abilities, and individualised support without singling people out are essential pillars of the hands-on EDI approach at De Pleats. They make use of some principles learned through experience and training courses on giving support to employees or colleagues with special needs. An example of this is the HARRIE training course. This acronym in Dutch stands for Helpful, Alert, Calm, Realistic, Instructive, Honest. Managers and staff learn, amongst other things, how to give clear, unambiguous instructions and compliments to

⁶³ <https://nexttourismgeneration.eu/best-practice-de-pleats-local-inclusion-in-friesland/>

people with specific needs. In addition, De Pleats is also a Fairtrade restaurant and a partner of MVO Nederland, the largest sustainable business network in the Netherlands.



Rijksmuseum, The Netherlands: a best practice for effective EDI initiatives. This encompasses practices related to physical and mental abilities, cultural diversity, accessibility, neurodiversity, inclusive leadership and equitable recruitment practices⁶⁴. The museum also hired an Accessibility Manager to support the integration of people with different physical abilities through various programmes. Additionally, improvements were made to the building to include accessible offices and exhibition spaces.

The European Access City Awards 2019: Breda⁶⁵. The purpose of this award is to *support* and *inspire* cities in Europe, which may face challenges when it comes to being accessible for all types of tourists, and promote best practices across Europe. It recognizes and celebrates a city's willingness, ability and efforts to become more accessible

A touristic fund has been made available to financially support the businesses in the city to improve their shops to complement accessibility.



"Classroom on Wheels" are mobile educational units for underserved areas, it also is about the *vehicle* of learning (a mobile unit for specific needs or innovative education, (like Huawei's SmartBus in the Netherlands reaching 2,260 students for digital skills), it also includes „To School Together" which has children with multiple severe impairments, is embedded in a regular primary school with organised frequent living-and-learning-together moments between „typical children" and children with disability, not only at mealtimes and leisure, but also during maths lessons, story reading, theatre and art. In this

⁶⁴ <https://nexttourismgeneration.eu/rijksmuseum-the-netherlands-a-best-practice-for-effective-edi-initiatives/>

⁶⁵ <https://nexttourismgeneration.eu/access-city-award-2019-quick-wins-from-breda-the-netherlands/>

project, the health care team fully participates in a regular environment⁶⁶. These are organised in a mainstream school, with full time assistance by a multi-professional care and support team. Children join regular activities with other children as much as possible (e.g. recreation, music lessons and mealtimes). Children with and without disabilities learn reciprocally. One partner country nominated schools in a segregated setting as examples of inclusion, because they also provide support in mainstream schools⁶⁷.



High accessibility

The Netherlands is generally very accessible for people with disabilities, especially in public transport (buses, trams, trains are ramp/elevator equipped with accessible toilets) and modern public buildings, with wide, flat streets and accessible hotels common. However, challenges remain in historic areas with cobblestones and narrow spaces, and while new buildings are compliant, some older restaurants, shops, and historic sites, especially regarding accessible restrooms, still pose significant barriers, requiring extra planning.

Public Transportation & Infrastructure

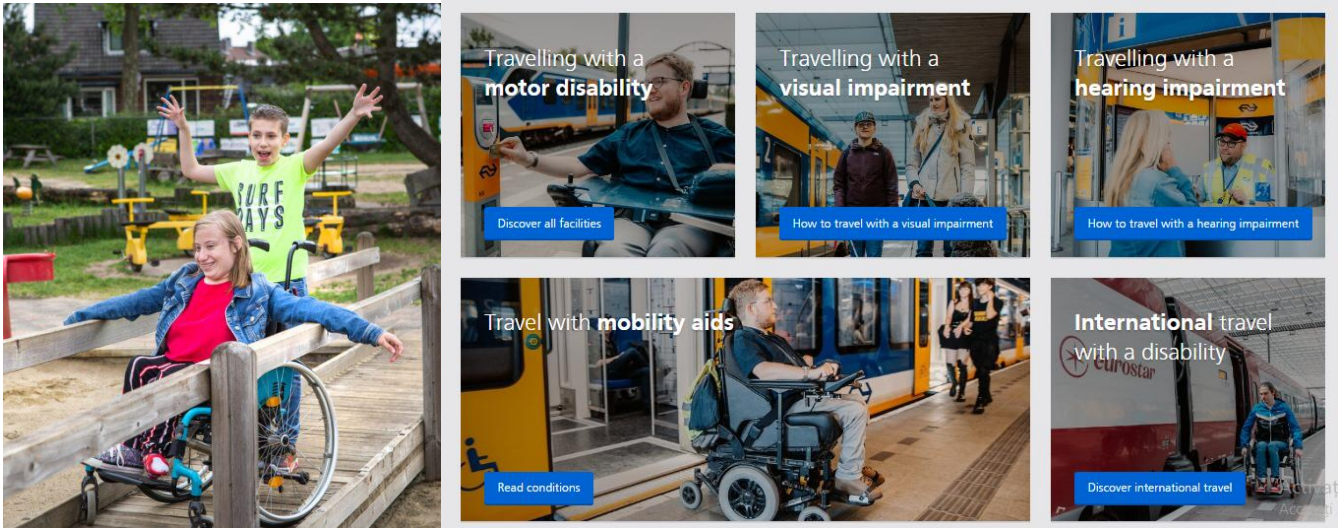
- **Excellent.** Buses, trams, and trains (like the NS) are highly accessible with ramps, elevators, and accessible toilets; platforms are often level with trains⁶⁸.
- **Infrastructure:** Sidewalks are generally wide, flat, and have curb cuts (ramps) for wheelchairs; bridges are often accessible, unlike some other places.
- **Mobility Scooters:** Widely used on streets and bike paths, indicating good local accessibility.

⁶⁶ <https://standtogether.org/stories/education/how-a-mobile-school-on-wheels-is-revolutionizing-education>

⁶⁷ <https://leefstijlpoliplus.nl/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Good-Practices-Towards-Inclusion-Activity-and-Participation-of-Children-with-Complex-and-Intense-Supp.pdf>

⁶⁸ <https://www.ns.nl/en/travel-information/traveling-with-a-disability/visual-disability/preparing-at-home.html>

- **Playgrounds and public parks**⁶⁹.

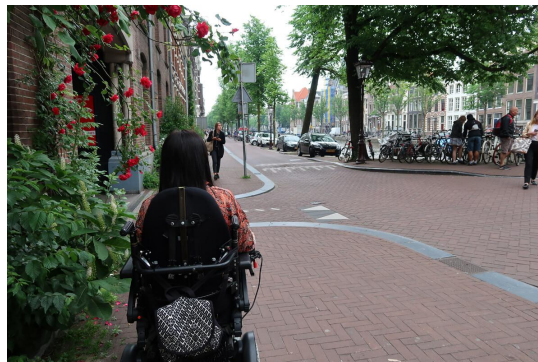


Accommodation & Dining

- **Hotels:** Many hotels, especially larger chains, follow accessibility standards similar to the ADA, offering spacious accessible rooms.
- **Restaurants/Cafes:** Larger establishments are usually accessible; however, smaller, older places, particularly in historic canter's, can have narrow entrances or restrooms on different levels.

Attractions & Culture

- **Museums/Attractions:** Many modern museums offer accessible tours and facilities, with staff trained to assist. Discounted tickets may be available in theatres and concert venues for people with disabilities and their carer's⁷⁰.
- **Accessible traveling options via Accessible Travel Netherlands**⁷¹.



⁶⁹ <https://access-nl.org/features/navigating-the-netherlands/>

⁷⁰ <https://wheeltheworld.com/accessible-travel/netherlands>

⁷¹ <https://www.simplyemma.co.uk/3-days-amsterdam-wheelchair-users-travel-guide-amsterdam/>

1. Country context: Finland

The current population of Finland is 5,626,062 people⁷². 10.0% of persons aged 18+ have a disability, the prevalence of disability is rather stable in age groups between ages 18-49 years (varying between 6.3-8.1%) and then increases with age, being highest (39.9%) among those aged 80+⁷³.

2. Legal framework

Finland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol on May 11, 2016, with both entering into force for the country on June 10, 2016, marking a significant step in promoting disability rights and ensuring equal participation and non-discrimination through legislative changes and national monitoring⁷⁴. The ratification has required changes to legislation, including in the Municipality of Residence Act and the Social Welfare Act, as well as most recently to the Act on Special Care for the Mentally Handicapped.

The legislation focuses on equality, inclusion, and individual needs, centred around the Non-Discrimination Act⁷⁵ (1325/2014) which complements the Constitution by aiming to promote equality and prevent discrimination on grounds like age, origin, disability, sexual orientation, language, and religion, ensuring equal treatment in public and private life, with oversight by the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman and redress mechanisms like compensation for victims, and key service laws like the new 2025 Act on Disability Services and Assistance Act⁷⁶ came into force on 1 January 2025, expanding eligibility beyond the previous „severely disabled” definition to include individuals meeting updated disability criteria, aiming to promote equality, inclusion, independent living, and self-determination, with decisions made before 2025 remaining valid until reviewed. With the updated legislation it aims at ensuring universal design and specific support (personal assistance, interpreting, financial aid) to enable independent living and societal participation, aligned with the UN CRPD.

- **Enforcement & Support:**
 - **Non-Discrimination Ombudsman:** Assists victims, gives recommendations, and interprets the Act.
 - **National Non-Discrimination and Equality Board:** Confirms reconciliations and issues statements.
 - **Occupational Safety and Health Authorities:** Supervise compliance in workplaces.
- **Remedies:** Victims of discrimination are entitled to proportionate compensation from the discriminating party (e.g., employer, service providers)⁷⁷.

⁷² <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/finland-population/>

⁷³ https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/fileadmin/uploads/wg/Documents/Country_Disability_Reports/WG_Country_Disability_Report_-_Finland_WG_09.11.2025_.pdf#:~:text=Prevalence%20of%20Disability.%20%E2%80%A2%20The%20age%2Dadjusted%20percentage,39.9%25%2C%20among%20those%20aged%2080%20and%20over

⁷⁴ https://um.fi/press-releases/-/asset_publisher/ued5t2wDmr1C/content/suomi-sitoutui-vammaisten-henkiloiden-oikeuksista-tehtyyn-yleissopimukseen-ja-sen-valitusmenettelyyn/35732

⁷⁵ <https://oikeusministerio.fi/en/equality-and-non-discrimination>

⁷⁶ <https://www.hel.fi/en/news/the-new-disability-services-act-enters-into-force-on-1-january-2025>

⁷⁷ <https://oikeusministerio.fi/en/equality-and-non-discrimination>

3. Education

In Finland, in education the focus is on integration, not separation. Finland emphasizes equity, which means recognizing individual differences and adjusting the learning experience accordingly. It's about fairness, not sameness. This approach goes beyond academic achievement. Inclusion is about well-being, self-worth, and belonging. When students feel accepted and understood, they're more likely to stay motivated, engaged, and confident in their abilities⁷⁸.

Finland's education system is designed around the principle that support should be available for every student, not just those with diagnosed learning difficulties. To make this possible, Finnish schools use a well-structured 3-tiered support model (General Support, Intensified Support, Special Support with a detailed Individual Learning Plan (ILP) outlining goals, teaching methods, accommodations, and services)⁷⁹ that provides help at different levels, depending on each student's needs.

This support may mean aids and equipment, a personal assistant or an interpreter. Education can be personalised, meaning that the disabled student can have individual learning goals, all students follow the same curriculum, with individual education plans (IEPs) tailoring it to their need. Some children with disabilities enter extended compulsory education. This means that the child starts school earlier at age 6. If necessary, the child will receive a special support decision describing the child's need for support and the school's support measures.

Learner welfare services⁸⁰ are included in the curriculum, and municipalities and schools are obliged to include their services in the curriculum.

Development of inclusion and production of models for municipality, school and learner-level planning, organisation and implementation of inclusive special needs education, in co-operation with various interest groups.

Several projects are developing the virtual school for SEN, according to the national strategy. These projects include representatives from the private and public sectors, state, municipalities, universities and research centres, both in the humanities and technical areas.

There are several projects to prevent the exclusion of learners by developing productive learning models and models to teach and support learners with mental illnesses.

A student with a disability can receive support, help and reasonable adjustments to their studies. A student with a severe disability may have the right to a personal assistant who helps them with eating, taking notes and moving about in the educational institution. Students with hearing impairments or deafblindness have the right to sign language interpreting⁸¹.

Self-evaluation, carried out by the education providers themselves, is the most important quality assurance mechanism. A sample-based assessment approach is carried out at national level, according to an assessment plan. The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is responsible for carrying out national evaluations at all levels of education⁸².

4. Employment

Finland fosters inclusive employment through strong anti-discrimination laws, proactive diversity initiatives in companies, and support for vulnerable groups like immigrants, youth, and people with

⁷⁸ <https://www.techclass.com/resources/education-insights/finlands-approach-to-special-education-how-every-student-gets-individualized-support>

⁷⁹ <https://www.techclass.com/resources/education-insights/finlands-approach-to-special-education-how-every-student-gets-individualized-support>

⁸⁰ <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/finland/systems-of-support-and-specialist-provision>

⁸¹ ⁸¹ <https://yhteiskuntaorientaatio.fi/en/learning-materials/health-and-wellbeing/disability-in-finland>

⁸² https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/TSI_FIQUE_FIIE_D2.3_Executive_summary.pdf

disabilities, focusing on integration, equal opportunities, work-life balance (e.g., family leave), and skill development, though challenges like gender gaps in entrepreneurship remain. Key aspects include policies against bias, support for returning parents, and efforts to integrate international talent, recognizing diversity's economic value.

Specific Initiatives & Policies:

- **Anti-Discrimination laws**⁸³ require equality plans for employers with 30+ staff and mandate equal access for disabled individuals.
- **Employment Programs:** Initiatives by entities like the University of Helsinki offer specific programs for people with disabilities, and big companies like Danske Bank, Nokia, Aalto University are open to train and hire people with all abilities⁸⁴.
- **Wage subsidies.** Wage subsidies are paid for work carried out on an employment contract or for an apprenticeship. Both public sector employers, such as municipalities, and companies and other private-sector employers such as associations, foundations and social corporations can receive the subsidy when the relevant conditions are met. On the other hand, many municipalities pay a substitute to employers when they hire a young person⁸⁵.
- Municipalities have the responsibility to organise Public Employment Services (PES) and they decide the budget allocation⁸⁶. Therefore, a state level overview of a funding scheme does not exist, as the allocation of the funds can have regional variation.
- The allocation of **The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)**⁸⁷ funding is described in Finland's recovery and resilience plan. On a general level it can be recognised that RRF funding has been allocated to One-Stop Guidance Centre's⁸⁸.
- **Support for entrepreneurship** for people with disabilities is primarily delivered through non-public actors. The Federation of Finnish Entrepreneurs with Disabilities was established in May 2019⁸⁹ and promotes collaboration and networking among entrepreneurs with disabilities with an aim to provide equal possibilities for the disabled to be active in working life. Additionally, the Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities (Invalidiliitto), the Vates Foundation, and the Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired are organisations that work to support entrepreneurial activities among the disabled people. While the focus is predominantly on providing employment rather than self-employment opportunities, information on paths to entrepreneurship is provided on their webpages⁹⁰.

5. Success stories

Hilma: Support Centre for Disabled Immigrants (Helsinki)⁹¹ – is a specialised support centre that addresses the *intersection* of disability and migration – a group that faces multiple barriers (language, cultural, service access) so people with disabilities who are immigrants can access mainstream services and participate fully in society. Hilma has been active in municipal decision-making bodies, showing clear influence on local policy and visibility for the group it serves.

⁸³ <https://oikeusministerio.fi/en/equality-and-non-discrimination>

⁸⁴ <https://inklusiiv.com/di-in-finland/>

⁸⁵ <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/finland/36-integration-of-young-people-in-the-labour-market>

⁸⁶ YouthWiki/Finland 4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

⁸⁷ https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-recovery/recovery-and-resilience-facility/country-pages/finlands-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en

⁸⁸ YouthWiki/Finland 4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness.

⁸⁹ <https://sheatwork.com/finland-offers-a-supportive-environment-for-entrepreneurship/>

⁹⁰ https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/05/inclusive-entrepreneurship-policy-assessment-country-notes_48c462fc/finland_c7d37083/48ded06c-en.pdf

⁹¹ tukikeskushilma.fi

Activities:

- **Information & guidance:** one-stop, multilingual counselling on rights, services, rehabilitation and social benefits tailored for immigrants with disabilities.
- **Peer-support groups & community activities:** regular group meetings, family support, activities that build social networks and reduce isolation.
- **Work-oriented support:** job advice, short work-trial placements and links to employers to increase inclusion in the labour market.
- **Advocacy & participation:** Hilma represents service users in city consultations and equality councils to influence local accessibility planning. Example: Hilma is a member of Helsinki's Equality & Non-Discrimination Advisory Board.
- **Intersectional focus** – by focusing on immigrants with disabilities (not just disability or migration separately), Hilma addresses combined barriers (linguistic + cultural + physical).
- **Accessible services** – walk-in information points, multilingual staff and outreach activities that make services easily accessible.
- **Peer support + professional counselling** – combines life experience-based groups with qualified staff to build trust and practical outcomes (employment, access to rehabilitation).
- **Municipal collaboration** – formal links with city structures (advisory boards) allow user voices to influence accessibility policies and planning.

How Hilma fits in the national/local systems. Finland provides statutory disability services (including personal assistance under the Disability Act) and municipalities run many local services, so community centres like Hilma connect people to statutory supports and help navigate the system⁹². Helsinki has explicit accessibility policies and practical tools (e.g., accessible route planning in the HSL transport app, accessible public spaces and museum accommodations), which make local inclusion efforts scalable and sustainable when service users can access them⁹³.



Accessibility in Finland. Finland is generally accessible, especially its modern cities, with strong laws ensuring equal rights and comprehensive support services like transport and assistive devices, but challenges remain, particularly with older infrastructure, varying accessibility across regions/services, and the impact of harsh winter weather, requiring careful planning for a smooth experience⁹⁴.

Finland's cities are known for their clean design, calm pace, and reliable infrastructure, all of which make them especially welcoming for travellers with different access needs. Whether you're navigating with a wheelchair, pushing a stroller, or simply looking for an easier way to explore, you'll find cities

⁹² <https://www.esn-eu.org/>

⁹³ <https://www.hel.fi/static/hki4all/esteettomyyslinjaukset/city-of-helsinkis-accessibility-policies-2022-2025.pdf>

⁹⁴ <https://www.visitfinland.com/en/practical-tips/accessible-travel-in-finland/>

here that prioritise comfort and independence. Finland's "design for all" approach, mandated often by law, is visible in more than just architecture.

Visit Finland⁹⁵ showcases travel accessible services from around the country and has a comprehensive Inclusive Travel Guide, last updated in 2024⁹⁶.



Credits: Sanna Kalmari

Artivati V



Credits: Sanna Kalmari



Isinki Marketing, Maija Astikainen

4



Many public spaces in Finland offer Braille signage for visually impaired visitors.

Credits: Oodi Library, Jussi Heilistén

Outdooractive also provides maps and content for travellers looking for accessible outdoor destinations at www.outdooractive.fi/en.



Credits: Petri Jauhainen

Valteri Centre for Learning and Consulting, is a national centre for learning support operating under the Finnish National Agency for Education that provides multidisciplinary support for early childhood

⁹⁵ www.visitfinland.com/en/things-to-do/all/accessible

⁹⁶ <https://www.visitfinland.fi/4b1296/globalassets/visitfinland.fi/vf-julkaisut/2024/inklusiivisen-matkailun-opas.pdf>

education and primary education across Finland. The goal is to offer the best possible learning support in local schools, supporting learning difficulties, with its results showing improved inclusion and support for students in Finland through services, training, and collaborative projects like fostering quality inclusive education with Ireland⁹⁷.

Offers services like consultations, support periods, and training to enhance learning environments. Develops educational resources, including materials for inclusive education.

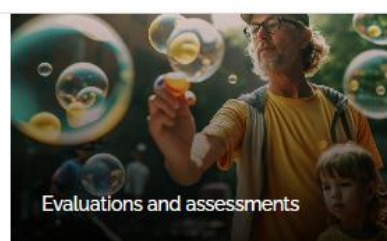
Collaborates on national/EU projects (e.g., with Ireland) to strengthen inclusive practices and educational outcomes. **Outcomes:** Aims to strengthen local school support, promote inclusion, and help every pupil reach their potential, proven by their active participation in tenders⁹⁸.



Counselling visits



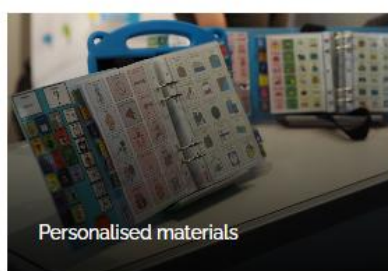
Support periods



Evaluations and assessments



Rehabilitation



Personalised materials



Valteri School admission



Assisted living



Morning & afternoon activities and camps

Aktiva
Accesatji

⁹⁷ <https://www.valteri.fi/en/>

⁹⁸ <https://www.tenderbulls.com/Result/ResultList?searchtext=Valteri-Koulu>

1. Country context: Ireland

Ireland's population is around 5.38 million inhabitants as of 2024⁹⁹ and over 1.1 million people, or 22% of the population, reported having a long-lasting condition or difficulty in the 2022 Census. This included more than 400,000 people (8% of the population) with at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty to a great extent, meaning more than 1 in 5 people experience a disability to some extent, with higher rates in older age groups and varying impacts on daily life and work, including difficulties with physical activity, pain, learning, and mental health¹⁰⁰.

2. Legal framework

Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in March 2018, after being an early signatory in 2007, and has been working on its implementation, even acceding to the Optional Protocol in late 2024 for stronger accountability and individual complaint system¹⁰¹.

The first relevant law is the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act¹⁰² from 2015 (amended in 2022) on persons who require or may require assistance in exercising their decision-making capacity, whether immediately or in the future. The National Disability Authority Act 1999 that created and regulates the National Disability Authority¹⁰³ which came up with the **Universal Design** concept, promoted by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD)¹⁰⁴. Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, gender, ability or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. This is not a special requirement, for the benefit of only a minority of the population. It is a fundamental condition of good design.

If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits. By considering the diverse needs and abilities of all throughout the design process, universal design creates digital and built environments, services and systems that meet peoples' needs.

Additional laws such as the Citizens Information Act 2007¹⁰⁵ that contains a provision introducing a personal advocacy service for certain persons with disabilities.

Disability Act 2005¹⁰⁶ provides for the assessment of health and education needs of persons with disabilities, it includes a complaints mechanism in the case of non-provisions of services. It also provides for the facilitation of better access to public building and public services by persons with disability, and it obliges the State to promote equality and social inclusion.

Education Act 2018¹⁰⁷ states that a school must prepare a policy which includes a statement that it shall not discriminate in its admission of a student to the school on specified grounds.

⁹⁹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=IE>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/pressreleases/2023pressreleases/pressstatementcensus2022resultsprofile4-disabilityhealthandcarers/>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/publications/ireland-and-the-uncrpd/>

¹⁰² <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/64/enacted/en/html>

¹⁰³ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1999/act/14/enacted/en/html>

¹⁰⁴ <https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2006/48/>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/14/enacted/en/html>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/14/enacted/en/html>

Education of persons with special needs Act 2004 provides for the provision of education to persons with additional education needs, so that those people may have the same right to avail of, and benefit from, appropriate education as their peers, and in an inclusive environment¹⁰⁸.

Employment Equality Act¹⁰⁹ makes provision for the promotion of equality between employed persons.

Equal Status Act¹¹⁰ promotes equality and prohibits types of discrimination, harassment and related behaviour on particular grounds, and in connection with the provision of services, property and other opportunities to which the public generally has access.

The Irish Human Rights Equality Commission¹¹¹ (IHREC) has statutory responsibility under the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act to promote and monitor ‘the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Ireland. The National Disability Authority (NDA)¹¹² offers evidence-based advice and research to Government on disability policy and practice and promoting the approach of Universal Design, it also supports IHREC to perform this monitoring role by the provision of information, advice and statistical information where required.

3. Education

The Access & Inclusion Model (AIM)¹¹³ was introduced in June 2016. AIM is designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)¹¹⁴ programme and access the support they need. AIM is a child-centred model for all children and involves seven levels of progressive support. These move from universal to targeted, based on the needs of the child and the preschool service. AIM offers tailored and practical supports based on need and does not require a formal diagnosis of disability. Even in early childhood interventions the Universal Design apply, according to the Guide¹¹⁵.

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004¹¹⁶ makes further provisions for the education of people with disabilities, to provide that people with disabilities shall have the same right to avail of, and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers who do not have disabilities, to assist children with disabilities to leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives, to provide for consultation with parents of children with disabilities in relation to the education of those children, for those purposes to establish the National Council for Special Education¹¹⁷.

Universal Design in Education. The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD) at the National Disability Authority (NDA) has a remit to advance the promotion of Universal Design in education in

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2003/34/>

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2022/08/IHREC-Employment-Rights-Leaflet-2019-WEB.pdf>

¹¹⁰ <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2022/08/IHREC-Equal-Status-Rights-Leaflet-WEB.pdf>

¹¹¹ <https://www.ihrec.ie/>

¹¹² <https://nda.ie/>

¹¹³ https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Explainers_AIM.pdf

¹¹⁴ <https://indd.adobe.com/view/01b85954-957b-42dc-b7ae-e21a8cfec239>

¹¹⁵ https://earlychildhoodireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Explainers_UDGuidelines.pdf

¹¹⁶ <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2003/34/>

¹¹⁷ <https://ncse.ie>

Ireland. Integration of Universal Design in early learning and care Settings and as part of education programmes at Primary, Secondary, Third Level and in Continuous Professional Development (CPD)¹¹⁸.

4. Employment

The Employment Equality Act 1998-2015¹¹⁹ as well as the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 contain chapters on Disability and Reasonable Accommodation, where the employer is obliged to provide reasonable accommodation to enable a disabled person:

- to have access to employment;
- to participate or advance in employment; *or*
- to undertake training.

This is unless the accommodation would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer.

Reasonable accommodations are effective and practical measures taken by the employer to adapt their place of business including:

- the adaptation of premises and equipment;
- patterns of working time;
- distribution of tasks; or
- the provision of training or integration resources.

The employer is not obliged to provide any treatment, facility or thing that the person might ordinarily or reasonably provide for himself or herself.

In determining whether the measures would impose a disproportionate burden, account is taken of:

- (a) the financial and other costs entailed;
- (b) the scale and financial resources of the employer's business; and
- (c) the possibility of obtaining public funding or other assistance.

Another chapter is on Positive Action. In addition to prohibiting discrimination, the Acts also aim to ensure full equality in practice through positive actions (i.e. more favourable treatment to persons who differ under any of the grounds). In practice, this means that employers can adopt and maintain specific policies and practices to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked to any of the grounds. This might include, for example, providing flexible working hours, e-working, or offering work internships and/or training programmes, or other work benefits that attach to any of the nine grounds.

Assisted employment is provided via programs like:

- **Community Employment (CE)**¹²⁰ **for long-term unemployed.** CE scheme in Ireland helps long-term unemployed individuals (aged 21-55, usually on benefits for 12+ months) get back to work through part-time (19.5 hrs/week), temporary placements in local community projects, offering practical experience, valuable skills, and accredited training (QQI awards) to boost career prospects in sectors like childcare, retail, or admin. Funded by the Department of Social Protection (DSP), CE provides work routine, social skills, and a chance to gain major qualifications, often for up to three years, bridging the gap to permanent employment.
- **JobsPlus**¹²¹ **(employer incentives),** is a financial incentive to encourage employers to hire people who are unemployed. Employers use JobsPlus when filling new positions, or re-filling positions that occur from staff turnover. Eligible employers, who employ jobseekers from the live register¹²² on a full-time basis, get regular grant payments to help balance wage costs. This is paid monthly, in arrears, over a period of 18 months by the Department of Social Protection

¹¹⁸ <https://universaldesign.ie/education>

¹¹⁹ <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2022/08/IHREC-Employment-Rights-Leaflet-2019-WEB.pdf>

¹²⁰ <https://enableireland.ie/CESchemes>

¹²¹ <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/unemployment-and-redundancy/employment-support-schemes/jobsplus/>

¹²² <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/unemployed-people/signing-on/>

(DSP). If the employee is under 30 years of age, the payment is co-funded by the European Commission.

- **EmployAbility Services**¹²³ for people with disabilities, injuries, or illnesses, offering job coaches, placement, and ongoing support for both jobseekers and employers, offering job coaches and tailored support. It is also a recruitment advice service for the business community. It also gives employers access to a pool of potential employees.

Providers also deliver: in employment support for both the employer and the employee, a professional job-matching service to help ensure successful recruitment, advice and information on additional employment supports and grants.

- **The Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP)**¹²⁴ is a 6-month, 30 hour per week voluntary work experience programme. The programme is for jobseekers that are currently in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment and who have been unemployed for six months (156 days) or more.
- **Community Services Programme (CSP)**¹²⁵ supports community-based organisations to provide local services and create jobs for people who may face barriers to work. It gives financial support to not-for-profit community companies and co-operatives to help with the cost of hiring staff. CSP are managed by Pobal¹²⁶ on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht.
- **The Short-Term Enterprise Allowance (STEA)**¹²⁷ supports people who have lost their job and want to start their own business. The assistance is paid instead of your Jobseeker's Benefit for a maximum of 9 months.
- **The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA)**¹²⁸ scheme encourages people getting certain social welfare payments to become self-employed. If you take part in this scheme, you can keep part of your social welfare payment for up to 2 years. To qualify, you must be under the age of 66.
- **The Rural Social Scheme (RSS)**¹²⁹ provides income support for farmers and fishermen/women who are getting certain social welfare payments.
- **Intreo**¹³⁰ is the Irish Public Employment Service and your single point of contact for all employment and income supports. Designed for a streamlined approach, Intreo offers practical, tailored employment services and supports for both jobseekers and employers. It is part of the Department of Social Protection.
- **Job Interview Interpreter Grant**¹³¹. If you are a jobseeker who is deaf, hard of hearing or has a speech impairment you can apply for funding to have a sign language interpreter or other interpreter attend a job interview with you. Funding can also be provided to cover the costs of an interpreter during an induction period when you start work.

¹²³ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-social-protection/services/employability-services/>

¹²⁴ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-social-protection/services/work-placement-experience-programme/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/WPEP/>

¹²⁵ <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/unemployment-and-redundancy/employment-support-schemes/community-services-programme/>

¹²⁶ <https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/community-services-programme-csp/>

¹²⁷ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-social-protection/services/short-term-enterprise-allowance-stea/>

¹²⁸ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-social-protection/services/back-to-work-enterprise-allowance/>

¹²⁹ <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/farming-and-fishing/rural-social-scheme/>

¹³⁰ <https://jobsireland.ie/en-US/IntreoServices-Jobseeker>

¹³¹ https://careersportal.ie/work-employment/employment.php?ed_sub_cat_id=207&menu_parent_id=&parent=13

5. Success stories

Since 2013 The annual Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) offers **the Architecture Awards**, to raise awareness of the value that architecture brings to society – from our homes to our workplaces, from our schools to our healthcare buildings, and at every scale in our villages, towns and cities, applying the Universal Design concept. Quality architecture is inclusive and sustainable and makes a positive contribution to climate change action.

Awards Categories: Adaptation and Re-use, Conservation, International, Living: Adaptation / New Build / Housing, Public Buildings, Workplace and Fit-Out, Research, Sustainability, Universal Design and Urban Design¹³².



Beyond the Trees: Avondale House and Forest Park, winner in the Universal Design category, RIAI Architecture Awards 2023

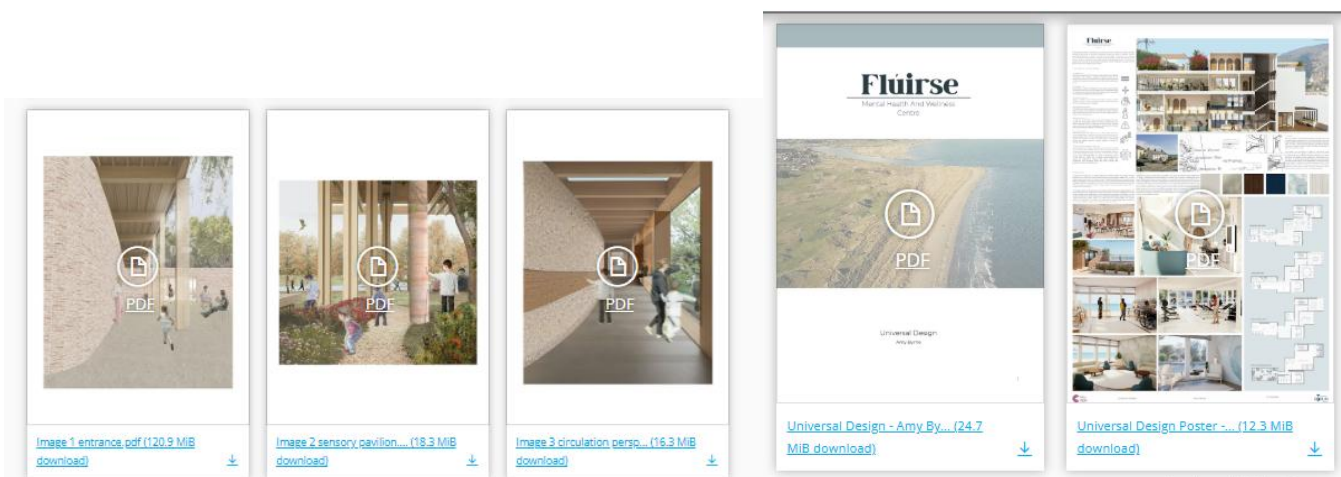


Dominick Hall, Commended in the Universal Design category, RIAI Architecture Awards 2023

Universal Design Grand Challenge (UDGC)¹³³ is a competition that promotes and awards excellence in student projects that feature solutions that work for everyone. Students enter their best project which demonstrates the use of the **Principles of Universal Design**. The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD) at the National Disability Authority (NDA) runs the UDGC Student Awards. Each year they continue to be amazed at the creativity and commitment to inclusion and Universal Design demonstrated by the students who enter projects in 3 categories (Built Environment, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Products and Services), and the academic tutors/supervisors who support them.

¹³² <https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design/awards/riai-universal-design-award>

¹³³ <https://universaldesign.ie/education/grand-challenge-student-awards>



2 examples of winning projects in the pictures: Transition space and Mental Health and Wellness centre¹³⁴

Valteri Centre for Learning and Consulting is a national centre for learning support operating under the Finnish National Agency for Education that provides multidisciplinary support for early childhood education and primary education across Finland and Ireland. The goal is to offer the best possible learning support in local schools, supporting learning difficulties, with its results showing improved inclusion and support for students in Finland through services, training, and collaborative projects like fostering quality inclusive education with Ireland¹³⁵.

Accessible Ireland. Ireland delights in welcoming those with special needs and reduced mobility, and services and amenities are always improving to be accessible¹³⁶. Castles and towers may have an accessible first floor yet are less likely to have elevators. Heritage Ireland¹³⁷ provides accessibility information for many of Ireland's historic sites.

In Northern Ireland, the National Trust¹³⁸ supplies access information about parking, toilets, and the grounds for popular sites. Many of these offer guided tours that bring history and visual aspects to life in incredible detail.

Dublin, a city rich in history and culture, has many fully accessible attractions for visitors with disabilities. The magnificent 800-year-old St Patrick's Cathedral is easy to navigate thanks to ramps and an electric elevator at the entrance. Guided tours are free, and audio guides are available¹³⁹.

Disabled Holidays¹⁴⁰ is a great resource with a list of accommodations offering disabled facilities. Disabled Friendly Hotels¹⁴¹ has a great database of hotels that accommodate special needs. Each hotel partner must provide details on its accessibility and services, and the site includes reviews confirming the validity of this information.

¹³⁴ <https://universaldesign.awardsplatform.com/gallery/QedMdlao/qmROEkYZ?search=1749c386ac67910f-6>

¹³⁵ <https://www.valteri.fi/en/>

¹³⁶ <https://disabledaccessibletravel.com/accessible-destinations/ireland/>

¹³⁷ <https://heritageireland.ie/>

¹³⁸ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/about-us/access-for-everyone>

¹³⁹ <https://visiteurope.com/en/experience/accessible-ireland/>

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.disabledholidays.com/search/uk-l23/ireland-l28/>

¹⁴¹ <https://disabledfriendlyhotels.com/en/dfh/home>

Ireland is known as the land of 100,000 welcomes for nothing. Locals are known for their friendly, helpful nature and will be very happy to assist however they can.



MORE DESTINATIONS



MOBILITY EQUIPMENT



TRANSFERS



1. Country context: Denmark

Denmark has a population of 6,013,006 inhabitants¹⁴² around 29.1% (in 2020¹⁴³) and as much as 36.7% of Danes (over 16) report having a disability, making Denmark one of the EU's highest rate, while over 400,000 people belong to disability organizations, covering visible/non-visible conditions, with recent data showing ~246,000 receiving disability pensions, often due to mental health issues in younger people¹⁴⁴.

2. Legal Framework

Denmark ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in July 2009, committing to its principles, but the convention hasn't been directly incorporated into Danish law; instead, it's applied as a source of law, leading to ongoing monitoring and criticism from the UN for gaps in implementation, especially regarding non-discrimination and accessibility, allowing some discriminatory practices (like refusing service to guide dogs)¹⁴⁵.

Denmark protects people with disabilities through laws and policies that emphasizes full societal participation and independent living for people with disabilities, like the **Anti-Discrimination Act**¹⁴⁶ and specific labour market acts, focusing on inclusion and preventing discrimination in employment, education, and social services. It also approved with additional acts for social services (based on which municipalities provide support and services to compensate for reduced function, helping individuals live more independently.), while also providing social support via municipalities and benefits. However, enforcement of reasonable accommodation and accessibility outside the labour market has historically been weaker, though the EU's Accessibility Act is increasing digital access requirements¹⁴⁷.

3. Education

In Denmark, special education can be organized in different ways and usually in the educational system called Folkeskole – Public School Act¹⁴⁸ covering early education, the Act on Secondary Education for Young People with Special Needs (STU)¹⁴⁹ which offers tailored, three-year vocational training for older youth (16-25) who need it, and also crucial long term support is determined via Pedagogical-Psychological counseling (PPC)¹⁵⁰, involving parents and pupils, ensuring rights to education, adapted instruction, and even personal assistance for practical school challenges.

¹⁴² <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/denmark>

¹⁴³ https://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/empl_portal/ede/Master%20sheet%20for%20updating%20EDE%20All%20Data%202020%20SG%2006%2010%202020_REV.pdf

¹⁴⁴ <https://handicap.dk/DPOD>

¹⁴⁵ <https://cphpost.dk/2014-10-06/general/un-disability-committee-criticises-denmark/>

¹⁴⁶ <https://pharmadanmark.dk/en/work-life/employee-well-being/inclusive-work-life/discrimination>

¹⁴⁷ https://accessible-eu-centre.ec.europa.eu/document/download/54c6e340-21be-4376-82ee-047c655748bf_en?filename=DK_AccessibleEU_AccessibilityIndicators2023_Report_acc.pdf&prefLang=sv

¹⁴⁸ <https://eng.uvm.dk/primary-and-lower-secondary-education/the-folkeskole/about-the-folkeskole>

¹⁴⁹ <https://uu.kk.dk/stu/in-english>

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.foraeldreraadgivningen.dk/artikel/p%C3%A6dagogisk-psykologisk-r%C3%A5dgivning-ppr-0>

Folkeskole Act is the Danish national law¹⁵¹ governing the free, public primary and lower secondary school system (ages 6-16), setting overall goals, curriculum frameworks, and organizational standards for subject-specific learning, democratic values, and inclusive education, while individual municipalities manage day-to-day operations, allowing local adaptation within this national structure.

Key Aspects of the Folkeskole Act related to inclusive education are:

- **Municipal Responsibility:** Municipalities own and run the schools, deciding practical organization, staffing, and local goals within the Act's framework, ensuring cost-free education for all.
- **Inclusive & Differentiated Learning:** Mandates schools to differentiate instruction to meet individual student needs, offering extra support (like remedial help) through headteachers and parents, focusing on inclusion

In most cases, the pupil remains in a mainstream school class and receives special education in one or more subjects as a supplement to general teaching. A pupil may receive special education that replaces participation in regular education in one or more subjects. Alternatively, they may be taught in a special class, either in mainstream or special school settings. Finally, the pupil may attend either a mainstream school class or a special class and be taught in both types of classes. Special classes exist for pupils with, for example, intellectual disabilities, dyslexia, visual impairment, hearing impairment, and physical disabilities.

Curricular policies for secondary and further education includes planning of education courses for young people with special needs that – to the full extent possible – consider the individual's qualifications, maturity and interests and should consist of one planned and coordinated course.

In Danish education, **Pædagogisk Psykologisk Rådgivning (PPR)** are the Pedagogical-Psychological Counseling that provides crucial support for students (0-18 yrs) with special needs, linking families to resources like psychologists, speech therapists, and special education, often keeping kids in mainstream classes with supplemental support. It's rooted in inclusive principles, focusing on individual strengths and resources (Social Pedagogy) to ensure learning, development, and well-being, fostering an empathetic, holistic approach rather than just academic testing.

The Act on Youth Education for Young People with Special Needs (STU)¹⁵² provides a free, 3-year individualized upper secondary education for young people (16-25) unable to complete mainstream education, focusing on personal, social, and vocational skills through practical training and internships for future independence, managed by municipalities. It aims to create equal opportunities and prepare them for active adult life, distinct from formal qualifications but offering pathways to further education or employment, with municipal funding covering costs.

Target Group: Young people with intellectual, physical, or psychosocial disabilities who cannot manage regular upper secondary education even with support.

Goal: Develop personal, social, and vocational competencies for independence and participation in society while receiving support up to three years, personalized to the student's interests and potential.

¹⁵¹ <https://eng.uvm.dk/primary-and-lower-secondary-education/the-folkeskole/about-the-folkeskole>

¹⁵² <https://uu.kk.dk/stu/in-english>

Content: Mix of schooling, workshops, and workplace internships (experience).

Funding: Fully funded by municipalities (local governments).

Legal Right: It's a legal right for eligible youth to receive this tailored education.

It starts with an assessment: Municipal Pedagogical Psychological Counseling (PPC) assesses a young person's needs.

Decision: Based on this assessment (PPC), the municipality decides on the appropriate support, including STU.

Implementation: The education is delivered through various settings like schools or workplaces, tailored to the individual.

Context in the Broader System:

Inclusion Principle: Denmark emphasizes inclusion in primary/lower secondary education (Folkeskole) with support.

STU as an Alternative: STU serves those for whom even inclusive mainstream education isn't sufficient, ensuring they get a meaningful post-compulsory education.

In essence, the STU law ensures specialized, practical, and free upper secondary training for those with significant special needs, fostering their ability to become independent adults.

4. Employment

Danish legislation addresses the inclusion of persons with disabilities from the perspective of placement on the labour market: local adaptation of work places to facilitate employment instead of offering just of social assistance.

Through the years the legal framework was solidified in order to guarantee the rights (anti-discrimination) and in order to actively support the access on the labour market (adapting work spaces, subsidies, customized programmes).

The principle of inclusion is achieved by setting obligations of the employers to adapt their spaces on one hand and by Job centers and specially Units working actively to support people with all their needs, to match the vacancies.

Denmark has an employment policy framework that specifically supports people whose work capacity is permanently or long-term reduced. The Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment have Measures for placing disabled persons in employment¹⁵³ such as access to personal assistance, wage subsidies for employers, preferential access and counteractions towards differential treatment, as well as supports the municipalities to help unemployed disabled into the labour market.

Compensation for Disabled Persons in Employment¹⁵⁴ is to enhance and stimulate the possibility of employing persons with disabilities and retaining them in the labour market and to offer them the

¹⁵³ [Measures for placing disabled persons in employment](#)

¹⁵⁴ [Measures for placing disabled persons in employment](#)

same possibilities of pursuing a trade or profession as persons without disabilities, it is organized in 3 tiers:

- 1) Personal assistance for persons with disabilities in employment.
- 2) Wage subsidies on the employment of newly educated people.
- 3) Preferential access in connection with filling a vacant position.

Active Employment Measures¹⁵⁵. This act concerns subsidies for aids, workstation design and layout. Under employment-legislation, subsidies are granted for aids, tools, small-scale workstation design and layout or teaching equipment.

The Unit for Job and Disability (Specialfunktionen Job & Handicap) supports Denmark's 94 job centres in the initiatives they provide for people with reduced working capacity. It offers seminars, online tools, networking activities, etc. Furthermore, the unit develops new methods as part of employment initiatives to help integrate and retain disabled employees in the labour market.

The **Danish Act on the Prohibition of Differences in Treatment in the Labour Market** prohibits discrimination on grounds including disability and requires employers to make reasonable accommodation (unless the burden is disproportionate) to enable a person with a disability to access work or employment. The Act sets obligation adjustment applies to persons with disabilities, meaning that an employer must take expedient measures to consider the specific requirements for granting a person with disability access to employment, to work or to success in employment. However, the obligation adjustment does not apply if the employer would as a consequence have a disproportionately heavy burden imposed upon him or her. If the burden is sufficiently alleviated through public measures, it is not considered to be disproportionately heavy.

The prohibition against differential treatment also applies to anyone carrying out counselling and education activities, anyone offering employment, anyone laying down provisions and making decisions on permission to carry out activities relating to self-employment and anyone making decisions concerning membership of and participation in an employee or employer occupation and the advantages enjoyed by the members of such organizations¹⁵⁶.

5. Success stories

Videnscenter om Handicap (Knowledge center on disability)¹⁵⁷ it is a nation-wide organization with both public and private supporters that works to foster inclusive communities for all. By working together to uncover knowledge about barriers to participation for people with disabilities and we provide advice on disabilities and effective interventions. The Knowledge Center on Disability is the lead on many projects that are research-based and supports inclusion, the main results generating one being Disability Tech and the Inclusive Tech Lab where everyone can come by and experience technologies that have the potential to improve the lives of people with disabilities, (and other projects

¹⁵⁵ [Measures for placing disabled persons in employment](#)

¹⁵⁶ [Measures for placing disabled persons in employment](#)

¹⁵⁷ <https://videnomhandicap.dk/>

like the Movement for All, Recess for All, Together for leisure time, Cycling for everyone, Nature for everyone, On the Way to a good everyday life, Sunflower program for invisible disabilities and many others).

The Center works with scientists in Denmark, external experts, educators and facilitators to deliver the project. The educators and facilitators are the ones that deliver workshops in Danish Primary Schools across the country.



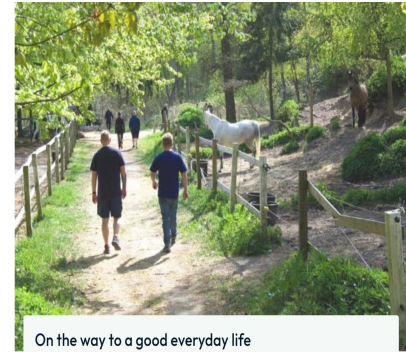
Cycling for everyone

"Cycling for all" was a collaboration between the Danish Cyclists' Association and the Knowledge Center on Disability, which intended to help create better cycling opportunities for people with disabilities.



Nature for everyone

The project "Nature for All" aimed to give people with disabilities better opportunities for an active outdoor life. As part of the effort, the Knowledge Center on Disability mapped more than 270 accessible nature routes and experiences in Denmark.



On the way to a good everyday life

"On the way to a good everyday life" helped veterans suffering from PTSD in the transition from psychiatric treatment to an active everyday life. From June 1, 2025, the effort is anchored at the Danish Veterans Home Foundation, which will continue the work and methods developed in the project.

Movement for all "Bevegelse for alle", is supported by the Novo Nordisk Foundation. Movement in school is important for all children and young people. The project aims to promote the joy of movement and inclusion in movement communities for all children. The project creates knowledge and tools to carry out the inclusion task in movement activities. It also provide concrete materials for movement breaks, movement in the subjects and the subject of physical education. Therefore, together with teachers and pedagogues, it creates knowledge and tools to handle the task of inclusion in movement activities. In addition, it provides concrete materials(the main Guide¹⁵⁸ and additional tools like the Adaptation wheel – A tool to help adapt sports and activities for people with disabilities¹⁵⁹ and the Dialogue Cards to assist the conversation on inclusion in activities¹⁶⁰) all of these and other strategies for creating an inclusive environment, prioritizing accommodations for students with disabilities, forming/refining accessible facilities, equipment, and assistive technology in order to increase well-being in the primary school through movement as well as for movement in the specific school subjects and the subject of physical education.

¹⁵⁸ <https://videnomhandicap.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Alle-til-idraet.pdf>

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.aktiviteterforalle.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Tilpasningshjulet.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ <https://www.aktiviteterforalle.dk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Dialogkort.pdf>

Alle med i bevægelsesaktiviteterne

Tilpasningshjulet

Med tilpasningshjulet kan du skruer på elementerne i bevægelsesaktiviteterne og dermed øge deltagelsesmulighederne og gøre aktiviteterne inkluderende.

Download tilpasningshjulet her

Inklusionskultur & bevægelsesfællesskab

Dialogkort

Med dialogkortene får du en ramme til at tale om de styrker, eleverne benytter i bevægelsesfællesskaberne.

Dialogkortene nuancerer elevernes forståelser af hinanden, og det skaber positive forståelser af hinanden, når eleverne identificerer styrker hos sig selv, hinanden og i fællesskabet.

Download dialogkort her

Disability Tech Denmark¹⁶¹ is an ambitious project that focuses on leveraging AI and new digital solutions for the benefit of people with disabilities. We work to ensure that the technology is user-friendly, accessible and ethically sound. The project was born out of a conference on AI and social innovation in February 2024. We build on these discussions to address the barriers that people with disabilities encounter in technological development. We focus on four tracks that contribute to an overall solution with the aim of creating knowledge, dialogue, collaboration, awareness and new solutions.

- *Target group.* We put people with disabilities at the center and ensure that they become active co-creators of digital solutions that meet their needs.
- *Policy.* We work for better political frameworks that support the development and implementation of new digital solutions.
- *Innovation.* Through collaboration with start-ups and tech companies, we develop innovative solutions that promote inclusion and participation.
- *Knowledge.* We create new knowledge with studies, best practices and knowledge discovery to create sustainable solutions.

Disability Tech Denmark focuses on influencing the framework for developing and implementing digital solutions that strengthen inclusion, quality of life and opportunities for participation for people with disabilities. The field of disability tech is only just being developed in Denmark, but holds great potential to create improvements in quality of life and opportunities for participation. To realize this potential, collaboration across sectors and knowledge about challenges and solutions are essential.

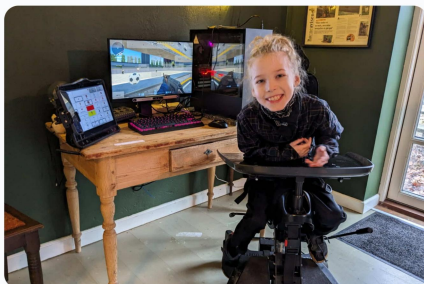
¹⁶¹ <https://disabilitytech.dk/>



Inclusion through technology¹⁶². Despite technological advances, people with disabilities continue to experience challenges with access to digital aids. The Disability Knowledge Center is part of the project Disability Tech Denmark, which works to implement and develop digital solutions and increase digital competencies to promote technological inclusion and quality of life for people with disabilities. Disability Tech Denmark brings together disability and patient organizations, startups, research institutions and international actors in a unique collaboration to influence the framework for developing and implementing digital solutions that improve inclusion and quality of life for people with disabilities, following the principle Inclusion through technology, the initiative has recorded many success stories.

Cases

See how inclusive digital solutions are making a difference for people with disabilities. From AI-based assistive devices to digital inclusion, we share the most inspiring success stories.



When I game, I can do everything

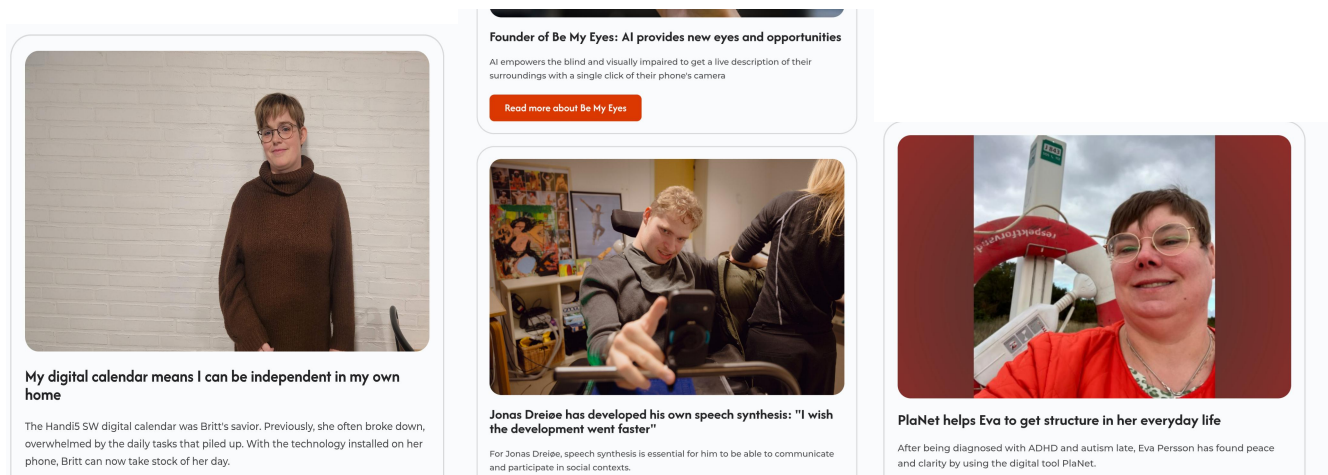
Alf is 11 years old and has a body that often lives its own life. He knows only too well about being physically limited, but when he games – with the right eye-controlled technology – he can do anything.



Technology has given me the opportunity to get a job

Employers didn't give Rasmus a chance. It wasn't until he started his own production company, We Are Wonder, that his career took off. With the right technology, Rasmus can make even the most unlikely things happen.

¹⁶² <https://disabilitytech.dk/cases/>



Solsikken – The Sunflower Programme¹⁶³ originated at the British Gatwick Airport as a collaboration between disability organizations and the airport. The Sunflower Lanyard was developed to give people with invisible disabilities the opportunity to make the invisible visible and thereby easily signal that more time, patience or help may be needed.

The sunflower string (basically a name tag with sunflower symbols on it) became incredibly popular with the user group, and neither the airport nor the organizations could handle the spread, which quickly spread to all other British airports.

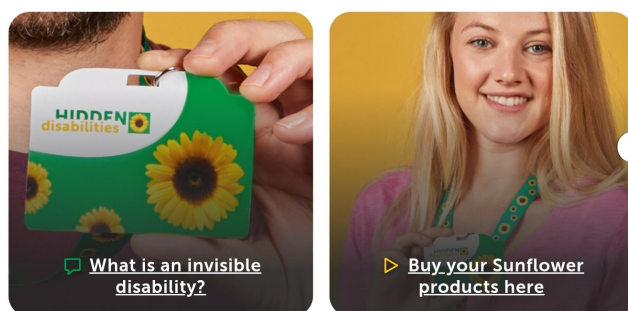
Thus, a private company was established – Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Lanyard Scheme, which is based in the UK. The Sunflower Scheme works globally to improve the conditions of people with invisible disabilities.

Since its inception, Solsikken has spread to other industries. It is found in public transport, supermarket chains, cultural offerings, amusement parks, healthcare and museums.

The sunflower was first introduced in Denmark in January 2020, when it was introduced as a pilot scheme at Copenhagen Airport, after which all major Danish airports followed suit.

In Denmark, the Sunflower Program has entered into a strategic collaboration with the Knowledge Center on Disability, which is responsible for contact with the Danish disability and patient organizations that are part of the Sunflower Program. All companies that are part of the Sunflower Program commit to giving away a Sunflower String free of charge and without questions. These include stores such as Føtex and Netto and amusement parks such as Tivoli.

There are many alternatives to the Sunflower String – a cap, a scarf, a teddy bear. In the Sunflower Program store you will find an overview of all the products sold in Denmark.



¹⁶³ <https://hdsunflower.com/dk/>

The **Better transitions to the labour market** project¹⁶⁴ was developed by the Knowledge Centre on Disability in collaboration with the Knowledge Centre for Inclusive Learning Environments under the Student Advice Service. The project will run from May 2025 to December 2026. The project will develop and test peer-networking courses in collaboration with trade unions and unemployment insurance funds targeting students and graduates with disabilities from higher education.

In the project, we will work with students/graduates, trade unions and unemployment insurance funds to develop and test a concept for network groups for students and graduates with disabilities. The concept will be tested by trade unions and unemployment insurance funds in the spring of 2026.

Benefits for students and graduates with disabilities:

- That they have gained increased labor market knowledge and knowledge about job searching with a disability, including support schemes.
- That they have strengthened their skills in terms of job search and use of support opportunities.
- That they can transfer and use their own coping strategies in relation to job searching and jobs.
- That they can inspire and support each other in the network group.
- That they have gained increased confidence in their own abilities in relation to job searching.

Benefits for trade unions/unemployment agency:

- The concept and materials are useful and relevant.
- The concept allows them to organize networking events on their own.
- Better knowledge of the needs of the final target group, relevant programs and strategies.
- Increased willingness to put effort into their activities.

¹⁶⁴ <https://videnomhandicap.dk/projekter/projekt-bedre-overgange/>

1. Country context: Sweden

Sweden has a population of 10,610,485 making it the largest Nordic country by population and featuring a low density, with most residents in urban areas¹⁶⁵. Around one in five people in Sweden (about 20%) live with a disability or functional impairment, though figures vary by definition, with about 12% having work-limiting disabilities, and prevalence rising significantly with age, from 10% for young adults to over 32% for those 80+¹⁶⁶.

2. Legal framework

Sweden ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008, making it a legally binding agreement that shapes Swedish disability policy towards ensuring equal participation and non-discrimination for people with disabilities, with ongoing legislative changes and monitoring under the Convention, also signing the Optional Protocol for individual complaints¹⁶⁷.

Sweden's policy is to 'achieve equitable living conditions and full participation in a diverse society for people with disabilities'¹⁶⁸.

One intent with this objective is to help increase gender equality and ensure that a child-rights perspective is taken into account.

Shared responsibility – overall responsibility for improving accessibility is divided between different levels of government and public agencies:

- The Swedish Government and Parliament establish guidelines for disability policies, mainly through legislation.
- Government agencies have a national responsibility for specific sectors, including education, healthcare and employment.
- The regional councils are responsible for health and medical care.
- The 290 Swedish municipalities are responsible for education and social services, among other things.

The legal right to independence is ensured with the Act concerning Support and Service to Persons with Certain Functional Disabilities (LSS)¹⁶⁹ which was enforced in 1994. It is a human rights law designed to offer people with extensive disabilities greater opportunities to live independent lives, and to ensure that they have equal living conditions and enjoy full participation in community life.

The law gives people with extensive disabilities the right to personal assistance, a form of support that is mostly funded by taxes. The amount of help they receive is determined by the extent of their disabilities.

¹⁶⁵ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/sweden-population/>

¹⁶⁶ Washington group on Swedish statistics 2024 report

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/oa-edit/10.4324/9781003463016-28/implementation-article-12-un-convention-rights-persons-disabilities-kingdom-sweden-yana-litins-ka>

¹⁶⁸ <https://sweden.se/life/equality/disability-policy>

¹⁶⁹ https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-1993387-om-stod-och-service-till-vissa_sfs-1993-387/

In 2009, the **Discrimination Act**¹⁷⁰ was introduced in Sweden, its general purpose being to strengthen the disability policy and the legal protection of the individual, and to help victims of discrimination obtain redress and financial compensation.

The Act combats discrimination on the grounds of gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other beliefs, disability, sexual orientation or age, and is divided into two parts:

1. The *proactive* part of the law imposes a duty to take positive action and concerns working life and the educational system.
2. The *reactive* part of the law deals with the prohibition of discrimination in working life, in the educational system and in other areas of society.

The Equality Ombudsman¹⁷¹ (DO) monitors compliance with these laws.

The justice system: Swedish police authorities are required to analyse their operations from a disability perspective. For instance, crime victims with disabilities must be able to understand the information they get. The Swedish National Courts Administration are tasked with making Swedish courts more accessible.

Swedish Agency for Participation¹⁷² - is an expert agency with around 50 employees and promotes the implementation of disability policy. It develops and spreads information about obstacles to participation, and support public-sector bodies. It works to enable full participation in society for people with disabilities, and to attain equality in living conditions. The Agency follows and analyses the development of work within the field of disability. It looks at living conditions for people with disabilities, and how public-sector bodies work with accessibility and participation, it creates and spreads information about how to combat social challenges. It supports organizations in their work to promote accessibility, and to increase participation from people with disabilities.

The Agency's primary target groups include public authorities, county councils and municipalities, but also with private sector employers and producers of products and services, also dealing with collecting the experiences of people facing obstacles in society.

3. Education

The work for equal opportunities start at an early age. The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools¹⁷³ coordinates the Swedish government's support for special needs education, with a view to helping students meet their educational goals.

The **National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools** (SPSM in Swedish), works to ensure that children, young people and adults – regardless of functional ability – have adequate conditions to fulfil their educational goals. This is done through:

- special needs support;
- education in schools for children with special needs;
- accessible teaching materials;
- government funding.

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.do.se/choose-language/english/discrimination-act-2008567>

¹⁷¹ <https://www.do.se/choose-language/english>

¹⁷² <https://www.mfd.se/other-languages/>

¹⁷³ <https://www.spsm.se/om-oss/other-languages/english/>

The Agency has broad knowledge of the educational consequences of disabilities. The support it offers involves individuals' learning and the work and activities of teachers, as well as organizational issues. The work is based on the belief that everyone, regardless of functional ability, has the right to a well-functioning education. The knowledge and skills the Agency offers are a complement to the resources of the municipalities and schools.

The Agency also works to bring research and practice closer together. One way is by disseminating the findings from special needs research. The Agency cooperates with universities and other institutions of higher education in networks and we participate in educational programs and courses.

In addition, there is regular contacts with the Swedish National Agency for Education and the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. The Swedish National Agency for Education¹⁷⁴ has the overall responsibility for equal access to education, regardless of students' abilities.

International collaboration is a crucial step, through international work and contacts, we gain experience, knowledge and information about how other countries work with education for all.

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education¹⁷⁵ is a network of 31 European countries. Sweden is represented by the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools, SPSM. The network works to develop collaboration in the field of educational and to improve quality of special needs education in Europe.

Member countries share the vision for inclusive education systems, that all students of all ages have the right to meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, together with their friends and peers. Inclusive education is seen as a democratic process where quality in education for all students is central. The goal is to improve educational policy and teaching based on the needs of students.

4. Employment

The Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) has been tasked by the government to help more people with a functional impairment find employment. Employers who hire people whose work capacity is limited are sometimes entitled to wage subsidies.

From the social services - There are strict accessibility regulations in the Planning and Building Act and the Planning and Building Ordinance¹⁷⁶, which aim to enable as many people as possible to participate in society on equal terms. If people with disabilities need to have their accommodation modified to fit their specific needs, they have the right to apply for a grant from their local council/municipality.

Transport support: having the possibility to travel without hindrance is of vital importance to people with disabilities. All citizens must be able to work, study and take part in community activities on equal terms. To this end, the Swedish government has instructed the country's municipalities to initiate moves to make facilities such as bus and tram stops more accessible, which is all part of the Public Transport Act¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.skolverket.se/andra-sprak-other-languages/english-engelska>

¹⁷⁵ <https://www.european-agency.org/>

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.boverket.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/national-regulations/pbl-pbf/>

¹⁷⁷ <https://lagen.nu/2010:1065>

People with a permanent disability who have great difficulty travelling or using public transport can receive a car allowance or a car adaptation grant from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan)¹⁷⁸. This also applies to parents of children with functional impairments.

Digital strategy: the public sector communicates mostly via digital channels. New tools may give people with disabilities a greater degree of independence. Special emphasis is therefore being placed on digital inclusion in Sweden's National Digital Strategy.

The Public Employment Service has assisted employment programs and services.

The **Special Introduction and Follow-Up Support (SIUS)**¹⁷⁹ provides a dedicated SIUS consultant for personalized, intensive support, including job matching, training, and guidance for both employee and employer during the introduction phase.

Wage Subsidies (Nystartsjobb): financial support for employers hiring individuals with reduced work capacity, making it easier for them to get a foothold in the job market.

Rusta och Matcha (Equip and Match): an initiative where you choose a provider (like AKG Sweden¹⁸⁰) for tailored support in finding work or education, including application help, networking, and training.

Step to Work (STA)¹⁸¹: in-depth, individualized work preparation for those needing significant support due to disability or illness to enter work or study.

Work Experience & Training: opportunities for work experience placements (Praktik) and work-integrated training to build skills and confidence.

Validation: assessment of skills and knowledge acquired through life, work, or study to help with job placement.

Assistive Devices: support and allowances from the Försäkringskassan (Social Insurance Agency)¹⁸² can provide allowances for assistive devices needed at work, or necessary aids to perform a job.

Protected Employment: an example is Samhall¹⁸³, a state-owned company, provides meaningful training, coaching and employment for people with disabilities for the past 40 years.

5. Success stories

Samhall for a better society¹⁸⁴. The state-owned services and goods provider Samhall offer people with disabilities meaningful employment that furthers their personal development. Samhall is Sweden's largest company and can be found all over the country. For more than 40 years, it has been helping to build a labour market that sees everyone as an asset.

¹⁷⁸ <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/english/disability/car-allowance-for-an-adult>

¹⁷⁹ <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/other-languages/english-engelska/additional-support/support-a-z/support-person-sius>

¹⁸⁰ <https://akgsverige.se/>

¹⁸¹ <https://akgsverige.se/en/sta/>

¹⁸² <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/english/for-employers/employee-with-a-disability#:~:text=The%20employee%20can%20apply%20for%20an%20allowance,the%20working%20environment.%20Allowance%20for%20assistive%20devices.>

¹⁸³ <https://samhall.se/in-english/#content>

¹⁸⁴ <https://samhall.se/in-english/#content>

How Samhall works? It is the Swedish Public Employment Service which decides who gets a job with Samhall. What everyone who works for Samhall has in common is that they all have some form of disability, as well as the capacity to work.

Our mission. We are owned by the state and it is our mission to create enriching jobs for people with disabilities. The goal is for 1500 employees to leave us each year to go and work for other employers. We train our staff and match them to the right tasks in areas such as cleaning, care, logistics and manufacturing. By utilizing the skills and abilities of all our employees, we are helping to build a more sustainable and inclusive society.

Together we make a difference. All staff who start working at Samhall are sent to us by the Swedish Public Employment Service. We provide training and then match them to the right job. We work with companies who share our values on diversity in the labour market. Our customers are therefore doing their bit to help bring meaning to the lives of people who may have been outside the labour market for a long time. This is a sustainable business concept and one that has seen us named „the most sustainable company in Europe”.

How we find the right match. We have developed our own matching process which we call the „Samhall Method”. The Samhall Method highlights the strengths and abilities of each person, enabling us to find the right person for the right job. Each person is then matched with the right co-workers to create a good dynamic.

We put an under-utilized resource to good use. Many people with disabilities are currently not in work. At the same time, many are keen to work if only they could get the right adjustments and support. They are an under-utilized resource that we want to make the most of. By seeing opportunities rather than obstacles, we give them the support they need to succeed. The result is proud employees and a better society for us all.

International cooperation. Samhall has been a member of the international cooperation organization Workability International¹⁸⁵ since 1987. With more than 130 members from some 40 countries all across the world, we work together towards a common goal – allowing people with disabilities to be better put to use a valuable resource on the labour market.



Klippan is a network only for people with intellectual disabilities to voice their own views as a tool for self-expression and self-advocacy and to make steps in reaching the vision: A society where people with intellectual disabilities can live their lives to the fullest¹⁸⁶.

¹⁸⁵ <http://www.workabilityinternational.org/>

¹⁸⁶ <https://dsq-sds.org/article/id/1528/>

Klippan was created and supported by the Swedish National Association for People with Intellectual Disability (Riksförbundet FUB)¹⁸⁷, a large advocacy organization supporting children, youth, and adults with intellectual disabilities and their families, working for a good life with full participation in society, with over 25,000 members and over 170 local sections across Sweden.

DigiVi¹⁸⁸ is a new Swedish dating app for people with disabilities, who want to find new friends or love. It is free of charge and aimed primarily at those with intellectual disabilities.

The dating jungle can be hard for anyone, and perhaps even more challenging if you have an intellectual disability. DigiVi wants to make it easier to meet new people – and safe. To register an account, you need to physically meet a local DigiVi representative and to identify yourself with a Swedish personal identity number, „personnummer" (similar to a National Insurance number or Social Security number), or a temporary coordination number, "samordningsnummer".

DigiVi has been launched in a few towns in Sweden, and others are following suit. At this stage, users can only text each other, but there are plans to add the possibility to send pictures as well. One ground rule, though: no naked pictures!

The app has been developed by Relationer som funkar ("Relationships that function"), a project within FUB – the Swedish National Association for People with Intellectual Disability. FUB is an advocacy organization that works to enable children, young people and adults with an intellectual disability to live a good life.



¹⁸⁷ <https://www.fub.se/om-fub/organisation/about-fub/>

¹⁸⁸ <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2Rf7c6qSSt/>

1. Country context: Poland

The current population of Poland is 37,952,375 inhabitants¹⁸⁹ and as of late 2024, around 3.9 million people in Poland held valid disability certificates according to national statistics¹⁹⁰ representing about 10.5% of the total population. While this official count uses certificates, broader estimates from sources like the National Census and surveys suggest a higher figure, potentially over 4.5 million, including those with self-reported disabilities not formally certified, indicating significant variation in reported numbers based on definition.

2. Legal framework

Poland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on September 6, 2012, after signing it in March 2007, committing to implement its human rights standards, though full implementation and addressing systemic issues like institutionalization remain ongoing challenges, with efforts focused on aligning Polish law with the CRPD's principles with many reforms completed that led to establishing the Solidarity Fund, enabling the implementation of program such as Personal Assistant, Care 75+ or Care and Housing Centres¹⁹¹.

The **Accessibility Plus** program is the first comprehensive approach to accessibility in Poland. Its purpose is to ensure that people with special needs have free access to goods and services and can participate in social and public life. Our focus is on adapting public space, architecture, transport, and products to the requirements of all citizens.

The 2021 Strategy for People with Disabilities has already fundamentally changed the outlook – from rehabilitation-oriented to one based on equal rights. Housing and inclusive education programs are also based on this approach

Poland addresses equal opportunities through its Constitution and specific laws, notably an Anti-Discrimination Act (ETA)¹⁹² and Labour Code, prohibiting discrimination based on gender, race, disability, etc., in employment, education, and public life, with a push for a new act to implement UN disability conventions by ensuring universal access to society's systems. Key principles include equal treatment and compensation (no less than minimum wage) for workplace discrimination, with ongoing efforts to bolster rights for persons with disabilities.

3. Education

Poland is actively developing inclusive education, shifting from segregated models towards integrating students with special needs into mainstream schools, supported by reforms, EU initiatives like „Career Without Barriers", and a focus on teacher training, though challenges remain with implementation, resources, and community attitudes, emphasizing a whole-school approach for all learners.

¹⁸⁹ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/poland-population/>

¹⁹⁰ <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/living-conditions/social-assistance/disabled-people-in-2024,7,6.html>

¹⁹¹ <https://www.gov.pl/web/family/10th-anniversary-of-the-ratification-of-the-convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities>

¹⁹² <https://leglobal.law/countries/poland/employment-law/employment-law-overview-poland/04-anti-discrimination-laws/>

„Career Without Barriers" (Kariera bez barier)¹⁹³ is a major Polish national project led by the Educational Research Institute (IBE PIB) to make vocational education and training (VET) more inclusive, especially for students with disabilities, focusing on better career guidance and skills for the labor market, running from 2023-2026 with Ministry of National Education funding, aligning with Poland's EU Presidency goals for equitable learning.

Understanding of Inclusion: often viewed as a process for students with special educational needs (SEN) within the general system, with individualized support and curricula available.

Support Mechanisms: Psychological and pedagogical support centers (PORadnie Psychologiczno-Pedagogiczne)¹⁹⁴ provide assistance to children, from birth, and young people with psychological and pedagogical assistance and assistance in choosing their educational and vocational path, provide parents and teachers with psychological and pedagogical assistance related to the upbringing and education of children and young people, and support kindergartens, schools and other institutions in the implementation of teaching, educational and care tasks.

Specialist clinics conduct activities focused on specific, homogeneous problems, taking into account the needs of the local community.

Tasks of public psychological and pedagogical counseling centers:

- diagnosis of children and adolescents;
- issuing opinions and rulings regarding the education and upbringing of children and young people;
- providing direct assistance to students and parents;
- implementation of preventive tasks and those supporting the educational and upbringing function of kindergartens, schools and other institutions, including supporting teachers in solving teaching and educational problems;
- supporting kindergartens, schools and facilities.

The assistance provided by the public psychological and pedagogical counseling center is voluntary and free of charge.

4. Employment

Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities¹⁹⁵ focuses on accessibility, independent living, and removing barriers, with extensive public consultations involving disabled people's organizations.

INTEGRACJA organization¹⁹⁶ established the first integration center that specializes in vocation activation of the disabled, there are five centers in the country now. These centers are employment agencies that run workshops and trainings for improvement and consulting.

¹⁹³ <https://www.ibe.edu.pl/en/national-projects/a-career-without-barriers>

¹⁹⁴ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/poradnictwo-psychologiczno-pedagogiczne>

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.gov.pl/web/family/equalising-opportunities-for-persons-with-disabilities-a-new-project-is-launched>

¹⁹⁶ <https://integracja.org/>

The 2025 Act on the Labour Market and Employment Services¹⁹⁷ expands the mandate of Regional and Powiat Labour Offices to include identifying, engaging and activating individuals who are neither working nor registered with the Public Employment Services (PES). Operating within a multi-level governance structure, the PES will require adaptation at a national, regional and local level to tackle social obstacles, structural obstacles, supported employment.

There is a number of instruments to support people with disabilities are provided in the Act of 27 August 1997 on Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities. One of them is the obligation to provide an employee with a disability a workplace equipped with accessible and assistive technology according to the person's needs. Moreover, this law enables employers to create so-called "sheltered workplaces". This is an enterprise with a special legal status, which is adapted to employ people with higher degrees of disability. The main goal of the company, apart from making a profit, is also the professional activation of disabled people who would have problems performing their tasks in an ordinary workplace.

The required employment rate of people with disabilities in a sheltered workplace is:

- at least 50%, including at least 20% of all employees, are persons classified as severely or moderately disabled, *or*
- at least 30% of the blind or mentally ill classified as severely or moderately disabled.

A sheltered workplace should meet the requirements for facilities and rooms used by the workplace:

- comply with the provisions and principles of occupational health and safety;
- take into account the needs of people with disabilities in terms of adapting workstations, hygienic and sanitary rooms, and communication routes and meet the requirements of accessibility.

The workplace should also provide emergency and specialist medical care, counselling, and rehabilitation services.

People with disabilities in Poland have the right to get reimbursement from the state to cover costs incurred as a result of their disabilities. Reimbursements cover accommodation, assistive technologies, rehabilitation tools, education, and more, depending on the level and type of disability. The State Fund for the Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities (PFRON)¹⁹⁸ is responsible for handling the reimbursements.

Anyone with:

- a significant, moderate or light degree of disability or a certificate of disability in the case of persons under 16 years of age,
- needs resulting from disability that can be met thanks to the co-financing, and the subject of the application will enable or significantly facilitate the disabled person to perform basic daily activities or contact with the environment,

has the right to apply for and receive subsidies to eliminate technical barriers (including reimbursement for assistive digital technology) and subsidies to eliminate communication barriers.

The subsidies (co-financing) can be used to eliminate technical barriers and communication barriers preventing people with disabilities from functioning independently. (Communication barriers are

¹⁹⁷ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/developing-public-employment-services-for-economically-inactive-people-in-poland_7daca138-en.html

¹⁹⁸ <https://www.pfron.org.pl/en.html>

limitations that prevent or hinder a person with a disability from freely communicating and/or sharing information.)

The amount of co-financing is up to 95% of the costs, but not more than fifteen times the average salary, and it can be received once every 3 years. Employers can also receive financial assistance for adapting the workplace for the employment of persons with disabilities¹⁹⁹.

5. Success stories

The Government Plenipotentiary for Persons with Disabilities in Poland²⁰⁰ is working alongside the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy to advance rights and support systems, such as the new Personal Assistance Act. This position is dedicated to ensuring people with disabilities are heard and supported, with a focus on policy, legislation, and implementation of support programs, reporting to the relevant Family Minister.

Government Representative: The Plenipotentiary acts as the direct link between the government and the disability community.

Policy & Legislation: involved in drafting laws (like the Personal Assistance Act) and improving existing legislation for vocational rehabilitation, employment, and social inclusion.

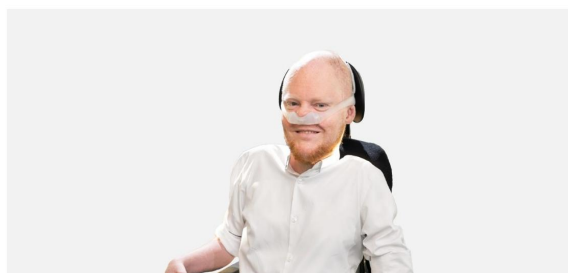
Coordination: works with NGOs, foundations, and other government bodies to create a unified approach to disability issues.

Advocacy: aims to make social groups feel cared for and important, transforming policy into tangible results.

Current Key Figure – Łukasz Krasoń: the current Government Plenipotentiary for Persons with Disabilities in Poland, also holding the position of Secretary of State.

Łukasz Krasoń

Secretary of State, Government Plenipotentiary for People with Disabilities



In February 2021, Poland adopted the **Strategy for Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 by the Council of Ministers**²⁰¹. The strategy sets out eight priority areas: Independent Living, Accessibility, Education, Work, Living Conditions & Social Protection, Health, Awareness and Coordination. The overall objective: to ensure that persons with disabilities can live independently and fully participate in all areas of life.

¹⁹⁹ Research on Digital Skills, Accommodation and Technological Assistance for Employment, conducted by the European Disability Forum (EDF), 2024

²⁰⁰ <https://niepelnosprawni.gov.pl/english-version/the-government-plenipotentiary-for-disabled-people/>

²⁰¹ <https://www.gov.pl/web/family/the-first-polish-strategy-for-persons-with-disabilities>

Comprehensive and effective job-placement model working countrywide²⁰² is run by Fundacja Aktywizacja (Activation Foundation) a large Warsaw-based NGO founded in 1990, runs a variety of programs in education and employment for persons with disabilities as well as for their potential employers. The support model is based on individualized assessments and the provision of tailored services. At the same time, the foundation assists employers in job crafting and provides post-employment support. In 2023 some 3,120 persons with disabilities benefited from this support, of whom 1,137 found jobs in the open labour market, provides a “comprehensive model of support for persons with disabilities” in Poland: individualized assessments, vocational training, support for job placement, advice for employers, creation of inclusive jobs.



Regional railway company becoming accessible and a role model for the whole country²⁰³. LKA, the railroad company of the Łódź region in Poland, launched a comprehensive accessibility program, including online sign language interpreters and induction loops on trains. Other rail companies are following suit, and representatives of the LKA are involved in developing national guidelines.



Avalon Foundation’s Accessibility Map²⁰⁴. Online map providing detailed and verified data about the accessibility of medical facilities, launched the Accessibility Map in 2020 to locate accessible medical facilities. By 2024, it covered 400 facilities and served 20,000+ users with specific accessibility needs.

²⁰² <https://zeroproject.org/view/project/b7e2bc65-6347-422b-99ef-c4f5a66673d9>

²⁰³ <https://zeroproject.org/view/project/36deb8d7-ad4a-ec11-8c62-000d3ab64328>

²⁰⁴ <https://zeroproject.org/view/project/2de75cf2-ebfe-489b-ac2b-8f112c87f968>



Accessibility Plus Program²⁰⁵. Countrywide policy to improve accessibility on all levels, backed by a substantial budget, pushes the issue of accessibility in Poland in different ways: through legal regulations, investment in the skills of key professional groups such as architects, and in the development of new assistive technologies based on Universal Design.



The Project „Socio-professional activation of people with disabilities”²⁰⁶ is funded by the European Social Fund and implemented by Malwa Plus Association for People with Disabilities in Grodzisk Mazowiecki. The project supports people with disabilities to acquire basic life skills (cooking, computer use, carpentry), social skills and vocational training so that they can live more independently and look for a job.

²⁰⁵ <https://zeroproject.org/view/project/cd4a4eaa-ad4a-ec11-8c62-000d3ab5a6d0>

²⁰⁶ <https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en/projects/helping-people-disabilities-become-independent>

1. Country context: Germany

The total population of Germany was 84.1 million in 2025, making it Europe's most populous country²⁰⁷ around 7.9 million people had an officially recognized severe disability at the end of 2019, representing 9.5% of the population, a figure that slightly decreased to 7.8 million (9.4%) by 2021, with most disabilities occurring in older age, though broader estimates suggest up to 13-15% of the population experiences some impairment or disability²⁰⁸.

2. Legal framework

Germany ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) on February 24, 2009, making it legally binding domestic law since 2009, aiming for inclusion and equal rights for people with disabilities, with implementation monitored by bodies like the German Institute for Human Rights.

For the concrete national implementation of the rights of the UNCRPD, the Federal Government introduced a **National Action Plan** (NAP 1.0), which was published in September 2011. This contained an overall strategy for the next ten years to enable equal participation for persons with disabilities. On 28 June 2016, the NAP 2.0 replaced the first National Action Plan²⁰⁹. This now contains 175 measures in 13 fields of action and thus attempts to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities even further through targeted measures. In addition, there is a commissioned person for each federal state who is committed to the interests of persons with disabilities – the Disability Commissioner at the federal level.

The institutional framework includes:

- The Institute for Human Rights²¹⁰ that follows the principle Nothing for us without us, that covers Consistent implementation of the UN CRPD by all state bodies with the participation of people with disabilities and the organizations representing them; the elimination of exclusionary segregated worlds in the areas of housing, work and education, and the implementation of the right to full participation in and within society; Strengthening the self-determination and personal rights of people with disabilities²¹¹.
- The Institute for Human Rights also has a monitoring role²¹², being an independent body that promotes respect for the rights of persons with disabilities and monitors the implementation of the CRPD in Germany.
- There is a person responsible for the concerns of persons with disabilities for each of the federal states and they have regular meetings with beneficiaries²¹³.

²⁰⁷ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/germany-population/>

²⁰⁸ https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2020/06/PE20_230_227.html

²⁰⁹ <https://www.bezev.de/en/institute-for-inclusive-development/knowledge/human-rights-und-inclusion/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/>

²¹⁰ <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/archiv-bundesregierung/alt-inhalte/nicht-ohne-uns-ueber-uns-451554>

²¹¹ <https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/themen/rechte-von-menschen-mit-behinderungen>

²¹² <https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/das-institut/abteilungen/monitoring-stelle-un-behindertenrechtskonvention/ueber-die-monitoring-stelle>

²¹³ <https://www.behindertenbeauftragter.de/DE/AS/der-beauftragte/behindertenbeauftragte-in-bundeslaendern/behindertenbeauftragte-in-bundeslaendern-node.html>

- There is also a Disability Commissioner at federal level – Jürgen Dusel²¹⁴, has been the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Relating to Persons with Disabilities since 2018. The lawyer previously served as the State Government Commissioner for Matters Relating to Persons with Disabilities in Brandenburg. His term of office is guided by the motto "Democracy needs inclusion".
- The Federal Government in Germany is concerned with the interests of persons with disabilities and is committed to implementing the UNCRPD in order to enable inclusion and equal participation in society.

Germany's legal framework for people with disabilities is built on the Basic Law (Grundgesetz), prohibiting discrimination, and is detailed in acts like the **General Equal Treatment Act (AGG)**, the **Disability Equality Act (BGG)**, and **Book IX of the Social Code (SGB IX)**, all aimed at ensuring inclusion, equal participation (especially in work/education), accessibility (public spaces, transport), and support, aligning with the UN CRPD principles. Key elements include employer quotas for severe disabilities, accommodations, and specific assistance for integration, supported by bodies like the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters relating to Persons with Disabilities.

Basic Law (Article 3 (3)²¹⁵): the foundation, stating no one shall be disadvantaged due to disability.

General Equal Treatment Act (AGG)²¹⁶: prohibits discrimination in employment and daily legal life, covering harassment and requiring reasonable accommodation.

Disability Equality Act (BGG)²¹⁷: focuses on equal opportunities and accessibility for public services and federal bodies.

Book IX of the Social Code (SGB IX)²¹⁸: provides detailed provisions for rehabilitation and participation, aiming to enable independent living and social inclusion.

Federal Act on Participation (BTHG)²¹⁹: reforms SGB IX to implement UN CRPD principles, focusing on inclusion and individual participation rights.

3. Education

The Federal Ministry funds research in the field of inclusive education, while the Länder (states) implement policies, with differing strategies for integrating students.

Mainstream Schooling: Special needs children attend mainstream schools, supported by special education teachers who co-teach, provide mobile assistance, and develop individualized plans.

Support Systems: Inclusion involves cooperation with other specialists (therapists, nurses) and provision of accessible learning materials and technology.

²¹⁴ <https://www.behindertenbeauftragter.de/DE/AS/der-beauftragte/der-beauftragte-node.html;jsessionid=8AE7236AA307FC9795379982C820CFD1.intranet232>

²¹⁵ https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/englisch_gg.html

²¹⁶ <https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/EN/about-discrimination/order-and-law/general-equal-treatment-act/general-equal-treatment-act-node.html>

²¹⁷ <https://nitsantech.de/en/accessibility-glossary/disability-equality-act-bgg>

²¹⁸ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12168151/>

²¹⁹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27460107/>

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research BMBF funds projects since 2017 to develop effective inclusive teaching methods and accessible learning environments. The researchers in cooperation with educational practitioners assess how to successfully design accessible learning environments and communal teaching as well as learning processes. In addition, they examine innovative diagnostic and support measures that are geared towards the learners individual living and learning circumstances and disabilities²²⁰.

Varying Implementation: While many states move towards inclusion, some, like Bavaria, are described as "structurally persistent" in their segregated approaches²²¹.

Germany's social services subsystem offers vocational training centers for youth with disabilities, re-training centers for adults, and integration centers that help individuals with severe disabilities identify and maintain employment, move from training centers to work, and liaise with employers to moderate accommodations and special dismissal procedures²²².

4. Employment

Within the legal framework of the General Equal Treatment Act, disabled employees in Germany are well protected against any kind of discrimination and, additionally, have special protection and rights under the German Social Code to receive Support & Services: Entitlement to assistance for medical, vocational, and social integration, including support in education and daily life.

Two authorities exist that are responsible for protecting and promoting the interests of disabled people: Integrationsamt (Integration Office)²²³ and Bundesagentur für Arbeit (Federal Employment Office)²²⁴.

- **Integrationsamt (Integration Office)** is particularly responsible for workplace issues, including the collection and distribution of the quota compensation levy for the severely disabled, for the special protection against dismissal of severely disabled employees, and for distribution of supplementary benefits for severely disabled people's participation in employment.
- **Bundesagentur für Arbeit (Federal Employment Office)** is especially responsible for career advice, placement measures for unemployed disabled people, recognition of disabled people who are equal to severely disabled people and supervision of the employer's obligation to employ severely disabled people.

Employers must meet quotas for severely disabled individuals, provide accommodations, and can get subsidies for barrier-free designs; protections against discrimination in hiring and work are strong²²⁵.

²²⁰ <https://www.empirische-bildungsforschung-bmbfsfj.de/en/Inclusive-Education-1866.html>

²²¹ <https://c4ep.eu/germany-and-the-eus-policies-on-inclusive-education-is-it-inclusion-or-segregation/#:~:text=Baden%2DW%C3%BCrtemberg%2C%20Bavaria%2C%20Rhineland%2DPalatinate%20and%20Saarland%20are%20described,an%20inclusive%20school%20system%20is%20not%20recognizable.>

²²² <https://disabilityin.org/global-directory/germany#:~:text=Germany's%20legislation%20protects%20people%20with%20disabilities%20from,the%20government%20for%20implementing%20barrier%2Dfree%20workplace%20designs>

²²³ <https://www.integrationsfachdienst.de/de/>

²²⁴ <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/en>

²²⁵ <https://disabilityin.org/global-directory/germany#:~:text=Germany's%20legislation%20protects%20people%20with%20disabilities%20from,the%20government%20for%20implementing%20barrier%2Dfree%20workplace%20designs>

- Meet a 5% quota for those with severe disabilities (employers with 20+ employees). Businesses that do not comply with this obligation must pay a scaled compensatory levy.
- Ensure employees with severe disabilities (at workplaces with five or more employees with disabilities on staff) have the right to elect ombudspersons to advocate for them.
- Accommodate the specific needs of employees with disabilities (government subsidies for doing so are available)
- Employers can apply for compensation for providing probationary employment and internships for persons with disabilities. Germany has also increased its enforcement of non-discrimination policies toward people with disabilities in the workforce.
- Persons with disabilities are protected from employment and workplace discrimination. This covers direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, job advertising and hiring. Employers are liable for lost compensation and damages should discrimination be proved.

Accessibility: a right to barrier-free public buildings, transport, and communication, with federal and state laws enforcing this²²⁶:

- Employers may apply for subsidies from the government for implementing barrier-free workplace designs or providing accommodations or other assistance to works.
- On July 17, 2002, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, along with the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, issued an ordinance on the Creation of Barrier-Free Information Technology in accordance with the Act on Equal Opportunities for Disabled Persons. The German name of this ordinance is *Barrierefreie Informationstechnik-Verordnung – BITV*. The aim of the ordinance is to ensure that people with disabilities can have access to all Internet content and services provided by German federal institutions. As part of the requirements, the federal government agencies and departments must ensure that all websites, web applications and software applications are built in an accessible fashion. Conformance with the BITV is determined by using the BITV test, which provides a set of validation steps for determining if a site conforms to the BITV requirements. The BITV conformance requirements are based upon the WCAG 1.0, however, the BITV standards are currently being updated to harmonize with WCAG 2.0. While the BITV requirements only apply to German federal government web sites, the government does encourage state and local agencies and commercial providers to build websites and services in a manner that is accessible.
- **European Accessibility Act.** The European Parliament and the Council came to a provisional agreement on the Commission’s proposal for a European Accessibility Act on 8 November 2018.
- There are currently roughly **700 sheltered workshops for persons with „severe” disabilities** in Germany employing approximately 280,000 people. Qualified workshops for persons with disabilities are to be preferentially taken into account when awarding public contracts. A little over a decade ago, the national government clarified the sheltered workshop regulations to a more “person-centered” approach, requiring that participants are individually assessed for capacities and support needs, as well as supporting the creation of “workshop councils” to give voice to these disabled employees. The government considers sheltered workshop to be transitional only for job holders who can transition to the open labor market, and regards that there is a population that will never have the capacity to work outside of sheltered workshops, and that to work in a sheltered workshop is a right of the severely disabled. Training and support in work, protecting the right to employment for people with severe disabilities, and

²²⁶ [https://disabilityin.org/global-](https://disabilityin.org/global-directory/germany#:~:text=Germany's%20legislation%20protects%20people%20with%20disabilities%20from,the%20government%20for%20implementing%20barrier%2Dfree%20workplace%20designs)

[directory/germany#:~:text=Germany's%20legislation%20protects%20people%20with%20disabilities%20from,the%20government%20for%20implementing%20barrier%2Dfree%20workplace%20designs](https://disabilityin.org/global-directory/germany#:~:text=Germany's%20legislation%20protects%20people%20with%20disabilities%20from,the%20government%20for%20implementing%20barrier%2Dfree%20workplace%20designs)

legally defined special allowances in the workplace (tax relief, a parking badge, and protection against dismissal) are all available²²⁷.

BAG-UB²²⁸ – The German Federal Agency for Employment. Since its founding in 1994, BAG UB has been campaigning nationwide for the dissemination of the concept of Assisted Employment in order to provide people with disabilities with opportunities on the general employment market. BAG UB represents the interests of all stakeholders to the principles of supported employment: people with disabilities, their supporters, (integration) specialist services and other providers for participation in working life, schools and the disabled help.

German Social Code. Severely disabled persons or disabled persons statutorily treated as such are additionally protected under the German Social Code. It defines disabled persons as “individuals whose bodily functions, mental abilities or mental health are highly likely to deviate for more than six months from the state which is typical for their age and whose participation in society is therefore impaired”. Severely disabled persons are those with a disability of grade (Grad der Behinderung) 50 or more. Disabled persons with a disability of grade 30 to 50 may be statutorily treated as severely disabled by a decision of the competent authority if, otherwise, they cannot obtain or keep a suitable job.

Employees of this kind have in particular the following special rights and protection under the German Social Code²²⁹:

- Employers offering more than 20 positions have to employ a certain number of disabled employees in order to avoid a statutory compensation payment (Ausgleichsabgabe) to the Integration Office.
- Disabled employees are entitled to an additional five days of holidays per year.
- Disabled employees can only be dismissed with the prior consent of the appropriate authority.
- Disabled employees are entitled to an accessible workplace.
- Disabled employees are entitled to work part-time, if this is necessary due to their individual handicap
- Where more than five disabled employees are employed, a representative of the disabled employees must be elected who, has for example to be notified and be given the opportunity to comment regarding all matters concerning a disabled person.
- Special Benefits: Severely disabled individuals (with a GdB of 50+) receive a "Disability Card" (Schwerbehindertenausweis) for benefits like tax relief, free transport, and exemption from fees.

5. Success stories

BNW²³⁰ (Training Center for Economic Development) and the Business Network for Inclusion (Bildungswerk der Niedersächsischen Wirtschaft and Unternehmens-Netzwerk Inklusion) BNWUNI have a mission of broad workforce development, including immigrants, youth, and people with disabilities. BNW supports small and medium-sized enterprises in workforce inclusion in the primary labor market, employers are guided through the German legal regulations to develop sustainable

²²⁷ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321017012_Diversity_and_Change_in_the_Labour_Market_Careers_of_Persons_with_Disabilities

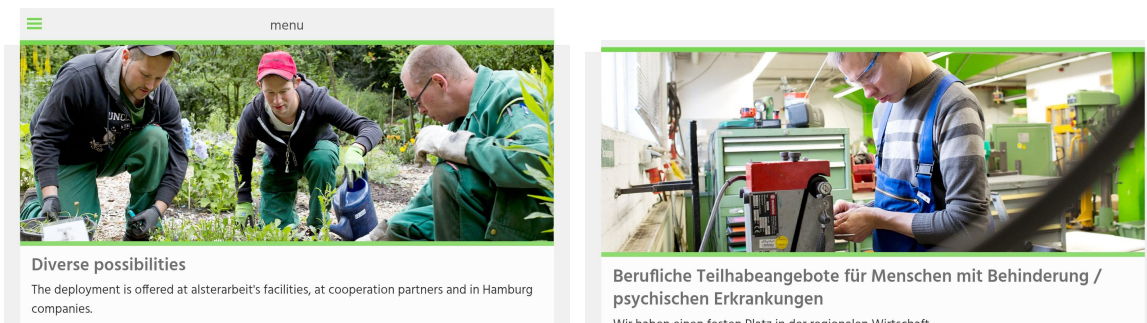
²²⁸ <https://www.bag-ub.de/>

²²⁹ <https://www.globalworkplaceinsider.com/2014/10/disability-what-protection-from-discrimination-do-disabled-employees-have-in-germany/>

²³⁰ <https://www.bnw.de/>

inclusion strategies. The project is exploring development of a permanent advisory network for employers on inclusion.

Alster Work (Alsterarbeit)²³¹. Hamburg-based non-profit social enterprise that provides various forms of employment for people with disabilities. The organization supports people both with and without disabilities to find employment and works with companies to supply an inclusive workforce. Alsterarbeit's ISA works to facilitate inclusion strategies so that people with and without disabilities truly work together.



Bethel²³². In the workshops of the v. Bodelschwingh Foundations Bethel find people with disabilities possibilities of education, employment and rehabilitation. Integration companies and integration specialist services provide disadvantaged people to the general job market. Long-term unemployed people can take part in vocational training measures in the workshops. Bethel plays a special role in helping people with epilepsy. The Vocational Training Center is still the only one that specializes in training young people with epilepsy. Meanwhile, disabled and mentally ill people are also included in additional projects.



The traveling exhibition “Really My Right!”²³³ addresses these and many other questions. Even after several years, the exhibition's themes remain relevant. Studies show that women with disabilities are ten times more likely to be victims of sexual violence. Many are unaware of their rights and how to seek help when needed. The exhibition provides information on topics such as self-determination, sexuality, and protection from sexual violence. A unique feature is that all exhibits are presented in plain language. Audio options are also available at each station.

A network of dedicated individuals from various organizations in Hamburg have joined forces to bring the exhibition back to Hamburg in 2025. The exhibition's patron is Funda Gür, State Councilor of the Authority for Health, Social Affairs and Integration. She was represented at the opening by Steffen Ries, Head of the Integration Office of the Social Authority.

²³¹ <https://www.alsterarbeit.de/start>

²³² <https://www.bethel.de/en>

²³³ <https://www.hamburg-travel.com/see-explore/events/events-calendar/echt-mein-recht-1/>

Women's representatives Bibi Botuli from Alsterarbeit and Kira Jacobsen from Elbe-Werkstätten jointly moderated the festive and joyful opening. Together, they guided the audience through the program, which included various speeches and musical performances.

My right is back! It's my right again!

The exhibition provides information on topics such as :
protection from sexualized violence.

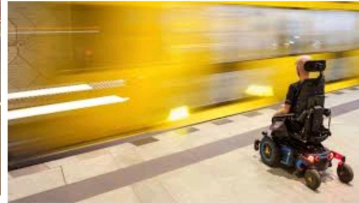
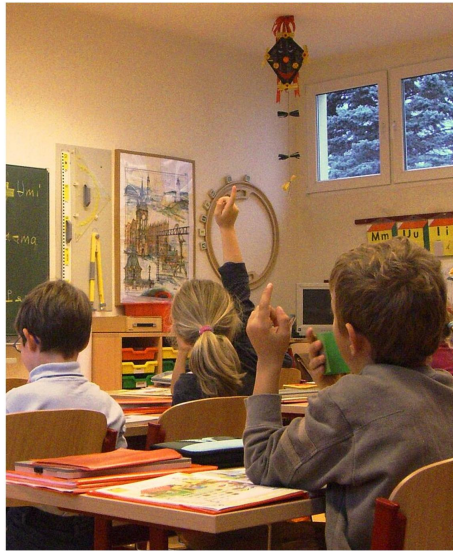


Regional models such as the **Rügen Inclusion Model**²³⁴ which show that systematic inclusion is possible and can produce good results for students. Since 2010, this concept has been implemented at elementary schools on the Isle of Rügen in cooperation with local elementary schools, local special education schools as well as the Educational Authority in Greifswald and the Ministry of Education Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

At present, all school children on Rügen are learning together – no student is being taught in a special education class for any of the disabilities. A scientific team of pedagogues from the University of Rostock monitors the project, verifies its successful implementation and examines how students with poor learning outcomes develop within a new learning environment. In order to do so, the learning progress of children that are taught in inclusive classes on Rügen is compared with the progress of those taught in regular classes at schools in the city of Stralsund. Furthermore, it will be investigated whether such an integrative educational framework provides successful learning conditions for every school child.

The concept is based on the US-American Response-to-Interventionapproach (RTI), which closely combines educational prevention and integration. This concept aims at answering the following questions: How can a successful and integrative education of every school child be realized, with special consideration of those students that show development risks? Which lesson materials, special education materials and learning techniques are not only suitable for the commonly capable children but also for students that need even more support in order to successfully face the demands at schools? How can a productive cooperation between teachers of regular schools and those of special education schools be organized?

²³⁴ <https://www.rim.uni-rostock.de/en/>



- Multi-level partnerships: coordination between federal ministries, states, municipalities and NGOs for integrated projects (education + social services + housing)²³⁵.
- Investments in transport and infrastructure: transparent municipal projects with measurable deadlines and indicators (e.g. BVG, MVG plans).
- Digital inclusion: laws and guidelines for the accessibility of digital products and services (BFSG) – increasingly relevant for access to education, public services and the labor market²³⁶.

²³⁵ <https://www.publikationen-bundesregierung.de/pp-en>

²³⁶ <https://www.activemind.legal/>

1. Country context: Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's population is around 10.4 million in late 2025²³⁷, roughly 6% of the total population, or around 560,000 to 624,000 people, live with disabilities, though estimates vary, with recent data suggesting figures closer to 5.6-6.3%. While the country has made progress in inclusion and accessibility, challenges persist with unemployment (around 80% among disabled individuals in one survey), stigma, and inaccessible infrastructure, despite commitments to international standards²³⁸.

2. Legal framework

Azerbaijan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol in January 2009, with the documents entering into force for the country on January 28, 2009, and actively implementing its obligations through legislation and programs like the Agency for Sustainable and Operational Social security (DOST Centers) to support inclusion, accessibility, and social protection for people with disabilities²³⁹.

The **Law "On the rights of persons with disabilities"**²⁴⁰ and **Law on the Prevention of Disability, Rehabilitation, and Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities**²⁴¹ establishes rights, including free rehabilitation aids and preferential employment.

Labor Code²⁴² provides specific guarantees like shorter work weeks for certain groups, job protection during staff cuts, and inclusion in job fairs.

Protections & Guarantees Rehabilitation: free provision of prosthetics, wheelchairs, and other aids; expansion of high-tech prosthetics for war-disabled individuals.

Social Inclusion: focus on improving infrastructure accessibility, inclusive education, and integration into community life.

Ombudsman's Role²⁴³: monitors rights, analyzes legislation, and advocates for improvements.

3. Education

Inclusive education in Azerbaijan is a developing field, moving from a Soviet-era system of separate special schools towards integrating children with disabilities into mainstream settings, supported by government programs and NGOs, but facing challenges like insufficient teacher training, outdated

²³⁷ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/azerbaijan-population/>

²³⁸ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2022/12/02/including-persons-with-disabilities-into-society-is-a-strategic-priority-for-azerbaijan>

²³⁹ https://treaties.un.org/pages/viewdetails.aspx?src=treaty&mtdsg_no=iv-15&chapter=4&clang=_en#:~:text=Objection%20to%20the%20declaration%20made%20by%20Azerbaijan,declaration%20to%20the%20Convention%20on%20the%20Rights

²⁴⁰ <https://www.sosial.gov.az/en/media/news/purposeful-work-is-being-done-in-the-field-of-protection-of-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-social-security-rehabilitation-and-integration-into-society-in-our-country>

²⁴¹ <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/items/09aef549-f5ff-47dd-b3b4-ea67a594b45e>

²⁴² <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=2653>

²⁴³ <https://ombudsman.az/en/pages/20>

legislation focusing on a medical model, physical barriers, and negative social attitudes, though pilot projects show promise in adapting curricula and fostering social integration for a truly inclusive society.

Policy Shift with the goal is to move beyond mere integration (placing children in general schools but in separate classes) to true inclusion, where all children learn together. Specific projects have been implemented to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular schools. Since 2005, the government has launched several initiatives to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular learning settings, like the:

- **Psychological-medical-pedagogical commissions**²⁴⁴ are responsible for conducting diagnostics of physical, mental and/or psychological impairments and for deciding on children's education placement, including the need for early intervention and special education.
- **National Program on Development of Inclusive Education, 2005**²⁴⁵ to shift towards inclusion, supported by international efforts. The National program was based on pilot projects in four cities, implemented by the non-government organization Centre for Innovations in Education (CIE) and involving children with mild and moderate disabilities.
- Another joint project was rolled out in cooperation with UNESCO within the **Development Programme on the Education of Vulnerable Children 2005-2009**²⁴⁶. The project included the provision of special equipment for 13 kindergartens and 16 regular education schools.
- The **State Programme for the Development of Inclusive Education for the Persons with Disabilities 2018-2024** has set out to promote the inclusion of learners with disabilities into regular schools and to fulfil their right to access equal education opportunities to their peers. Among its objectives, the state programme intends to amend existing legislation and make it consistent with the new approach.
- **EU-funded 2018–20 Programme Expanding Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities**²⁴⁷, implemented by UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Education, aimed to increase access to quality education in regular schools for children with disabilities while simultaneously organizing awareness campaigns. The project also included teacher training modules to improve teachers' capacities and enhance their skills to foster an inclusive classroom.
- Initiatives like the **Step-by-Step methodology** have successfully included children in mainstream classrooms, adapting curricula and using IEPs (Individualized Education Programs).

Vocational Training. Projects also focus on vocational skills for youth with disabilities in traditional arts and crafts, courses are organized for PWDs in collaboration with organizations like the Azerbaijan Society of the Deaf and Blind, British Council and various disability unions²⁴⁸.

Sports & Integration. The Deaflympic Committee partners with unions (like for hearing/speech disabilities) to develop Deaflympics, offering sign language courses to coaches and athletes for better communication and integration²⁴⁹. These initiatives focus on employment, sports integration, sign language training, and general skill-building to boost inclusion, offering stipends and employment support for successful participants.

²⁴⁴ <https://sosial.gov.az/en/ministry/state-medical-social-expertise-and-rehabilitation-agency>

²⁴⁵ <https://education-profiles.org/northern-africa-and-western-asia/azerbaijan/~inclusion>

²⁴⁶ <https://education-profiles.org/northern-africa-and-western-asia/azerbaijan/~inclusion>

²⁴⁷ <https://edu.gov.az/en/news-and-updates/15704>

²⁴⁸ <https://www.sosial.gov.az/en/media/news/a-vocational-course-was-organized-for-about-100-people-with-disabilities>

²⁴⁹ <https://www.deflimpiya.az/en/blog/sign-language-courses-organized-by-the-deaflympic-committee>

4. Employment

The employment framework includes quotas, job placement support, and protection against dismissal. Job placement support for people with disabilities in Azerbaijan is actively provided by the Ministry of Labour, the State Employment Agency (SEA) through vocational training, self-employment programs, and direct job placement, often in partnership with NGOs and international organizations like the UNDP, aiming to overcome barriers like infrastructure and skill gaps by focusing on inclusive policies, accessible environments, and tailoring support to labor market needs.

Ministry of Labor²⁵⁰ leads initiatives to increase employment and provide advanced rehabilitation services, especially for war-disabled individuals. It ensures that:

- persons with disabilities receive monthly disability pensions or social benefits;
- war-related, military service-related, and other special-reason disability holders, as well as persons whose bodily functions are impaired by 81–100% (Group I disability), receive the President's monthly allowance along with their disability pension or social benefit;
- caregivers of persons whose bodily functions are impaired by 81–100%, as well as caregivers of children with disabilities, also receive the President's monthly allowance.

In recent years, a modern rehabilitation system has been established in Azerbaijan; new rehabilitation centers have been launched, and services based on advanced international experience have been implemented. The number of rehabilitation devices provided to persons with disabilities at the state's expense has significantly increased. As a result of these efforts, the annual number of persons with disabilities receiving rehabilitation services has increased more than tenfold since 2018, and the annual number of rehabilitation devices distributed has nearly tripled.

State Employment Agency (SEA)²⁵¹ and the Ministry of Labour prioritize PWDs, offering vocational training, job fairs, and self-employment support (providing assets for small businesses).

Inclusive Policies: Azerbaijan has policies for vocational and medical rehab, aiming to remove barriers and create an accessible society, though implementation faces challenges.

The 2022-2026 National Strategy emphasizes improved infrastructure, social assistance, and labor market inclusion and **The National Socioeconomic Development Strategy** (2022-2026) prioritizes disability inclusion, accessibility, and labor market participation.

The **Agency for Sustainable and Operational Social security (DOST)**²⁵², a central body for delivering integrated social services and support, it has a Headquarter and 5 other regional offices. Works with the Ministry to support youth with disabilities through skills development, internships (e.g., with Fairmont Baku), and career guidance.

Inclusion is the provision of access to work, education and other social environment and infrastructure for a person with a disability to lead a decent life at the place of residence, regardless of the percentage of impairment of bodily functions, type of disability and the degree of limitation of a person's life.

²⁵⁰ <https://www.sosial.gov.az/en/media/news/continuous-efforts-are-underway-in-our-country-to-ensure-the-social-protection-and-rehabilitation-of-persons-with-disabilities-8739>

²⁵¹ <https://sosial.gov.az/en/ministry/state-employment-agency>

²⁵² <https://dost.gov.az/en/>

Integration is the creation of conditions for the full and effective participation of people with disabilities in the life of society on an equal basis with others, regardless of the percentage of impairment of body functions, type of disability, degree of limitation of a person's life.²⁵³

Self-Employment: Programs provide training and assets to start small household businesses, with over 1,200 PWDs supported in 2025 alone²⁵⁴.

Job Fairs & Placement. BP Azerbaijan²⁵⁵ the Latsis Foundation²⁵⁶ and the EEAS²⁵⁷ are examples of organizations hosting job fairs and placement initiatives for people with disabilities, connecting them with employers for internships and jobs, as seen with projects in Azerbaijan and Georgia. These events, like BP's successful program with the British Council or the EU-funded fairs, create direct links between job seekers with disabilities and companies such as Microsoft, Bosch, and others, leading to placements and mentoring opportunities. SEA organizes events connecting PWDs with employers, facilitating internships and job placements, with major projects involving companies.

5. Success stories

The **DOST Inclusive Development and Creativity Center**²⁵⁸, which was opened in October 2021 with the participation of President Ilham Aliyev, is the largest inclusive creativity and development space in the South Caucasus for the first time, covering a wide range of activities. This Center, which was created on the initiative of First Vice President Mehriban Aliyeva, has an important role in revealing and developing the creative potential, talents, and other skills of people with disabilities and other sensitive groups, presenting them to society, and their social integration. The center consists of an auditorium for 121 people, various professional-creative rooms and studios, a library, administrative rooms, a canteen and so on. In addition to trainings for beneficiaries, complex rehabilitation works are also carried out. In order to reveal the talents and abilities of people with disabilities and introduce them to the society, exhibitions of their creative examples are organized.

The center implements measures to increase teaching and creative potential in the following areas: audio-recording and media direction, direction of floristics, gardening and landscape design, direction of artistic carving, carpet weaving, weaving and embroidery, tailoring direction, direction of photography, music direction, direction of pottery, fine arts direction, dance direction, culinary direction, direction of stage performance.

Heydar Aliyev Foundation's socially significant projects to support inclusion, **Regional Information Centers for people physical disabilities**²⁵⁹ were established in 3 regions of our country (Nakhchivan, Ganja, Yevlax) to create opportunities for people with disabilities to use ICT. Books published in Braille

²⁵³ <https://dost.gov.az/en/page/kimlerin-dovlet-terefinden-minik-avtomobili>

²⁵⁴ <https://e-social.gov.az/en/projects/self-employment>

²⁵⁵ https://www.bp.com/en_az/azerbaijan/home/news/press-releases/employability_of_people_with_disabilities.html

²⁵⁶ <https://www.latsis-foundation.org/eng/news/career-fair4all-or-the-first-step-towards-integrating-people-with-disabilities-into-the-labour-market>

²⁵⁷ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/10456_en#

²⁵⁸ <https://dost.gov.az/en/page/dost-inkluziv-inkisaf-ve-yaradiciliq-merkezi>

²⁵⁹ <https://heydar-aliyev-foundation.org/en/content/view/112/2041/The-Regional-Information-Centre-for-physically-disabled-people-in-Yevlakh>

are presented to people with disabilities, as well as cinema halls where films are shown for people with speech and hearing disabilities, and a room for mind-developing computer games in these centers.



Heydar Aliyev Foundation launched a project to provide persons with disabilities with next-generation, high-technology prosthetics²⁶⁰. Soldiers injured in the April 2016 battles were promptly provided with advanced prosthetic devices supplied by leading manufacturers from Germany, Iceland, and the United Kingdom. After the war, the Ministry provided 619 high-technology prosthetic devices to 496 servicemen.



Society of Disabled Women (DWS)²⁶¹ in Azerbaijan runs projects, to train women with disabilities and service providers, aiming to increase access to public services, reduce violence, and empower them to advocate for their rights, with support from partners like the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women. These initiatives provide skills, legal awareness, and safe spaces, leading to greater civic participation and improved community attitudes towards women with disabilities, aligning with broader global goals for inclusion and equality.



Enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Azerbaijan²⁶². BP and its co-venturers in the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli (ACG), Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC), Shah Deniz (SD), and South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) celebrated the successful completion of the project aimed to develop skills and

²⁶⁰ <https://heydar-aliyev-foundation.org/en/content/view/60/4639/A-group-of-Garabagh-War-disabled-soldiers-and-officers-are-provided-with-high-tech-prostheses-with-support-from-the-Heydar-Aliyev-Foundation->

²⁶¹ <https://dwsa.az/en/news/read/196>

²⁶² https://www.bp.com/en_az/azerbaijan/home/news/press-releases/employability_of_people_with_disabilities.html

capabilities of the targeted people through trainings and other specialized activities. The training programme mainly focused on enhancing the English language, computer and soft skills.

Throughout the implementation of the project BP and its co-venturers worked closely with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population and the State Employment Centres combining their efforts with those of business organizations and enterprises to explore and identify internship and employment opportunities for the participants in the project. To achieve this objective, a job fair was successfully organized, during which participants were brought together with approximately 40 employer organizations to discuss the opportunities available to them after completing the training program.

Projects like the Virtual Skills Development Lab²⁶³ aim to improve access to training through technology, to achieve a deep mastery of ICT skills by students, to enable students to operate freely and purposefully in the information environment, and to ensure that students are developed as competitive individuals with a logical and non-standard way of thinking.

The project is implemented by the Ministry of Science and Education and an international education company "Algorithmics." By improving the teaching of computer science, the project develops students' algorithmic thinking, logical thinking, and project design skills and teaches them the basics of programming.

The number of schools covered by the project has been increased to 762, of which 230 are new to the project. The project currently covers 6,000 teachers and 510,000 students in 57 cities and districts across the country. 1,370 students' study in 10th-11th grades, which are involved "The Digital Skills" project.



Strengthening Civic Participation in Azerbaijan²⁶⁴. Study visit to Romania of persons with disabilities from Moldova and Azerbaijan.

The project objectives were to facilitate the creation of a network of NGOs in the Republic of Moldova and Azerbaijan that will collaborate and exchange good practices in the integration and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, in order to improve the quality of services provided and develop common strategies to combat discrimination and social exclusion.

The INFONET Alliance²⁶⁵ from Moldova, in partnership with CED Romania – Center of Excellence through Diversity²⁶⁶, have organized this visit. Members of NGOs from Azerbaijan went to Bucharest, Romania, to participate in the **Festival of Inclusion and Accessibility**, to promote communication and

²⁶³ https://edu.gov.az/en/programmes/reqemsal-bacariqlar_16387

²⁶⁴ <https://infonet.md/news/41>

²⁶⁵ www.infonet.md

²⁶⁶ <https://ced-romania.org.ro/>

political dialogue with representatives of the National Authority for Persons with Disabilities in Romania.

Main objectives:

- Facilitate the exchange of experience, knowledge and good practices between organizations, in order to improve the quality of services provided and develop common strategies to combat discrimination and social exclusion.
- Exchange of good practices in accessible tourism and ensuring access to accessible information, infrastructure and culture.

These activities have strengthened the organizational capacity of NGOs, increased their visibility and influence in protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and promote a culture of respect, equality and accessibility in society. The project “Strengthening Citizen Participation in Azerbaijan” was co-financed by the European Union (EU) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). The project partner was the Public Association “INFONET Alliance”, which implemented the Project “Strengthening the Capacity of Civil Society Organizations in Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova through the Exchange of Experience, Lessons Learned and Good Practices in the Field of Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities”.



1. Country context: Portugal

Portugal's population is around 10,405,520²⁶⁷ and people with disabilities represent over 10% of the population²⁶⁸.

2. Legal framework

Portugal ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol in 2009, making it a full party to the treaty, with the goal of ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of human rights for people with disabilities, though challenges remain in fully implementing its provisions, like legal capacity and voting rights.²⁶⁹

Since ratification, Portugal has taken steps, including developing national legislation (like Law No. 46/2006 on discrimination²⁷⁰ and like Law 38/2004 on prevention of discrimination on the basis of disability and the enforcement mechanisms²⁷¹) protecting rights and mandating accessibility, reinforced by UNCRPD ratification, and reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on progress.

3. Education

Portugal has a progressive, legally-backed inclusive education system, centered on Decree-Law 54/2018, aiming for all students, regardless of disability or background, to learn together in mainstream schools with strong support, though challenges remain in consistent implementation, teacher training, and resource allocation, making it a model for other nations but requiring ongoing development.

Key Aspects of Portugal's Inclusive Model:

- **The Decree-Law 54/2018 law²⁷²** defines inclusion as a right, moving beyond just "mainstreaming" students with disabilities to supporting all learners in mainstream settings. The law states a flexible learning model that recognizes the students' needs, capabilities and interests, and helps them gain a common knowledge base throughout their school career, regardless of the educational or training course they are enrolled in, achieved through different types of measures: universal – for all students; selective – to fill potential gaps in the implementation of universal measures; extra – to solve proven persistent problems not overcome by universal and selective measures.
- The principle **All-Together Learning applies**: All children, including those with physical disabilities, learning difficulties, or who speak Portuguese as an additional language, learn in regular classrooms.
- **Information and Communication Technology Resource Centres (CRTICs)** that provide assistive tech, training, and resources.

²⁶⁷ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/portugal-population/>

²⁶⁸ <https://disabilityinsider.com/country/portugal/>

²⁶⁹ <https://oddh.iscsp.ulisboa.pt/en/media-en/press-en/un-concerned-with-persons-with-disabilities-in-portugal/>

²⁷⁰ https://www.inr.pt/noticias/-/journal_content/56/11309/898501

²⁷¹ <https://www.fiolegal.com/post/understanding-discrimination-law-in-portugal-a-legal-insight>

²⁷² <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/en/detail/decree-law/54-2018-115652961>

- Schools have **Learning Support Centres (formerly special schools) and Resource Centres for Inclusion (RCIs)**²⁷³ to support teachers and students, provide specialized support through partnerships with mainstream schools. The transformation of the special schools into RCIs has become an essential tool for implementing Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Multidisciplinary Teams: Support is delivered by teams that collaborate with schools, families, and other sectors²⁷⁴.
- Individualized Support: Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are developed and regularly reviewed for students needing extra support²⁷⁵.
- A key feature is the emphasis on collaboration, with a well-established pattern of schools working in local clusters.

As the Portuguese education system moved forward in relation to inclusion over the last two decades, the country has also seen impressive developments in terms of equity. It is one of the few countries with improvement in all of the subjects assessed by OECD's PISA. The rate of early leavers from education has reduced significantly²⁷⁶.

Ana Sofia Antunes, Secretary of State of Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, said that approximately 98.5 per cent of children with disabilities were now integrated into mainstream schools. Shortcomings had however been identified concerning equipment and technology, and special allowances would be provided to remedy those. Measures had been taken to combat poverty of persons with disabilities and promote their social inclusion, including resource centres for inclusion and the creation of an Institute for Employment and Vocational Training²⁷⁷.

4. Employment

Integrating individuals with disabilities into the workforce holds immense potential for economic growth. This is a benefit acknowledged by the Portuguese government as part of its commitment to inclusivity under the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**²⁷⁸.

People with disabilities are protected by law against discrimination in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of other state services, and the government effectively enforces the law. The law also mandates access to public buildings and ensures that the laws are adhered to. No legislation covers private businesses or other facilities²⁷⁹.

Key elements:

- **National Institute for Rehabilitation (INR)**²⁸⁰ offers a guide on rights and support, it ensures the planning, implementation and coordination of national policies aimed at promoting the rights

²⁷³ <https://www.european-agency.org/news/innovative-new-inclusive-education-law-portugals-schools>

²⁷⁴ <https://nasenjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1471-3802.12663>

²⁷⁵ <https://oecdutoday.com/portugal-inclusive-education/>

²⁷⁶ <https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/includenews-march-2022/>

²⁷⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2016/03/committee-rights-persons-disabilities-examines-report-portugal>

²⁷⁸ <https://portugal2030.pt/en/portugal-2030/o-que-e-o-portugal-2030/>

²⁷⁹ <https://disabilityinsider.com/country/portugal/>

²⁸⁰ <https://www.inr.pt/inr>

of persons with disabilities, it carries out tasks of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security.

- **Portuguese National Confederation of Organisations of Disabled People (CNOD)**²⁸¹: An umbrella body advocating for rights and inclusion, representing various disability types (intellectual, physical, sensory) through 36+ member organizations, advocating for inclusion, equal rights, labor market access, and social integration as a human rights issue, working with national bodies like the CIG Advisory Board and the Economic and Social Council to influence policy and budget allocation for disability rights in Portugal, serving as a unified voice for the disability movement.
- **Observatory of Disability and Human Rights**²⁸² (Observatório da Deficiência e Direitos Humanos (ODDH): publishes regular human rights indicator reports.
- **CERCINA – Cooperative for Education/Rehabilitation**²⁸³: a collaboration between key service providers, combines social welfare with economic activity, focusing on integrating vulnerable groups (like people with disabilities, mental health challenges, or former inmates) back into society through supported education, skill-building, job placement (supported employment), and therapy, using cooperative principles for self-help, mutual benefit, and community inclusion, rather than pure profit. They provide a holistic approach, bridging gaps in traditional services by offering vocational training, psychosocial support, and fostering self-sufficiency through collective action and shared resources.
- **Portugal's National Disability Strategy (ENIPD 2021-2025)**²⁸⁴ Portugal's strategy seeks to move beyond mere accommodation to genuine, systemic inclusion, leveraging both national efforts and European frameworks to build a more just and solidary society. It focuses on reinforcing inclusion through priorities like citizenship, education, employment, and autonomy, guided by the UN Convention. Key actions include promoting inclusive education, ensuring access to higher education, offering a specific social benefit for extra costs (PSI), implementing employment quotas, and developing community-based supports for independent living, coordinated by the National Rehabilitation Institute (INR). The strategy aims for a more just, diverse society, tackling barriers in justice, accommodation, and digital access, with collaboration from disability organizations.
- **Inclusion Desks**²⁸⁵: Specialized Social Security points provide information and support for people with disabilities, acting as a central access point for rights and services like the Social Inclusion Benefit, with a large network across districts, municipalities, and islands, accessible in person or sometimes online, coordinated by INR.
- **Support Product Assignment System (SAPA)**²⁸⁶ is a system that contributes to the realization of a comprehensive, integrated and transversal policy of response to persons with disabilities or temporary disabilities, in order to compensate and mitigate activity limitations and participation restrictions resulting from disability or temporary disability through, inter alia:
 - the free and universal allocation of support products;

²⁸¹ <https://cnod.pt/>

²⁸² <https://oddh.iscsp.ulisboa.pt/>

²⁸³ <https://cecop.coop/stories/cercina-portugal>

²⁸⁴

https://www.inr.pt/enipd#:~:text=The%20ENIPD%202021%2D2025%20is%20a%20proposal%20that,non%2Ddiscrimination%20*%20Respect%20for%20difference%20and%20diversity

²⁸⁵ <https://www.seg-social.pt/ptss/pssd/menu/familia/deficiencia-incapacidade/balcao-inclusao>

²⁸⁶ <https://www.inr.pt/sistema-de-atribuicao-de-produtos-de-apoio>

- the effective management of their allocation through, in particular, the simplification of procedures required by the entities and the implementation of a centralized IT system;
- simplified financing of support products.

5. Success stories

The State Railway Operator, Caminhos do Ferro Portugueses (CP) has a service called “**integrated mobility service**” (SIM)²⁸⁷ aimed at helping passengers with reduced mobility. English-speaking customer service representatives can be reached by phone (7 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Monday-Friday). SIM staff provide for train and station accessibility; assistance during boarding/exiting or during the train ride; assist with trip planning. Some train stations are equipped with elevators.

Subway (Metro): 31 of Lisbon Metro’s 52 stations offer full accessibility to people with disabilities²⁸⁸: elevators and moving walkways at main stations that provide access from the platform to street level, as well as payment machines adapted for passengers with disabilities and/or visual impairment. Passengers with visual disabilities can travel with their guide dogs as long as their service animals are leashed and muzzled.



Porto’s new metro system²⁸⁹ provides accessibility for passengers with disabilities system-wide with a network of elevators, ramps, and spaces for wheelchairs onboard metro cars. Public transportation vehicles in general have specially reserved seats for individuals with disabilities, but some vehicles may not be equipped to load and secure wheelchairs mechanically. All Portuguese airports provide wheelchairs and bathrooms to accommodate disabilities.

Digital Tools to Foster Inclusiveness. Porto’s System of Accessible Itineraries (SIA)²⁹⁰ can help decision-makers, municipality services and citizens to develop pedestrian-friendly networks in their cities. An in loco analysis of the main features, weaknesses, and potential of public spaces was undertaken within a selected survey area in the city of Porto, with the aim of improving the inclusiveness of public spaces. The integration of several concerns and regulations, pertaining to inclusiveness in the design of public spaces, into an easy-to-understand summary specific to this territory constitutes an important first step towards changing the existing paradigm. Apart from the inherent advantages to citizens with reduced mobility, the SIA also has the ability to inform urban planners concerning areas in need of intervention,

²⁸⁷ <https://www.cp.pt/en>

²⁸⁸ <https://www.metrolisboa.pt/en/faq/>

²⁸⁹ <https://smarttourism.cm-porto.pt/accessibility/>

²⁹⁰ <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/11/5840>

prioritizing the execution of corrective actions within the public space, following principles like "Universal design", "inclusive design" or "design for all".

CERCINA-The cooperative for Education, Rehabilitation, Empowerment and Inclusion²⁹¹ was created in 1981 through collaboration between parents, therapists and teachers who wanted to provide educational and occupational support to young people with disabilities in the community of Nazaré, a region in Portugal. Since then, the cooperative has been providing support for children and young people with special educational needs in a regular school context, offering psychological and social help, speech therapy and psychomotor support for family members, as well as dedicated classes for personal and social enrichment.

It also provides vocational training for young people who, due to their specific needs, have difficulties in finding or maintaining a job; it facilitates access to new information and communication technologies via computer literacy courses and provides support activities for preventing the risk of drug addiction.

The cooperative has 187 members, 37 of which are worker members. The other members are the cooperative's users and their relatives, as well as people from the local community who have an interest in CERCINA's activity and mission.

CERCINA's success lies in their work within the community, through the development of local partnerships and investment in innovative approaches to raise awareness about the abilities of people with physical, mental, social and economic disadvantages.

Among the many activities organized by the cooperative in the community of Nazaré, one that stands out for being quite unusual is **Rádio Nazaré**, a regional, mainstream radio station broadcasting daily to an audience of 100,000 inhabitants, which is managed by three CERCINA employees. The Radio offers a space to CERCINA's members who can choose songs to play on the radio. During the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the radio is playing an important role as a public service agent, providing credible news and general information about the pandemic and its consequences in terms of public health and economic impact, and also as a friendly companion for the elderly or the digitally excluded, thereby helping to combat social isolation.



Practical Guide: The Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Portugal²⁹² is a Simplex+ measure that gathers information from various areas of interest and respective public services in Portugal, aiming to promote the autonomy and citizenship of people with disabilities and facilitate decision-making and the promotion of inclusion.

²⁹¹ <https://cecop.coop/stories/cercina-portugal>

²⁹² https://www.inr.pt/guia_pratico

This Guide provides information on social support, employment support measures and vocational training, social and tax benefits and practical information on the Inclusion Points network or on how to apply for a Multipurpose Medical Disability Certificate.

This Guide is also a training tool, as it clarifies the correct terminologies to be adopted, helping to support persons with disabilities in realizing their rights and in signaling practices of discrimination on the grounds of disability.

1. Country context: Romania

Romania's population is 18,857,762 in 2025, based on latest United Nations data²⁹³, 25% of the total population aged 16+ years old and up has a disability, and 6% have a severe disability²⁹⁴. The data also shows that approximately 4.7% of the population or 1 out of every 20 people in Romania holds a disability certificate as of June 2023, totaling nearly 900,000 individuals, of which roughly 77,000 are children²⁹⁵, a growing trend from 2020 when data showed 853465 certificates holders²⁹⁶.

2. Legal framework

Romania ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010, making it legally binding, and has since worked on aligning national laws, culminating in the participatory National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities (2022-2027) to better implement CRPD principles, though progress has faced challenges with coordination and resources.

The cornerstone of disability rights in Romania is **Framework Law 448/2006 for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**²⁹⁷ which has been updated to reflect CRPD principles, it established a comprehensive framework for their social inclusion, equal opportunities, accessibility, and support services, including mandatory employment quotas for companies (companies of 50 employees and up must hire 4% of people with disabilities) and provisions for education, housing, and transport to adapt to disabled individuals' needs. It defines disability, sets principles like non-discrimination, and outlines responsibilities for public authorities and employers to ensure full participation in society.

Based on the law, the **National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with disabilities**²⁹⁸ was elaborated and approved, also called an equitable Romania strategy, 2022-2027 with the overall objective to ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities, based on freedom of decision, in all areas of life and in an accessible and resilient environment. The strategy has 9 directions of action:

1. Accessibility and mobility
 2. Effective protection of rights
 3. Employment
 4. Social protection, including habilitation/rehabilitation
 5. Independent living and community integration, including access to public services
 6. Education
 7. Health
 8. Social participation
 9. Implementation of the CRPD and monitoring of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities.
- The **National Authority for the Protection of Rights of Persons with Disabilities**²⁹⁹ is responsible for overseeing the implementation and monitoring of the National Strategy and it started the implementation based on Diagnosis of the situation of people with disabilities in Romania report³⁰⁰.

3. Education

The **New National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**³⁰¹ covers the period 2022-2027 and it include a pillar dedicated to Education:

²⁹³ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/romania-population/>

²⁹⁴ <https://anpd.gov.ro/strategia2022-2027/#/>

²⁹⁵ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/romania/brief/disability-inclusive-social-protection-in-romania>

²⁹⁶ <https://anpd.gov.ro/strategia2022-2027/#/>

²⁹⁷ <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/77815>

²⁹⁸ <https://anpd.gov.ro/strategia2022-2027/#/>

²⁹⁹ <https://anpd.gov.ro/web/>

³⁰⁰ <https://anpd.gov.ro/web/despre-noi/programe-si-strategii/strategia-nationala-dizabilitati-2022-2027/>

³⁰¹ <https://anpd.gov.ro/strategia2022-2027/#/>

- Access of children and young people with disabilities and/or special educational needs to quality inclusive education in the community, on an equal basis with other children and young people, so that they can reach their maximum development potential.

Although the situation of children in Romania has steadily improved over the past 28 years, challenges persist. For too many children, accessing quality education is an everyday challenge due to factors such as poverty, discrimination or lack of support from parents and the community. Thanks to many initiatives from UNICEF, UNDP and EU projects many initiatives were launched and even brought good results, like the Qualitative Inclusive Education (QIE) from UNICEF Romania³⁰² launched in 2014. According to an independent mid-term review of the program, QIE has achieved impressive results. It has already:

- prevented 83% of at-risk children from dropping out;
- improved school participation for 67% of children at risk of dropout;
- improved school performance for 53% of children;
- made functional a model of support for vulnerable families integrating education and local governance.

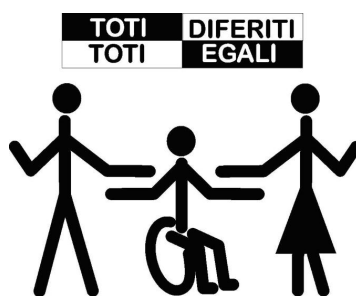
A recent survey amongst teachers revealed that educational services must be changed and adapted to be more flexible and open to the diversity of children that live in the respective communities³⁰³.

The Strategy also includes specific objectives on education³⁰⁴:

6.1. Improving access to quality education for all levels of pre-university education

6.2. Improving access to tertiary education

As an effort to include children with disabilities in vocational schools and in local trade schools.



4. Employment

Romania's new National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities covers the period 2022-2027³⁰⁵. This strategy is built on a wealth of data and took shape through a participatory process with all relevant stakeholders, especially persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. In doing so, this represents Romania's first strategy on the topic of disability inclusion that reflects the lived experiences of persons with disabilities.

The National Authority for the Protection of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ANPDPD)³⁰⁶ is responsible for overseeing the implementation and monitoring of the National Strategy. From January 28, 2025 a new provision under the law, establishes additional obligations and reporting requirements on companies with 50 or more employees in respect of hiring disabled people, setting provisions for active recruitment, communication with ANPDPD and yearly reporting³⁰⁷.

Notably, there are no specific penalties for failing to comply with these new reporting obligations. Employers who do not meet the 4% quota must:

³⁰² <https://www.unicef.org/romania/quality-inclusive-education-package>

³⁰³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042810015442>

³⁰⁴ <https://anpd.gov.ro/strategia2022-2027/#/educatie>

³⁰⁵ <https://anpd.gov.ro/strategia2022-2027/#/>

³⁰⁶ <https://anpd.gov.ro/web/>

³⁰⁷ <https://ceelegalmatters.com/dentons/28807-new-obligations-for-romanian-employers-regarding-the-hiring-of-persons-with-disabilities>

- pay a monthly contribution to the state budget, equivalent to the gross minimum national salary multiplied by the number of unfilled positions allocated for persons with disabilities; or
- pay at least 50 percent of the above amount to the state budget and use the remaining amount to purchase goods and/or services from authorized protected units that employ persons with disabilities.

5. Success stories

The Accessible Romania Project (Romania accesibila)³⁰⁸, carried out by the CED Romania Association – Center for Excellence through Diversity, with the main goal to be a centralized information and partnership space for all those who want to contribute to creating a more inclusive world, facilitating equal access for all citizens. Romania accesibila is a digital platform that brings together resources, guides, examples of good practices and service providers to promote a more accessible Romania, supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities in various fields such as education, work, culture and social life, offering solutions from assistive technology to inclusive design.

What you will find on the platform:

- Reports (such as those on accessibility in the EU), guides, articles already available:
 - The “Barrier-Free Public Spaces” Guide – a useful tool for local authorities, architects and urban planners.
 - The AccessibleEU Report – a detailed analysis of the level of accessibility in the built environment at European level.
 - DOTCOM – an online tool developed by the European Commission, dedicated to monitoring national policies in the field of disability.
 - The Accessibility Guide for Theater Performances – a pioneering initiative in Romania, which transforms access to culture into a real right for people with disabilities.
 - The “Feel the City” tactile exhibition – launched in 2023 in Timisoara, dedicated to blind people, for a sensory experience of urban space.³⁰⁹
- Providers: a list of companies and organizations that offer accessibility products and services (equipment, consultancy, design, tactile solutions).
- Good Practices: examples and concrete initiatives, such as guides for inclusive hospitality.
- Application Areas: solutions for retail, fashion, education, packaging and services, targeting the intersection of technology and design.
- Programs and courses on the topic of disability.
- Case studies among people with disabilities.
- Developing accessibility in all areas of life.

Motivație (Motivation)³¹⁰ is an NGO founded in 1995, which restores freedom of movement to people with motor disabilities.

- 2020 - Motivation has 15 regional teams. We donate annually over 1,000 appropriate wheelchairs, respecting the WHO recommendations, with support from donors and sponsors who give to the Wheelchair Fund. We organize mobility and independent living sessions and camps for at least 35 children and adults using wheelchairs, country wide.
- Motivation remains a family for 22 youth with medium and severe disabilities taken from Placement Centers. They live in 5 family-like homes. Some can work, with support, in the carpentry or at the occupational workshops, at a car wash for Motivation’s vehicles, in the greenhouses or even at the wheelchair warehouse.

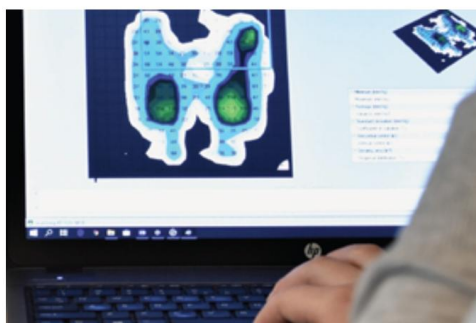
³⁰⁸ <https://romania-accesibila.ro/>

³⁰⁹ <https://jurnal-social.ro/platforma-romania-accesibila-ro-resurse-si-solutii-pentru-o-romanie-incluziva/>

³¹⁰ <https://motivation.ro/en/about-us/>



- 2019. Motivation introduces 3 BodiTrak computerized pressure mapping systems into our support services for wheelchair users. These are used to prevent pressure sores and to correct wheelchair posture.



- The #EnAble Parking Campaign to free up parking places for persons with disabilities is present in shopping centers throughout the country.
- 2017. We organize experience exchanges with foreign partners, to learn about best practices in disability services. The first visits take us to AGAPE Foundation, Sweden, our partner in the donation of quality wheelchairs.
- We test a new approach on the provision of socio-professional inclusion guidance for persons with spinal cord injuries. Our approach proposes a complex intervention for reintegration after an accident that results in spinal cord injury. Motivation's multidisciplinary team (independent living trainer, wheelchair technician, socio-professional orientation specialist) assesses the situation of each person with disabilities, creates an inclusion plan and provides support for achieving the objectives identified together with each client.



- Motivation consolidates the internal training program for wheelchair provision and independent living training staff. New team members attend courses on working with people with disabilities and providing appropriate mobility services that meet the WHO standards. More experienced team members attend intermediary and high-level courses that help consolidate knowledge, improve services, and develop mentorship and teamwork practices.



- We create #TeamMotivation, which includes fundraiser-athletes with and without disabilities. We participate annually in at least 3 mainstream sports events, where we raise funds for Motivation's programs.



- 2013-2016. Motivation creates regional teams in Cluj, Satu Mare, Constanța and Buzau. We support the creation of 8 social economy entities by some of our regional teams. These provide models of inclusive employment for persons with disabilities, accessible transport services and income generation for social services dedicated to persons with disabilities.
- 2012. We create and register the Accessibility Map and Mark, as instruments whereby we assess buildings in Romania from the viewpoint of accessibility for persons with reduced mobility. We introduce Gentle Teaching – a new working method for children and youth with medium and severe disabilities – and we train disability specialists on its use.
- First edition of the Romanian Disability Gala, organized in partnership with ActiveWatch – Media Monitoring Agency and broadcast by TVR1 on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

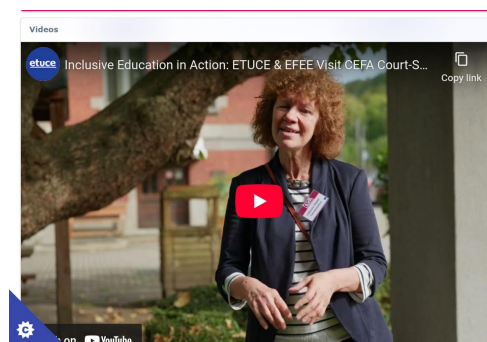
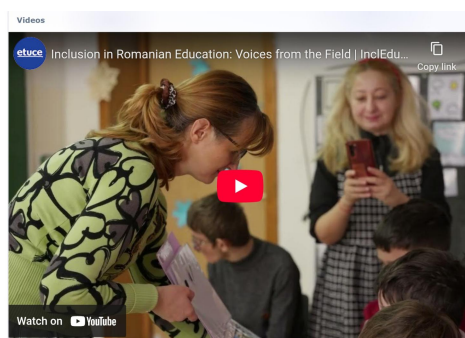


- We meet Shaw Trust, UK, and start consolidating our long-term strategic partnership to initiate employment services for people with disabilities in Romania.
- Motivation initiates the employment program, whereby we aim to facilitate mainstream work inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- We consolidate wheelchair sports by launching the first wheelchair tennis program in Romania, after affiliation to the International Tennis Federation.



- 2003. We inaugurate the Independent Living Model in Bragadiru – a completely wheelchair accessible house where wheelchair users learned to adapt their homes, to participate in household activities, learned personal care and wheelchair skills.
- 2001. We created **Motivation LLC**, a company working in assembly, adaptation and distribution of wheelchairs and other types of mobility equipment. The profit generated by the company funds social services provided by Motivation Romania Foundation, its sole owner.
- Motivation Romania takes custody and renovates the Bragadiru Culture Home, to create the Bragadiru Community Center for Youth with Special Needs. The building included wheelchair accessible accommodation, training rooms, conference hall, physiotherapy and medical assessment rooms, kitchen and dining hall, as well as offices of Motivation staff during 2000 and 2009.

InclEdu4AllNeeds³¹¹ – Inclusive education for all needs. European Sectoral Social Partners in Education promoting inclusion of persons with special needs in education. The two-year project aims to identify and promote successful joint approaches of social partners in ensuring the full inclusion of persons with special needs in education systems and education policies (focusing on education personnel and leadership of education institutions), as well as to evaluate the current policies and practices, resulting in a concrete set of proposals and recommendations for national member organizations, employers in education, education authorities and governments. The initiative is carried out by the ETUCE and EFEE in partnership with education trade unions and employer organizations from Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Romania, Moldova, Germany, Ireland, and France.



The "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, offers an elective course entitled **Inclusive Architecture/Universal Design³¹²** taught by Lecturer Dr. Arch. Oana Mihăescu and Iris Popescu. The course was created to present, promote the principle of Universal Design, and to go through the stages of inclusive design to integrate accessibility and inclusion as fundamental elements of architecture.

³¹¹ <https://www.csee-etu.org/en/projects/136:incledu4allneeds>

³¹² uauim.ro/facultati/arhitectura/arhitectura/discipline-la-alegere/st-113/

1 | 10
Pe cine include orașul? 10 teme de reflecție
Oana Mihălescu
4 octombrie 2025
B Inclusiv

Arhitectură
incluzivă /
Design
universal

Facultatea de
Arhitectură
UAUIM, București
anul 4
curs la alegere
sem. al II-lea
<https://www.uauiim.ro/facultati/arhitectura/arhitectura/discipli-na-la-alegere/sit-113/>

standard
versus
realitate

2 | 10
Pe cine include orașul? 10 teme de reflecție
Oana Mihălescu
4 octombrie 2025
B Inclusiv

Ce trebuie
obligatoriu
respectat?

Fig. III.1. – Handicap permanent sau temporar legat de individ

NP 051 – 2012

Normativ privind adaptarea
clădirilor civile și spațiului urban
la nevoile individuale ale
persoanelor cu handicap

81

1. Country context: Moldova

Moldova's population is of 2,977,214 inhabitants as of 2025³¹³, official data from late 2024 indicates around 161,900 people are officially registered with disabilities, representing roughly 6-7% of the population, with children making up about 2-2.2%³¹⁴. However, estimates suggest the actual number could be higher, with some sources citing around 7% of the population living with a disability, highlighting challenges with data collection and societal support³¹⁵.

2. Legal framework

The Republic of Moldova ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010, demonstrating a commitment to aligning its laws and practices with international human rights standards for people with disabilities, though challenges remain in full implementation.

This ratification led to legislative changes, like the **LAW No. 60/2012 on the social inclusion of people with disabilities**³¹⁶, aiming to shift from a medical model to a rights-based approach, fostering inclusion in areas like education, health, and accessibility. The law brings provisions to ensure persons with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as others, focusing on dignity, access, and non-discrimination.

Since adopting the Law on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Moldova has prepared a National Program on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2017-2022³¹⁷ and a National Deinstitutionalization Program 2018-2026³¹⁸.

The new **National Program on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2023-2027**³¹⁹ is developed in accordance with the new reality of Moldova as a EU candidate country³²⁰, national priorities outlined in the National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030" (Law no. 315/2022)³²¹, with an emphasis on:

- integrating accessibility standards for persons with disabilities into infrastructure and transport policies (direction 5.19, point 4),
- streamlining initial training programs in the IT field, adapting programs and teaching methods to the needs of persons with disabilities (direction 5.26, point 31),
- developing mandatory standards for adapting programs and educational infrastructure to the needs of persons with disabilities (direction 5.27, point 6),
- establishing partnerships between authorities and non-governmental organizations/employers for the economic integration of persons with disabilities, including by capitalizing on new technologies (direction 5.27, point 7),
- preventing and combating crimes motivated by prejudice, ethnicity or discrimination, taking into account the vulnerability of people, especially the population at increased risk of HIV infection, people living with HIV, people with disabilities, including people with mental disabilities in psychiatric institutions, ethnic minorities, etc. (direction 5.29, point 26).

At the same time, the development of the policy document is related to the government priorities established in the **Government Activity Program "Prosperous, Safe, European MOLDOVA"**³²², which provides for actions to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities in all sectors of society (PAG,

³¹³ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/moldova-population/>

³¹⁴ https://statistica.gov.md/en/number-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-the-republic-of-moldova-9460_61550.html#:~:text=As%20of%20January%201%2C%202024%2C%20according%20to,usual%20residence%20in%20the%20Republic%20of%20Moldova.

³¹⁵ <https://borgenproject.org/disability-in-moldova/>

³¹⁶ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=132240&lang=ro

³¹⁷ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=101863&lang=ro

³¹⁸ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=109067&lang=ro

³¹⁹ <https://social.gov.md/comunicare/comunicate/ministerul-muncii-si-protectiei-sociale-lucreaza-la-un-nou-program-national-de-incluziune-sociala-a-persoanelor-cu-dizabilitati/>

³²⁰ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/moldova/>

³²¹ <https://old.gov.md/en/content/government-approves-european-moldova-2030-national-development-strategy>

³²² <https://old.gov.md/ro/advanced-page-type/government-activity-program>

chapter V Labor and Social Protection, paragraph 11). Consequently, the need to develop the program is established by the Government Action Plan for 2023 (GD no.90/2023) (act.13.17).

The actions proposed under the Program will ensure the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular by integrating the principle of "leaving no one behind", which emphasizes the relevance of the Program with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In essence, Moldova has legally committed to the CRPD, but consistent practical application and overcoming societal barriers (like changing mentalities) are ongoing goals, as highlighted by the UN in Moldova³²³. Thanks to UN programs and international cooperation necessary reforms were started, a notable example being the **UNPRPD program Paradigm Shift: Strategic Action Supporting CRPD Implementation**³²⁴ was launched in 2012 to support the government in a comprehensive reform initiative intended to reverse the discrimination experienced by persons with mental and intellectual disabilities.

Five themes were identified as priorities in the context of this project:

- 1) equal recognition before the law;
- 2) access to justice;
- 3) the right to independent living in the community;
- 4) the right to inclusive education;
- 5) independent monitoring of the CRPD.

An evidence-based policy framework for people with disabilities was developed and implemented. This intervention includes:

- Capacity building of stakeholders on issues of discrimination on grounds of psychosocial and intellectual disability and ability to identify harmful medical practices.
- The creation of inclusive education services allowed children with disabilities to receive a quality education in their community school and is an efficient way to prevent new cases of child institutionalization into residential segregated schooling.
- For the first time, the deinstitutionalization of adults with disabilities was set on the governmental agenda. A transition strategy and plan for phasing out institutional options and replacing them with services to achieve social inclusion was developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Labor Social Protection and Family.
- Advancements on decentralization of psychiatric care and establishment of community mental health centers.
- An independent and effective complaints and monitoring mechanism for securing the rights of persons in psychiatric facilities was created and in 2014 institutionalized and funded from the state budget.
- The first mobilized and officially registered organization of persons with psychosocial and intellectual impairments has been directly engaged in promoting the deinstitutionalization agenda in three major respects: (i) participation in policy formulation as official members of the National Council on Disability, (ii) carrying out independent human rights monitoring in institutions and (iii) developing innovative services for supported decision making.

3. Education

In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has made significant progress in the field of education, particularly in the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education. As a result, the number of children with special educational needs (SEN) enrolled in schools has grown substantially³²⁵. Moldova still faces major challenges like teacher training gaps, lack of adapted infrastructure, and persistent social stigma, slowing meaningful integration despite strong policy goals and increasing support from organizations like UNICEF, Keystone Moldova and CCF Moldova. While numbers in regular

³²³ <https://moldova.un.org/en/286754-%E2%80%9CNothing-impossible%E2%80%9D>

³²⁴ <https://globaldisabilityfund.org/programme/moldova/>

³²⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/reports/inclusion-children-special-educational-needs-education-system-2024>

schools are up (over 90% in mainstream by 2022), many still lack full participation, highlighting a need for better resources, support systems, and attitude shifts.

Children with mental or physical disability in educational institutions: in the 2023/24 academic year, 10,400 students with mental or physical disability were enrolled in the country's educational institutions, including 9,900 students in general education institutions and 500 students in schools for children with mental or physical impairments³²⁶.

The institutional framework that supports an inclusive education starts with the Ministry of Education and Research³²⁷, the Republican Center for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance³²⁸ (country level), the Psychological and pedagogical assistance service³²⁹ (district level), Multidisciplinary intraschool commission level³³⁰ (monitoring and individual study plans).

Within the Education Reform in Moldova, there were created and endowed **Resource Centers for Inclusive Education in schools**³³¹, with teaching/learning materials and specialized equipment for children with special education requirements and/or disabilities to accommodate more than 1,700 children with sense deficiencies, difficulties of studying, dyslexia, autism, Down Syndrome, physical, communication deficiencies and other special education requirements benefit from the services of those 100 Resources centers³³².

Within the Education Reform in 2020 and with the support of donor funded projects, it was piloted the Model of Inclusive Education for Children with Severe Disabilities and its extension to the national education system³³³, another major achievement was the Regulations on the certification of teaching staff in general education, vocational technical education and psychological and pedagogical assistance services, because the implementation of changes in the certification of teachers and specialists aim to strengthen psychological and pedagogical assistance to children with SEN³³⁴.

Keystone Moldova³³⁵ provides technical assistance to central and local public authorities, local specialized bodies in the field of education, district/municipal psycho-pedagogical assistance services and school and kindergarten administrations in promoting and implementing inclusive education, thus contributing to providing equal opportunities for quality education to all children Assistance may include:

- Development and capacity-building of multidisciplinary teams, support teachers and classroom teachers in inclusive education, namely in the following areas: assessment of educational needs of students with special educational needs, development and implementation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), involvement of parents of children with SEN in the implementation and monitoring of IEPs, development of curricula based on IEPs, assessment of knowledge of students with SEN, etc.
- Planning and development of educational support services according to the educational needs of students (support teachers, resource centers for inclusive education, etc.), meditation classes.
- Preparing the environment in schools and kindergartens, as well as in communities for the educational inclusion of children with special educational needs.
- Assisting children with special educational needs and their families in educational inclusion.
- Promoting inclusive education at national and local levels by sharing good practices and lessons learned.

³²⁶ https://statistica.gov.md/en/number-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-the-republic-of-moldova-9460_61550.html#:~:text=As%20of%20January%201%2C%202024%2C%20according%20to,usual%20residence%20in%20the%20Republic%20of%20Moldova.

³²⁷ <https://mecc.gov.md/en>

³²⁸ <https://incluziune.edu.gov.md/>

³²⁹ <https://centrulplasament.md/sectia-asistenta-psihipedagogica.php?lang=en>

³³⁰ <https://incluziune.gov.md/ro/content/ord-6832019-mecc-regulamentul-cadru-al-comisiei-multidisciplinare-intrascolare>

³³¹ <https://old.gov.md/en/file/160522>

³³² <https://old.gov.md/en/content/equipment-materials-100-centres-inclusive-education-transmitted-district-administrations>

³³³ <https://www.verbina.org/index.php?pag=page&id=1194&l=en>

³³⁴ NORRAG, Comparative study of inclusive education practices, the cases of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia by Jekatyryna Dunajeva practices

³³⁵ <https://www.keystonemoldova.md/ro/directions-of-activity/promoting-and-implementing-inclusive-education/>

Keystone Moldova implements activities related to inclusive education in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, the Republican Center for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance, the General/District Directorates of Education, district psycho-pedagogical assistance services, local public authorities and school administrations.

Child, Community, Family. CCF Moldova Organization supports schools and teachers in creating proper environment for inclusion of all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social and emotional conditions, helping 967 children integrate in schools in their community, 54 schools have become inclusive and child-friendly³³⁶.

To facilitate the process of inclusive education for pupils with special educational needs, our organization provides the following services:

- Educational assistance (private lessons, educational recovery, homework preparation support).
- Psychological assistance (individual and group counseling).
- Support staff assistance (support teaching staff, speech therapist, psychologist, psych-pedagogue).
- Specific therapies (psychotherapy, speech therapy recovery hours).

4. Employment

The employment of people with disabilities is supported by the National Employment Agency (ANOFM)³³⁷ and it includes a variety of active employment measures:

- Unemployed benefits.
- Vocational training, re-training, career change, internships.
- Wage subsidies for persons with disabilities – 80% of the wage for 6 months of employment.
- Subsidies for job creation or for workspace adaptation for people with disabilities: employers get reimbursed 50%-75% of adaptation expenses depending on the type of disability.
- Subsidies for employers to start local initiatives and employment of people with disabilities and social vulnerabilities, especially in the rural areas such employers are reimbursed up to 65% of expenses related to equipment or devices purchases, and they can apply for wage subsidies as well.
- Commute reimbursements.
- Start-up initial funds.

ANOFM takes an active role in enforcement of specific rights (night work, overtime), continued guidance of beneficiaries, creates guidelines for employers to promote inclusion³³⁸, and only in collaboration with persons with disability, employers and most often Local Public Authorities can the employment measures be successful³³⁹.

The employment of people with disabilities in Moldova faces barriers, but there are legislative advances (Labor Code art. 35-36³⁴⁰) and civil society efforts through inclusion projects, mainly the Alliance of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities from the Republic of Moldova (AOPD)³⁴¹ with over 50 NGOs members. Although recent data on employment tracking are harder to find publicly, the success stories are telling, it shows integration obtained after many activities and collaboration with the International Labor Organization for example, the focus being on rights, barriers and partnerships to enhance professional action, collaboration and professional opinion³⁴².

According to the Labor Force Survey data, the labor force participation rate of persons with disabilities in 2023, accounted for 17,0% compared to 49,2% for persons without disabilities. Among disabled men,

³³⁶ <https://www.ccfmoldova.org/en/inclusive-education>

³³⁷ <https://www.anofm.md/>

³³⁸ <https://anofm.md/ro/node/20676>

³³⁹ <https://anofm.md/ro/node/20048>

³⁴⁰ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=113032&lang=ro

³⁴¹ <https://aopd.md/>

³⁴² <https://anofm.md/ro/node/19881>

the participation rate accounted for 16,0% and for women 18,2%. In the urban area, the participation rate accounted for 21,1%, and in the rural area – 15,3%³⁴³.

5. Success stories

Access Egal pentru Toți (Equal Access for All)³⁴⁴. The platform was initially developed by a team formed by Ion Balan from Ștefanesti (Floresti), Vasile Savca from Carnateni (Causeni) and Anatolie Gutu, administrator of the Company „Trigava” (Connection link), within the inclusive Hackathon „Solutions for Inclusion”, organized by the Center for Independent Journalism, with the support of Switzerland. The mentor of this team is Victor Koroli, executive director of the INFONET Alliance³⁴⁵. Later on the platform was taken over and developed by INFONET.



The platform was designed to collect, process and analytically visualize data on the accessibility conditions of public buildings in the Republic of Moldova. The target audience is:

- Representatives of local public authorities,
- Directors and administrators of public buildings,
- Professionals and experts in the field,
- Media representatives,
- Persons with disabilities,
- The general public, all those responsible for creating accessibility conditions, as well as all those interested in the subject.

The concept of the platform has evolved and tends to develop into a tool for:

- Advocacy for the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities,
- Familiarization and promotion of accessibility norms and standards,
- Promotion of a unique methodology for assessing accessibility conditions,
- Learning and simulation of the monitoring and evaluation process.

The platform contains accessibility assessment data carried out in other projects implemented with the support of other donors regarding:

- 50 buildings in the justice system,
- 37 offices of the territorial subdivisions of the National Employment Agency and others
- 60 police stations
- 1974 pooling stations all over the country

³⁴³ https://statistica.gov.md/en/number-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-the-republic-of-moldova-9460_61550.html#:~:text=As%20of%20January%201%2C%202024%2C%20according%20to,usual%20residence%20in%20the%20Republic%20of%20Moldova.

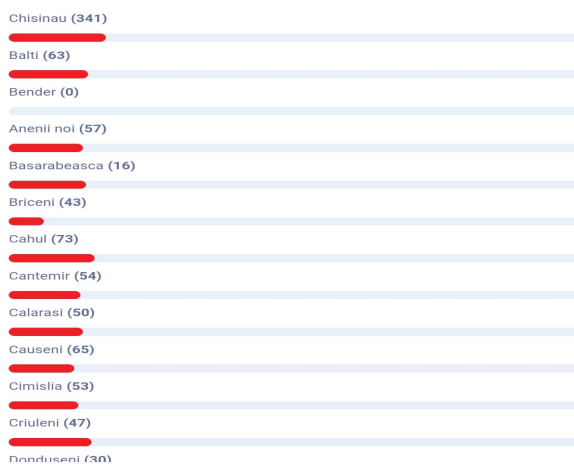
³⁴⁴ <https://accesibilitate.infonet.md/>

³⁴⁵ www.infonet.md

2217
TOTAL EVALUARI

0
TOTAL EVALUARI LUNA CURENTA

Evaluări pe raioane



Floare de Cireș (Cherry Flower)³⁴⁶ is a social enterprise launched by the NGO Eco-Razeni³⁴⁷, which combines entrepreneurial innovation – a catering service – with a deep social mission: empowering people with disabilities. It is a model of inclusion, hope and dignity. Through this enterprise, young people with disabilities and those from vulnerable backgrounds get more than a job, they find purpose, skills and a way forward.



Founded in 2012 with the support from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMASK), the Volkshilfe Solidarität Association and Wien Work from Austria and later reinforced with Eu4Business funds it manages to train, hire, retain and promote young people with disabilities and multiple vulnerabilities.

In addition to the catering component, the enterprise runs a social canteen that provides hot meals daily for hundreds of vulnerable people from three villages in Ialoveni district. These meals are professionally prepared and delivered by the same young employees, adding even more meaning to their work.

³⁴⁶ <https://ecorazeni.md/ro/cherry-flower/>

³⁴⁷ <https://ecorazeni.md/>

“Floare de Cireș” also organizes career guidance sessions throughout the country, to identify and inspire future employees. Through interactive workshops, children and adolescents learn about study options, how to present themselves at interviews and how to write an effective CV. Thanks to professional equipment and continuous staff training, the enterprise now competes on an equal footing with commercial companies in HoReCa.



“Floare de Cireș” has become a national model of good practices in social entrepreneurship, recognized not only in Ialoveni, but throughout Moldova. Customers from all over the country choose their catering services not only for the quality of the food, but also for the inspiring human stories behind each dish.

Looking to the future, the team has ambitious plans: expanding catering services and opening a training center for practical and theoretical education of future employees.

Today, “Floare de Cireș” offers jobs to 51 people, of which 30 are young people with disabilities or from disadvantaged social categories. They work as assistant chefs, waiters, event organizers or in food production for deliveries throughout the country. For many, this is the first contact with the labor market or the first real experience of social inclusion.

Accessibility Map³⁴⁸ is an essential guide for people with reduced mobility in the Republic of Moldova created by the Association MOTIVAȚIE (MOTIVATION)³⁴⁹. It is an online platform which centralizes information on the accessibility of over 3,820 buildings and public spaces in the country, grouped into various categories.

The assessment took into account all essential elements – from access to the building and the existence of ramps, to doors, interior spaces, adapted toilets, elevators and specially arranged parking spaces. Buildings are evaluated according to a detailed guide and receive one of the following qualifications:

- *Accessible*: a person with reduced mobility can enter and benefit from services independently, without difficulty.
- *Partially accessible*: access is possible only with the help of an attendant.
- *Inaccessible*: the building cannot be accessed even with assistance, posing a risk to both the person and the companion.

The Accessibility Map is a project with social impact. The idea of the map emerged in 2008-2009, but took shape in 2011, through a project supported by the SOROS Foundation Moldova. The main goal remains to combat discrimination and promote equal access to public infrastructure. The map highlights both institutions that comply with accessibility standards and those that do not, constituting an advocacy and public awareness tool.

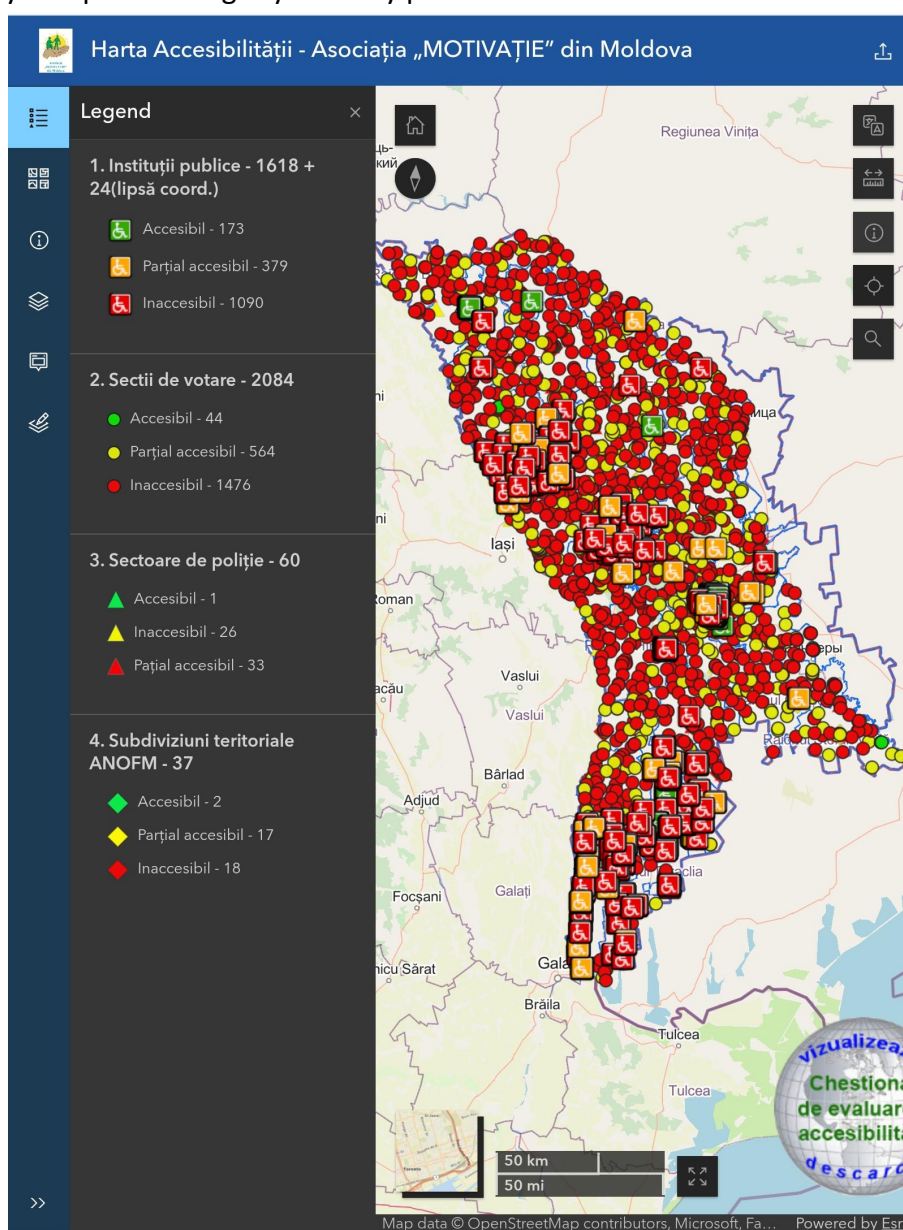
³⁴⁸ <https://motivatie.md/harta-accesibilitate/>

³⁴⁹ www.Motivatie.md

The community is also encouraged to contribute to updating and enriching the database. To report the accessibility of a building, you can complete the Accessibility Assessment Questionnaire, available online.

The map is also not only a guidance tool, but also an advocacy platform. Through the visibility it offers, it encourages public institutions and economic agents to improve infrastructure and comply with accessibility standards. Each assessed location represents an example of good practice or, on the contrary, an alarm signal regarding the need for intervention. In this way, the Accessibility Map becomes a bridge between citizens, authorities and the business environment, stimulating dialogue and concrete actions.

Moreover, this initiative promotes equal opportunities and the fundamental right to mobility. In a modern society, free access to public spaces should not be a privilege, but a normality. The Accessibility Map offers not only a real picture of the current situation, but also a clear direction for future policies of inclusion and urban development. It reminds us that a truly accessible community is one that respects diversity and puts the dignity of every person at the center of its actions.



Tony Hawks Center³⁵⁰ is working on the ground to support people with disabilities in Moldova, and is committed to improving the lives of vulnerable children.

- It provides non-invasive rehabilitation services, including physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy, for children aged 0 to 18.
- For 20 years we have been providing support, services and equipment to children with special needs.
- The aim of the Center is to help families raising children with special needs. A primary aspect was the location of the Center as close as possible to the place of residence.
- We have specialists in pediatric rehabilitation, physiotherapy and hydro-kinesitherapy, occupational therapy and music therapy, psycho-pedagogy and sensory integration, speech therapy, psychology, social assistance.



CONTACTEAZĂ-NE

DONEAZĂ



³⁵⁰ <https://tonyhawkscentru.md/>

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Guide of good practices in the field of inclusion of people with disabilities:	4
✓ United Kingdom.....	5
Success Stories	8
✓ Netherlands.....	13
Success Stories	16
✓ Finland	20
Success Stories	22
✓ Ireland	26
Success Stories	30
✓ Denmark	33
Success Stories	36
✓ Sweden	42
Success Stories	46
✓ Poland	48
Success Stories	51
✓ Germany	54
Success Stories	58
✓ Azerbaijan	62
Success Stories	65
✓ Portugal	69
Success Stories	72
✓ Romania	75
Success Stories	77
✓ Republic of Moldova	82
Success Stories	86