

Job first

Examples and ideas for employment
and inclusion of people
with intellectual disabilities

#End
Segregation

Making
decisions



Living
independently.



Going to
school and
having a job



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Why did we write this report?

People with intellectual disabilities face major barriers in finding work.

They are often excluded from regular jobs. Many live in poverty and are isolated from their communities.

Work is more than a way to earn money.

It helps people to be independent, build confidence through application of their skills and interactions with others. It helps them to belong.

Work is a right guaranteed by law that applies in all European countries.

“States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities”.¹

Work is also a way to influence policies and decisions.

When people with intellectual disabilities are not working in public organisations or other places that have influence on their life, they are not in the room when policies are made.

¹ Article 27 of the UNCRPD.

This report shows why employment plays such an important part in Europe finally ending segregation of people with intellectual disabilities and isolation of their families.

We call this report “Job first” because we want to emphasise the importance of having a job – earning your own money, being around your colleagues and other people, contributing your skills and knowledge.

We call it “Job first” because there are many organisations that use employment as a first step to inclusion – they support people with intellectual disabilities to find a job, and that leaves to being able to have a place to live, know and be around other people.

The title of this report is also partly inspired by the “Housing First” approach to tackling homelessness. We admire and respect the results of this policy, and we like the clarity of its approach and its name.²

Who is this report for?

This report is for:

- Policymakers
- Employers and Employment services
- Organisations supporting people with intellectual disabilities
- Self-advocates and families

We hope they can find in this report good ideas and examples to help them in their work. To support skills development of people with intellectual disabilities, to recruit them and support them to succeed in a job. It will benefit both the employers and the employees.

² More about Housing First. <https://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2016/06/01/housing-first-guide-available-in-different-languages?bcParent=27>

Why having a job is so important

Lack of employment is a pressing problem for people with intellectual disabilities.

The difference between people with disabilities and those without disabilities in how many are employed is big. Much lower proportion of people with disabilities are in employment compared to people without disabilities. This is called the disability employment gap, and it stands at over 20 percentage points in Europe.³

And for people with intellectual disabilities, it is even more difficult to find a paid job.⁴

- In 29 countries few or no people with intellectual disabilities are employed on the open labour market.⁵

“We need to work!”⁶

For those who have a job it is often not in the open labour market, and they earn less than the minimum wage.

Protected employment is seen as the only solution to have a work-like activity and have some source of income.

³ According to the [disability database by Eurostat](#), in the European Union, the disability employment gap was up to 21.5% in 2023.

⁴ According to the [Inclusion Indicators 2023](#), in 20 European countries less than 10% of people with intellectual disabilities have a job.

⁵ [Inclusion indicators 2024](#), Inclusion Europe

⁶ [Inclusion Indicators 2024](#), Inclusion Europe

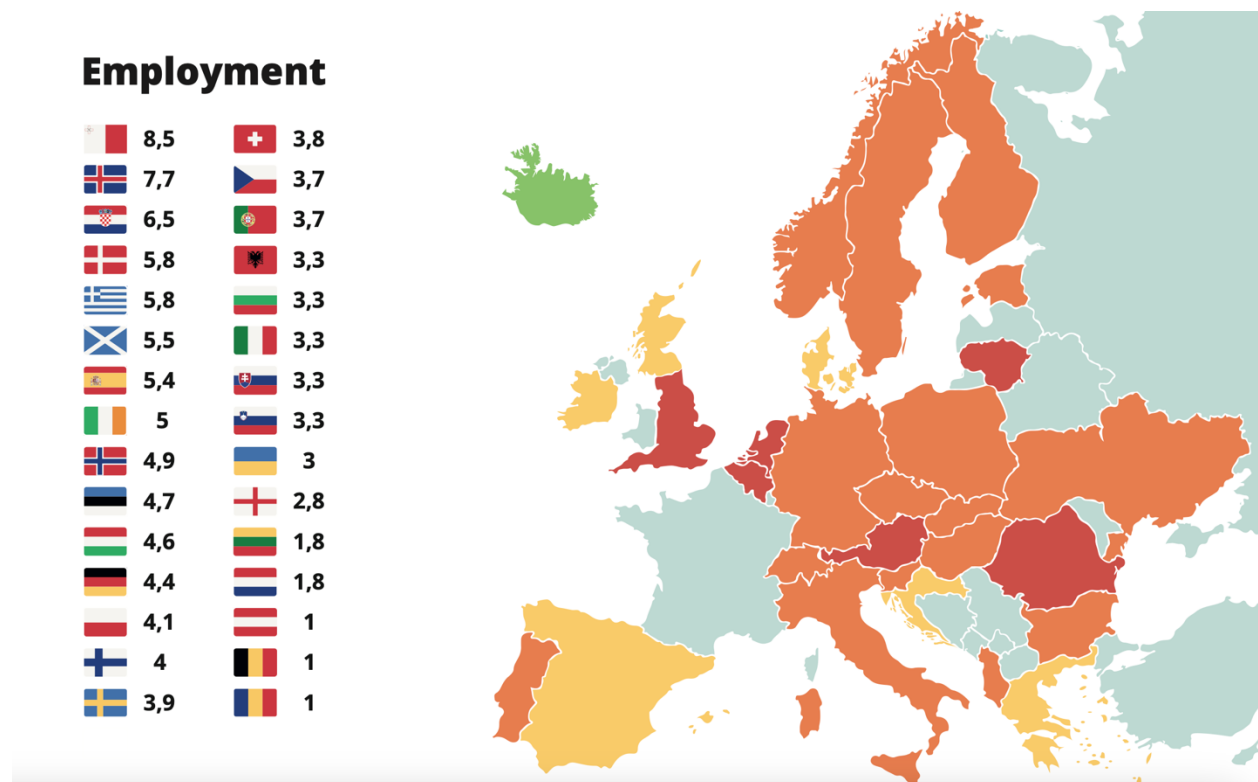
People working in protected employment often receive a salary or compensation that is lower than on the open labour and they do not get the same working rights.

- In 13 countries adults with intellectual disabilities working in ‘protected employment’ get paid less than minimum wage.⁷

“More wages, not pocket money please!”⁸

Employment of people with intellectual disabilities in 31 countries

[Inclusion indicators 2024](#)



⁷ [Inclusion Indicators 2024](#), Inclusion Europe

⁸ [Inclusion indicators 2024](#), Inclusion Europe

Sometimes social protection works against people who want to enter the open labour market.

- For example, in 18 countries people with disabilities might lose some of the financial support they receive when they find a job. This is sometimes called the ‘social benefits trap’.⁹

All these barriers stand not just between a person and their chance to have a job – they also stand in the way of inclusion.

Having a job matters for inclusion

Having a job plays a big role in our lives not only because that’s how we earn money, but because that’s where we meet people, learn and apply our skills, where we can feel useful. It’s good for inclusion.

“Having a job is about being independent, it is about having co-workers, and it makes me feel that what I do is important.

I have been working for a long time, and I am happy with my job.

But I know not all people with intellectual disabilities have the opportunity to have a job.”¹⁰

⁹ [Inclusion Indicators 2024](#), Inclusion Europe

¹⁰ Soufiane El Amrani, for Inclusion Europe Radio

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/4wZgex5yw9eHilE3boFrpA?si=1df3efc3a26047cb>

Earning money

People with intellectual disabilities are at a higher risk of poverty.¹¹

29% people of with disabilities in the European Union are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, compared to 18% of people without disabilities.¹²

Poverty is often related to not having a job.

Many people who have a job still experience poverty, because they earn little money. This is called in-work poverty.

11% of people with disabilities are at risk of poverty even though they are in work, compared to 8% of people without disabilities.¹³

“Because of my intellectual and physical disabilities, it is difficult to find a job. I am doing a job-like activity for a small fee.”¹⁴

More and more people with disabilities don’t have enough money to pay their housing costs.¹⁵

¹¹ [Poverty of persons with disabilities and their families](#) (PDF), Inclusion Europe 2020. Page 7.

¹² [Disability Database](#), Eurostat, quoted June 2025.

¹³ [Disability Database](#), Eurostat, quoted June 2025.

¹⁴ [Inclusion Indicators 2024](#), Inclusion Europe.

¹⁵ [Targeted measures for persons with disabilities to cope with the cost-of-living crisis](#), European Parliament, 2023. The report says, “among people with disabilities, the housing cost overburden rate was 11.7% in 2022 compared to 9.0% in 2021” The report also says “11% of people with disabilities are more likely to be able to pay housing bills, compared to 8.2% without disability”.

Poverty of persons with disabilities and their families

[Policy briefing](#) (PDF)



It is also important to consider the situation of families of people with intellectual disabilities.

Many family members must work and provide care at the same time (informal care). Sometimes they must stop working.¹⁶

This is especially true for women.¹⁷

Around 7.7 million women are not working because of care responsibilities, leaving them at a higher risk of poverty, decreased pension and social exclusion.¹⁸

Independence and inclusion

Having a job isn't just about the money — it builds autonomy, confidence, the freedom to achieve your goals in life, social networks, belonging.

Work is where people meet, form diverse social networks and develop skills which help them to live independently.

Meeting other people, being part of a team, performing a task in autonomy, managing time and resources – these are all skills we can use in our everyday lives.

¹⁶ [Reconciling work and care: the need to support informal carers](#), Eurocarers, 2018

¹⁷ [International women's day: putting the spotlight on women as caregivers to family members with intellectual disabilities](#), Inclusion Europe, 2025

¹⁸ [A European Care Strategy for caregivers and care receivers](#), European Commission.

“Thanks to work, I developed much better communication skills, improved my network skills and developed more confidence.”¹⁹

Skills and talents

Skills are essential to find a work, vice versa work is a key place to learn new skills.

Skills are essential for career progression, personal growth and social participation.

People with intellectual disabilities often miss out on these opportunities.

They face major barriers in accessing education, internships, university, lifelong learning programmes.

In 2025, 12.8% of young people (15-29 years) with disabilities don't have a job and are not in education.²⁰

- 18,000 children with intellectual disabilities are not in education.²¹

Many children with intellectual disabilities are still segregated in “special schools” which is not an environment preparing them for the labour market or to be included in the community.

- 530,000 children are in special schools in Europe.²²

Moreover, education and training system are not flexible enough. They often promote selective classes and diplomas that are not inclusive and accessible.

¹⁹ Mathew, taking part in Breaking Barriers program by Enable (more information in the 2nd part of the report).

²⁰ [EU Disability Data base](#) available online

²¹ [Inclusion Indicators 2024](#), Inclusion Europe

²² [Inclusion indicators 2024](#), Inclusion Europe

They miss the chance to learn in universities or vocational schools the technical skills that businesses need. This prevents them from learning skills needed in a changing labour market.

Many important skills — like communication, collaboration, empathy, autonomy and problem-solving — are often overlooked. But these social skills are essential for participation in society, not just for getting a job.

And in a world where artificial intelligence is replacing many technical skills, social skills are more valuable than ever. They deserve to be taught, supported, and celebrated — starting in inclusive schools, and continuing throughout life.

Life-long learning

Learning and skills development is not a matter for children only. Adults need to learn and develop too, and often this happens at work, or is closely related to work.

People with intellectual disabilities need to have access to life-long learning and career development.

"If we work, we get the opportunity to get new skills"²³

EU institutions have programmes to make their traineeships more accessible for people with disabilities. However, these traineeships remain inaccessible due to the lack of reasonable accommodations provided by the institutions.²⁴

²³ László Bercse, speech available on [Inclusion Europe Website](#)

²⁴ <https://www.edf-feph.org/eu-institutions-failing-its-staff-with-disabilities-un-experts-hear/>

The European Union announced the Union of Skills in 2025.²⁵ This new initiative aims to help people learn and develop skills.

Value for employers

Creating jobs for people with disabilities has many benefits for employers.²⁶

These are benefits like:²⁷

- A better workplace and work environment
- Attracting more and interesting profiles
- Re-thinking and simplifying processes and approach
- Stable workforce for jobs with a past of heavy turnover.
- Positive image of the company which develops inclusive employment program.

Value for society

Hiring people with intellectual disabilities is good for everybody.

It breaks down stereotypes and reduces discrimination.²⁸

When people with intellectual disabilities have jobs, they also take part in the economy — they pay taxes, spend money, and help businesses grow, just like everyone else.²⁹

²⁵ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/union-skills_en

²⁶ Getting to Equal: the disability inclusion advantage, Accenture, 2028
<https://www.accenture.com/content/dam/accenture/final/a-com-migration/pdf/pdf-89/accenture-disability-inclusion-research-report.pdf>

²⁷ “My talent for diversity”, research by AMS, 2020 (<https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/D-3.1-The-European-research-and-the-lessons-learnt-as-uploaded-in-the-participant-portal-1.pdf>)

²⁸ International Monetary Fund, Inclusivity in the open labor market, 2019 (available online <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2021/05/19/Inclusivity-in-the-Labor-Market-50230>)

²⁹ OECD, Building back more inclusive labour market, 2022 available online https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-employment-outlook-2022_1bb305a6-en.html

Examples of support to employment

Many organisations create jobs and support people who want to learn new skills.

Some examples are listed below and more are on [Inclusion Europe's website](#).

Internships Work – National Development Team for Inclusion, United Kingdom

Young people with learning disabilities or autism often leave school without clear pathways into employment.

The [Internships Work](#) programme was created to address this gap by providing supported internships in England. The project helps young people to access the paid job that they want.

How do they do that?

Internships Work is **a national programme** led by the National Development Team for Inclusion.

Internships Work collaborates with the British Association for Supported Employment, and local authorities.

It supports local authorities, colleges, and employers to develop **high-quality supported internships for young people aged 16–24**. These young people are part of an Education, Health and Care Plan (a support plan in the United Kingdom).

4500 young people are part of these internships per year.

The internships are one academic year and combine practical training with classroom-based learning.

Young people are supported by skilled job coaches who help them gain confidence, learn practical skills, and prepare for permanent jobs.

The programme offers a quality framework which helps employers to ensure quality inclusive environments and roles that match the interns' strengths.

Internships Work proves that high expectations, structured support, and strong collaboration can lead to real jobs for young people with intellectual disabilities.

The programme also offers valuable tools, guides, and data to help other organisations to also do it and have success.

Customized employment – Plena inclusión, Spain

In Spain, **Plena Inclusión** tested a new approach called “**Customized Employment**”.

Unlike traditional approaches that expect individuals to fit existing jobs, this method starts by exploring a person's strengths, interests, and preferences, and then creates tailored jobs that also meet the needs of employers.

How do they do that?

They designed **a methodology to make job flexible**, so it can meet the needs of both employers and employees with intellectual disabilities.

This methodology consists of 4 parts:

1. Discovery: to get to know the person and his/her environment. It helps finding his/her skills, and preferences to identify relevant jobs and training.
2. Planning: to find relevant companies and plan visits. This helps knowing more about the employer and the jobs. Also, skills development plans are made.

3. Negotiations: to design the job position that meets those needs, and the person's skills. It also identifies the benefits for the company and the necessary support and mechanisms for achieving success.
4. Support: to advise the company on how to provide continuous training, support, and helping them to take part in the company's life, and in the society outside.

They tested the methodology in 12 regions in Spain. Over 500 people took part in the project.

The project has positive impacts on employment rates, social inclusion and well-being.

The number of people hired tripled over the course of the process, while the number of hours of paid work per week quadrupled.

Also, the feeling of belonging to their neighbourhood or town increased by 25%.

This initiative shows that adapting jobs to people with intellectual disabilities, even those who need higher support, helps employment and employers.

Visit the [Plena Inclusion's website](#) for testimonies of participants.



Breaking Barriers – Enable, Scotland (UK)

In Scotland, [Breaking Barriers](#) is a unique partnership giving the opportunity to young people with learning disabilities to attend one of the leading business schools.

Thanks to the programme students achieve an accredited qualification and gain real work experience with some of the country's largest employers in Scotland.

How do they do that?

Enable partners with big universities and companies.

The programme was founded by Enable together with the University of Strathclyde Business School, and ScottishPower.

Now it expanded to the University of Strathclyde's Faculty of Science, partnering with Balfour Beatty for its work placements, and Edinburgh Napier University, where students work with corporate partner, like EY or Dayforce.

The programme gives participants the opportunity to access the life-shaping experience of university.

It leads to long-term job and further education.

Since 2018, over 97% of graduates have progressed into employment or further education.

Breaking Barriers shows that inclusive education and employment are linked and highly successful.

Work and Job Coaching – Tukena, Finland

Tukena Oy is a Finnish service provider supporting people with disabilities in achieving a good life through training and employment. Tukena Oy provides services aimed at enhancing skills, autonomy, and integration into the workforce.

Tukena Oy operates across various regions in Finland.

How do they do that?

‘Work activity’ is a rehabilitation activity preparing for working life and strengthening social skills. The work activity includes various jobs like, assembly job, property maintenance, cleaning, and the manufacture of crafts and wood products.

It supports the transition to work or further studies.

‘Job coaching’ promotes job placement in the workforce. The job coach supports the person in finding suitable jobs and guides employers.

Tukena's model shows that with the right support, people with intellectual disabilities develop skills and thrive in inclusive work environments.

Supported Employment Program – Rytmus, Czechia

People with intellectual often face serious barriers to accessing regular jobs, even though they have skills and motivation to work.

[Rytmus](#) helps change that by supporting people to discover their strengths, improve their skills and connect them with major employers like Ikea, Microsoft, and the Czech Post.

How do they do that?

Rytmus provides **personalised support** to help people succeed in employment.

Rytmus uses the “Human-Centred Planning method” which is a way to make sure support fits individual goals.

Support includes building everyday skills like time management, communication, and travel, as well as learning about labour rights.

Participants receive help preparing for job interviews, navigating the hiring process, and getting support directly in the workplace if needed.

The programme is based on respect, choice, and the idea of “just enough” support. So, people are empowered to make decisions and take responsibility.

Services are available in Prague, Brno, and the Karlovy Vary region.

Rytmus shows that inclusive employment is possible when support is tailored to individual needs and when companies are open to partnership with families, service providers and others.

Work Training and Social Rehabilitation – Jurta, Czechia

Jurta's work training programme creates a safe and supportive space where people can try out different tasks, build self-confidence, and learn how to work in a real job environment.

It helps people transition step-by-step toward the open labour market and have more independence.

How do they do that?

Jurta offers a **work integration service focused on real-life and practical skills**.

Participants work on personal development, such as decision-making, responsibility, and daily routines. They train in skills needed both in and outside work, like travelling independently, understanding working hours, or knowing about their employment rights.

Work training takes place in a realistic job setting and lasts from 12 to 24 months.

People are supported by professionals and later can **transition to supported employment** provided by the *Osmý den* agency. There, they receive help finding jobs, contacting employers, and getting on-the-job assistance from a job consultant.

Some success stories:

Marcela, 52 years old

Marcela has lived in institutions since birth. She had no experience with regular work, responsibilities, or even setting her own schedule.

During her time in the work training programme, she gradually became familiar with getting up regularly, working in a team, and being consistent in her work.

Thanks to these new skills and habits, Marcela now works as a cleaner in a retirement home. She has a regular job and receives a regular salary. The staff at the retirement home describe her as a reliable and independent colleague.

Petr, 18 years old

Petr lives with his family. He attended a special school and left a vocational school at age 17 because he couldn't keep up with his classmates. When he joined the work training programme on the recommendation of a social worker, he had no idea what kind of job he wanted and didn't know what working hours or a salary meant.

He began coming to Jurta two days a week and worked in the ceramics workshop. He enjoyed it and gradually became more independent. With the support of social workers, he developed a better idea of his goals. Thanks to his talent and motivation, he now works at Jurta and, through the follow-up supported employment service, is looking for a job he chose himself.

Jurta shows that finding a job can be a step-by-step process. It helps people getting out of segregation.

KLAPjob – Lev, Denmark

KLAPjob is a pioneering employment programme that creates inclusive job opportunities across Denmark. It makes collaboration with a wide network of employers possible.³⁰

How do they do that?

Collaboration with employers: Klapjob partners with many different companies to find jobs that can be tailored to people with intellectual disabilities.

Customisation of jobs: The programme works closely with employers to adapt job roles, ensuring tasks are manageable, such as focusing on one task at a time, and providing clear instructions.

³⁰ More on the Klapjob project on Inclusion Europe's website <https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/klapjob-employment-inclusion-people-disabilities/>

Personalised Support: KLAPjob offers guidance throughout the employment process, including assistance with applications, interviews, and support, ensuring both employers and employees have the resources they need for success.

Financial benefits and incentives: In addition to the €2,500 per month of disability benefits, participants earn a wage of €5–6 per hour for their part-time work, amounting around €495 per month for a 20-hour workweek. This money allows individuals to supplement their income while maintaining their disability benefits.

Employers participating in the KLAPjob programme benefit from a wage subsidy of €3 per hour per employee. It encourages companies to create job opportunities.

KLAPjob has created more than 6,000 jobs for people with intellectual disabilities.

KLAPjob shows that with thoughtful collaboration, support, measures to ensure good incomes, individuals with intellectual disabilities can thrive in the open labour market.

Jobs in tech – Séfora LLC, Italy

Séfora is a social enterprise in Parma, Italy. They work in the ICT (technology) sector and help people with intellectual disabilities and neurodivergence to find jobs. They either hire people themselves or support them to get jobs in regular companies.

How do they do that?

Séfora helps both **people** and **businesses**.

For people looking for jobs:

- **Assessment** – They learn about the person's skills, needs, and goals.
- **Orientation** – They help the person find the right kind of job.
- **Planning** – They set training goals and help with CVs and interviews.
- **Coaching** – A Job Coach supports the person during training or at work.

For businesses:

- **Assessment** – They find out what the company needs and how to support inclusion.
- **Training** – They teach companies how to work well with people with intellectual disabilities and neurodivergence.
- **Consulting** – They give advice on laws, support, and funding.
- **Accessibility services** – They help make websites and documents easier to read and understand.
- **IT services** – They also provide web and app development services.
- **AI Services** – They help using AI to achieve social impact.

In 2024:

- 45 people involved.
- 28 people did internships with support from a Job Coach.
- 10 people got hired either by Séfora or a different company, some even pursued higher education.

Séfora shows that offering support at every step is a good way to get real jobs.

Technology can be a tool to make jobs more inclusive.

I earn a job – GTB, Belgium

GTB (short for Specialized Team Mediation in English) helps people with disabilities or health issues find paid jobs in Flanders (Belgium).

The project “I earn a job” focuses on providing supported employment to people who have a disability allowance.

How do they do that?

They use the SUEM approach, which means in English “**place, train, maintain, progress.**”

GTB supports people step by step using a person-centred and inclusive method.

First, they find participants through public employment services, disability organisations, families, employers, day care centres, or even GTB's website.

Then, they give access to supported employment using the “place, train, maintain, progress” approach:

- Participants go straight into paid jobs.
- Each person has one trusted job coach with whom he/she regularly meets and communicates.
- Coaches also speak with employers (on average, 16–20 employer contacts).

Jobs supported include roles like cleaners, shop assistants, kitchen staff, administrative workers, and IT support.

Work contracts are often permanent, and participants work on average 3 days a week.

GTB also helps employers in accessing financial support by providing guidance and support on wage subsidies, and to pay for training and job coaching.

Throughout the journey, they also involve families and the support network. This makes a real difference.

So far, 103 people got access to paid jobs thanks to the project (which represents 56% of the participants).

Many think support comes first, then jobs. “I earn a job” shows the contrary is also possible. First comes the job, and then the support, which should be individualised.

In my opinion, giving a job to someone with a disability ... is a matter of seeing the opportunities that make it possible, rather than the barriers that make it difficult.

Sanders – Employer taking part in “I earn a job”.

DZWONI Center – PSONI, Poland

The [DZWONI Center](#) Poland **helps** people with intellectual disabilities **find and keep jobs** in the regular job market.

It was created by the Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and follows the supported employment model. It started over 20 years ago and is the first non-public employment agency in Poland using this model.

How do they do that?

The DZWONI Center acts like **a bridge between the person, employers, and their environment** (families, supporters, services etc.).

They provide:

- **Training to develop work and social skills**, including digital skills, money management, physical and mental health, civic and sex education.
- **Job coaching** to support people at work.

So far, they have helped about **3,000 people**, and at least **65% found jobs and kept them** with support.

These types of training for work and social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities are rare in Poland, which makes their programs very impactful and popular.

They also work with other organisations and the government to improve how supported employment works in Poland. In 2025, they helped start work to **make supported employment a part of Poland's social services system**.

DZWONI shows that offering support beyond just job integration, like trainings on how to take care of health and manage money, leads to long-term employment and inclusion.

The success of this approach can push for policy changes, helping supported employment become part of national systems.

Training and support to employment – Cercica, Portugal

Cercica offers personalised vocational courses in areas such as hospitality, gardening, animal care, graphic arts, laundry services, interior cleaning, and administrative support. These programs are designed to equip people with intellectual disabilities with both technical and independent living skills.

How do they do that?

Internships opportunities: Participants engage in internships lasting from three months to a year, depending on individual and employer needs. These internships provide real-work experience and are supported by transportation, meal subsidies, and insurance.

Employer collaboration and support: Cercica collaborates with over 100 companies, offering consultancy services to identify suitable job placements and providing technical support.

Financial incentives: Employers benefit from state incentives, including wage subsidies and assistance with workplace adaptations, to facilitate the integration of employees with disabilities.

Cercica shows combining vocational training and continuous support creates a pathway to employment for individuals with disabilities and inclusion.

Government incentives and policies play an important role in encouraging businesses to adopt inclusive hiring practices.

Inclusive Workplaces Toolkit – Inclusion International

Inclusion International shares clear and simple steps that businesses can follow to include people with intellectual disabilities.

How do they do that?

Inclusion International and their members held consultations with employers in different countries to hear from businesses about why they weren't including people with intellectual disabilities yet, and what help they needed to be inclusive.

They created the [Inclusive Workplaces Toolkit](#). It gives advice for every part of the job process, from hiring to support at work.

The toolkit focuses on actions that are easy to copy and don't cost much.

Here are the steps companies can take to be more inclusive:

Create a culture of inclusion: Help all employees understand people with intellectual disabilities and the challenges they face. Use easy-to-understand language and do activities that support inclusion.

Offer open job positions to everyone: Don't create new jobs that you think are "easy", specifically for people with intellectual disabilities - hire for the roles you actually need and give people the support to do them. Make sure pay is fair and equal.

Make recruitment accessible: Give interview questions in advance. Use plain language during interviews. Make sure people can get support if they need it.

Make hiring and onboarding easier: Write job contracts in plain language. Go over the contract in person. Do the same for the job introduction. Explain clearly what is expected in the role. Ask for feedback.

Give support and reasonable accommodations: Ask the person what support they need. Offer flexible working hours and deadlines. Make sure the support given actually helps.

Make communication accessible: Use clear and simple language in all work messages.

Share meeting agendas in advance and follow them. Use tools that are easy for everyone to use.

Create inclusive policies: Write health and safety policies using respectful and inclusive language (for example, don't say "preventing disability"). Make sure all policies are in plain language and easy to find. Create an inclusion policy for the whole company.

The toolkit also includes examples of job descriptions, interview questions, contracts, and more.

This toolkit shows that inclusion doesn't need a lot of money, just a bit of commitment and small changes that help everyone.

Most importantly, employers should use this guidance not only for hiring people with intellectual disabilities but for all hirings and all employees, to make it inclusive of all.

"What a breath of fresh air it was to see a job application promoting pre-seen interview questions. I suffer from anxiety, and in previous interviews have not communicated half of what I could offer owing simply to the pressure of the situation. I hope that more charities and companies follow this lead. Beyond inclusivity, I think."

Plena Inclusion and Inclusion Europe produced a similar toolkit for businesses³¹.

³¹ <https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/guidelines-employment-of-people-with-intellectual-disabilities-in-europe-research-report/>

Good lives Framework on employment – Learning Disability England

The Good lives Framework is a document that people can use as a template for how they go about changing things for the better.

The Good lives Framework covers every area life, and the chapter 6 is about developing a Good Lives framework for how we can best support more people with learning disabilities into “employment and contribution”, so they can live their "Good Lives".

How do they do that?

They did:

1. **Years of consultation** to gather the challenges and demands of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

The results show that, for many, access to paid employment is the way to be included, valued and respected in the society.

There are many barriers in England: lack of quality supported employment, lack of adequate reasonable accommodations, no clear laws and national targets etc.

2. **A compilation of ideas** we can work on together to get more people into work, gathered from their members and partners across the country working towards Good Lives.

There are many ideas. Below are some ideas proposed:

- Develop a commissioning model for supported employment that works for people with learning disabilities.
- Develop quality standard for supported employment.
- Change education system to embed supported employment in education so children experience the world of work.

3. A compilation of examples of how good might look like:

There are many examples. Below are some examples shared:

- **Project Choice**³² offering work experience and a supported internship programme for young adults aged 16 to 24 learning disabilities, difficulties, and/or autism.
- **Hft**³³ works with DFN Project SEARCH, and various other partners to run several supported internships in a variety of locations.

The Good Lives Framework on employment and contribution shows that there are already good examples all over the country of individuals, families and services overcoming challenges and creating solutions for employment.

Dialogue between employers and self-advocates – Inclusion Ireland

In Ireland, Inclusion Ireland's *IHREC Employment Project*³⁴ proves that dialogue between self-advocates and businesses can drive inclusive employment.

How do they do that?

Inclusion Ireland put together an Employment Rights Working Group of 6 self-advocates.

They took part in training about their employment rights and the system in Ireland.

They then consulted with other self-advocates from around the country about what barriers to employment they have experienced and what they think employers could do to be more inclusive of employees with intellectual disabilities.

³² <https://www.camdenrise.co.uk/newsandblogs/-/blogs/project-choice-supported-internships-for-16-to-24-year-olds-1#:~:text=Project%20Choice%20is%20a%20Specialist,their%20employability%20and%20independence%20skills.>

³³ <https://www.hft.org.uk/our-services/supported-employment/>

³⁴ <https://inclusionireland.ie/projects/ihrec-employment-project-2023/>

The project raised awareness among employers about the rights of people with intellectual disabilities and developed tools to support change — such as a **Code of Practice**³⁵ for both employers and employees on inclusive hiring and a **podcast series**³⁶ featuring people with lived experience.

Important job platforms like Indeed took part in the dialogue.

This project shows that solutions to inclusive employment will be found with people with intellectual disabilities.



Advocacy, and easy-to-read editors

Many jobs have been created within the organisations advocating for people with intellectual disabilities. These are the jobs in advocacy, communication, and other core functions of our organisations.

One of the movements' innovations led to jobs for “easy-to-read editors” (people with intellectual disabilities who create and evaluate documents in easy-to-read).

³⁵ The code of practice is available online following this link <https://inclusionireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Employment-Code-of-Practice-Digital.pdf>

³⁶ the “Make it work” is available on Spotify following this link <https://open.spotify.com/show/74j2HC0rQDiDfAzNc6pliM>

Collaboration: Lebenshilfe and Toom – Germany

Since 2014, Toom Baumarkt, one of Germany's largest hardware retailer (300 stores across Germany), [has partnered with Lebenshilfe](#).³⁷

They offer internships, work experience, and jobs in toom stores and outdoor projects.

They also partner with people with intellectual disabilities on joint projects, for example to make the communication of the company more accessible.

How do they do that?

Lebenshilfe and Toom launched a **joint communication project to make environmental actions more accessible and inclusive**.

They work together with people with intellectual disabilities on communication materials in easy-to-read and understand formats.

For example, they developed the "Do-it-yourself" brochures and videos in easy to understand to guide people step-by-step in tasks such as protecting insects on balconies or gardens, gardening in a sustainable way, saving energy in heating and lighting,

Including people with intellectual disabilities in the creation of these materials brings their perspective on protection of environment and makes the content understandable for all.

Thanks to this collaboration, Toom now has a dedicated easy-to-read section on its website.

This collaboration shows that joint projects can not only support employment of people with intellectual disabilities but also help businesses in communication, and awareness about their engagement for the environment.



³⁷ <https://www.lebenshilfe.de/mitmachen/aktiv-werden/toom>

Jobs in policy-making

Being in the room is a first step to being able to influence policies and decisions.

People with intellectual disabilities have much to contribute to policy-making. But they are mostly left out because of a lack of job opportunities.

People with intellectual disabilities can provide knowledge, expertise, and experience.

People with intellectual disability can use their expertise to make public communication more accessible.

They can also train politicians and administrations on inclusion.

That way, policies and laws become more representative and inclusive.

Here are just some examples of people with intellectual disabilities working to make policies and policy-making better.

Robert Martin

Robert Martin was a pioneer in self-advocacy, creating the self-advocacy group called People First New Zealand³⁸.

He made history when he became the first person with an intellectual disability elected to serve on the UN CRPD Committee in 2016³⁹.

In 2020, he was re-elected for another 4-year term on the CRPD Committee.

³⁸ For more information: <https://www.peoplefirst.org.nz/>

³⁹ Europe for Us easy-to-read magazine. 2016. Available at: https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/JULY2016_English-1.pdf

During his mandate, Robert Martin made sure to include self-advocate and people with intellectual disabilities in the Committee's work.

He worked with governments and NGOs to advise on policies related to the rights and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

So far, he is the only person with intellectual disabilities to have served on the Committee.

"You need to speak out about the things that are important to you."



Mar Galcerán

Mar Galcerán became the first member of parliament with Down Syndrome in Spain.

Before being elected, Mar Galcerán became a civil servant in Spain and worked in different presidential departments, such as social housing, equality and healthcare.

"No one knows our situation and our challenges better than us."⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Europe for us. Number 1/2025. Available at: <https://str.inclusion.eu/198cc175df5eb2e86ce7ab90e.pdf>

More profiles of elected officials with intellectual disabilities in [Europe for us](#) easy-to-read magazine.



Soufiane El Amrani

Soufiane El Amrani works as a self-advocate and accessibility expert at Inclusion Europe. He helps developing easy-to-read content.

He works at the same time with Inclusion International, being a link between the Council and Inclusion Internationals' members in Europe.

Soufiane talks in debates and does speeches in European institutions to raise awareness, point out challenges that people with intellectual disabilities face, and recommend better policies.

Soufiane reviews Inclusion Europe reports to make sure they say the right things and are easy to understand, like this one.

"Governments think they know what is best for us, but they don't"⁴¹



⁴¹ <https://www.inclusion.eu/governments-think-they-know-what-is-best-for-us-but-they-dont>

László Bercse

László is the Vice-President of Inclusion Europe, and chair of the European Platform of Self-Advocates.

In his work with ÉFOÉSZ, László Bercse gives trainings so everybody can learn about disability rights' and to stand up for themselves.

**" We must be considered as persons, not just subjects of political decisions.
We are people, we are European citizens too."⁴²**



⁴² Inclusion Europe post. 2021. "We must be considered as persons, not just subjects of political decisions. We are people, we are European citizens too!" Available at: <https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/we-must-considered-as-persons-not-just-subjects-of-political-decisions-we-are-people-we-are-european-citizens-too/>

Job first for inclusion

Job first means hiring people with intellectual disabilities, investing in their skills, making the work environment inclusive and keep promoting rights and inclusion jobs.

It means providing inclusive hiring programmes, support, reasonable accommodation and accessibility of the workplace.

It means creating traineeship opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities and value their skills, providing inclusive workplace where they can develop their skills and progress in their careers and lives.

There's a lot to learn from people with intellectual disabilities.

For example, in policy-making they bring their expertise and expectations into policies.

They help to make documents and communication accessible and easy to understand.

Job-first also means to partner up with policy makers, disabled people organisations, employment services, businesses to make sure jobs are sustainable and lead to inclusion.

Every company, organisation, administration can make jobs inclusive:

- Personalise job: make jobs fit for the person.
- Make hiring process inclusive: make jobs easy-to-understand and access.
- Provide support and reasonable accommodation.
- Create a culture of inclusion.
- Offer training and promotions for all: make jobs useful to learn new skills.
- Enable dialogue: make jobs participative for rights and inclusion.
- Create partnership: make inclusive jobs a responsibility for everybody.

The European Commission published “The Disability Employment Package”. This initiative shares some guidelines and recommendations on how to make jobs more inclusive across the EU.⁴³

It is time for employers and countries to use every resource to repeat the good work and make employment a tool for inclusion.

Recommendations for employment policies

Policy makers should consider the following actions while designing employment policies:

- Recognise skills and jobs as a way to support independent living and inclusion.
This should shape their approach to work, education, training and life-long learning.
It would also help employment services to provide support based on a person-centred and inclusive approach.
- Enable access to education, vocational training, life-long learning for people with intellectual disabilities.
Promote learning and training in inclusive settings so they benefit from the right environment to work in the open labour market and participate in the society.
Make sure the full range of skills are recognised and valued in the labour market.
- Make sure people with intellectual disabilities get access in training in administration or in policymaking.

⁴³ https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/eu-employment-policies/disability-employment-package_en

This would be a strong signal sent to any employers, showing that they lead by example.

- Promote supported employment and other programs for the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities into the open labour market.

Make sure resources are available for support like job coaches, reasonable accommodations and other resources to make workplaces inclusive.

Support training on inclusive and personalised employment.

- Support the change of laws on protected employment towards real pay, working conditions and rights and pathways to the open labour market.
- Support dialogue between employers and self-advocates on the right to work and inclusion in the workplace.
- Make sure jobs are available in policy making.

Recommendation for EU employment policies

Adopt a dedicated EU plan for skills and employment!

This plan should recognise jobs as essential to achieve social inclusion.

It should have EU goals and EU money for jobs, training, and accessible employment programmes.

It should invite EU countries do more for employment and inclusion of people with disabilities provide better data, use good resources and suggest improvements.

For example, it can ask EU countries to have national employment measures linked to inclusive education, independent living, housing and support.⁴⁴

Use EU money to support employment and inclusion!

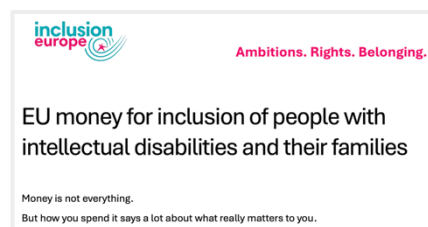
The next EU Budget should have specific objectives and funds to support employment and social inclusion of people with disabilities.

The European Social Fund is currently a good tool to support employment, education, training, and social inclusion of people with disabilities.

So, dedicated social fund should remain and become even more impactful by supporting reforms for inclusive employment, and ensure good working conditions for workers in sheltered employment.

EU money for inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and their families

[Position paper](#).



⁴⁴ This plan is called by other organisations “Employment and skills Guarantee”, as part of the EU Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities. This plan would build on and go beyond reports, guidelines, practices shared in the Disability employment package.

Make sure national money supports employment and inclusion!

Member States should invest in employment and social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

The EU should provide guidance to member states in using national subsidies (state aids)⁴⁵, public procurement⁴⁶ to support employment and inclusion.

Invest in skills, all of them!

The “Union of Skills” is the new strategy to support skills⁴⁷. It aims to make skills fit for the new challenges and be more competitive.

The EU should make sure the initiatives of this strategy reach people with intellectual disabilities. It should foresee specific objectives and measures for them.

People with intellectual should be included in plans to develop skills on using new technology like the artificial intelligence. They should have the opportunity to understand it, learn how to use it, manage its risks. This will not only help them to cope with the requirements of the new job market but also empower them in their daily lives.

The strategy should also recognise a wide range of skills, including social skills, which are just as important for getting a job and being included in society. In a world where AI is replacing some tasks, these human skills will remain essential, because they are part of what makes us human.

⁴⁵ The [State Aid Regulation](#) allows national money to go to businesses which are considered supporting employment of people with disabilities. (Section 6 of the General Block of exemptions)

⁴⁶ [EU Public Procurement Directive](#) supports social services and businesses which are considered supporting employment of people with disabilities.

⁴⁷ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/union-skills_en

Address unemployment and in-work poverty of people with disabilities!

The EU aims to lift 15 million people out of poverty by 2030.⁴⁸

These policies are an opportunity to take action to combat poverty of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

These policies should recognise unemployment, in-work poverty, barriers to learning new skills, as a major factor of poverty and social exclusion.

There should be concrete actions to solve the issue, by supporting decent level of incomes from work and social protection, access to services, and housing.

These set of policies should address the fact that often salary and social benefits cannot be cumulated.

Measures should also support families to get out of poverty by providing support, compensate unpaid care work, and support to access to services.

⁴⁸ The renewal of actions in the European Pillar of Social Rights strategy and the Anti-poverty strategy

Education:**5.8**

At least 530,000 children with intellectual disabilities are in special schools.

Employment:**4.0**

In 29 countries, few or no people with intellectual disabilities are employed in the open labor market.

Healthcare:**6.1**

In 11 countries, people with intellectual disabilities have no or very little freedom of choice about their reproductive health.

Representation:**6.3**

In 20 countries, there is no person with an intellectual disability on the council of the national disability organisation.

Housing:**5.1**

In 27 countries, few or no adults with intellectual disabilities live in their own place.

Decide and vote:**5.1**

In 14 countries people can be denied the right to vote because their legal capacity was removed.

Independence:**4.3**

852,000 people with intellectual disabilities are in segregated "care" institutions.

www.inclusion.eu/indicators