

# No Barriers

## Strategies and Best Practices for the Employment of Individuals with Intellectual Disability



# **No Barriers: Strategies and Best Practices for the Employment of Individuals with Intellectual Disability**

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# FOREWORD

This book emerges from a bibliographical collection and scientific research conducted under the Erasmus+ project “No Barriers: Strategies and Best Practices for the Employment of Individuals with Intellectual Disability”. It involved researchers from four countries: Portugal, Türkiye, Sweden, and Italy, who approached the barriers faced by People with Intellectual Disability in employment, proposing specific measures of labour inclusion primarily focused on four strategic vectors: language, communication, implicit and explicit attitudes, and the use of assistive technologies. The training program presented is comprehensive and aimed at all stakeholders involved in the process of labour inclusion, including individuals with Intellectual Disability, their families, or employers. It’s worth noting the excellent choice of vectors for intervention, as they are the ones that pose the most barriers to the full inclusion of People with Intellectual Disability, which are not as prominent in other types of disabilities, particularly physical and sensory. The role of accessible language and effective communication is widely recognized as crucial factors for the successful labour inclusion of People with Intellectual Disability. On the other hand, the inadequate adaptation of assistive technologies to the needs of this population is another factor that hinders their development and warrants further study and exploration. At a time when there is discussion about the type of education that should be provided to People with Intellectual Disability, with voices divided between advocating for segregated training in institutional programs solely directed at people with disabilities, and the belief in the benefits of education delivered in mainstream contexts, the authors offer some clues that could be decisive in shedding light on certain aspects and bringing new and more comprehensive perspectives to this discussion.

While we all agree with the authors of this work that we should avoid a “fascist-like training” that focuses solely on “utilitarian, functional, and productive” aspects, this is not always easy in today’s society, which expects very little from workers with Intellectual Disability. As reiterated several times in this book, we all fight for People with Intellectual Disability to find conditions in the workplace to carry out their functions competently, with the possibility of personal and professional fulfilment. However, despite the increasing employment rates among the population with disabilities, it is undoubtedly in the field of Intellectual Disability that we encounter the greatest barriers. A work like this can pave new paths in this issue because we know that it is in Intellectual Disability that we find the highest unemployment rates and even within the employed population, we see that these individuals continue to perform jobs with low social recognition. It is urgent that companies start recognizing these individuals as an asset, providing them with all the conditions to express their abilities in a welcoming environment that allows them to reach their maximum potential. Despite the large number of texts published on the rights of Persons with Disabilities in various community sectors, this book stands out not only for its high level of theoretical and empirical knowledge but also for revealing the state of the art in Portugal and serving as a valuable manual of specific indications and suggestions for effective labour inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. The authors present a serious and in-depth study of the issue of employment for people with intellectual disabilities, in line with the paradigm in which we all believe – the dignity of people with intellectual disabilities in all places they attend.

*Helena Albuquerque*

President of the Board

HUMANITAS – Federação Portuguesa para a Deficiência Mental

(<https://humanitas.org.pt/>)

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**PART I**

**NEED  
ANALYSIS**



# INTRODUCTION

## *Empowerment Through Employment: An Introduction to No Barriers*

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In his book “The Eternal Return of Fascism”, Rob Riemen (2012, p. 66) wrote: “Education has bowed to the dictates of what is useful to business and the state”. It may sound like a digression, but much of what this book sets out to question involves the ideas of productivity, functionality and usefulness. What physical and cognitive configuration does a person have to have to be considered a “perfect” employee in the light of contemporary canons? Do we have to fit people to canons, canons to people, or both? What role do teaching resources, mediation strategies and technology play in this dilemma?

Returning to the beginning and the quote from Riemen (2012), it’s worth emphasising that the mention of fascism doesn’t appear here in vain. The idea of “normality” is itself totalitarian. So this book, nor any other, can or should provide recipes for “normalising” People with Intellectual Disability (PwID) so that they remain indistinguishable from the crowd of workers. What they can and should do is initiate strategies for understanding their diverse characteristics so that this

diversity becomes part of what contemporary society understands as work.

Workplace inclusion for People with Disabilities (PwD) is a critical aspect underscored by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). According to General Comment No. 8 (2022) on the right of persons with disabilities to work and employment, the CRPD clarifies the obligations of States parties regarding this right as enshrined in Article 27 of the Convention. It emphasises that meaningful work and employment – emphasising the meaningfulness of it – are essential for the economic security, physical and mental health, personal well-being, and sense of identity of individuals, including PwD. The CRPD highlights that ableism – a value system that devalues individuals based on their physical and mental characteristics (Nario-Redmond, 2020) – adversely affects the opportunities for PwD to have meaningful work and employment. It calls for the removal of barriers to the right to work and employment for PwD in the open labour market, on an equal basis with others, highlighting issues such as high unemployment rates, lower wages, and lack of accessibility in the work environment (United Nations, 2022).

We can now adopt the more neoliberal language used by Mor Barak (2017), and continue along an economic path in justifying the importance of the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in the labour market. In general, organisational diversity represents advantages in the economic sphere, since by reducing employee turnover, absenteeism, and boosting productivity, companies save costs. They gain a competitive edge in attracting talent by appealing to women, minorities, and diverse individuals. Utilising diversity drives growth through targeted marketing to different demographics and enhances the corporate image, positively affecting stock valuation. Furthermore, embracing a global workforce from various nationalities expands market opportunities and global talents.

Above all, as the title suggests, “employment empowers” or, in other words, promotes self-determination, and this book aims to support everyone in a more inclusive path to do so.

Bell (2019) suggests that EU labour law can play a role in fostering

inclusion, particularly in the context of sheltered employment, while, through a local lens, Carnemolla et al. (2021) underscore the role of connecting individuals with their communities. Therefore, and as a first step, the international team of No Barriers to Employment (2022-1-SE01-KA220-ADU-000089826) jointly developed the chapter **“Transnational Legal Frameworks and Context of Employment and Intellectual Disability”**, to explore the different legal and social conditions that PwID experience in Italy, Portugal, Sweden, and Türkiye – the consortium countries. Afterwards, in the second chapter of part I, research on the perceptions regarding the main barriers and hindrances to the professional inclusion of PwID in these countries is presented, through the chapter **“Contextual Perceived Needs for Inclusive Employment of People with Intellectual Disability”**.

These first two chapters complete a need analysis that serves as a pillar for a training programme, developed in the second part of the book. In the first chapter of this part – **“Empowerment through Language, Inclusive Models, and Activism: Nurturing Inclusion for Individuals with Intellectual Disability”**, Cátia Casimiro, João Léste, and Carla Sousa explore how language is performative, and how this can be either an inclusion or exclusion pillar. Aligned with this, in the next chapter, titled **“Accessible and Inclusive Communication in the Workplace”**, Stefano Cobello and Elena Milli, approach specific strategies to enhance accessible communication in inclusive workplaces. In the third chapter of this training **“Employment Models and Best Practices for the Inclusion of Individuals with Intellectual Disability”**, Gülce Güner and Emre Hüseyin Yiğit approach the contemporary employment models to support PwID in their job contexts. Moreover, Gulben Cura and Şenay Kızılkum further explore these models in the chapter **“Recruitment and Job Coaching for and with Intellectual Disability”**, focusing on how people can be inclusively recruited to different businesses. In chapter 5, the No Barriers to Employment Project joins a-STEP (CA19104), a COST Action aimed at building an interdisciplinary, intersectoral Pan European and beyond, network which will enhance social inclusion and empowerment of PwID and individuals on the autism spectrum, to develop a comprehensive view of the potential of assistive technologies for employment

inclusion. In this sense, May Agius, Tali Heiman, Gerda Sula, Paulina Tsevetkova, Benjamin Nanchen, Alan H. Tkaczyk, and Carla Sousa, developed the chapter “**Supporting Workplace Inclusion: Reasonable Accommodations and Assistive Technologies for Individuals with Intellectual Disability**”. Lastly, and due to the need for more pedagogical approaches documented in part I of the book, chapter 6 explores the potential of analogue game-based learning in the development of employment skills by PwID. Written by João Léste and Carla Sousa, “**Analogue Game-Based Learning to address underemployment of People with Intellectual Disabilities: Resources and Best Practices**” is, therefore, a conceptual and practical approach to this training need. All chapters of the training programme includes, besides the traditional abstract and keywords, a short statement on their pedagogical goals, and relevance for PwID.

I would like to conclude by saying that the inclusion of PwID into the labour market not only contests ableist norms but also embraces diversity as a driver of economic and, above all, social justice. The collaborative work of the No Barriers to Employment project further elucidates the complex legal, social, and pedagogical landscapes that shape the professional inclusion of PwID across different countries, and reflects a commitment to redefining work in a way that values everyone.

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# TRANSNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND CONTEXT OF EMPLOYMENT AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

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## **Abstract**

This chapter highlights the importance of employment for Persons with Intellectual Disability (PwID), focusing on its impact on well-being and social inclusion. Mainly, it reviews the existing legal frameworks in Italy, Portugal, Sweden, and Türkiye to explore how they facilitate the workplace inclusion of these individuals. As a result, the developed research finds persistent challenges in implementing legal frameworks, aligning PwID's skills with job market demands, and providing comprehensive support. It also emphasises the importance of reasonable accommodations in the workplace and discusses the successes and limitations of legal and societal initiatives in the four case study countries. Conclusively, it calls for a holistic approach that includes improving legislation, enhancing support systems, and raising awareness to ensure the effective inclusion of PwID in the workforce, underlining the need for societal and legal reforms to

bridge the gap between intention and practice in the employment of PwID.

**Keywords:** Intellectual Disability; Employment; Workplace Inclusion; Legal Frameworks; Reasonable Accommodations.

### Relevance of the Chapter for People with Intellectual Disability (PwID)

This chapter is particularly relevant for Persons with Intellectual Disability (PwID) as it not only highlights the benefits of employment, such as increased self-esteem, a sense of purpose, and financial independence but also identifies the barriers that hinder full participation in the workforce. Through its comprehensive analysis, the chapter serves as a relevant resource for policymakers, employers, and advocates, urging a collective effort to remove obstacles and promote the employment inclusion of PwID, thereby affirming their rights and contributions to society.

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## 1. PwID in the Working Life

Research has consistently shown the importance of working life for PwID. Santilli et al. (2014) found that career adaptability and hope significantly impact the life satisfaction of workers with Intellectual Disability (ID). Dehuri and Mukund (2021) emphasised the therapeutic and psychological benefits of work, as well as the need for appropriate vocational rehabilitation services. Donnelly et al. (2010) highlighted the role of informal support networks in creating and sustaining employment opportunities for this population. These studies collectively underscore the relevance of working life for PwID, both in terms of their well-being and their social inclusion.

In order for this inclusion to be full and effective, societies need to create legal frameworks that support it, fostering the labour presence of PwID. Below we explore these legal conditions, having Italy, Portugal, Sweden and Türkiye as case studies.

### **1.1. Italy**

In Italy, work constitutes a right of all citizens. And on February 5th, Law no. 104 (1992) is drawn to specify that the individuals to which work becomes a right includes People with Disability (PwD) as well. Later on, in 1999, Law No 68 of March 12 (1999) created the framework needed to guarantee that this right is indeed accessible to all PwD. From that point on, all private and public organisations were obligated to comply with certain quotas that were imposed. These quotas would reserve a certain number of vacancies, calculated on the basis of the number of employees in service, each company should render to PwD. Besides this quota system, this law stipulated the need to carefully assess the actual abilities and aspirations of PwD during the recruitment process in order to better evaluate these people's profiles. Moreover, the right to work of the PwD was from then on promoted by conventions between the competent targeted employment offices and employers. These conventions all have different aims. Among these are the employment itself, the inclusion of PwD who have particular characteristics and difficulties in entering the ordinary employment cycle, the temporary employment with training purposes (Legislative Decree no. 276, 2003). Other tools that offer ease in job placement to PwD are programs of traineeship aimed at social inclusion and rehabilitation and personalised projects aimed at autonomy.

On September 14th 2015, Legislative Decree No. 151 (2015) was imposed to simplify the procedures related to employment relations and equal opportunities. In 2021 a Law (Law No. 227, 2021) was drawn, imposing the need for the government to adopt new legislative decrees on the rights of PwD. And in 2022 the Guidelines for the targeted employment of this particular group were established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (2022).

In support of PwID's employment, Italian legislation states the

norms for the right of PwD to work (Law No. 68, 1999). This Law introduces a system of obligations, sanctions and incentives towards the companies, aiming for PwD's protection. Instituting financial penalization to those who do not comply with the quota system; and tax bonuses and reductions to companies in order to encourage PwD's employment. These benefits are administered by the National Social Insurance Institute (INPS) and are contingent upon the degree of disability recognized by the medical commission. They translate into reductions of the gross monthly salary taxable for social security purposes, with the extent of reduction and the duration linked to the worker's disability level. Currently, for employees with ID under stable contracts of not less than 12 months, a 70% reduction in the taxable salary is granted for up to 60 months or for the entirety of the employment period.

However, the job market in Italy for individuals with disabilities faces a tangled web of intricate challenges. Some of which aren't bound by the legal system. Initially, the low cultural level and the lack of concrete professional skills of PwD often do not align with the demands of companies. Posing a significant barrier. Additionally, the exemption from mandatory recruitment, bound by the quota system law, for about 95% of Italian enterprises further limits opportunities for PwD. Still, the employment of an individual with ID in small companies or even with such a high level of specialisation can be problematic, both to the company and to the PwD, since in this case, the workload would require highly culturally and professionally qualified personnel. In addition to this, the "recruitment by name" practice allows companies to bypass their legal obligation to the detriment of the individuals with severe disability, leaving the civil law protections for individuals with disabilities in case of employment refusal uncertain. Thus, convention-based hiring seems to be the sole channel for PwD to access employment, yet it cannot be enforced upon companies. Even though the legal system appears to be fully structured, the governance of these policies is vertical and fragmented, leaving both active and income support policies poorly integrated. Moreover, their operational role falls upon the regions' Job Centers but the lack of adequate financial and human resources becomes evident. Also, the

dissemination of these centres falls mainly on the southern regions, which aligns with the territory with fewer companies, thus reducing the number of opportunities that could be granted.

To facilitate hiring, key factors such as contract liberalisation, increased and simplified interactions with social cooperatives, compensation flexibility, territorial reference adjustments, widespread adoption of nominative hiring, and greater participation between companies and job centres could prove assistive to the hiring of PwD.

## **1.2. Portugal**

Portugal's constitution does defend work as being a right of everyone including, specifically, PwD (Portuguese Republican Constitution, 1976, art. 71). This article also instals in the state the role of creating a national policy regarding the protection of work as a right towards PwD. Which leads to the settlement of the foundation law for the prevention, rehabilitation and integration of PwD (Republic Assembly, 2004). This Law assigns all rights to PwD and sets the basis for their protection in all dimensions of life and advertises the need for more specific measures. One of these measures that arise is the quota system, protected by Decree-Law 29/2001 (Ministry of State Reform and Public Administration, 2001) which requires companies, both public and private, to reserve a percentage of vacancies within the company to PwD. Later, Law 4/2019 (Republic Assembly, 2019) expanded the public bodies to which the previous law covered. Other measures of positive action that were set were bound to Decree-Law 7/2009 (Republic Assembly, 2009a) – which says PwD have the right to a certain number of absences due to health – and Law 35/2014 (Republic Assembly, 2014) – that guarantee no financial losses in the payroll when these absences occur.

A number of programs have also been established in addition to these measures. RMA (Accompanied Major Regime), bound to Law 49/2018 (Republic Assembly, 2018), is a program linked to the Family Court whose goal is for PwD to be accompanied in order to fully, personally and consciously exercise their rights and duties whilst preventing or avoiding harmful decisions. MAVI (Independent Living Support Model), bound to Decree-Law 129/2017 (Work, Solidarity

and Social Security, 2017; Instituto Nacional para a Reabilitação, 2019), is a program linked to the welfare system whose goal is the approximation of PwD's full autonomy. The latter differs from the former in the sense of being more comprehensive of the individual's wishes and desires.

In addition to these laws and programs, Portugal has other forms of supporting the employment of PwID. There are state entities especially focused on the rehabilitation and integration of PwD, such as the National Secretariat and Council for the Rehabilitation and Integration of PwD, that promotes the integration and adaptation of these individuals and assesses the implementation of the policies. Furthermore, the foundation law for the prevention, rehabilitation and integration of PwD (Republic Assembly, 2004) also instils the role of all entities to work in an articulated and cooperative manner in order to achieve the Law's goal. Therefore, all district welfare system centres financially support reasonable accommodations (Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity, 2009) in cooperation with Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional (IEFP) – a national public employment service. This latter seeks to promote the creation of employment and the increment of its quality through the implementation of active policies, namely the Employment and Qualification Support Program for PwD and Inability (2020). This program's main objective is to give support to PwD who present difficulties in accessing, maintaining and progressing in their job. The different phases in which this program acts are the orientation to qualification, the support in placement, post-placement follow-up, adaptation of the workplace and elimination of barriers. All financial support to all these programs and entities comes from the state, bound by Law 290/2009 (Republic Assembly, 2009). So, beyond all other programs and measures previously described, like the quota system; the justified absences and their remuneration; and both RMA and MAVI programs, there are also POISE (operational plan for social inclusion and employment) and PSI (social provision for inclusion). POISE is a program settled in four structural points, the third is aimed at promoting inclusion, particularly of individuals belonging to the most vulnerable social groups (Eurocid, n.d.). PSI is a financial aid that can be complementary to the individual's work

income and seeks the promotion of one's autonomy and inclusion (Instituto da Segurança Social, 2017).

Even though the work may appear to be protected by the legal system and supported by various measures and programs, some gaps in its implementation emerge. For one, the Decree-Law that instils the quota system (Ministry of State Reform and Public Administration, 2001) states that whilst at an employment interview, the jury assesses the ability of the PwD that is applying for the vacancy according to the work role needs. This gives the jury the decision-making power to decide whether to employ said individual with disability, even though there are financial aids instated by the welfare system that complement potential discrepancies.

Besidestheselegalconcerns,manyauthors(Casimiro,2023;Nogueira, 2022) claim the lack of awareness among the population is one of the most crucial points. Lack of awareness results in the prevalence of stigma and may reflect false beliefs about the productivity and capabilities of PwD. Consequently, their discrimination and harmful behaviours may impact detrimentally the work environment and even decrease the PwD's productivity, if not their own exclusion.

Additionally, structural, functional, and social aspects of the workplace can act as impediments to the successful integration of PwD. A crucial need exists for both professional and social preparation of not only the individuals with disabilities who are seeking employment but also of the company that is employing and staff as well. High unemployment rates in Portugal among PwD accentuate ongoing exclusion, highlighting the necessity for employers to seek external support.

To enhance inclusivity and integration, it is essential to address these challenges in a more comprehensive way. The modifications desired by PwD include increased job opportunities, adapting work to accommodate individual and particular needs, heightened awareness, and sensitivity among employers and colleagues. The latter involves being sensitive both in your approach and in the specific language you use when addressing an individual with disability. What leads to the need to provide training on inclusive practices.

Additionally, there is a deficiency in studies on this topic in Portugal,



and the absence of ethical committees within companies impedes progress.

To summarise, meaningful change demands a fundamental alteration in workplace attitudes, awareness, and procedures, coupled with the advocacy for inclusive policies and the eradication of long-standing barriers.

### **1.3. Sweden**

In Sweden, there is a special focus on how disability is portrayed. Previously, disability was considered an individual characteristic, but it is now believed to be a characteristic of the environment. Meaning the environment may have obstacles and limitations that prevent some individuals from fully participating in social life. Therefore, disability is now viewed as a result of a non-inclusive context. The Swedish Parliament Riksdag demanded these alterations to be made in the legislation, actively changing it in the Discrimination Act, Equality Ombudsman Act, Education Act, and Workers' Recruitment Act. These changes recognized inadequate access to social life for PwD as a new form of discrimination and aimed to establish inclusion in all dimensions of life. The country's disability policy is based on the principle of equal rights for all, aiming to ensure that PwD participate in social life and have the same opportunities as individuals without disabilities in all areas, including production and cultural fields.

Swedish law includes measures to ensure inclusion for all, primarily through strong employer obligations, employment and vocational rehabilitation programs, universal coverage, and comprehensive and accessible social benefits. The increasing number of government-supported programs and organisations focused on providing access to and maintaining employment for PwD reflects Sweden's relatively high employment rates. The Swedish Public Employment Service offers an employment entry and follow-up (SIUS) program to support individuals with functional disabilities in finding and maintaining employment. This program is an example of such support. The SIUS service provides support for employees with disability by gaining a deeper understanding of the considerations and adjustments they may need in the workplace. This is done in consultation with their

employer and co-workers. Employees with disability are then guided until they can perform tasks independently. The government also offers financial protection and support to businesses operating in the sectors of goods and services, health, and medical care, particularly those with fewer than 10 employees.

When evaluating the social policies of the Swedish State concerning individuals with disabilities, it can be concluded that they are generally successful. However, certain issues require immediate attention. Specifically, deficiencies in communication and follow-up mechanisms have been identified, particularly concerning harassment and abuse targeting women with disability. As a result, this vulnerable demographic continues to face victimisation. Instances of harassment and abuse can come from unexpected sources, such as personnel within private service providers or even within women's with disability own families. This specific group face challenges in persuading authorities and society to address their grievances. The prevailing culture of silence among these women, who choose not to report incidents of harassment or abuse, further complicates its resolution. Urgent policy interventions are necessary, including rigorous inspections of private service providers, improving communication barriers faced by women with disability in articulating their concerns, and educational initiatives aimed at empowering and encouraging these women to speak out. Women's associations and non-governmental organisations dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities are actively engaged in devising solutions for the challenges faced by women with disabilities. Demonstrations and conferences are pivotal components of their advocacy efforts, aimed at preventing the recurrence of problems. The entities emphasise the need to address this issue through a multifaceted approach that involves both systemic reforms and societal education.

#### **1.4. Türkiye**

Türkiye's constitutional protections provide a foundation for safeguarding the rights and accommodations of individuals with ID in the workplace. The Turkish Constitution upholds equal rights and freedoms for all citizens, outlawing discrimination based on

disability. The “Law on Disabled People” (Law No. 5378, 2005) outlines a comprehensive set of rights and protections for individuals with disabilities, including employment, ensuring equal access to opportunities and active participation in the workforce.

The employment quota system mandates employers with 50 or more employees to reserve a minimum of 3% of their positions for workers with disability. Failure to meet this requirement can result in penalties, incentivizing businesses to be inclusive. Employers are also required to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disability, such as modifying the physical workspace, implementing flexible work hours, or adapting job tasks.

Vocational rehabilitation centres play a pivotal role in integrating individuals with disabilities into the job market, offering training, counselling, and support. The legal framework ensures workers with disability receive social security benefits and healthcare services, guaranteeing access to essential medical care and financial support. Discrimination on the basis of disability is strictly prohibited, and victims of discrimination are empowered to seek legal remedies.

Accessibility is also emphasised in the law, highlighting the importance of making public buildings, transportation, and services accessible to PwD. The Turkish government collaborates with disability organisations to raise awareness and provide training to employers and the general public, fostering understanding and support for the rights and needs of PwD.

On top of this, Türkiye’s state and welfare system has implemented measures to promote the employment of PwID. These include employment quotas, which require employers to reserve at least 3% of their positions for workers with disability, and vocational rehabilitation centres that provide comprehensive training and counselling. The Turkish welfare system offers financial support, including disability benefits and social security, to ensure PwID have access to necessary resources. Employers are also legally mandated to make reasonable workplace accommodations, including physical adjustments and modified job tasks, to create an environment where PwID can perform their roles effectively. Both the welfare system and legal framework actively combat discrimination against PwID in

employment, providing victims with legal avenues to seek remedies, and reinforcing the principle of equal treatment in the workplace.

However, despite the establishment of employment quotas to promote workers with disability, challenges persist in ensuring widespread compliance. Employers often fail to meet the mandated 3% employment quota for workers with disability, and enforcement mechanisms are sometimes lacking. Stigmatisation and bias against PwID are prevalent in many workplaces, leading to discrimination in hiring and promotion decisions (Yilmaz, 2020). Limited access to vocational rehabilitation centres is another issue, particularly in rural areas, which can hinder individuals with ID from receiving essential skills training and support (Aydemir-Döke, & Emir-Öksüz, 2017).

Inadequate reasonable accommodations for PwID, such as workplace accessibility, flexible working hours, and task modifications, also hamper their ability to perform their jobs effectively. A significant gap exists in awareness among employers and the general public regarding the capabilities and potential contributions of PwID, and raising awareness and dispelling stereotypes is essential to improve their employment prospects (Aydemir-Döke, & Emir-Öksüz, 2017).

Inconsistent support services, such as financial support and benefits, can create challenges for PwID in accessing necessary support. To address these challenges and enhance the implementation of legal and policy frameworks for PwID in the workplace, several measures should be considered:

- Enhance enforcement: Strengthening enforcement mechanisms related to employment quotas and anti-discrimination laws, along with imposing stricter penalties for non-compliance, can encourage employers to meet their obligations and promote the inclusion of workers with disability (Yilmaz, 2020).
- Implement awareness and sensitization programs targeting both employers and the general public to counter stereotypes and biases.
- Expand the reach of vocational rehabilitation centres, particularly in rural areas, to ensure equal access to training and support (Aydemir-Döke, & Emir-Öksüz, 2017).
- Establish systematic monitoring and reporting mechanisms to

assess progress and challenges in employing PwID (Temizkan et al., 2022).

### **1.5. Concluding Remarks About PwID in the Working Life**

All of these countries have committed to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), demonstrating their dedication to upholding the principles outlined in the convention, particularly those pertaining to employment. This includes recognizing the right to work to PwD, the opportunity to maintain their jobs, and fostering inclusive work environments. Consequently, each country has implemented a comprehensive legal framework to protect and promote the rights of PwD in the workplace.

The Convention also reinforces the importance of nations implementing measures to promote and protect these rights. Notably, a common feature among these countries is the establishment of a proactive quota system within both public and private companies. This system aims to secure employment opportunities for PwD by reserving a specific percentage of vacancies for them. However, it is worth noting that these quotas often remain unfulfilled.

And even when met, they don't necessarily reflect the actual proportion of PwD in the workforce, resulting in a high number of unemployed PwD in these countries. This discrepancy may be linked to a lack of awareness among the general population and the associated stigma. Another shared characteristic is the existence of legislation in all these countries that recognizes reasonable accommodations as essential for the inclusion and adaptation of PwD in work settings. These accommodations can range from physical adjustments, such as modifying workplace structures, to pedagogical support, like flexible job roles and working hours. In these countries, companies are legally required to implement these accommodations, which are financially supported by the social system.

Furthermore, all these countries have training programs designed to facilitate the transition of PwD into employment, as a means of promoting inclusion. However, a common challenge in all these countries is the limited opportunities and support available for PwD, whether it relates to rehabilitation or access to job centres.

Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a holistic approach. This includes not only refining regulatory measures but also establishing comprehensive support frameworks to bridge the gap between legal intent and effective workplace inclusion. Therefore, it is essential to strengthening the regulation, monitoring, and evaluation of law implementation, along with expanding the reach of centres, implementation of awareness initiatives and sensitization programs.

## **2. Reasonable Adaptations in the Employment Context of PwID**

Reasonable adaptations are crucial for the workplace inclusion of PwID (Wood et al., 2019). These adaptations and accommodations, which are part of the interactive process between employee and employer, can significantly impact the hiring process and job placement of this demographic (Dovigo, & Zappella, 2014). However, there are concerns about the cost and implementation of these accommodations, as well as the fear of disclosure and potential risks for the mental health of the employees (Zuckerman, 2016). Despite these challenges, workplace inclusion is a right for individuals with ID and can lead to their personal and professional development (Pereira-Silva et al., 2018).

In the following pages, we'll look at the legal contexts for guaranteeing these adaptations and accommodations, based on the situation in Italy, Portugal, Sweden and Türkiye.

### **2.1. Italy**

Italy's legal system addresses the understanding of reasonable accommodation and simultaneously establishes a National Observatory focused on monitoring and addressing the needs and conditions of PwD (Law No. 18, 2009). Among various laws and decrees, Law No. 68 (1999), specifically in articles 4 and 10, imposes a duty on employers to undertake "all possible adaptations of the productive organisation" with the aim of preventing dismissals. Legislative Decree No. 216 (2003), amended by Decree-Law of 8/04/2008, No. 59, builds on the latter, mandating the implementation of these reasonable accommodations in order to ensure full equality for individuals with disability. Failure to do so is considered discriminatory, emphasising

the significance of creating an inclusive work environment. In this implementation, the employer is compelled to seek the most suitable solutions that respect the rights of the employee without imposing disproportionate burdens (Legislative Decree No. 81, 2008, art. 42). In legal disputes, the burden of proof lies with the employer. These reasonable accommodations are partially financially reimbursed, per Law No. 99 (2013), not only incentivizing companies to employ PwD but also promoting one's accessibility.

Concerning workplace discrimination, the legal framework not only ensures that PwD have the opportunity to be represented by an association in case of disputes (Law No. 67, 2006), but it also delineates clear procedures and regulations for addressing and resolving such cases (Legislative Decree No. 150, 2011).

Italy's approach to implementing reasonable accommodations starts from the removal of architectural barriers in public and private buildings, imposed by National Collective Labour Agreements (Law No. 13, 1989; Presidential Decree no. 503,1996; Legislative Decree No. 81, 2008), setting the foundation for an inclusive environment. Public administrations designate disability managers to supervise these initiatives.

Moreover, the government has some initiatives set in place to enhance PwD's qualification and marketability. The Piedmont Region's collaboration with accredited agencies, one of them, which provides vocational training courses for PwD. The city of Milan also Milan further supports inclusivity with specialised courses for PwID. But these qualification courses also arise from the private sector, since National Collective Labour Agreements compel sector bodies to establish tailored training courses. Other kinds of initiatives are customised projects, like at Unicredit, where specialised units collaborating with unions address the problems related to the working conditions of PwD. One of the solutions is the identification of a tutor. Beyond these, the national contracts also provide flexibility in the workplace to these individuals. Including transforming employment relationships into part-time, flexible working hours, and the choice of work location. These initiatives collectively reflect a commitment to fostering inclusive and supportive work environments for individuals

with ID, encompassing physical accessibility, vocational training, and specific employment rights.

Nonetheless, some challenges arise when it comes to accessing and using assistive technologies. The main challenges for PwD in accessing and usage of these technologies are based on their exclusion in the workplace. Usually, this happens because of the disparities regarding their lower educational and training levels compared to the general population. Which transpires in the lack of these people's empowerment. Therefore, the strengthening and improvement of their skills and competencies are crucial for meaningful employment, allowing PwD the autonomy to make self-determined choices.

Another instance of exclusion emerges with the automation of the workplace. Yet again due to a lack of skills, PwD are viewed as not capable of working in a digitalized environment. Even though some social cooperatives have been demonstrating how it's possible to successfully organise work activities for these individuals in the field of dematerialization and data entry. And considering the role of digitalization it's imperative to integrate PwD into the digital workforce. Beyond technological adaptation, providing tailored support is essential. Cariplo Foundation's 'Lavoro e Psiche' and the Piedmont Region's 'Tsunami' focus on this need specifically by allowing PwD to access tutors or job coaches, granting them ways to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to understand the work environment and task at hand. This support is essential for PwD's autonomy in the workplace.

## ***2.2. Portugal***

In Portugal's legal system, there's a law that specifies the importance of companies addressing functional limitations through job adjustments and technical aids, highlighting the commitment to inclusivity (Ministry of State Reform and Public Administration, 2001). The foundation law for the prevention, rehabilitation and integration of PwD (Republic Assembly, 2004) places a duty on both public and private companies to undertake all efforts to implement these reasonable accommodations in order to achieve a more inclusive workplace. All these accommodations are financially supported by



the social system, as per law 290/2009 (Republic Assembly, 2009b), and the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), also bound by the Decree-Law 290/2009, which extends financial aid from the IEFP. Additionally, the DL 93/2009 (Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity, 2009) establishes a system for providing assistive products to individuals with disabilities, while Directive 7225/2015 (Ministry of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security, 2015) outlines general procedures for the allocation and funding of assistive products.

Therefore, this implies the existence of reasonable accommodation-focused initiatives. Initially, the Portuguese Diversity Charter, launched in March 2016, provides concrete measures to promote workplace diversity and equal opportunities. There's a broad plan of action within the National Employment Program (IEFP). Their Employment Program aims to give qualification support to PwD through guidance. It focuses on their training to qualification, their job placement and post-placement monitoring, workplace adaptation and barrier removal, with financial incentives for businesses to undertake these adaptations – also supported by the District Social System Centers (Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity, 2009). Other targeted employment measures include proximity to the labour market, alternative employment methods, support for accessibility and participation, technical support for integration and reintegration, specific methodologies for non-autonomous reentry and employment quotas in both the public and private sectors as outlined in the Law for the Promotion of the Rights of PwD.

Additionally, initiatives like the Valuable Network, co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ program, aim to boost corporate social responsibility by fostering the inclusion of PwD in the job market. The Adapt4You project, backed by IEFP funding, seeks to deliver solutions to support these endeavours. Others like Operation Tampinhas rely on the population's contribution to the crafting of technologies. Or Fundação Altice's Inclusion Program that offers a more personalised assistive technology upon application.

Although Portugal has entities and laws protecting PwD's rights to reasonable accommodations, their access offers some challenges. APD (2012) brought up the issue relating to the bureaucracy that

it entails. Mainly the ability to offer up-to-date technology and the financial capacity to provide it promptly come to question. The time waiting for assistive technologies from accountable entities may present as a hurdle for the company wanting to fill the vacancy. Therefore, the simplification of this process is needed. Proposed measures include decentralisation, as well as the establishment of a monitoring centre to ensure the quality and promptness of their answers. Regarding the use of assistive technologies, the main challenges lie in the levels of linguistics and digital literacy of this specific group. Content not being adapted to PwD's comprehensive capabilities poses an obstacle to their access to information. This highlights the need to facilitate their use by tailoring these technologies to each and every individual need.

### **2.3. Sweden**

Sweden has strong legislation in place to improve accessibility in society, as demonstrated by the 'Planning and Construction Law'. This law requires the removal of easily fixable barriers in public buildings and spaces. An example of this commitment is the Law on Adaptation of Public Transport for the Disabled, which has been in effect since 1979.

Samhall is an example of public support. Samhall is an institution that operates under the Swedish Public Employment Agency and aims to improve job opportunities for individuals with disability with weakened working capacities or those who cannot find work or support. Its primary objective is to create job opportunities for PwD, providing them a place in the regular labour market. However, there are other forms of governmental support available. Municipal health and social care services have implemented initiatives to ensure reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities in the workforce. These initiatives focus on creating a supportive environment for sustained employment, including access and maintenance of work. In addition, transportation funding provisions cover commuting expenses to and from the workplace. Recognizing the significance of a suitable living environment, the services provide financial support for home-related expenses and adaptations. Additionally, they take

a comprehensive approach with 'lifecycle support', emphasising continuous assistance and guidance throughout an individual's life journey. These efforts demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity and empowerment, with the aim of integrating people with disabilities into the workforce and society. In addition, local governments have established a 'municipal social board'. These boards operate within the municipal borders and conduct examinations and research on the living conditions of residents. They also undertake studies to disseminate information to citizens regarding the social services offered by the municipality.

#### **2.4. Türkiye**

The 1982 Constitution of Türkiye provides constitutional safeguards to ensure the protection of the rights of all individuals, including those with disabilities. It adheres to the principles of equal treatment and absence of prejudice. Türkiye has enacted legislation that explicitly prohibits discrimination based on disability, known as anti-discrimination laws. Relevant legislations in this context comprise the Turkish Penal Code (Law No. 5237) and the Law on Disabled Persons (Law No. 5378). These laws have a crucial function in deterring and sanctioning discrimination against individuals with disabilities. The Labour Law (Law No. 4857) in Türkiye mandates that employers must offer appropriate accommodations for employees with disabilities.

Regarding inclusive education, laws such as the Law on Primary Education and Training and the Law on PwD, mandate that educational institutions provide essential accommodations to ensure equitable educational opportunities for students with disabilities. Regarding social services and financial benefits, these rights are bound by the Law on Disabled Persons. These services include providing healthcare access, rehabilitation programmes, and financial support to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

Moreover, Türkiye has signed international agreements such as the United Nations CRPD.

As a result, Türkiye is collaborating with both governmental and non-governmental organisations to promote reasonable accommodations for PwID in the workplace. Government regulations aim to create an

inclusive environment where reasonable accommodations are legally required, fostering equal opportunities for PwID. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and advocacy groups provide guidance, advocacy, and resources to individuals with disabilities and their families. Awareness campaigns challenge stereotypes and change perceptions about PwID, educating employers and the public about their unique strengths. Some NGOs offer job placement and support services, acting as intermediaries to match PwID with suitable employers and assist them in securing and maintaining employment. This collaboration demonstrates Türkiye's commitment to creating a more inclusive and accommodating work environment for PwID, ultimately promoting active participation in the labour force (Aydemir-Döke, & Emir-Öksüz, 2018; Bader et al., 2013).

Even so, PwID face significant challenges, in Türkiye, in accessing and utilising assistive technologies, which are essential tools for their participation in education, employment, and social inclusion. These challenges include limited awareness and education, high costs associated with assistive technologies, lack of customization and localization, limited availability in rural areas, bureaucratic hurdles, and lack of training and technical support.

Limited awareness and education about assistive technologies can lead to underutilization of available tools, such as in educational settings, hindering students' educational opportunities. High costs can make these devices unaffordable for many individuals and families, especially in countries with economic disparities like Türkiye. Customization and localization of assistive technologies can also be a challenge, as they often need to cater to specific needs and language requirements.

Limited availability in rural areas further complicates the problem, as access to assistive technologies is often concentrated in urban areas, leaving individuals in rural areas at a disadvantage. Bureaucratic hurdles, such as complex paperwork and long waiting times, can delay the process of acquiring assistive technologies, particularly when obtaining approval and funding through the healthcare system. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that involves governmental initiatives, educational institutions, healthcare

providers, non-governmental organisations, and the private sector. Collaborative efforts are essential to increase awareness, reduce costs, customise technologies to local needs, improve access in rural areas, streamline bureaucratic processes, and provide training and technical support.

### ***2.5. Concluding Remarks About Reasonable Adaptations in the Employment Context of PwID***

The obligation to implement these reasonable accommodations is enshrined in the law across all four countries. And while the duty of employing these reasonable accommodations falls on companies, the state is the one that provides financial support. When this financial support is not applicable other non-governmental entities cooperate in creating ways to deliver these accommodations to PwD. This partnership is not only to mitigate costs but also to enhance accessibility.

Nevertheless, there remain challenges to be confronted: the weight of high expenses, limited reach to specific regions, bureaucratic complexities and the absence of proper training and technical support for the general population's awareness. This reiterates the need for expanding the regions in which PwD can access these technologies, simplifying bureaucratic processes and personalization of responses according to individual needs, carrying out more awareness initiatives and investing in training and technical support.

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# CONTEXTUAL PERCEIVED NEEDS FOR INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

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## **Abstract**

This international study investigates the employability of People with Intellectual Disability (PwID) from the perspective of professionals in Italy, Portugal, Sweden, and Türkiye. Surveying 43 professionals through an online questionnaire, the research examines educational needs, the importance of reasonable accommodations, and evaluation frameworks in employment settings for PwID. Key findings highlight the critical role of social skills and interpersonal communication, with variations in focus across countries – Türkiye emphasises social skills, Sweden prioritises problem-solving abilities, and Italy values adaptive and self-care skills. The results advocate for customised educational strategies and the necessity of personal learning plans, especially in Portugal, Italy, and Sweden. Challenges in workplace accommodations due to limited employer awareness are also noted, with a call for increased use of assistive technologies to foster inclusive work and learning environments. The study underscores the need for tailored training and education to enhance the employability of PwID.

**Keywords:** Employability; Intellectual Disability; Inclusive Practices; Assistive technologies; Reasonable Accommodations.

### Relevance of the Chapter for People with Intellectual Disability (PwID)

The significance of this chapter for individuals with Intellectual Disability (PwID) lies in its thorough analysis of the obstacles and opportunities that influence their ability to find employment and participate in the workforce. This chapter emphasises the crucial significance of flexible and inclusive training methods, reasonable accommodations, and the use of assistive technologies. Therefore, it provides insight into the comprehensive approach required to empower PwID.

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### Introduction

People with Intellectual and Developmental Disability (PwID) face significant challenges that include extensive limitations in both intellectual capabilities and adaptive behaviours, affecting essential daily life skills (Schalock, et al., 2021). This issue impacts millions globally, marking it as a worldwide concern. It is notably pressing in European countries, such as Portugal (PT), Italy (IT), Türkiye (TR), and Sweden (SE), where studies have indicated that these individuals encounter difficulties in obtaining employment due to their linguistic and digital literacy, lower educational achievements, and obstacles in accessing and utilising assistive technologies, especially within the context of a job market that increasingly values high skill levels and technological proficiency (APD, 2012; ISFOL, 2014). To address these challenges, there has been a push towards establishing a solid legal framework aimed at safeguarding the employment rights of PwID by introducing a proactive quota system, acknowledging the necessity

for reasonable accommodations, and providing specialised training programs to ease their transition into the workforce.

Despite these efforts, PwID continues to face significant barriers that severely limit their employment opportunities, primarily due to systemic issues (AlFozan, & AlKahtani, 2021; Hall et al., 2017). A critical issue is the labour market's general failure to recognize the potential and abilities of PwID (AlFozan, & AlKahtani, 2021), compounded by inadequate institutional policies and practices that fail to cater to their unique needs and capabilities (Baker et al., 2018). This negligence not only curtails their employment opportunities but also denies society the benefits of their diverse contributions.

Addressing these challenges necessitates a comprehensive reform of the training and educational frameworks, with a focus on adapting them to better meet the needs of PwID as a crucial area for future research in employment for this demographic (AlFozan, & AlKahtani, 2021). The goal of such reforms should be to create an inclusive, flexible educational environment that welcomes the specific needs of PwID through the implementation of effective adjustments and the integration of assistive technologies (Boot et al., 2018; Chandola, & Rouxel, 2021; Sula, 2023). Such measures could significantly enhance the educational and developmental experiences of PwID, ultimately improving their employment prospects (AlFozan, & AlKahtani, 2021; Almaky, 2020).

## **Method**

### *Participants*

This research utilised a non-random convenience sampling of 43 professionals who are actively involved in the domain of inclusion. The cohort comprised 13 individuals from Türkiye (30.20%), 12 from Portugal (27.90%), 10 from Italy (23.30%), and 8 from Sweden (18.60%). The majority of the respondents were female ( $n = 28$ ; 65.10%), with 12 males (27.90%) and three non-binary individuals (7.00%). The age range of these professionals varied from 31 to 66 years, with an average age of 40.67 years old ( $SD = 10.34$ ).

The participants represented a wide array of professional roles,



with 'trainers and/or educators' making up the largest group ( $n = 11$ ; 25.60%). Additionally, the study included 10 teachers (23.30%), 8 professionals in the intellectual disability sector (18.60%), 7 NGO staff members (16.30%), 6 health professionals and/or therapists (14.00%), and one individual who self-identified as having an intellectual disability (2.30%).

### *Procedure*

This study utilised a quantitative methodology, employing a survey to collect data from participants. The survey, comprising 16 questions divided into six categories, was designed to gather comprehensive insights (Appendix A of this book; <https://doi.org/10.24140/nobarriers.v1.p02.07>). The initial section aimed to obtain informed consent from all respondents, followed by a section that collected demographic data. Subsequent sections delved into skills and teaching methods in vocational training, reasonable accommodations, the recruitment process, and the monitoring and evaluation process. Participants were requested to answer multiple-choice questions within each category, with the request to select up to three responses. The objective of these questions was to explore the work-life inclusion of PwID, focusing on their primary challenges and needs. The survey was conducted online via Google Forms from September 9th, 2023, to October 28th, 2023. Subsequently, the responses were transposed to Excel for further analysis.

### **Findings**

#### *Skills and teaching methods required in the vocational training of PwID*

Upon reviewing the questionnaires, it was discovered that individuals perceive social skills and interpersonal communication as the most essential for the vocational training of people with intellectual disabilities (PwID), with these skills particularly highlighted in TR ( $n = 12$ ; 92.31%) and SE ( $n = 4$ ; 50.00%). Communication skills were also deemed important by a significant portion ( $n = 22$ ; 51.16%) of the respondents. From the IT perspective, adaptive and self-care skills

are seen as paramount ( $n = 9$ ; 90.00%), while in PT, the focus is more on technical and job-specific skills ( $n = 9$ ; 75.00%). Respondents from SE also pointed out the importance of problem-solving skills ( $n = 4$ ; 50%) in vocational training.

Conversely, time management and organisational skills were identified as the least crucial, particularly in TR (with no values reported) and PT ( $n = 2$ ; 16.66%). In IT and SE, technical and job-specific skills were considered least important ( $n = 1$  each; IT = 10.00%, SE = 12.50%). These results are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' perceptions regarding the skills required in the vocational training of PwID ( $N = 43$ )

What are the most important skills required in the vocational training of people with Intellectual Disability?										
	IT		PT		SE		TR		TOTAL	
	%	$n = 10$	%	$n = 12$	%	$n = 8$	%	$n = 13$	%	$N = 43$
Communication skills	50.00	5	41.66	5	37.50	3	69.23	9	51.16	22
Problem-solving skills	40.00	4	50.00	6	50.00	4	53.85	7	48.83	21
Social skills and interpersonal communication	80.00	8	66.66	8	50.00	4	92.31	12	74.41	32
Technical and job-specific skills	10.00	1	75.00	9	12.50	1	38.46	5	37.20	16
Time management and organisation skills	20.00	2	16.66	2	37.50	3	0.00	0	16.27	7
Adaptive and self-care skills	90.00	9	25.00	3	25.00	2	30.77	4	41.86	18

The study revealed that adaptive and personalised learning plans are seen as the most effective pedagogical approach for vocational training of PwID from the self-perceptions of the participants, particularly noted in PT ( $n = 11$ ; 91.67%), IT ( $n = 8$ ; 80.00%), and SE

( $n = 5$ ; 62.50%). Peer-assisted learning and collaboration are also valued highly, especially in IT ( $n = 8$ ; 80.00%). Additionally, from IT's perspective, hands-on training and experiential learning are crucial ( $n = 8$ ; 80.00%), whereas TR participants favour individualised instruction ( $n = 10$ ; 76.92%).

On the other hand, task analysis and structured teaching were identified as the least suitable approaches ( $n = 11$ ; 25.58%), with no significant implementation reported in IT and PT. SE participants indicated hands-on training and experiential learning as the least preferred method ( $n = 1$ ; 12.50%). In contrast, TR respondents found visual and multimedia-based instruction to be least suitable ( $n = 2$ ; 15.38%).

These findings are detailed in Table 2, reflecting the self-perceptions of the study's participants.

Table 2. Participants' perceptions regarding the adopted pedagogical approaches in the training of PwID ( $N = 43$ )

	IT		PT		SE		TR		TOTAL	
	%	$n = 10$	%	$n = 12$	%	$n = 8$	%	$n = 13$	%	$N = 43$
Individualised instruction	10.00	1	58.33	7	25.00	2	76.92	10	46.51	20
Hands-on training and experiential learning	80.00	8	41.67	5	12.50	1	38.46	5	44.19	19
Visual and multimedia-based instruction	20.00	2	41.67	5	37.50	3	15.38	2	27.91	12
Task analysis and structured teaching	0.00	0	0.00	0	25.00	2	69.23	9	25.58	11
Peer-assisted learning and collaboration	80.00	8	33.33	4	50.00	4	53.85	7	53.49	23
Adaptive and personalised learning plans	80.00	8	91.67	11	62.50	5	23.08	3	62.79	27

Our study identified the lack of trained instructors and support personnel ( $n = 19$ ; 44.19%) and the challenges of social isolation and interaction ( $n = 18$ ; 41.86%) as the primary obstacles to integrating PwID into training programs, with these issues being most prominent in IT ( $n = 6$ ; 60.00% for both challenges). In other regions, the predominant challenges varied: unequal access to resources and support was highlighted in PT ( $n = 7$ ; 58.33%) and SE ( $n = 4$ ; 50.00%), while communication barriers were the main issue in TR ( $n$

= 9; 69.23%).

The challenges deemed least significant across all countries were related to sensory sensitivities and overstimulation, with only a minimal number of responses ( $n = 2$ ; 4.65%).

These insights are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Main challenges in the training inclusion of PwID, according to the participants ( $N = 43$ )

	In your perspective, what are the biggest challenges people with Intellectual Disability face in training processes?									
	IT		PT		SE		TR		TOTAL	
	%	$n = 10$	%	$n = 12$	%	$n = 8$	%	$n = 13$	%	$N = 43$
Difficulties with attention span and focus	50.00	5	25.00	3	12.50	1	61.54	8	39.53	17
Difficulty with abstract concepts	50.00	5	16.67	2	25.00	2	23.08	3	27.91	12
Communication barriers	20.00	2	33.33	4	25.00	2	69.23	9	39.53	17
Social isolation and interaction challenges	60.00	6	33.33	4	37.50	3	38.46	5	41.86	18
Sensory sensitivities and overstimulation	0.00	0	8.33	1	12.50	1	0.00	0	4.65	2
Unequal access to resources and support	40.00	4	58.33	7	50.00	4	15.38	2	39.53	17
Stigma and discrimination from peers	20.00	2	33.33	4	12.50	1	30.77	4	25.58	11
Lack of trained instructors and support personnel	60.00	6	50.00	6	25.00	2	38.46	5	44.19	19
Transportation and accessibility issues	0.00	0	16.67	2	25.00	2	0.00	0	9.30	4
Limited access to quality training programs	20.00	2	41.67	5	37.50	3	15.38	2	27.91	12

### *Reasonable accommodations in the employment context of people with Intellectual Disability*

In terms of measures to ensure access to reasonable adaptations in the workplace for PwID, regular training for employers and colleagues was the most valued measure ( $n = 22$ ; 51.16%). The second most valued were individualised accommodation assessments and plans ( $n = 18$ ; 41.86%) and employee assistance programs and support networks ( $n = 18$ ; 41.86%). In SE these were the least valued, being the most important measures legal protections and anti-discrimination laws ( $n = 5$ ; 62.50%) and accessible workplace facilities and assistive technologies ( $n = 4$ ; 50.00%). In IT, although these were taken highly in account, the most important measures identified were also

workplace facilities and assistive technologies ( $n = 7$ ; 70.00%). All countries except SE verified that collaboration with disability advocacy organisations ( $n = 6$ ; 13.95%) was the least important measure identified. Regular training for employers and colleagues ( $n = 1$ ; 7.69%) and flexible work arrangements and schedules ( $n = 1$ ; 7.69%) were also identified as the least important measures to ensure access to reasonable accommodations in the workplace. These findings are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Main measures to ensure access to reasonable adaptations in the workplace of PwID, according to the participants ( $N = 43$ )

In your perspective, what are the main measures to ensure all individuals with Intellectual Disability have access to reasonable adaptations in their employment context?										
	IT		PT		SE		TR		TOTAL	
	%	$n = 10$	%	$n = 12$	%	$n = 8$	%	$n = 13$	%	$N = 43$
Legal protections and anti-discrimination laws	20.00	2	25.00	3	62.50	5	23.08	3	30.23	13
Individualised accommodation assessments and plans	50.00	5	41.67	5	12.50	1	53.85	7	41.86	18
Accessible workplace facilities and assistive technologies	70.00	7	25.00	3	50.00	4	23.08	3	39.53	17
Regular training for employers and colleagues	60.00	6	66.67	8	12.50	1	53.85	7	51.16	22
Inclusive hiring and promotion practices	20.00	2	33.33	4	37.50	3	53.85	7	37.21	16
Flexible work arrangements and schedules	30.00	3	50.00	6	25.00	2	15.38	2	30.23	13
Employee assistance programs and support networks	40.00	4	33.33	4	25.00	2	53.85	7	41.86	18
Collaboration with disability advocacy organisations	10.00	1	16.67	2	25.00	2	7.69	1	13.95	6

According to the participants, the two most significant challenges faced by PwID in accessing reasonable accommodation and assistive technology in the workplace were related to the lack of awareness and understanding among employers ( $n = 23$ ; 53.49%). This finding was consistent across TR ( $n = 9$ ; 69.23%), IT ( $n = 6$ ; 60.00%), and PT ( $n = 7$ ; 58.33%). Another main challenge identified was the insufficient training for employees and HR staff ( $n = 8$ ; 18.60%). This was confirmed in PT ( $n = 9$ ; 75.00%), IT ( $n = 6$ ; 60.00%), and SE ( $n = 4$ ; 50.00%). Additionally, TR faced two other significant challenges: inadequate legal protection and enforcement ( $n = 9$ ; 69.23%) and stigmatisation and bias in the workplace ( $n = 9$ ; 69.23%).

The least significant challenge identified was communication

barriers in requesting accommodations ( $n = 8$ ; 18.60%). Although low scores were found in all countries regarding this challenge, the least important factor in PT was inadequate legal protections and enforcement ( $n = 1$ ; 8.33%). In SE, the least significant challenge was financial constraints for providing assistive technologies (with no values). In TR, bureaucratic hurdles in the accommodation approval process were identified only once ( $n = 1$ ; 7.69%). The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Main challenges in accessing reasonable accommodations and assistive technologies in the work context of people with PwID, according to the sample ( $N = 43$ )

	In your opinion, what are the main challenges that people with Intellectual Disability face in accessing reasonable accommodations and assistive technologies in the work context?									
	IT		PT		SE		TR		TOTAL	
	%	$n = 10$	%	$n = 12$	%	$n = 8$	%	$n = 13$	%	$N = 43$
Lack of awareness and understanding among employers	60.00	6	58.33	7	12.50	1	69.23	9	53.49	23
Financial constraints for providing assistive technologies	50.00	5	25.00	3	0.00	0	23.08	3	25.58	11
Inadequate legal protections and enforcement	20.00	2	8.33	1	37.50	3	69.23	9	34.88	15
Stigmatisation and bias in the workplace	20.00	2	25.00	3	37.50	3	69.23	9	39.53	17
Limited availability of customised accommodations	40.00	4	33.33	4	25.00	2	23.08	3	30.23	13
Communication barriers in requesting accommodations	0.00	0	25.00	3	37.50	3	15.38	2	18.60	8
Insufficient training for employees and HR personnel	60.00	6	75.00	9	50.00	4	15.38	2	48.84	21
Bureaucratic hurdles in the accommodation approval process	30.00	3	25.00	3	37.50	3	7.69	1	23.26	10

### Recruitment Process

The primary characteristics of an inclusive recruitment process for PwID, according to the sample, were clear and accessible job descriptions and requirements ( $n = 22$ ; 51.16%) and flexible work arrangements and a supportive environment ( $n = 19$ ; 44.19%). This was verified in TR and PT. In SE, inclusive language and communication ( $n = 5$ ; 62.50%) and diverse interview panels and training for interviewers ( $n = 3$ ; 37.50%) were found to be important. The main characteristics identified in IT were flexible work arrangements and supportive environment ( $n = 5$ ; 50.00%) and ongoing support and training for

hired employees with intellectual disabilities ( $n = 5$ ; 50.00%).

A minor characteristic, collaboration with disability advocacy organisations ( $n = 7$ ; 16.28%), was verified in IT but not entirely in other countries. Although this type of collaboration received low scores, the characteristics that were not identified included customised application and interview accommodations (PT), clear and accessible job descriptions and requirements (SE), and diverse interview panels and training for interviewers (TR).

These findings are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Main characteristics of an inclusive recruitment process, according to the sample ( $N = 43$ )

In your opinion, what are the main characteristics of an inclusive recruitment process for people with Intellectual Disability?	IT		PT		SE		TR		TOTAL	
	%	$n = 10$	%	$n = 12$	%	$n = 8$	%	$n = 13$	%	$N = 43$
	Clear and accessible job descriptions and requirements	40.00	4	58.33	7	0.00	0	84.62	11	51.16
Equal access to job postings and application procedures	10.00	1	25.00	3	25.00	2	15.38	2	18.60	8
Customised application and interview accommodations	30.00	3	0.00	0	25.00	2	38.46	5	23.26	10
Inclusive language and communication	40.00	4	33.33	4	62.50	5	38.46	5	41.86	18
Diverse interview panels and training for interviewers	40.00	4	25.00	3	37.50	3	0.00	0	23.26	10
Flexible work arrangements and supportive environment	50.00	5	50.00	6	25.00	2	46.15	6	44.19	19
Anti-discrimination policies and training	10.00	1	25.00	3	25.00	2	15.38	2	18.60	8
Collaboration with disability advocacy organisations	0.00	0	25.00	3	25.00	2	15.38	2	16.28	7
Regular feedback and evaluation of the recruitment process	30.00	3	16.67	2	12.50	1	15.38	2	18.60	8
Ongoing support and training for hired employees with intellectual disability	50.00	5	25.00	3	12.50	1	23.08	3	27.91	12

In terms of the main challenges faced by PwID during the recruitment process, the study found that the most commonly observed issues were stigmatisation and bias in the hiring process ( $n = 24$ ; 55.81%) and insufficient support services for job seekers with intellectual disabilities ( $n = 21$ ; 48.84%). The study also found that these challenges varied between countries. Limited access to job opportunities and networking were identified as major challenges in

IT ( $n = 6$ ; 60.00%) and PT ( $n = 7$ ; 58.33%). And lack of inclusive hiring practices and accommodations were identified in both SE ( $n = 4$ ; 50.00%) and TR ( $n = 10$ ; 76.92%).

Inadequate legal protections and enforcement against discrimination ( $n = 4$ ; 9.30%) were identified as a minor challenge across all countries.

These findings are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Main challenges PwID face in recruitment processes, according to the sample ( $N = 43$ )

In your country, what are the main challenges that people with Intellectual Disability face in recruitment processes?										
	IT		PT		SE		TR		TOTAL	
	%	$n = 10$	%	$n = 12$	%	$n = 8$	%	$n = 13$	%	$N = 43$
Limited awareness and understanding of intellectual disabilities among employers	40.00	4	50.00	6	25.00	2	38.46	5	39.53	17
Lack of inclusive hiring practices and accommodations	20.00	2	33.33	4	50.00	4	76.92	10	46.51	20
Stigmatisation and bias in the hiring process	40.00	4	58.33	7	50.00	4	69.23	9	55.81	24
Limited access to job opportunities and networking	60.00	6	58.33	7	25.00	2	38.46	5	46.51	20
Insufficient support services for job seekers with intellectual disability	70.00	7	41.67	5	25.00	2	53.85	7	48.84	21
Inadequate legal protections and enforcement against discrimination	0.00	0	0.00	0	12.50	1	23.08	3	9.30	4

When asked about the main training needs to create a more inclusive working environment for PwID within their organisation, the results showed that disability awareness training for all staff ( $n = 20$ ; 46.51%) and job coaching and support for employees with intellectual disability ( $n = 20$ ; 46.51%) were the top priorities. These findings were observed in both TR and IT. The most commonly identified training needs in PT were mental health and wellness support training ( $n = 6$ ; 50.00%) and collaboration with disability advocacy organisations training ( $n = 5$ ; 41.67%). In SE, the most commonly identified training needs were inclusive leadership and management training, and collaboration with disability advocacy organisations training ( $n = 4$ ; 50.00%, in both). The least important training needs were anti-discrimination and inclusion policies training ( $n = 8$ ; 18.60%). Although this was verified in IT, not so much in the remaining countries. In PT, the sample



mentioned training on reasonable accommodations and accessibility only once ( $n = 1$ ; 8.33%). In SE, disability awareness training for all staff was never mentioned, and in collaboration with disability advocacy organisations training in TR. These findings are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Own organisation's main training needs to become more inclusive, according to the sample ( $N = 43$ )

	In your opinion, what are your organisation's main training needs in order to become a more inclusive working environment for people with Intellectual Disability?									
	IT		PT		SE		TR		TOTAL	
	%	$n = 10$	%	$n = 12$	%	$n = 8$	%	$n = 13$	%	$N = 43$
Disability Awareness Training for All Staff	50.00	5	33.33	4	0.00	0	84.62	11	46.51	20
Training on Reasonable Accommodations and Accessibility	20.00	2	8.33	1	25.00	2	46.15	6	25.58	11
Effective Communication Strategies	30.00	3	33.33	4	25.00	2	7.69	1	23.26	10
Inclusive Leadership and Management Training	50.00	5	16.67	2	50.00	4	46.15	6	39.53	17
Mental Health and Wellness Support Training	20.00	2	50.00	6	25.00	2	7.69	1	25.58	11
Anti-Discrimination and Inclusion Policies Training	10.00	1	25.00	3	25.00	2	15.38	2	18.60	8
Collaboration with Disability Advocacy Organizations Training	30.00	3	41.67	5	50.00	4	0.00	0	27.91	12
Job Coaching and Support for Employees with Intellectual Disabilities	60.00	6	33.33	4	25.00	2	61.54	8	46.51	20

### Monitoring and evaluation process

The most effective methods for evaluating an organisation's inclusion environment, according to the sample, are focus groups and inclusive workplace committees ( $n = 25$ ; 58.14%). This was confirmed in SE ( $n = 5$ ; 62.50%). Employee surveys and feedback ( $n = 23$ ; 53.49%) were also found to be effective, which was confirmed in TR ( $n = 11$ ; 84.62%), and also external audits and assessments by diversity and inclusion experts ( $n = 23$ ; 53.49%) which was confirmed in IT ( $n = 7$ ; 70.00%) and PT ( $n = 8$ ; 66.67%). SE participants found inclusion metrics and KPI tracking to be important assessment strategies ( $n = 5$ ; 62.50%).

Benchmarking against industry standards and best practices ( $n = 6$ ; 13.95%) was considered the least important strategy. Verified across

all countries.

These findings are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Best strategies for the assessment of organisational inclusivity, according to the sample ( $N = 43$ )

	In your opinion, what is the best strategy for assessing how inclusive an organisation's environment is?									
	IT		PT		SE		TR		TOTAL	
	%	$n = 10$	%	$n = 12$	%	$n = 8$	%	$n = 13$	%	$N = 43$
Employee Surveys and Feedback	60.00	6	41.67	5	12.50	1	84.62	11	53.49	23
External Audits and Assessments by Diversity and Inclusion Experts	70.00	7	66.67	8	50.00	4	30.77	4	53.49	23
Inclusion Metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Tracking	20.00	2	41.67	5	62.50	5	61.54	8	46.51	20
Focus Groups and Inclusive Workplace Committees	60.00	6	33.33	4	62.50	5	76.92	10	58.14	25
Benchmarking Against Industry Standards and Best Practices	10.00	1	33.33	4	12.50	1	0.00	0	13.95	6

Finally, it was found that the two most effective strategies for assessing the organisational inclusion of PwID are conducting inclusive focus groups and workshops with these employees ( $n = 28$ ; 65.12%), identified as best in TR ( $n = 76.92\%$ ), IT ( $n = 6$ ; 60.00%) and SE ( $n = 4$ ; 4.60%). Additionally, performance reviews and career tracking ( $n = 20$ ; 46.51%) were also identified as the most effective strategies. For PT respondents, the most effective strategy is to conduct focus groups and feedback from employees with intellectual disabilities ( $n = 9$ ; 75.00%). SE participants also identified working with disability organisations for assessment as one of the best strategies ( $n = 4$ ; 50.00%).

The least important strategy identified by the sample was accessibility audits and accommodation assessment ( $n = 12$ ; 27.91%). This was confirmed in PT ( $n = 3$ ; 25.00%), but not in IT and TR. In these countries, surveys and feedback from employees with intellectual disabilities (IT  $n = 2$ ; 20,00%; TR  $n = 3$ ; 23,08%) were found to be the least important strategy for assessing the organisational inclusion of PwID.

Table 10 details these findings.

Table 10. Best strategies for the assessment of organisational inclusion of PwID, according to the sample (N = 43)

In your opinion, what is the best strategy for assessing the specific inclusion of employees with Intellectual Disability in an organisation's environment?										
	IT		PT		SE		TR		TOTAL	
	%	n = 10	%	n = 12	%	n = 8	%	n = 13	%	N = 43
Surveys and Feedback from Employees with Intellectual Disabilities	20.00	2	75.00	9	3.45	3	23.08	3	39.53	17
Collaboration with Disability Advocacy Organizations for Assessments	20.00	2	33.33	4	4.60	4	46.15	6	37.21	16
Inclusive Focus Groups and Workshops Involving These Employees	60.00	6	66.67	8	4.60	4	76.92	10	65.12	28
Performance Reviews and Career Progression Tracking	50.00	5	25.00	3	3.45	3	69.23	9	46.51	20
Accessibility Audits and Accommodation Assessments	40.00	4	25.00	3	0.00	0	38.46	5	27.91	12

## Discussion

This global study, exploring professional insights on inclusion for PwID, offers significant findings across four key areas: educational needs, skills for vocational training, accommodations in the workplace, and frameworks for monitoring employment for individuals with ID.

The research highlights the essential role of social skills and interpersonal communication in the vocational training of people with ID, particularly focusing on the context in Türkiye. While Sweden and Italy adhere to the general trend, they introduce unique perspectives; Sweden emphasises the critical nature of problem-solving skills, and Italy points to the importance of adaptive and self-care skills. These variances underscore the diverse cultural and educational settings in which the professionals operate, paralleling Jansen-van Vuuren & Aldersey's (2020) work on the stigmatisation experiences of people with ID and their families in different cultures.

A similar trend underscores the paramount importance of social skills and interpersonal communication in vocational training, with a particular spotlight on Türkiye. Sweden's professionals underscore problem-solving skills, whereas Italy's focus on adaptive and self-care skills echoes research on vocational training's impact on employment chances, health, and societal and economic benefits (Helbig et al.,

2023).

The study also illuminates favoured pedagogical methods in vocational training, where adaptive and personalised learning strategies are particularly valued in Portugal, Italy, and Sweden. This suggests a growing recognition of the need for tailored educational methods catering to the unique needs of learners with ID (Casale-Giannola et al., 2023). Italy's preference for hands-on and experiential learning indicates a pragmatic approach to teaching.

The findings from our survey on inclusive recruitment processes for PwID underscore the importance of specific measures to enhance accessibility and support within the workplace. The most emphasised characteristics across the sample were the necessity for clear and accessible job descriptions and requirements, alongside flexible work arrangements and a supportive environment, particularly highlighted in Türkiye and Portugal. These elements, previously explored by Bray and Grad (2003) are critical in demystifying the job application process for PwID, ensuring that potential employees can understand what is expected of them and that they will be entering a workplace that values their well-being and accommodates their needs.

Regarding accommodations in the workplace, there's a clear consensus on the challenges posed by employers' lack of awareness and the urgent need for enhanced training for staff and HR professionals, especially in Türkiye, Italy, and Portugal. This points to a broad requirement for better understanding and skills among employers and HR to create more inclusive work environments. Participants underscored assistive technologies' potential in vocational training and employment for PwID, advocating for a unified approach to adopting these technologies across nations, focusing on training and awareness to ensure their effective use and to optimise their role in workforce inclusion for people with ID.

When it comes to frameworks for monitoring the inclusion of people with ID in the job market, the study prefers inclusive focus groups, workshops, performance evaluations, and career tracking. However, in Portugal, the focus is on direct feedback from employees with ID, offering crucial perspectives on the success of inclusion strategies.

### *Limitations and Future Directions*

Despite the broad scope of this study, it presents certain limitations. A significant constraint is its dependence on the viewpoints of professionals within the field, which may inadvertently neglect the direct experiences and needs of PwID.

Additionally, while the research spans several countries, the distinct socio-cultural and economic backgrounds across these regions could influence the generalizability of the findings. This is particularly relevant when considering the variation in policy environments and the degree of technology implementation among the countries studied. The exploration of specific types of assistive technologies was not exhaustive within this study, limiting the understanding of how these technologies might be best integrated into both vocational training and workplace accommodations for PwID.

To better contextualise the research culturally, future inquiries should endeavour to gather firsthand insights and experiences from PwID themselves. This approach would enrich the study with a comprehensive perspective on the efficacy and pertinence of the vocational training and employment methodologies being applied.

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**PART II**

**TRAINING  
PROGRAM**



# EMPOWERMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE, INCLUSIVE MODELS, AND ACTIVISM: NURTURING INCLUSION FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

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## **Abstract**

This chapter explores the pivotal role of language in the inclusion and empowerment of People with Intellectual Disabilities (PwID). It critically examines the historical evolution of language, highlighting the shift from ableist terms to more inclusive expressions, and the significance of adopting plain language to enhance informational accessibility for PwID. Moreover, it discusses the challenges posed by attempts to integrate gender-neutral language in texts, which may inadvertently increase their complexity. Through examples, it underscores the transformative potential of inclusive employment models in enriching corporate culture and adding value to businesses, while exploring the intersectionality of linguistic changes, including the impacts of gender neutrality on cognitive load and accessibility, proposing a nuanced approach to language that respects diversity while ensuring inclusiveness. Ultimately, this comprehensive analysis is aimed at fostering a more inclusive society through strategic linguistic and employment practices.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Language; Intellectual Disability; Accessibility;

## Employment Models.

### Relevance of the Chapter for People with Intellectual Disability (PwID)

The focus of this chapter is on how language can promote the inclusion of People with Intellectual Disability (PwID). It discusses the historical roots of ableist terms, and how language can conversely act as a path for inclusion, moving forward. Moreover, it showcases the two facts of this approach: firstly, using inclusive language to talk about PwID; secondly, using plain language and adaptations of texts to promote informational accessibility to PwID. Some obstacles are also highlighted in the chapter, such as some conflicts between the usage of gender-neutral language and the heightened complexity of texts and sentences. Finally, we show examples of how having an inclusive business model through employment can help to add value to the company.

### Objectives of this Training Subsection

- Present the role of language in communication, and how it shapes the way humans interact amongst themselves and with the world around us.
- Showcase bad examples of how language was used to maintain ableist paradigms and contrast this with other positive and inclusive examples.
- Offer guidelines on how to apply plain language to adapt texts in order to promote informational accessibility to PwID.
- Discuss possible intersectional linguistic conflicts, such as how gender neutrality in romance languages increases the complexity and cognitive load of texts.

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## Introduction

There are many aspects that make humans differ from other social animals. One of the most important, if not the most, is the complexity of our communication. While there has been found evidence that other animals have the capacity for syntactic ability in communication, such as wild chimpanzees (Leroux, et al., 2023) and some types of birds (Engesser et. al., 2016), there is no denying that humans have by far the most complex system of signs and communication, filled with nuance and subjectivity. Moreover, our language is not only a means of communication but a way to exist in the world, which is filled with non-neutral discourse Bakhtin (2006 [1979]). Therefore, when a human communicates, their sentences are indissociable from their own ideologies and both individual and shared beliefs. Our relationship with speech is also dialogical because our choice of symbols, signs, speech patterns and lexical resources is also shaped by our perceptions of the recipient of the message (Bakhtin, 2006 [1979], p.289). What this means, in practice, is that our choice of words is very much intentional, and reveals much of *ourselves* and of *what we think of others, and how we value our relationship towards them*.

In this particular regard, this chapter intends to demonstrate how our choice of words towards PwID reveals the deeply rooted ableism that people without disabilities reproduce, and how we can combat these misconceptions through a more inclusive model of language, in order to promote a society with equal opportunities for PwID.

## Euphemism Treadmill and Eugenics until Activism through the Social Model of Disability

Since its development, language and the meaning we give to words have faced many transformations. As society gains more knowledge and understanding of the discrimination that People with Disabilities (PwD) – and, in this specific case, those with Intellectual Disability (ID) – face, it is only natural that the way we identify this specific group has also changed drastically. This long process has involved many improvements, such as laws that protect the rights of PwD, the

foundation of institutions that promote these rights, and, not least importantly, the way in which we talk about PwID.

Throughout the centuries, there have been several changes made to the expression to designate PwID. From “idiocy” in the Roman era; the use of “imbecile” in the Mishnah – a collection of the Jewish oral traditions – by the end of the second century; to the use of “people with intellectual disability” in the modern era, several have been the designations of this particular social group (Keith & Keith, 2011). More specifically, some of the terms used throughout history were: mentally retarded, mental deficiency, feeble-minded, idiot, imbecile, moron, fool, lunatics “not *compos mentis*” (not of sound mind), innocent, to the one now used: ID – which, in a study conducted by Beart, Hardy, and Buchan in 2005 was concluded that is a powerful and dominant label (Keith & Keith, 2011).

While most of these words are perceived as being very aggressive and derogatory by today’s standards, we must not incur anachronisms, because most of them were thought of as just being plain definitions of PwID’s situations. However, it is also important to note that labels usually are, directly or indirectly, intimately related to stigma and deviance – as what is considered “normal” never requires a specific label. Therefore, sooner or later, it is expected that the labels that are in use today will no longer be accepted, since these labels will become more negatively charged as they reflect the context, attitudes, and perceptions that current society has about what or who is being labelled (Keith & Keith, 2011).

In this sense, the process of continuously updating terms that refer to marginalised groups is called “euphemism treadmill”: a term that describes the process of replacing words that were once considered adequate, but become pejorative over time – and, thus, evolve into a reference to offensive definitions (Stollznow, 2020).

PwD, which people with ID are a part of, are often seen as being less than, as being “Others”, when compared to the rest of the “normal” population. They were usually seen as being monstrosities and “freaks”. This led them to be involuntarily part of “freak shows” in circuses and carnivals in the late-nineteenth-century – furthering the dehumanisation process they went through (Baynton, 2013; Foucault,

1988; Keith & Keith, 2011), mostly because that was the only way most of them could find some semblance of employment at the time. Another factor that contributed to their dehumanisation was eugenics. This term was coined in 1883 by Francis Galton and has always had a negative connotation associated with it, especially because it intended to “perfect” the human race by diminishing what at the time was considered “problematic people” and their “problematic” or “imperfect” behaviours (Davis, 2013; Kevles, 1985).

In this context, PwID were seen as having defects that needed to be *cured or completely eliminated* so that they could achieve their “*full capacity*” as humans, shaping much of what is known as the medical model of disability: a deficiency that needs to be overcome by the individual, and that can, to some extent, be “cured”. On the other hand, the social model of disability defends that the barriers that PwD encounter are the result of social oppression and exclusion and, thus, it is *society itself that is disabled* and has the moral responsibility to remove its obstacles to fully enable their participation (Lau, 2019; Shakespeare, 2013).

While the social model of disability is still not known to most people, the term was coined by Mike Oliver in 1983, and was a fundamental element in the development of the UPIAS, a British organisation formed by PwD that aimed to substitute segregated facilities with work opportunities for PwD and their main intention was to promote PwD’s full participation in society, independent living, and to have control over their lives – which was one of the main pillars of the British Disability Movement (Shakespeare, 2013). Besides this, this model also had a huge impact on policies concerning PwD, and was used as a huge inspiration for what was later postulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

### **The usage of Blue Ocean Strategy in the employment of persons with intellectual disabilities**

Although the CRPD states that PwD have the right to work like the rest of the population, they still face barriers in accessing jobs, mainly due to problems related to physical accessibility, work policies, attitudes



from co-workers and company, and due to the job itself (Miralles et al., 2007; United Nations, 2006).

To help combat this situation, Ellinger et al. (2020) presented the Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) as a tool to strengthen the presence of PwD in the workforce. Very briefly, the BOS divides the market space into two different categories: the red ocean, which represents the industries that exist at the moment, and the blue ocean, the industries that still do not exist, or in other words the market space that hasn't been identified yet (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005).

Moreover, in the red oceans, the companies try their best to outperform the competition and gain a bigger market share. However, as the markets get more saturated with competition, the probability of profit and growth diminishes (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005). On the other hand, as blue oceans are about unexplored markets, it creates new demand and heightens the probability of having profitable growth (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005).

Suppose we apply this strategy to the problem of lack of people in certain work areas and start to consider PwID as potential employees. In that case, a whole new recruitment market will suddenly become available. For example, in the study conducted by Ellinger et al. (2020), they showed examples of companies - Walgreens, Procter & Gamble, Lowe's, OfficeMax, UPS, XPO Logistics, and Peckham - that were facing shortages of people to work in their distribution centres. To face this challenge, they used the BOS to recruit and assimilate PwD for open job positions in those places.

Focusing on Walgreens as an example, they express that absenteeism and turnover from employees with disabilities are very low (Ellinger et al., 2020). At the same time, from a productivity standpoint, the employees are held to the same expectations as co-workers without disabilities. Notwithstanding, compared to other distribution centres, the one that employs PwD presents higher productivity than the rest (Ellinger et al., 2020). These results were due in part to the efforts of the, at the time, vice president of distribution and logistics, who ensured that the distribution centre had accessibility policies and design for its structure and processes.

As a whole, what contributed to these companies' strategy success

was: the continuous partnerships with local agencies that support PwID; maintaining equal pay for equal work; providing training to co-workers, supervisors, and managers about the specificities of hiring and integrating PwID; having a company culture that fosters a disability-friendly and inclusive workplace; and investing in the development processes and equipment to promote the assimilation and productivity of their employees with disabilities (Ellinger et al., 2020).

### **Plain Language as a Communication Tool and Other Linguistic Approaches**

Following what was proposed at the beginning of this chapter, it now remains to be seen how to communicate with PwID. For this, we will present considerations and guidelines on how to produce text in easy-to-read language.

According to Inclusion Europe (Šveřepa, 2021), when developing written material, there are three groups to take into consideration, mainly (1) the aspect of the document, (2) the sentence structure and words used, and (3) the way the information is organised.

Referring to the first group, is important that:

- All pages, but the front cover, are numbered at the bottom right of the page;
- The text is at least in size 14 with sans-serif fonts (for example Arial, Tahoma, Helvetica, or Verdana) and aligned left;
- The use of underlined and *italic* text should be considered cautiously;
- Using images next to the text helps PwID to understand the text, and those images should be straightforward, avoiding much abstraction;
- The titles are easy to understand and in **bold**.

Regarding the sentence structure and words used:

- Each new sentence should start in a new line;
- Each sentence should have a maximum of 2 lines with 45 characters each;

- They should, mostly, be written in the affirmative;
- The words used should be easy to understand. If possible, use simpler synonyms.
- If it is not possible to use easier words, then they should be explained every time they are used – or be in a glossary at the beginning with the explanation and reference to each page where the word is used throughout the document;
- Do not split words into two lines;
- Numbers should be written in Arabic numerals ‘10’, not Roman numerals ‘X’ nor in their word form ‘ten’.

Finally, when it comes to how the information is organised, it is important that:

- The main information is easy to find, either at the centre of the document or following the reading pattern of the language being used to write it. For instance, in Romance, Slavic and Nordic languages, Afrikaner, and Modern Chinese, that is the upper-left corner of the document, while for Arabic, Japanese, and ancient Chinese, that is instead the upper-right corner;
- The information appears in order and it is easy to follow;
- The paragraphs are divided by defined topics;
- Examples are used to explain what is written;
- Bullet points are used when doing lists;
- It is clear what or who the information is about.

For more information about this topic, we recommend going to the website of Inclusion Europe (Šveřepa, 2021) where it is possible to find a more extensive description of easy-to-read standards in several languages, not only for written text but for other formats too.

Considering the specific context of writing instructions for tasks that need to be performed by workers, one should pay extra attention to the order in which the information is written: it should follow the exact order of the steps that the person will need to accomplish to complete their task. For instance, step 1 should always come before step 2, which should always come before step 3, and so on. This includes, for instance, safety checks and preparations that should be taken before

the task begins, and should also be properly ordered. The ordering of the information is crucial to help establish the working pattern, which will be easier to remember and follow from then on.

However, following the BOS, more than using plain language, there also needs to be a shift in the tone of messages written for and about PwID. Much of the discourse surrounding PwID has historically focused on what they are lacking, in which ways they are different (with negative connotations), and on what they can't do. The way forward needs to include a whole paradigm shift that focuses on the capabilities and celebrates the diversity of PwID. An approach that encompasses this paradigm shift is the Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) method, which revolutionised research about young people, in particular from marginalised groups. Instead of treating them as research subjects, YPAR aims to empower them to become partners in the research.

Conventional wisdom would have us believe that young people, especially young people of colour who live in poverty, have little to bring to their education, and even less to teach their elders. The deficit discourses surrounding these young people focus principally on what they can't do, don't have, and can't learn. (Nieto, 2016, p.10)

This deficit discourse not only is based on a flawed assumption that formal education and socioeconomic status are necessarily tied to one's ability to positively contribute to research, but it also broadens the gaps that society as a whole should instead be attempting to bridge. Other contexts, such as the ones surrounding people with autism, ADHD, etc. have already adopted medically neutral terms that do not solely focus on people who present some sort of variance: neurodiversity, which represents the diversity of neurological characteristics that are possible within the scope of human biology. In that sense, "neurodiversity" does not specifically apply to people who are perceived as "deviant", but encompasses all types of people, both neurotypical and neuroatypical.

The topic of "typicality" is a whole other matter entirely, because those labels do imply that there is a matter of right and wrong – the *neurotypicals* being the right, and the *neuroatypical*s being deviant

from the *norm*. Although it is certainly less egregious than previously used terms, it is a safe assumption that these terms will become less acceptable due to the euphemism treadmill phenomenon. What would be, then, the most neutral term to accurately refer to PwID without implying a negative connotation? Is the term “disability” going to falter under the euphemism treadmill?

Initially, we must consider the “Nothing about Us without Us” (Sasaki, 2004) motto, which perfectly summarises the main point of the Global Disability Movement: that all discourse for and about PwD should include them as protagonists. For this reason, we do not recommend any shift in the term, since it was coined by PwD themselves. On the other hand, we must also take into consideration that, under the social model of disability, the concept of disability is neither set in stone nor solely based on the physiological characteristics of the person. It is, instead, defined when there is a gap between a person’s needs and the availability of the appropriate resources to meet those needs (Sousa et al., 2022).

As Léste and Farbiarz (2023) suggest, hundreds of thousands of years ago, when early humans had no way to address myopia, the condition would be considered a disability, because people with myopia would be unable to perform the basic activities that were expected of them as part of a group: keeping a lookout for predators, spotting prey, distinguishing edible plants from poisonous ones, and so forth. Léste and Farbiarz (2023) further explain that, nowadays, myopia and other mild visual conditions are not considered visual disabilities only because the current infrastructure surrounding ophthalmological care is so advanced and pervasive that most people with myopia have access to different options of care to choose from: using prescription glasses, prescription lenses, or undergoing eye surgery – and, therefore, can live comfortably in society without facing additional barriers that stem from their condition.

Similarly, when considering the BOS, would (or should) a person with an intellectual disability be considered “disabled” if the workplace is properly equipped to accommodate their needs and they can perform the same tasks, under the same standards? When we consider that they, in actuality, outperform people without intellectual disability

(Ellinger et al., 2020) when conducting the same tasks, it becomes apparent that their perceived disability is, at least, irrelevant in that context and, thus, could be simply regarded as their *condition*. This word, in particular, evokes a very neutral response, as it in itself is not charged with judgement – positive or negative –, but merely describes the context of the person – which is the key aspect of the social model of disability. After all, every characteristic that each person has is, in a way, part of the *human condition*.

This process, however, will only be complete when PwID are truly integrated into society because it is only by coexisting that we can normalise situations that can initially seem foreign to us. Therefore, we urge companies and other institutions to adapt their documents and materials to have more inclusive language and formatting, to consider the BOS, and, most importantly, to consider employing PwID as consultants in how to conduct these processes in an ethical, constructive manner.

## **Conclusions**

The way that humanity perceives disability has greatly shifted over the last millennia. From the moral model of disability, which considered disabilities as divine punishments from the gods; to the medical model of disability, which considered disabilities as physical flaws of each individual's body, and charges them with the daunting task of “overcoming their limitations”; we are now employing the social model of disability – which focus not on what is wrong with people, but in what resources are necessary so that anyone, no matter their condition, can live a comfortable, productive and meaningful life.

The first step towards this shift is to use more neutral and positive language to describe the conditions of people with disability. Instead of focusing on the “deficit discourse”, we must acknowledge particular differences amongst people, and celebrate their differences, as these differences allow them to provide a different and unique point of view. However, simply updating the current terms is not enough, we must combat the euphemism treadmill at its source – the perception of otherness that society projects onto PwID.

In order to do that, we must acknowledge that, by not ensuring that PwID have proper access to equitable job prospects, we are ever-so-slowly contributing to the maintenance of the perception that PwID are incapable of living fruitful, independent lives. As they are kept from being part of the Economically Active Population, they become more dependent on their families, caretakers, and support networks; and, in turn, their families must, sometimes, sacrifice even their own independence to become caretakers. In this regard, the Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) provides a very effective approach to integrating PwID in the job market, addressing this deeply rooted issue – with the benefit of having proven monetary benefits to the companies that adopt it.

Moreover, PwID should not only occupy entry-level positions but also be considered as consultants on how to promote this more inclusive paradigm shift. As the motto says: “Nothing about Us without Us”.

### **Considerations for Future Studies**

While this chapter presents many already-validated guidelines for plain language usage in communication, we would also like to point out that, as language evolves, many of its signs and structures shift over time. Currently, romance languages have been going through some slow progress towards the usage of more gender-neutral language, since their improper nouns are mostly gendered by the usage of -o and -a suffixes, in most cases, to distinguish the male and female counterparts of the same improper noun. For instance, the radical of one of the words for “student” in Portuguese is “*alun-*”, which can be complemented with an “-a” to form the female version of the student noun “*aluna*”, or “-o” to form the male version “*aluno*”. The problem arises when we notice that romance languages suffer from the “male as a norm” grammatical phenomenon, which makes it so the improper noun to address a multi-gendered group will always be the male version, by default. So, in a group of 100 students with 99 female students and 1 male student, the group would be addressed as “*alunos*”.

Some strategies to address this desire for gender neutrality is the

preference for terms that are gender-neutral by default, for instance, the word “*estudante*” also means student and can be applied to both female and male students. However, the problem stands because the usage of articles is also gendered, so the aforementioned group would still be called “*os estudantes*”. Another common strategy that has been proposed is to substitute the articles and suffixes with gender-neutral versions, such as -e, -u, -x, and -@. However, it is there that we face a common intersectional issue: current screen-reading software is very incompatible with such neologisms – resulting in a decrease of accessibility for people with visual disabilities –, while also increasing the cognitive load required to interpret sentences, since they are formed by unfamiliar words – resulting in less accessibility for PwID and, for instance, people with ADHD.

Currently, a final solution for this issue has not yet been proposed, but we strongly suggest the preference for gender-neutral terms that are already part of the common lexis of the population, as well as rewriting sentences to avoid using gendered words, if possible. Some specific accents and dialects also eliminate the usage of gendered articles altogether, which is the case for the city of Niterói, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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# ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

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## **Abstract**

This chapter provides an overview of the core principles and strategies for attaining accessible and inclusive communication in professional environments. Therefore, it underscores the significance of simplicity, clarity, and respect in ensuring that information exchange is accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities. The main subjects covered are adjusting communication styles to cater to different requirements, employing various methods of communication, and the importance of feedback and adaptation in improving comprehension. Ultimately, the chapter promotes a proactive stance towards inclusivity, with the goal of establishing a work environment where each person is esteemed and capable of making meaningful contributions.

**Keywords:** Accessible Communication; Inclusive Practices; Multimodal Communication; Workplace Diversity; Adaptation and Feedback.

## Relevance of the Chapter for People with Intellectual Disability (PwID)

This chapter holds particular relevance for People with Intellectual Disability (PwID), as it outlines the importance of creating communication strategies that accommodate diverse cognitive abilities and learning styles. By emphasising simplicity, clarity, and the use of multimodal communication methods, the chapter provides a blueprint for crafting messages that are accessible to PwID, ensuring they can effectively understand, participate in, and contribute to professional environments. The focus on adapting communication styles, employing visual aids, and on assistive technologies underscores a commitment to inclusivity, enabling PwID to navigate the workplace in a more confident and autonomous manner.

### Objectives of this Training Subsection

- Equip participants with skills to make communication clear and understandable for PwID through plain language and visual aids.
- Foster an inclusive workplace by adapting communication to meet individual needs and valuing the contributions of PwID.
- Establish feedback mechanisms to continuously refine communication practices based on input from PwID and team members.

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### Introduction to Accessible Communication

In the field of professional communication, accessible communication goes beyond traditional methodologies, demanding a nuanced approach tailored to a diverse audience. This module aims to impart a comprehensive understanding of key principles, skills and knowledge

that can be crucial in enhancing professional interactions and contributing to a more inclusive and productive work environment.

Accessible communication encompasses a range of principles designed to make information exchange understandable and accessible to as many people as possible, including those with disabilities. Here are some key principles:

- **Simplicity and Clarity:** The use of plain, straightforward language, without jargon, technical terms, or complex sentence structures makes the message clear and easy to understand for everyone, including individuals with intellectual disabilities or those for whom the primary language of communication is not their first language.
- **Consistency:** Maintain a consistent style and format in both verbal and written communications. Consistency helps individuals with learning disabilities or cognitive challenges to better understand and follow the content.
- **Multimodal Communication:** Employ various modes of communication, such as text, speech, visuals, and tactile elements ensures that information is accessible to people with different types of disabilities, as well as those with visual or auditory impairments.
- **Respect and Dignity:** When communicating with persons with disabilities it is fundamental to always communicate in a way that respects the dignity of the audience. It must be avoided to patronise or use childlike language when communicating with adults, regardless of their disability.
- **Use of Visual Aids:** Incorporating diagrams, symbols, or images to support text and verbal information can be particularly helpful for individuals who are visual learners or who have difficulty processing textual or spoken information.
- **Feedback and Adaptation:** It is useful to encourage and incorporate feedback to continuously adapt and improve communication methods. This includes being receptive to cues from the audience about whether they understand the material and adjusting accordingly.
- **Accessibility Features:** For digital communication, the company

should ensure that websites, documents, and other digital media are compatible with screen readers and other assistive technologies. This also includes using alt text for images, providing captions for videos, and ensuring navigability for keyboard-only users.

- **Inclusive Design:** When planning communication, the needs of people with disabilities should be considered from the outset. This proactive approach is more effective than making retroactive adjustments.

### **Inclusive Communication Strategies**

Inclusive communication strategies form the cornerstone of effective interaction in inclusive workplaces. These strategies encompass a range of practices designed to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their background or abilities, can engage in meaningful dialogue and collaboration. Central to these strategies are three key components: verbal communication, non-verbal communication, active listening, and feedback methods. Together, these components create a robust framework for inclusive communication, ensuring that every individual in a diverse workplace feels valued, understood, and empowered to contribute.

**Verbal communication:** It's about crafting messages that are clear, concise, and easily understandable to a diverse audience, including those with varying cognitive abilities. This involves using plain language and avoiding technical language or colloquialisms that might be unfamiliar to some. The tone and pace of speech are equally important, as they can significantly impact the listener's ability to process and engage with the information. Tailoring the message to the audience's needs, while ensuring it remains respectful and considerate, is key in fostering an inclusive and collaborative atmosphere.

**Non-verbal communication:** It encompasses body language, facial expressions, and gestures, all of which can significantly impact how messages are received and interpreted. In an inclusive setting, being mindful of non-verbal cues is crucial. It involves maintaining

open and approachable body language, using gestures that reinforce the spoken word, and being aware of cultural differences in body language interpretation. Facial expressions, in particular, play a key role in conveying empathy, understanding, and engagement. Making good use of non-verbal communication enhances the effectiveness of interactions, helping to bridge gaps and build stronger, more inclusive relationships. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand unspoken concerns or questions by recognizing and responding to non-verbal cues.

**Active listening and feedback methods** are vital for fostering inclusivity and understanding in communication. Active listening involves fully focusing on the speaker, understanding their message, and responding thoughtfully. It's about hearing beyond the words, grasping the nuances and emotions conveyed, and acknowledging them through verbal affirmations or appropriate body language. It is connected to skills necessary for fully concentrating, understanding, responding, and remembering what is being communicated. Providing feedback, on the other hand, is about offering constructive responses that encourage dialogue and understanding. It involves expressing thoughts clearly and respectfully, ensuring the speaker feels heard and valued. These methods are essential for creating a two-way communication channel that promotes mutual respect, clarity, and effective collaboration.

### **Adapting Communication Styles**

In a diverse workplace, effective communication is not a monolith; it requires a multifaceted approach that considers the unique communication needs and preferences of each team member. Workers with intellectual disabilities may face challenges in processing complex language, understanding abstract concepts, or interpreting non-verbal cues. Adapting communication styles to meet these needs is not just a matter of compliance or convenience; it is a fundamental aspect of creating an inclusive and respectful work environment where every individual has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully and feel valued.



One of the first steps is to use simplified language and structure by breaking down complex ideas into simpler, more understandable segments, using straightforward language and avoiding idiomatic expressions. This approach helps in making information more accessible, ensuring that workers with intellectual disabilities can understand and engage with it effectively. The use of visual aids, such as pictograms, charts, and infographics, can be incredibly powerful in conveying information in a more tangible and comprehensible manner. Symbolic language, which uses symbols or images to represent ideas or concepts, can also be a valuable tool in bridging communication gaps, especially for those who may struggle with traditional textual or verbal forms of communication.

Another crucial aspect that facilitates inclusive communication is Assistive Technologies. In today's digital age, various technologies can enhance communication for individuals with disabilities. This includes text-to-speech software, communication boards, and other specialised tools that can facilitate more effective and independent communication.

Through the personalization of communication strategies, it is possible to create an environment where every individual, regardless of their intellectual abilities, can understand, contribute to, and thrive in the workplace. This approach not only benefits the individuals with disabilities but also enhances the overall communication efficiency and inclusivity of the entire team.

The key aspects are:

- **Understanding Individual Needs:** The first step in personalization is to understand the specific communication needs of each worker. This might involve recognizing preferences in the type of language used, the pace of conversation, or the format in which information is delivered. For some, visual aids might be more effective, while others might benefit from verbal explanations or hands-on demonstrations.
- **Customizing Communication Tools:** Depending on individual needs, different communication tools may be employed. For instance, some individuals might find electronic communication

- aids more useful, while others might prefer physical tools like communication boards. The choice of tools should be based on what best supports the individual's understanding and expression.
- **Adaptive Language Use:** Tailoring the complexity of language and the type of vocabulary used is another crucial aspect. For some individuals, simplifying language and using shorter, more concrete phrases can aid in comprehension. For others, repeating key points or paraphrasing can be helpful.
  - **Incorporating Feedback:** Personalization also involves a continuous process of feedback and adjustment. Regular check-ins with the individual to assess the effectiveness of the communication approach and making necessary adjustments based on their feedback is essential. This ensures that the strategies remain relevant and effective over time.
  - **Training and Education:** For personalization to be effective, it's important for all team members, especially those in supervisory roles, to be trained in understanding and implementing personalised communication strategies. This training should cover not only the practical aspects but also the empathetic and respectful approach to personalization.
  - **Building Trust and Comfort:** Effective personalization can help build a sense of trust and comfort. When workers feel that their individual communication needs are understood and respected, it fosters a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

### **Overcoming Communication Barriers**

Communication barriers in the workplace can manifest in multiple forms and can significantly hinder the integration and productivity of workers with intellectual disabilities. These barriers can be broadly categorised into physical, language and psychological barriers. Each type presents unique challenges and requires specific strategies to overcome. Overcoming these barriers is not just the responsibility of the individual with a disability; it is a collective effort that involves adapting communication styles, fostering an inclusive environment, and continuously seeking feedback for improvement.

**Physical Barriers:** These include environmental factors that impede communication, such as noise, poor lighting, and physical distance. In the context of intellectual disabilities, it could also refer to the lack of accessibility to communication tools or platforms. Overcoming physical barriers involves creating an environment that facilitates clear communication and understanding.

**Language Barriers:** Language barriers arise when there is a mismatch between the communication style of the sender and the understanding of the receiver. This is particularly relevant when dealing with complex information or technical language that might be difficult for some workers to comprehend. Strategies to overcome these barriers can be used with simpler language, visual aids, and repetition to ensure clarity and understanding.

**Psychological Barriers:** These barriers stem from personal attitudes, emotions, or perceptions that affect communication. For instance, preconceived notions or discomfort about intellectual disabilities can impede open and effective communication. Tackling psychological barriers requires fostering an environment of empathy, openness, and respect. This includes training on disability awareness and creating opportunities for team members to build rapport and understanding.

## **Inclusive Communication in Recruitment**

Recruitment is a critical point of entry into the workforce, and how it's conducted can significantly impact the diversity and inclusivity of the workplace. For individuals with intellectual disabilities, traditional recruitment practices can often present unintended barriers, hindering their opportunity to fully demonstrate their capabilities and potential. Each stage of the recruitment process can be approached with inclusivity at its core, thereby enhancing the accessibility and fairness of the hiring process and creating a more equitable and welcoming environment.

**Job Advertisements:** Job advertisements can be crafted to be more inclusive by using clear, straightforward language and avoiding unnecessarily complex requirements that might discourage or exclude

candidates with intellectual disabilities. It also covers the importance of explicitly stating the organisation's commitment to inclusivity and diversity.

**Application Process:** The accessibility of the application process is another key focus. The application forms and procedures can be designed to be user-friendly and accessible, considering various needs and abilities. This might involve providing alternative formats, clear instructions, and the option for assistance if needed.

**Interview Techniques:** The interview stage is critical in the recruitment process. The adaptation of the interview can help candidates with intellectual disabilities to express their actual potential. This includes preparing interview questions that are clear and direct, considering alternative interview formats, and being open to adjustments such as longer response times or the presence of a support person.

**Assessment Methods:** Often, traditional assessment methods do not accurately reflect the abilities of candidates with intellectual disabilities. There are alternative assessment techniques that can provide a more accurate measure of a candidate's suitability for the role, such as practical tasks, work trials, or adjusted interview techniques.

**Onboarding and Integration:** Ensuring that new hires with intellectual disabilities feel welcomed and supported from the onset is crucial. This involves clear communication about job roles, expectations, and support systems, as well as ongoing communication to facilitate a smooth transition into the workplace.

## **Fostering an Inclusive Workplace Culture**

An inclusive workplace culture is characterised by an environment where differences are respected, where each person feels valued for their unique contributions, and where inclusivity is woven into the very fabric of the organisation's daily operations, interactions and ethos. Achieving this requires a multifaceted approach, touching on various aspects of organisational culture since it goes beyond compliance and policies. The key elements are:

- **Importance of Leadership in Driving Inclusivity:** Leadership has a crucial role in setting the tone for an inclusive culture. Leaders must not only advocate for diversity and inclusion policies but also embody these values in their actions and decisions. This includes actively promoting inclusivity in team dynamics, decision-making processes, and in recognizing and celebrating the contributions of all employees, including those with intellectual disabilities.
- **Inclusive Language and Behavior:** The use of inclusive language and the demonstration of inclusive behaviours are essential components of an inclusive workplace. This goes beyond avoiding discriminatory or offensive language; it's about using language that uplifts and includes all individuals. Similarly, inclusive behaviour involves actions that make everyone feel welcome and included, such as inclusive meeting practices, equitable distribution of opportunities, and fair recognition of achievements.
- **Peer Support and Mentorship Programs:** Establishing peer support systems and mentorship programs can significantly enhance inclusivity. These initiatives provide employees, especially those with intellectual disabilities, with the support, guidance, and advocacy they need to navigate the workplace successfully. It fosters a sense of belonging and provides an additional channel for addressing concerns and fostering professional growth.
- **Accessibility and Accommodations:** Ensuring that the workplace is physically and digitally accessible to all employees is a cornerstone of inclusivity. This includes not only compliance with legal requirements but also proactively seeking ways to make the workplace more accommodating, such as flexible work arrangements, accessible communication tools, and adjustments to the work environment.
- **Training and Awareness Programs:** Continuous education and awareness-raising activities are key to maintaining an inclusive culture. This involves regular training sessions on diversity, inclusivity, and sensitivity, which help to break down stereotypes and misconceptions and foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the challenges faced by individuals with intellectual disabilities. They can also equip employees with the

knowledge and skills to interact respectfully and empathetically with all colleagues.

- **Evaluating and Adapting Practices:** Finally, it is important to regularly evaluate workplace practices and policies for inclusivity. This involves seeking feedback from employees, including those with intellectual disabilities, and being open to making necessary adaptations to ensure that the workplace continues to be welcoming and supportive for everyone.

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# EMPLOYMENT MODELS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR THE INCLUSION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

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## **Abstract**

This chapter explores the critical role employment plays for People with Intellectual Disability (PwID), highlighting it as a means for achieving dignity, independence, and societal contribution, and how sectorial barriers still persist, despite progress in disability rights. Moreover, it examines employment models and practices to enhance workforce inclusion, promoting a more equitable society, addressing the impact of misconceptions on employment opportunities and exploring models like Supported Employment, Sheltered Workshops, Integrated Employment, and Customised Employment, each providing pathways to inclusion. Best practices including accessibility, accommodations, and inclusive hiring are discussed, with real-life examples demonstrating their effectiveness. Ultimately, this chapter aims to offer insights into creating more inclusive employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities, advocating for systemic changes in the job market.

**Keywords:** Intellectual Disability; Employment Inclusion; Supported Employment; Workplace Accommodations; Inclusive Hiring Practices.



## Relevance of the Chapter for People with Intellectual Disability (PwID)

This chapter has a significant impact on People with Intellectual disability (PwID) as it addresses the obstacles they encounter when seeking meaningful employment. This text examines employment models such as Supported Employment and Integrated Employment, emphasising the ways in which they promote independence and social inclusion for PwID. The chapter promotes the significance of inclusive hiring practices and workplace accommodations, and advocates for the elimination of stereotypes that restrict the workforce participation of PwID. By providing valuable insights and exemplary methods, this guide plays a vital role in establishing a job market that is more inclusive. It is a resource for employers, policymakers, and advocates who are committed to empowering these individuals.

### Objectives of this Training Subsection

- Equip participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement inclusive hiring practices and workplace accommodations for PwID.
- Challenge and change prevailing stereotypes and misconceptions about PwID, fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion within organisations.
- Provide practical strategies for integrating Supported Employment, Sheltered Workshops, Integrated Employment, and Customised Employment models, enhancing employment opportunities and workplace participation for PwID.

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## **Introduction**

Employment represents far more than just a means to earn a livelihood; it embodies the principles of dignity, independence, and the ability to make meaningful contributions to society. Nevertheless, individuals with intellectual disabilities have long faced formidable hurdles in accessing employment opportunities. Despite advancements in recognizing and upholding the rights of individuals with disabilities, substantial barriers persist within the job market. In the forthcoming chapter, we delve into various employment models and exemplary practices designed to cultivate the inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities in the workforce. Through this exploration, our project chapter aims to shed light on strategies that can facilitate greater participation and integration of individuals with intellectual disabilities into the workforce, thereby fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

## **Understanding the Importance of Inclusion**

Employing individuals with intellectual disabilities is not solely a matter of social justice; it's also a strategic business decision. By embracing workplace diversity and fostering inclusivity, organisations cultivate a dynamic environment enriched by a variety of perspectives and talents. Individuals with disabilities bring unique communication skills, interpersonal skills, and self-awareness & self-regulation to teams, enhancing collaboration and innovation. Moreover, their presence promotes a culture of empathy and understanding, which in turn strengthens team dynamics and morale. Through effective time management & work ethic, problem-solving, and adaptability, individuals with disabilities demonstrate their capabilities and commitment, contributing meaningfully to overall productivity and creativity. By providing opportunities for these individuals, organisations not only enrich their workforce but also uphold fundamental values of equality and respect, creating a more vibrant and successful workplace for all.

## ***Addressing Common Misconceptions***

Integrating individuals with intellectual disabilities into the workforce faces significant hurdles rooted in pervasive misconceptions and stereotypes. These biases often lead to discrimination and barriers during the hiring process, overshadowing the diverse abilities and potential contributions of these individuals.

Employers' reluctance to provide equitable opportunities, coupled with the lack of support systems and accommodations, further compounds the challenges faced by individuals with intellectual disabilities. To address these issues, it's crucial to challenge stereotypes, promote awareness, and implement inclusive hiring practices and support mechanisms.

By fostering inclusive environments and recognizing the value of diversity, organizations can harness the unique perspectives and talents of individuals with intellectual disabilities, driving innovation and fostering social inclusion within the workforce. Embracing inclusivity not only benefits individuals but also enriches workplaces and society as a whole.

## **Models of Employment**

### ***Supported Employment***

Supported Employment emerged as an approach to enhance the participation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. The roots of this model date back to the 1960s and 1970s and are a product of the disability rights movement of that era. As part of the efforts to increase the integration and independence of people with disabilities in society, the necessity for them to be able to enter the workforce and be employed in competitive jobs was emphasised.

This model not only focuses on helping individuals with disabilities find jobs but also on succeeding in their jobs. Unlike traditional rehabilitation approaches, Supported Employment aims to provide personalised support tailored to individual needs and skills. This support encompasses various aspects, starting from the hiring process to ongoing coaching and adjustment in the workplace to enhance job success.

Today, Supported Employment practices are observed across a broad spectrum. Through collaborations between public agencies, non-profit organisations, and the private sector, various programs and services are offered to promote the employment of individuals with disabilities. These programs focus on increasing awareness among employers about individuals with disabilities, ensuring appropriate workplace accommodations, and supporting the hiring process.

The fundamental principle of Supported Employment is to facilitate the full participation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce and maximize their potential. This model represents a significant step towards increasing diversity and inclusivity in the workplace, while also ensuring equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in society.

### *Sheltered Workshops*

Sheltered workshops have historically served as environments where individuals with disabilities can participate in productive work activities within a supportive framework. Sheltered workshops began in the mid-nineteenth century typically as extensions of educational or medical institutions (National Disability Rights Network [NDRN], 2012; Nelson, 1972). Originating from a desire to offer meaningful engagement and skill development, these workshops initially aimed to create a safe and accommodating space for individuals who faced barriers to employment in traditional settings due to their disabilities. The advent of sheltered workshops coincided with evolving societal attitudes toward disability and labour rights. They were often established by charitable organisations, government agencies, or private entities with the intention of providing vocational training, employment, and socialisation opportunities for individuals with disabilities. These workshops offered a range of activities, including assembly work, packaging, crafts, and other tasks, tailored to accommodate various abilities and support the personal growth of participants.

In recent years, there has been a shift in focus from sheltered workshops toward integrated employment settings. While sheltered workshops have provided valuable opportunities for skill development

and socialisation, there is a growing recognition of the importance of promoting greater independence and community integration for individuals with disabilities. Integrated employment settings emphasise inclusion and participation in mainstream workplaces alongside individuals without disabilities.

Today, the approach to sheltered workshops varies across different regions and jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions have implemented policies and initiatives to phase out sheltered workshops in favour of integrated employment options. These initiatives often involve providing support such as job coaching, workplace accommodations, and skills training to facilitate the transition of individuals from sheltered workshops to integrated employment settings.

However, it is important to acknowledge that sheltered workshops continue to exist in some communities and serve as a viable option for individuals with disabilities who may benefit from a more structured and supportive environment. Efforts are underway to enhance the quality of services provided in sheltered workshops and ensure that individuals have access to a range of employment options based on their preferences, abilities, and support needs.

### *Integrated Employment*

Integrated employment refers to the practice of individuals with disabilities working alongside individuals without disabilities in regular workplaces, rather than in segregated or sheltered environments. In integrated employment settings, individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to perform a variety of job tasks and roles that match their skills, interests, and abilities, just like their peers without disabilities.

The key principles of integrated employment include:

- **Inclusion:** Integrated employment promotes the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce, fostering a diverse and supportive workplace environment where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and succeed.
- **Equality:** Integrated employment emphasises equality of opportunity, ensuring that individuals with disabilities have access to the same employment opportunities, rights, and benefits as their neurotypical counterparts.

- **Individualised Support:** Integrated employment recognizes that individuals with disabilities may require different types and levels of support to succeed in the workplace. Support services such as job coaching, accommodations, and skills training are provided based on the unique needs of each individual.
- **Community Integration:** Integrated employment facilitates the integration of individuals with disabilities into the broader community, promoting social connections, relationships, and participation in community life beyond the workplace.

Integrated employment is often seen as a preferred alternative to sheltered workshops or segregated employment settings, as it promotes greater autonomy, independence, and self-determination for individuals with disabilities.

Integrated employment also has a variety of attributes and different methods of support. Integrated employment is also referred to as community-based employment, competitive employment, open employment, customised employment, inclusive employment or supported employment. This type of employment is characterised by a community-based setting where individuals work alongside coworkers, regardless of disability. The wages are comparable to those of all coworkers, and the support model follows a place-train-support approach (Janero et al., 2002).

### *Customised Employment*

Customised employment refers to competitive integrated employment, for person with a significant disability, that is based on an individualised determination of the strengths, needs, and interests, and is designed to meet the specific abilities of the person with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer (Inge et al., 2022).

Customised employment is a relationship between an employer and an employee that is negotiated to meet the needs of both parties. It is based on an exchange of specific contributions by the employee for pay by the employer at or above minimum wage. Customised employment is a universal employment strategy and is especially useful for employment seekers with significant life complexities and barriers to employment, such as severe disability (Inge et al., 2022).

Customised employment represents a paradigm shift in how employment services are delivered to individuals with disabilities. Instead of trying to fit individuals into existing jobs, customised employment focuses on creating job roles that are specifically tailored to the strengths, abilities, and preferences of each individual. This may involve conducting comprehensive assessments to identify the individual's skills, interests, and support needs, as well as exploring creative solutions for job creation and workplace accommodations. One of the key principles of customised employment is the emphasis on collaboration between the individual, vocational rehabilitation professionals, and potential employers. This collaborative approach allows for a thorough understanding of the individual's capabilities and the identification of potential job opportunities that align with their strengths and interests. Employers are encouraged to think creatively about how they can customise job roles to accommodate the unique abilities of individuals with disabilities while meeting the needs of their business.

Today, customised employment is recognized as a promising practice for promoting meaningful employment outcomes and community integration for individuals with disabilities. It is increasingly integrated into vocational rehabilitation programs and supported employment services across various settings, including public agencies, non-profit organisations, and private sector initiatives. The person-centred approach of customised employment underscores the importance of recognizing the unique talents and contributions of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

## **Best Practices for Inclusive Employment**

### *Accessibility and Accommodations*

Employers play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive workplace environment where individuals with intellectual disabilities can thrive. Prioritising accessibility and providing reasonable accommodations are essential steps in ensuring that all employees, regardless of their abilities, can fully participate and contribute to the workforce. Let's delve into some real-life examples of accessibility measures

and accommodations that can support individuals with intellectual disabilities in the workplace:

### **1. Physical Modifications**

- Installing wheelchair ramps, handrails, and elevators to ensure access to all areas of the workplace.
- Adjusting desk heights, door widths, and workstation layouts to accommodate individuals who use mobility aids or have physical limitations.
- Creating designated quiet areas or sensory-friendly spaces where employees can take breaks and manage sensory sensitivities.

### **2. Assistive Technologies**

- Providing screen readers, speech-to-text software, and magnification tools for individuals with visual impairments to access digital information and documents.
- Offering ergonomic keyboards, specialised mice, and adaptive computer software to assist employees with motor skill challenges in navigating technology and completing tasks.
- Utilising communication devices, picture schedules, and visual aids to support individuals with communication difficulties in expressing themselves and understanding instructions.

### **3. Flexible Work Arrangements**

- Allowing for flexible scheduling options, such as telecommuting, part-time work, or modified hours, to accommodate individuals with varying energy levels and transportation needs.
- Implementing job-sharing arrangements or task rotations to provide opportunities for skill development and accommodate diverse abilities and preferences.
- Offering remote work options and virtual meeting platforms to facilitate participation and collaboration for employees who may face challenges with commuting or social interactions.

### **4. Training and Support**

- Providing disability awareness training and resources for supervisors, coworkers, and support staff to promote understanding, empathy, and effective communication.
- Designating mentors or peer support networks to offer



guidance, encouragement, and assistance to individuals with intellectual disabilities as they navigate workplace tasks and social dynamics.

- Partnering with vocational rehabilitation agencies, disability advocacy organisations, and community resources to access specialised services, job coaching, and ongoing support for employees and employers alike.

### *Training and Education*

Providing training and education for both employers and coworkers is essential for fostering an inclusive work environment. This may involve disability awareness training, communication strategies, and promoting a culture of respect and understanding.

Creating an inclusive work environment requires a commitment to ongoing training and education for both employers and coworkers. By investing in disability awareness training, communication strategies, and promoting a culture of respect and understanding, organisations can foster an atmosphere where all individuals, regardless of their abilities, feel valued and supported. Let's explore some real-life examples of how training and education can enhance accessibility and accommodations in the workplace.

#### **1. Disability Awareness Training**

- Providing comprehensive disability awareness training sessions for all employees to increase understanding and empathy towards individuals with disabilities.
- Offering workshops and seminars facilitated by experts or individuals with lived experiences to address common misconceptions, stereotypes, and barriers faced by individuals with disabilities.
- Incorporating interactive activities, case studies, and real-life examples to illustrate the diverse range of disabilities and the importance of inclusion in the workplace.

#### **2. Communication Strategies**

- Implementing training programs focused on effective communication techniques and strategies when interacting

with individuals with disabilities.

- Teaching employees how to use person-first language and respectful terminology when referring to individuals with disabilities, emphasizing the importance of treating everyone with dignity and respect.
- Providing guidance on how to engage in meaningful conversations, ask appropriate questions, and offer support without making assumptions or judgments based on disability.

### **3. Promoting a Culture of Respect and Understanding**

- Encouraging open dialogue and discussion forums where employees can share their experiences, concerns, and perspectives related to disability inclusion in the workplace.
- Recognizing and celebrating diversity through inclusive events, awareness campaigns, and employee recognition programs that highlight the contributions and achievements of individuals with disabilities.
- Creating opportunities for collaboration, teamwork, and mentorship among employees from diverse backgrounds to foster mutual respect, understanding, and appreciation for each other's unique talents and perspectives.

#### *Partnerships and Collaboration*

Collaboration between employers, government agencies, non-profit organisations, and community stakeholders is essential for creating pathways to employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities. By working together, stakeholders can identify barriers, share resources, and develop innovative solutions to promote inclusive employment practices.

Establishing effective partnerships and fostering collaboration among employers, government agencies, non-profit organisations, and community stakeholders is pivotal in creating meaningful pathways to employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities. By leveraging collective expertise, resources, and networks, stakeholders can identify barriers, share best practices, and develop innovative solutions to promote inclusive employment practices and facilitate workforce participation. Let's delve into real-life examples of partnerships and

collaboration initiatives:

### **1. Employer Engagement Programs**

- Collaborating with local businesses and industries to create internship programs, apprenticeships, and job shadowing opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- Developing employer toolkits and resources that provide guidance on recruiting, hiring, and retaining individuals with disabilities, including information on reasonable accommodations and workplace inclusion practices.
- Facilitating employer forums and roundtable discussions where businesses can exchange ideas, share success stories, and address common challenges related to disability employment.

### **2. Government Agency Partnerships**

- Partnering with vocational rehabilitation agencies, state departments of labour, and workforce development boards to coordinate services, funding, and support for individuals with intellectual disabilities seeking employment.
- Aligning policies and initiatives to promote inclusive hiring practices, remove systemic barriers, and incentivize employers to hire and retain individuals with disabilities through tax incentives, grants, and workforce training programs.
- Collaborating with disability advocacy groups and legal organisations to ensure compliance with disability rights legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act.

### **3. Non-profit and Community Organization Collaboration**

- Forming partnerships with disability-specific non-profit organisations, such as advocacy groups, independent living centres, and disability service providers, to offer job readiness training, skills development programs, and career coaching services.
- Establishing community-based job clubs, peer support networks, and mentorship programs that connect individuals with disabilities to meaningful employment opportunities, social networks, and community resources.
- Engaging faith-based organisations, civic groups, and

philanthropic foundations in awareness campaigns, fundraising efforts, and volunteer initiatives aimed at promoting disability inclusion and economic empowerment.

### *Economic and Social Benefits*

Beyond the moral imperative of inclusion, the decision to employ individuals with intellectual disabilities brings forth a multitude of tangible economic and social benefits. These benefits not only enrich the workplace environment but also contribute to the overall success and sustainability of businesses. Let's explore in detail the economic and social advantages of embracing disability inclusion in the workforce, supplemented with real-life examples:

#### **1. Enhanced Employee Satisfaction and Productivity**

- Inclusive workplaces that prioritise diversity and disability inclusion often experience higher levels of employee satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty.
- Research studies have demonstrated that employees who work in environments where diversity is valued and respected are more motivated, committed, and productive.
- For example, a study conducted by the Institute for Corporate Productivity found that companies with diverse workforces reported 2.3 times higher cash flow per employee compared to those with less diversity.

#### **2. Increased Innovation and Problem-Solving**

- Embracing diversity, including individuals with intellectual disabilities, fosters a culture of creativity, innovation, and problem-solving within organisations.
- Diverse teams bring together a variety of perspectives, experiences, and ideas, leading to more innovative solutions and approaches to business challenges.
- Companies that actively seek out diverse talent pools are better positioned to develop products, services, and strategies that resonate with a wide range of consumers and markets.
- For instance, Microsoft's Autism Hiring Program actively recruits individuals on the autism spectrum for roles in software engineering, data analysis, and cybersecurity, recognizing the

unique talents and contributions they bring to the organisation.

### **3. Improved Customer Relations and Market Adaptability**

- Businesses that embrace diversity and disability inclusion are better equipped to understand and meet the needs of a diverse customer base.
- Employing individuals with intellectual disabilities can enhance customer relations, promote brand loyalty, and drive business growth by tapping into previously underserved markets and demographic segments.
- Companies that demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion often enjoy stronger reputations, increased brand awareness, and a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining both customers and top talent.
- For example, Starbucks' "Diverse by Design" initiative aims to create inclusive stores and workplaces where customers and employees of all backgrounds feel welcome and valued.

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# RECRUITMENT AND JOB COACHING FOR AND WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

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## **Abstract**

This chapter explores the multidimensional facets of integrating individuals with Intellectual Disability (ID) into the workforce, highlighting the critical roles of job coaches and the importance of environmental assessments in job placements. The work discusses three primary employment models for people with ID: sheltered workplaces, supported employment, and competitive employment, each with its distinct set of stakeholders ranging from employers to families. By detailing the responsibilities of job coaches, including assessing the interests and abilities of individuals with ID, matching them with suitable jobs, and providing ongoing support and training, the study underlines the comprehensive approach required for successful job integration. Additionally, it underscores the need for job coaches to engage in activities beyond professional competencies, such as facilitating social interactions and advising on future career planning.

**Keywords:** Intellectual Disability (ID); Job Coaching; Supported Employment; Workplace Inclusion.



## Relevance of the Chapter for People with Intellectual Disability (PwID)

The chapter is highly relevant for People with Intellectual Disability (PwID) as it sheds light on the critical facets of integrating PwID into the workforce, emphasising the pivotal role of job coaching and supportive employment practices. By discussing various employment models and outlining the responsibilities of job coaches, the chapter provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how to effectively support PwID in their pursuit of meaningful and sustainable employment.

### Objectives of this Training Subsection

- Build job-specific skills, social interaction capabilities, and work habits in PwID to improve their employability.
- Facilitate on-the-job training for PwID, helping them adapt to their work environment and culture, ensuring they can perform their tasks effectively.
- Support sustainable employment and career advancement for PwID through ongoing assessment, adjustment of training, and addressing workplace challenges.

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### Introduction

Working life is a multidimensional process that includes the employment and working process (Cavkaytar & Artar, 2019). There are various characteristics and different responsibilities that the stakeholders in the process should have in order for an individual with intellectual disability to enter a job and work in this job in a sustainable way. If there are community-based working life alternatives in the job placement process of PwID, determining the characteristics of employers and colleagues in environmental assessments and considering them in decision-making processes will contribute to the process. On the

other hand, the fulfilment of certain responsibilities by the personnel involved in the job placement process (e. g. job coach) or by the parents, who can be qualified as natural stakeholders, is important in supporting the individual with Intellectual Disability (ID).

When it comes to the working life of PwID, different employment alternatives can be mentioned. Employment of individuals with ID is generally carried out according to three different models. These models are the sheltered workplace model, supported employment and competitive employment. While there are generally PwID in sheltered workplaces, in competitive employment, individuals with ID often work with typically developing individuals. Therefore, according to the model adopted in the job placement of the individual, the stakeholders in the working life may differ as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Potential stakeholders in the working life of individuals with ID

<b>Employment Model</b>	<b>Potential Stakeholders</b>
<b>Sheltered Workplace</b>	Employer or responsible manager, workshop chief, other employees with disabilities, customers (if in the service sector, parents, families).
<b>Supported Employment</b>	Employer or human resources manager, job coach, typically, developing employees, customers, parents, and families.
<b>Competitive Employment</b>	Employers or human resources managers, typically developing employees, customers, parents, and families.

## Job Coaching

It is an important factor in the participation of individuals with ID in working life. Job coaches play an important role in the supported employment model, which can be described as an application. Job coaches are responsible for ensuring sustainable employment by providing the individual with ID with the support needed at pre-placement, employment and working process stages. In addition, the job coach can play an important role in supporting the components of the workplace where the individual is placed.

The job coach should conduct a series of assessment studies prior to the placement in order to ensure the sustainable employment of PwID (Camuso & Baker, 2008). In this context, various checklists can be used to determine how ready the individual with intellectual disability is for employment. In these checklists, it is important to determine the level of functioning of the individual with intellectual

disability in employability skill areas. In addition to determining the individual's level of competence, the job coach should collect data on the individual's hobbies, interests and aspirations by conducting interviews, observations and portfolio reviews in order to determine the most suitable job for the individual. In this process, the job coach should decide on the most suitable workplace for the individual by determining the potential work alternatives in the environment where the individual lives.

In this process, which can be characterised as job analysis, the job coach should identify potential workplace conditions and workplace culture (Hagner, Dague and Phillips, 2015). Prior to job placement, the job coach provides information about the individual and the surrounding workplaces, and decides on the most suitable workplace for the individual by bringing together the data it collects (Nord et al., 2016).

Supported employment, which is a method of practice used all over the world, is an important practice. This type of employment is aimed at individuals with special needs to become a paid and permanent employee in the labour market and individuals are supported in this direction. In this employment model, not only individuals with disabilities but also employers are supported. In the supported employment process, individuals are supported by job specialists, job coaches, job and vocational counsellors before, during and after work (Karaaslan, 2010).

During the job placement phase, the job coach clarifies the job description to the individual by observing the day-to-day activities of the role for a certain period of time and meeting with the employer. The coach evaluates the individual within the scope of the skills required by this job description and plans training sessions for the individual's needs, if any. It is very important that these trainings take place on the job, in a real environment. The job coach realises the job placement of the individual after the relevant training. In this process, the job coach provides support to the individual and other components in the workplace (e.g. coworkers, employer) and evaluates the individual's job performance. If the job coach does not observe any problems in the individual's job performance, they will gradually fade the support

they offer. At this stage, it is important to note that the job coach should not leave the individual unsupported during the fading period but should ensure that the support they offer is naturally offered by other components in the workplace. In this way, both the support needs of the individual with intellectual disability will be met and possible decreases in work performance will be prevented.

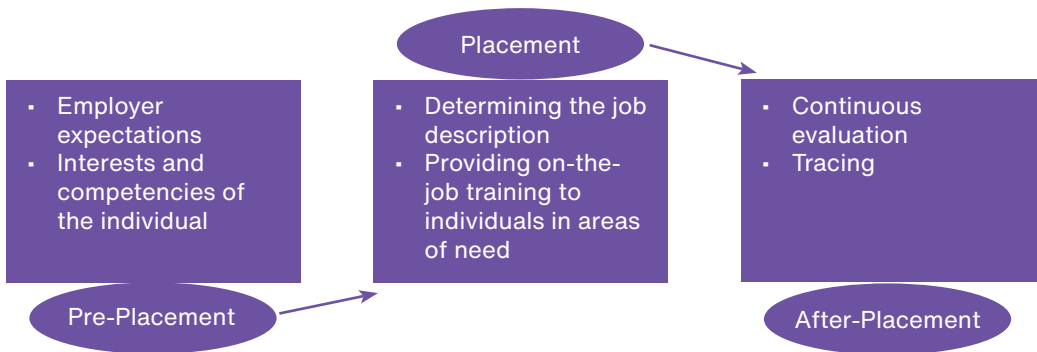


Figure 1. Tasks of the Job Coach

The job coach's activity in the process does not end after the job placement. The job coach should periodically make observations at the workplace where the person with intellectual disability works, meet with the stakeholders in the workplace and reveal data on how the process is going. This stage, which can be described as a monitoring process, is very important in ensuring sustainable employment (Meaker, 2016).

The responsibilities of job coaches are:

1. Assessing the interests and needs of individuals with ID towards working life.
2. Evaluates possible job opportunities in the environment where the individual with intellectual disability lives.
3. Matches the individual with intellectual disability with a job suitable for his/her interests and abilities.
4. Analyses workplace components (working conditions, employer expectations).
5. Provides institution-centred training to the individual with ID for the requirements of the workplace.

6. Places the person with intellectual disability in a job.
7. Provides on-the-job training to PwID.
8. Monitors the performance of the individual with intellectual disability in the workplace.
9. Provides support to individuals with ID, when needed.
10. Reduces the frequency and duration of the support according to the performance of the individual with intellectual disability (Cavkaytar & Artar, 2019).

Job coaches' duties and responsibilities in the process are not only about supporting professional competencies. For example, the job coach should act on subjects such as teaching or adapting the travel skills necessary for the transportation of the individual to the workplace, meeting the information needs of the employer and colleagues, if any, in the process, taking necessary measures to increase social interaction during breaks and leisure times. Finally, job coaches should inform parents about the individual's working life at regular intervals and provide consultancy services to individuals with ID and their parents for future career planning (Pierangelo & Giulani, 2007).

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# SUPPORTING WORKPLACE INCLUSION: REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

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## **Abstract**

The present chapter examines the current comprehension of Intellectual Disability (ID) through considering it from the lens of social and human rights. By doing so, it places particular emphasis on the significance of supportive environments and the strengths and capabilities of the individual, while exploring the critical significance of reasonable accommodations and Assistive Technologies (ATs) in relation to workplace inclusion. Compulsory reasonable accommodations, as required by legal structures, promote fair and equal opportunities for all, thereby enhancing employee retention, job satisfaction, and productivity. ATs, which encompass both low-tech and AI-driven applications, are of paramount importance in



augmenting the independence and functional capabilities of people with ID. Moreover, they foster inclusivity across diverse spheres of life, with particular emphasis on the workplace. Achieving technological alignment with individual requirements, financial obstacles, and attitude issues are all obstacles. The concluding section of the chapter emphasises emerging patterns, collaborative endeavours, and the continuous progression towards a future in which the workforce is more inclusive of individuals with ID.

**Keywords:** Intellectual Disability; Assistive Technologies; Reasonable Accommodations; Workplace Inclusion.

### **Relevance of the Chapter for People with Intellectual Disability (PwID)**

The focus of this chapter is on ways to improve the lives of people with Intellectual Disability (PwID). It discusses how our understanding of this condition has evolved over time, shifting the emphasis from what individuals cannot do to what they can do. Moreover, it describes how reasonable accommodations, which are helpful and fair modifications, in conjunction with different tools known as Assistive Technologies (ATs), can benefit people with disabilities in various spheres of life, including education, employment, and healthcare. Some obstacles are also highlighted in the chapter, such as the fact that not everyone comprehends the societal significance of these changes. However, the text concludes on a positive note by asserting that despite encountering obstacles, individuals are cooperating in an effort to foster a more inclusive and supportive global environment that welcomes all, including those who have Intellectual Disability (ID).

## Objectives of this Training Subsection

- Summarise the evolution of the conceptualization of ID, emphasising societal barriers and the importance of supportive environments.
- Explain the role of reasonable accommodations and ATs in promoting workplace inclusion for individuals with ID.
- Analyse the impact of reasonable accommodations on job satisfaction, productivity, and employee retention in workplace settings.
- Examine the barriers faced by individuals with ID in accessing and utilising ATs.
- Develop strategies for creating an inclusive workplace, considering the implementation of reasonable accommodations and ATs.
- Discuss the ethical considerations in implementing reasonable accommodations and ATs, considering factors like individual autonomy, dignity, and equal opportunities.

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## Introduction

Disability studies have undergone a paradigm shift, moving away from traditional deficit-oriented lenses in the exploration of People with Intellectual Disability (PwID). This evolution is driven by a recognition of the limitations inherent in solely medical models, leading to the adoption of more inclusive and rights-oriented frameworks that emphasise their agency, strengths, and unique capacities, while acknowledging their potential for meaningful contributions to society. Even so, their full citizenship implies their inclusion in various axes, such as the work axis, which emphasises the strategies and technological factors that can facilitate it.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive exploration of

the role of reasonable accommodations and Assistive Technologies (ATs) in supporting PwID in contemporary society with a specific emphasis on workplace inclusion.

### **Intellectual Disability in the Contemporary Context**

The contemporary context's definition of ID has moved away from purely medical or deficit-based models toward more inclusive and rights-oriented frameworks. Two prominent paradigms shaping this understanding are the social model and the human rights model of disability.

The conceptualization and understanding of ID have evolved over time, towards a more holistic understanding that considers individual strengths, abilities, and the importance of supportive environments and interventions. Traditionally, ID was often viewed through a medical or deficit-oriented lens, focusing on an individual's impairments or limitations. However, contemporary perspectives emphasise the role of societal barriers in disabling individuals rather than solely attributing disability to an individual's impairments (Neuman et al., 2023). The shift towards a more inclusive and person-centred approach recognizes that individuals with ID have unique talents and capacities, and with appropriate support, accommodations, and interventions, they can lead fulfilling lives and actively contribute to their communities.

The social model of disability emphasises that disability is not solely an inherent trait of an individual but is largely influenced by societal barriers and attitudes. It focuses on how environmental, social, and attitudinal factors create barriers that hinder the full participation and inclusion of individuals with disabilities. This model advocates for structural and attitudinal changes in society to create a more inclusive environment for individuals with ID (Neuman et al., 2023).

The human rights model of disability places ID within the framework of universal human rights. It asserts that people with ID are entitled to the same rights and freedoms as anyone else, as enshrined in international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This model

emphasises the importance of autonomy, self-determination, and dignity for individuals with ID, advocating for their full participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives (Degener, 2017). A comprehensive understanding of ID highlights the need to recognize these individuals' agency and capabilities while challenging societal barriers and promoting inclusive policies and practices. By embracing these models, society can strive towards creating environments that empower individuals with ID to live fulfilling lives and actively contribute to their communities.

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that individuals with disabilities – in this particular case ID – encounter multifaceted barriers that impede their full participation and inclusion in various facets of life. The necessity for reasonable accommodations and ATs for them is essential to ensure equal access, participation, and opportunities across various domains, including education, employment, and social engagement.

Reasonable accommodations, mandated by legal frameworks like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 2020) in the US, aim to remove barriers that might otherwise limit the involvement of people with disabilities. These accommodations encompass modifications in the environment, practices, or procedures, ensuring equitable access without imposing undue hardship. The provision of reasonable accommodations and ATs is essential for creating a more equitable society, ensuring that individuals with disabilities have the tools and opportunities needed to thrive and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Assistive Technology (AT) plays a pivotal role in fostering accessibility. These technologies encompass a wide range of devices, software, and tools designed to mitigate the impact of disabilities. From screen readers and speech recognition software for individuals with visual impairments to adaptive keyboards or mobility aids, these technologies facilitate access to information, communication, and physical spaces. Both accommodations and ATs contribute to fostering inclusivity, empowering individuals with disabilities to lead more independent lives, and also promote their well-being, self-reliance, and confidence. Framing the need for reasonable accommodations and ATs involves

recognizing these barriers and advocating for solutions, it might involve modifications or adjustments in the environment, procedures, or policies that enable individuals with disabilities to have equal opportunities.

### **The Importance of Reasonable Accommodations**

The implementation of reasonable accommodations has been proven to have positive effects, as supported by empirical evidence, which highlights their diverse range of benefits. Research consistently demonstrates that workplaces that adopt accommodations experience positive outcomes such as higher job satisfaction, increased productivity, improved employee retention, and decreased absenteeism (Nevala et al., 2015; Rumrill et al., 2023; Syma, 2019). In addition, providing individuals with ID not only promotes an environment that includes everyone but also adds to a workforce that is varied and creative, unlocking previously unexplored potential and talents (Park & Park, 2019; Syma, 2019).

Reasonable accommodations in educational settings are essential to create a learning environment that supports students with ID in reaching their academic potential (Heitplatz, 2020; Toutain, 2019). These accommodations involve tailored teaching approaches (Knight et al., 2019), assessments (Lovett, 2020), and personalised learning materials that cater to individual needs, fostering an inclusive educational experience where every student can thrive equally (Heitplatz, 2020). Similarly, in public spaces, either they are tangible or digital, adjustments must ensure that individuals can navigate independently and participate fully in various societal activities, promoting their inclusion and active engagement in the community, through cognitive accessibility (Cinquin et al., 2019; Roulstone & Morgan, 2014).

In healthcare environments, the scope of accommodations transcends physical accessibility, encompassing a crucial aspect often overlooked: cognitive accessibility for individuals with ID. Within this realm, communication aids play an indispensable role, facilitating effective interaction between healthcare providers and patients

facing cognitive accessibility challenges (Michael & Richardson, 2008; Sevens, 2018). These accommodations stand as pillars, ensuring equitable access to healthcare services, but can also be extended to other public services, that ensure PwID have their rights and an engaged citizenship. For them, navigating these settings can be daunting due to communication barriers, sensory processing differences, and cognitive complexities. Recognizing these challenges, healthcare providers implement various communication aids tailored to meet diverse cognitive accessibility needs. Visual aids such as pictorial guides, easy-to-read written materials, and symbol-based communication systems serve as effective inclusion tools (Chinn & Homeyard, 2017; Newman, Fisher, & Trollor, 2023; Sevens, 2018).

Employers can improve their support for employees with ID by adopting a comprehensive and inclusive strategy, which involves acknowledging each employee's unique needs, fostering open dialogue, and tailoring accommodations to their specific requirements. Flexible schedules, physical accessibility, and ATs are essential. Aligned with this, comprehensive training for employees - with and without disability - mentorship programs, and equal opportunities for career growth are also crucial. Regular feedback from employees and collaboration with disability advocacy groups can refine support mechanisms, transforming workplaces into environments that accommodate and empower employees with ID, contributing to a more inclusive society and a diverse work culture.

### **The Role of Assistive Technologies (ATs)**

AT is a broad term which encompasses assistive products as well as their related systems and services (WHO, 2022). This is illustrated by WHO's 5P model of people-centred AT which represents the AT system integrated around the person who requires AT (Figure 1). This system encompasses four integrated components which include AT products, AT personnel, AT provision, and AT policy. Importantly, AT can be used as an interface between the PwID's individual characteristics e.g. mobility, cognitive, sensory, and communication

difficulties, and the workplace environment and could be the difference between a PwID being able to work and having the necessary tools for successful employment or not (Alshamrani et al., 2023). Research has demonstrated that AT can positively impact the work performance of PwID (Morash Macneil et al., 2018). Furthermore, it has been suggested that AT could reduce the need for dependency on others such as job coaches (Heman et al., 2022). AT, is therefore considered to be of fundamental importance for PwID as it can enhance functional abilities and independence thereby ensuring inclusion in all aspects of life including the workplace (Boot et al., 2018). More specifically, AT can support PwID to obtain employment as well as to perform work-related tasks more independently (Alshamrani et al., 2023).



Figure 1. The 5P people-centred assistive technology model. Source: World Health Organization (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049451>)

In recent years, there has been an increased demand for AT in workplace settings due to an increase in technological advancements (Ward Sutton et al., 2022). AT products can be classified as low-, mid-, or high-tech depending on the complexity and materials utilised to produce the product. Low-tech AT products are generally less expensive and require minimal training to operate, while high-tech

products utilise electronics and are more expensive to produce (Ward Sutton et al., 2022). The provision of AT for any individual should consist of a matching process that takes into account individual needs and the requirements of the task in a specific context.

Individuals with ID may have difficulties with working memory, conceptual understanding, concentration, communication skills, time management skills, organisational skills, as well as poor motivation (Taubner et al., 2022). These difficulties may impact their ability to gain and maintain employment. Research has indicated that AT can be beneficial in workplace environments for people with ID as it can create positive changes to performance across tasks, although outcomes may differ according to the different types of AT and the type of outcome being measured (Morash Macneil et al., 2018).

Some ATs, particularly those that make use of mainstream technology such as handheld devices, have become more affordable, more readily available, and therefore more accessible (Morash Macneil et al., 2018). Examples of AT that have been specifically utilised to support employment for people with ID include the use of handheld computers, wearable technologies such as smartwatches, and portable electronic devices. Handheld computers can potentially aid individuals with ID by improving their organisational skills and enabling them to accomplish tasks independently. Wearable technology is a technological innovation integrating smart sensors, and its goal is to offer continuous, portable, and primarily hands-free digital accessibility. An example of that kind of technology is the smartwatch. Smartwatches enable users to autonomously utilise a variety of applications to enhance productivity, while also providing employers with the capability to oversee efficiency. Vibrating watches are another simple form of wearable AT that provides notifications to the wearer in terms of daily routines and events. Portable electronic devices have the ability to offer various prompts to aid individuals with ID in completing tasks, without the need for human support. Those prompts can be in the form of audio, video, or images, and in this way, the electronic devices support people with ID in independently performing work-related tasks (Morash-Macneil et al., 2018).

Importantly, people with ID and their support staff perceive the use



of AT as positive, particularly when mainstream devices are used (Randall et al., 2019). This aspect is important considering that the feelings and perceptions of individuals with ID should be taken into account during the selection process for AT.

The latest suggestions from the European Disability Forum (EDF) suggest that the ongoing advancement of AI-based applications and systems could open possibilities for their utilisation in education and employment. This development aims to facilitate the integration of PwID into the mainstream of accessibility (EDF, 2017; EDF, 2022). In terms of inclusion, the integration of AT in the workplace will involve artificial intelligence (AI), virtual and augmented reality, robotics, and smart environments (EDF, 2018). Recent progress in Socially Assistive Robotics (SAR) has demonstrated significant potential, motivating us to investigate the advantages of utilising robots for cognitive rehabilitation in individuals with ID. The findings of Mitchell et al. (2021) indicate that the active involvement of both the robot and the assistance provided by a tablet are crucial factors in engaging adults with ID and acting as facilitators of communication.

More recently augmented and virtual reality have also been considered as a means of supporting inclusion in the workplace. Virtual Reality (VR) has the potential to be empowering for individuals with ID, offering them a chance to practise and acquire new skills, particularly those involving abstract concepts that may be challenging to grasp (Jeffs, 2015). Communication aids may also be used to support PwID who have communication difficulties thus supporting inclusion in the workplace. For those with mobility challenges, mobility aids such as wheelchairs may be used to support transport to the workplace as well as between places in the workplace.

The pros and cons of technologies for PwID depend on how easy to use, affordable, organised, and well-supported these technologies are. These technologies are helpful in areas like communication, mobility, and accessing information (Global Disability Innovation Hub, 2021). Despite many benefits towards the use of AT to support inclusion in the workplace, barriers towards AT continue to persist and these can be largely categorised within the four integrated components of the 5P cycle. Barriers include poor matching of AT products to the

PwID as this group of individuals requires individualised assessments (Morash MacNeil et al., 2018). Specifically, support staff may not have the necessary assessment skills and/or knowledge of AT to match the technology to the potential user (Boot et al., 2018). Damianidou et al. (2019) note that as more sophisticated technology becomes available on the market, the need to select AT on an individual level has become even more important. Furthermore, once the AT is identified, there may be difficulties with access to AT products due to cost and a lack of funding mechanisms (Heman et al., 2022). When AT is procured, support to learn to use the AT is required, yet this may not be available (Ward Sutton et al., 2022). On the most basic level, the attitudes of employers may be a barrier, and they may perceive that a PwID is not capable of being employed (Rahmatika et al., 2022). While many of these issues can be addressed individually, national policies are required to progress in this area. Policies present an overarching commitment to the provision of AT products and systems to ensure access to AT for everyone on a rights-based level (WHO, 2022).

### **Challenges and Future Directions**

Creating an inclusive workplace for individuals with ID is an ongoing journey that requires addressing various challenges (Robinson et al., 2020). Positioning our reflection in a social-driven model of disability, it is possible to say that one significant hurdle lies in the implementation of reasonable accommodations tailored to the unique needs of these individuals (Gould-Werth, Morrison, & Ben-Shalom, 2018). The lack of standardised guidelines often leads to ambiguity, making it difficult for employers to provide the necessary support (Vornholt, et al., 2018).

Additionally, misconceptions and stigma surrounding ID can foster a reluctance among employers to embrace accommodations wholeheartedly. Changing mindsets and fostering awareness are crucial to dismantling these barriers and creating an environment where individuals with ID are viewed through the lens of their abilities rather than limitations (World Health Organization, 2022).

Integrating ATs poses another set of challenges. Identifying suitable

technologies that cater to diverse needs can be complex, given the spectrum of ID. Ensuring that these technologies are user-friendly and easily adaptable is vital for their successful implementation. The cost associated with acquiring and maintaining ATs also poses a financial challenge for both employers and individuals (Smith, et al., 2022).

The need for ongoing training for both employers and employees is evident. Many workplaces lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively utilise these accommodations and technologies. Bridging this gap through training programs can enhance awareness, understanding, and acceptance, fostering a more inclusive work environment (Moore et al., 2020).

Looking ahead, emerging trends and innovations offer promising avenues for supporting workplace inclusion for individuals with ID. Advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning can contribute to the development of more personalised ATs. Tailoring solutions to individual needs can optimise effectiveness and improve overall workplace integration (Jurado-Caraballo et al., 2022).

Collaboration between employers, advocacy groups, and government bodies is essential for developing comprehensive policies and guidelines. Standardising reasonable accommodations and AT implementation can provide a clearer roadmap for organisations, streamlining the process and promoting consistency across industries (Zallio, & Clarkson, 2022). Furthermore, the integration of VR and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies holds potential for creating immersive training experiences (Bailey et al., 2022). This could enhance understanding and empathy among employees, fostering a more inclusive workplace culture.

To conclude, while challenges persist in implementing reasonable accommodations and ATs for individuals with ID in the workplace, there is hope on the horizon. Continued efforts to raise awareness, coupled with advancements in technology and collaborative policy development, can pave the way for a more inclusive and supportive work environment for everyone (Vornholt et al., 2018).

## **Conclusions and Key Takeaways**

Ultimately, the current comprehension of ID has progressed towards a broader and more comprehensive approach, prioritising the social and human rights perspectives of disability. This shift acknowledges the significance of personal strengths, capabilities, and the influence of supportive surroundings in promoting the well-being and active engagement of PwID in their communities. The implementation of reasonable accommodations and ATs are essential in eliminating obstacles and advancing equitable accessibility in diverse fields.

Empirical evidence has demonstrated that implementing reasonable accommodations in the workplace leads to favourable results in terms of job satisfaction, productivity, and employee retention. Additionally, it fosters a diverse and innovative workforce. Customised accommodations in educational settings and public spaces guarantee an all-encompassing environment where individuals with ID can flourish on an equal footing. Cognitive accessibility aids, such as communication tools, are crucial in healthcare for promoting efficient interaction and ensuring fair access to services.

ATs, which include a wide variety of devices and systems, play a crucial role in promoting accessibility. Emerging technologies such as AI, VR, and SARs have the potential to greatly improve workplace inclusion. Notwithstanding the advantages, persistent challenges include inadequate alignment of technologies with individual requirements, financial obstacles, and attitudinal concerns.

Establishing an inclusive work environment necessitates tackling obstacles associated with the execution of appropriate adjustments and the incorporation of supportive technologies. Crucial elements include the implementation of standardised protocols, the dissemination of awareness campaigns, continuous training, and effective collaboration among all parties involved. In the future, upcoming trends and advancements show potential for customised solutions and immersive training experiences, leading to a more inclusive and supportive work environment for individuals with ID. The persistent endeavours to increase awareness, along with progress in technology and cooperative policy formulation, provide optimism for a future that is more inclusive.

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# ANALOGUE GAME-BASED LEARNING TO ADDRESS UNDEREMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY: RESOURCES AND BEST PRACTICES

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## **Abstract**

This chapter delineates an inquiry into the prevalent unemployment rates among People with Disabilities (PwD), focusing on the systemic impediments and societal biases that preclude their full participation in the labour market. As one of the potential paths, it introduces Game-Based Learning (GBL) as an intervention to ameliorate these disparities, particularly for People with Intellectual Disability (PwID). The objectives include a critical examination of current employment challenges faced by this cohort, an exposition of GBL and its pedagogical potential, and a presentation of empirical evidence underscoring the efficacy of games in cultivating pivotal employment-driven skills. Further, it scrutinises the instrumental roles of support workers in defining GBL initiatives, devising actionable strategies for the needs of PwID, and navigating the ethical terrain in the implementation of reasonable accommodations and assistive technologies. Therefore, it advocates for a preliminary evaluative engagement with selected games by pedagogical facilitators to ensure alignment with the specific developmental requisites and aspirations of the target demographic.

**Keywords:** Game-Based Learning; Intellectual Disability; Employment

## Barriers; Analogue Games; Accessibility.

### Relevance of the Chapter for People with Intellectual Disability (PwID)

The chapter delineates strategies to enhance the employability of individuals with Intellectual Disability (PwID) utilising Game-Based Learning (GBL). It explores GBL's efficacy in refining skills vital for workforce integration, enhancing negotiation and communication abilities among PwID. Highlighting specific games designed to cultivate these essential competencies, the chapter assesses their utility in preparing PwID for employment challenges. It also addresses potential barriers to implementing GBL for PwID, including accessibility issues, the need for tailored game modifications, and overcoming societal and institutional biases against the employability of PwID.

### Objectives of this Training Subsection

- Shed light on current unemployment rates for People with Disabilities (PwD), as well as the main challenges that keep this demographic from the workforce.
- Conduct an overview of GBL and its benefits to PwID.
- Present documents that support how games can help develop key skills that are desirable to combat the unemployment rates of PwD.
- Discuss the roles of Educators, Therapists and Caretakers in facilitating GBL for PwID.
- Develop strategies to apply GBL with this specific demographic, considering the reasonable and applicable accommodations.
- Discuss the ethical considerations in implementing reasonable accommodations and ATs, considering factors like individual autonomy, dignity, and equal opportunities.

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## **Introduction**

There has been an increasing interest in using analogue GBL to tackle different educational and developmental challenges in recent years (Maratou et al., 2023; Sousa et al., 2023a). This emergence of the analogue may be a natural response to over-digitization, digital fatigue and, at the same time, the technological barriers that exist in some educational contexts (Marenco, & Seidl, 2021; Sousa et al., 2023b). This trend has expanded to include a wide range of populations, including individuals who encounter difficulties in finding employment due to the stigma and systemic barriers imposed on PwID.

Analogue games provide a distinct platform for cultivating proficiency in various domains. Significantly, their utilisation in meeting the requirements of PwID has gained momentum, emphasising the potential to connect the divide between acquiring skills and finding employment opportunities. This introduction aims to examine the convergence of analogue GBL, the significance of addressing employment issues in the intellectual disability community, and the substantial role that games play in skill enhancement, particularly as a means of improving employability.

## **Analogue Game-Based Learning in Skill Development**

According to Inclusion Europe's 2021 report, while the employment rate of the European population is 74.8%, only 50.8% of PwD are employed. When considering specifically PwID, this number drastically drops: 36% in Ireland, 6% in Scotland and 3% in Portugal. Another important factor to consider is that this rate of employment is mostly composed of what is called "sheltered workshops" – which in most cases are unregulated, temporary and low-paid jobs (Inclusion Europe, 2021). Moreover, when analysing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 – which aims to offer equal access to job opportunities – and, more specifically, SDG 8.5 – which focuses on gender, youth and disability – there has not been a single progress report in regard to

the development of PwD's employability ratings and standards since 2016, indicating that there has not been significant development on that front for almost a decade (United Nations, n.d.).

Furthermore, we must take into consideration the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which states that "disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (United Nations, 2006). In that regard, one of the most prevalent and steep barriers of access of people with disabilities to equal employment opportunities is education (European Disability Forum, 2023, p.107). Workplaces increasingly consider communication, teamwork, time management – which are often referred to as "soft skills" – as requirements for job placements, and GBL has been demonstrated to be an effective path to bridge the gap of unemployment to PwD. Games, in this context, can be powerful tools to encourage critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, interaction and communication, and emotional skills (Vygotsky, [1926] 2004, apud Quast, 2022, p.55).

Moreover, Analogue Games, in particular, rely on the interaction between players to function, since all players need to be aware of the rules in order to effectively play. This "collective intelligence" that analogue games require of players is the most fundamental difference between a tabletop game and a digital game: the pieces are only moved if someone moves them, and the rules only apply if all players are aware and in agreement about them, as opposed to digital games, in which a computer will act as rule-enforcer for the players and facilitate the game dynamic (Léste, 2021, p.47).

When comparing games that exist in both physical and digital medium, [In digital games] players do not need to understand the rules comprehensively to play. Physical Pandemic [a board game] is simply a box of assorted objects until a player decides to read the rulebook. As the digital version [of the same game] reacts to their actions automatically, players can explore the game's mechanics and learn how they operate over time. (Stolee, 2020, p.15)

Initially, that can be perceived as a positive aspect of using digital games, especially when considering that PwID might face particular challenges when trying to play games on their own. However, it is precisely because analogue games require players to have full awareness and control of the game elements that it offers more important benefits to game-based learning strategies, especially if they are to be applied outside of the scope of the game – in this case, to focus on abilities that can be transferable to workplace activities and scenarios, such as hand-eye coordination, resource management, comprehending and following rules, etc.

Furthermore, on top of not offering barriers of access tied to digital literacy, the development of the collective intelligence to play the game will often require players to be able to compromise, communicate, find common ground, which are also invaluable skills to have in the workplace.

Currently one of the best examples of commercial games that have taken this approach is the Asmodee Access+ initiative (Asmodee, n.d. a). Asmodee, which is one of the biggest game publishers in the world, partnered with healthcare professionals to adapt some of their games to promote equal access to PwD in tabletop games. Currently, by 2024, there are three games that have already been adapted: Dobble, Timeline, and Cortex Challenge, which have also been evaluated in the efficiency with which they help develop 8 different skills: Emotional Engagement, Short-term Memory, Speech and Discourse, Planning, Motor Skills, Social Relations, Visual-spatial Processing, and Mental Imaging.

Each of the specialists that were involved in the project also offered personal testimonies that go more in-depth about the benefits of playing with patients in health-care scenarios; however, two of the most interesting points they make for this context are that: using games as tools allows for players to develop skills without realising the specific effort they are making (Asmodee, n.d. b); and playing encourages equality between players, blurring the separation between health-care professionals [caretakers and trainers, who can be sometimes perceived as being in a position of power] and patients [PwID, who can be sometimes perceived as being in a position of vulnerability]

(Asmodee, n.d. b). These perspectives are particularly important to keep in mind because they enlighten how GBL can detract the focus of the activity from “someone providing aid or training to PwID” – which deepens their dependence on others – to, instead, fostering a more egalitarian activity, that will have direct or indirect benefits to all players in individual ways – thus, promoting independence and empowerment.

Another very positive example is the usage of Tabletop Role-playing Games to improve the social skills of young people in the autism spectrum, via group therapy sessions (Henning, et al. 2024). The authors correlate the development of social skills with many desirable outcomes, some of which are directly related to employability, such as: interpersonal training in companies, self-awareness training, training in sales techniques (p.2); and making friends and building positive and healthy relationships (p.2), which are useful tools for networking. The usage of role-playing games, which are less structured than tabletop games, also has the benefit of allowing for greater personalization of experiences and developmental goals.

Because of that, in preparation for the study, the therapists also conducted individual interviews with the participants and their parents, in order to formulate specific target behaviours that were desirable for each individual participant. During the sessions, these target behaviours were constantly reinforced by the therapists – either by direct praise, by receiving bonuses to their characters (new equipment, abilities, or in-game monetary rewards), or advancing by group objectives. Therefore, although the activity was conducted in groups, each participant had particular goals and challenges that they were encouraged to face inside a safe space (p.5).

Moreover, the team devised a revised version of the Goal Attainment Scaling method (Kiresuk, Sherman 1968), which they called the “Homework scale” (p.4). This scale revolves around selecting points of assessment that were tailored to the particular needs of each participant – in collaboration with them and their parents –, that were tied to tasks they could perform outside of the group sessions (e.g.: talking to someone new in school, for a participant that faced particular challenges in engaging in conversation with people outside

their regular social circles). Therefore, while the sessions allowed for the participants to practise target behaviour in a safe environment, the structure and goals of the study also encouraged the transfer of these skills to real-life scenarios.

### **Best practices for implementing GBL**

As early as 1965, Robert M. Gagné wrote in his book “The Conditions of Learning” that, in order for the learning process to be effective, the student needs to feel that what they are learning can be applicable to their particular context and real-life situations (1970 [1965]). For this reason, the first requisite to apply GBL is to identify what skills each individual person has already mastered, which are sometimes called “Adaptive Behaviour Scale (ABS)”, “Short Adaptive Behaviour Scale (SABS)” (Hatton, et al., 2001), “Adult Independence Living Measurement Scale (AILMS)” (Zorzi et al., 2023), or “Independent Living Scale (ILS)” (Centre for Neuro Skills, 1986).

While there are many options to choose from, the most readily available one is the Independent Living Scale of the Centre for Neuro Skills. The document, however, was produced in 1986 and, therefore, includes some terms that are not up-to-date in terms of how to most ethically refer to PwID. It is also important to keep in mind that most of these forms are very extensive, and may include questions that could be of few relevance to specific scenarios. For this reason, if chosen as a guideline, we also recommend adapting the forms to be as short as possible – only including the questions that are relevant to the context – and to use language that is more positive-oriented and inclusive in general, as detailed in chapter 3 of this book. Moreover, many local institutions that work with PwID already have their specific assessment tools, and, therefore, will most likely be preferable, since they will be more tailored to the particular community in which the GBL approach will be applied.

After determining already-developed skills, the next step is to determine which goals each participant will have in their GBL journey. Do they have particular job goals or prospects in mind, which would require specific skills to be honed? Do they feel the need to



improve in a particular aspect of their lives? Are there specific local job placement programs (specific or not to PwID) that have explicit requirements and desirable skills?

This part of the process will undoubtedly be extremely particular to each institution and learner, much like an “Individual Development Plan”, “Individual Transition Plan” (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2006), “Individual Plan for Inclusion”, or “Individual Educational Plan”, but there are some guidelines that should always be kept in mind:

- First of all, always follow the People With Disabilities Global Movement’s motto: “Nothing For Us Without Us” (Sasaki, 2007): every step of the process should involve PwID.
- Always assume competence. If the individual displays a particular need, offer them the proper accommodations based on their Assistance Level requirement.
- Consult with their primary caretakers and health-care professionals as needed, but never to invalidate the individual’s statements or desires.
- Inform them of their rights to have trusted people accompanying them every step of the way.
- If at all possible, involve a multidisciplinary team, which can include therapists, occupational therapists, and other specialities as needed.
- Determine goals that should be achieved during the GBL sessions and other goals that could be achieved outside the context of the intervention. These goals, naturally, should be aligned amongst themselves, so that there is more likelihood of the transfer of skills happening.

When each learner’s skill sets and goals are defined, it is time to choose games that will improve upon already existing skills or help develop new ones – but, preferably, both. The easiest way to do that is to browse game publishers’ websites for games and reference the game mechanics of the prospective games. For instance, if we desire to develop financial skills, we could select games that involve “worker placement” and “resource management” skills, such as *Carcassonne*;

if we desire to develop fast reflexes, we could select matching games that are time-sensitive, such as “Dobble/Spot It”, or “Ghost Blitz”; and if we desire to develop fine motor skills, we can select games that revolve around equilibrium and stacking, such as “Jenga”. For a full list of games and game mechanics, we recommend the boardgamegeek.com website, and the book “Building Blocks of Tabletop Games” (Engelstein, Shalev, 2022).

Next, we present a list of desirable skills and games that help develop them, based on the “Catalog of Educational Games” (Galápagos Jogos, 2022 [free translation]), which is a document that relates games to the development of the “Multiple Intelligences Theory” (MI), coined by Howard Gardner (1983):

- Linguistic Intelligence: Black Stories Jr. (collection), Concept/Concept Kids, Dixit, Dream On, Imagine, Story Cubes;
- Logical/Mathematical Intelligence: Concept/Concept Kids, Dobble/Spot it, Dream On, Imagine, SET, Timeline;
- Spatial Intelligence: Dobble/Spot it, Imagine, SET;
- Interpersonal Intelligence: Black Stories Jr. (collection), Concept/Concept Kids, Dixit, Dream On, Imagine, SET;
- Intrapersonal Intelligence: Black Stories Jr. (collection), Concept/Concept Kids, Dixit, Dream On, Imagine, SET;

Furthermore, we present another list of desirable skills and games that help develop them, based on the “BNCC and Tabletop Games” (Devir Escolas, 2018 [free translation]), which is a document that relates games to the development of the skills detailed in Brazilian’s “Common National Curriculum Base” (*Base Nacional Comum Curricular*, free translation):

- Communication: Fast Food Fear!;
- Logical Reasoning: SET;
- Negotiation: Checkpoint Charlie, Carcassonne;
- Teamwork: Codenames, Fast Food Fear!;

Ultimately, the implementation of GBL for PwID necessitates a careful and considerate approach by support staff, teachers, and family members. Central to this process is the principle of direct engagement

with the games themselves by these people before introducing them to learners with disabilities. This preliminary step serves not only to assess the suitability of a game for the individual or group's specific needs and abilities but also to familiarise the facilitators with the game mechanics and potential learning outcomes. By playing the games first, educators and caregivers can better tailor the learning experience to the PwID's developed skills, personal goals, and interests, ensuring a more effective and meaningful learning journey. This practice aligns with the overarching goal of GBL: to create an inclusive, engaging, and empowering educational environment where PwID can thrive and achieve their fullest potential.

### **Addressing the “Lack of Evidence” of GBL as an Effective Educational Tool**

Many studies that have been conducted about GBL generally support that there is a lack of statistically relevant data to conclude that GBL is an effective educational tool. However, most of these studies centre around what is called the “Chess Effect” hypothesis (Sala, Foley, Gobet, 2017), which is the idea that chess, by virtue of being a cognitively demanding game that involves logical and spatial reasoning, will be able to positively impact student's performance in school. This phenomenon would be what is called “far transfer”, which means that the generalisation of chess-related skills is so far removed from what is being evaluated by academic performance that they are loosely related (Sala, Foley, Gobet, 2017), which is supported by other studies that suggest that chess-related skills are context-bound (Islam, Lee, Nicholas, 2021), and therefore not applicable to in-class settings and evaluations.

In that regard, the issue with the current evaluation of GBL is with the chosen methods – statistical evaluations of long-term grade changes compared to control groups – and object of evaluation – since the specific skills that chess develops are not what is being evaluated. This is precisely why this chapter is adamant about the development of individual educational plans for students or groups, that are focused on specific skills that are important to be developed, and to

choose specific games that relate to those skills, in order to heighten the propensity of near transfer of occurring.

## **Conclusion**

In his book “Homo Ludens”, Johan Huizinga (2016[1938]) talks at length about playing as a cultural phenomenon intrinsically tied to humanity’s development. Despite the modern criticism of some of his ideas, we must acknowledge the merit that playing is, undoubtedly, an opportunity to experiment with different scenarios, activities, social dynamics and skills. In that regard, we must consider that, aside from the educational, social and cognitive benefits of playing that were laid out throughout the chapter, playing in itself is a rewarding activity, and should be regarded as such.

Even so, the objective of this chapter is to demonstrate the benefits of GBL in addressing the unemployment rates of PwID. As mentioned before, games provide a very important opportunity to play out scenarios and test skills in a safe – and, hopefully, fun – environment, relieving some of the pressure that some people might feel when they are told that they need to practise a specific skill or task to achieve a particular goal.

Another important aspect of specifically analogue GBL is that, in order to play, all players need to be able to meet two very basic requirements: comprehend and follow rules; and be able to be in agreement with others as to what those rules are. Moreover, most games stimulate player interaction, healthy competition, cooperation, and many other soft skills that are considered increasingly important for the workplace.

Furthermore, this chapter also indicates some games that have been indicated to develop certain skills, types of intelligence, and abilities – while also offering some resources and websites for those who are interested in conducting their own follow-up research. In addition, we indicate the role which caretakers, healthcare professionals and educators should take for the GBL approach, and suggest some ways to assess already-developed skills, as well as define individual educational goals – in partnership with PwID and their support system.

Finally, we address some of the more common criticisms for GBL, namely that most studies focus on the transfer (or far transfer) of abilities from a non-formal/informal educational setting to a formal one – normally considering only statistical changes that are evaluated by possible improvements in grades from the schooling system, while not being closely related to the skills that the games in questions were supposed to help develop.

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# APPENDIX



## NEED ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

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### **Context**

This Need Analysis Questionnaire aims to gather perceptions about the needs for full labour inclusion of People with Intellectual Disability. Developed within the framework of the European project No Barriers to Employment (2022-1-SE01-KA220-ADU-000089826), it was designed to be applied to people with disabilities or others who work in the field of inclusion and whose experience allows them to understand and provide valuable self-perceptions on the topic explored. It is important to emphasise that it is part of a preparatory phase of a project focused on intervention, training and capacity building for professionals in the field, so its psychometric properties have not been systematically studied. Exploratory data from its online application in Italy, Portugal, Sweden, and Türkiye is presented in Chapter 2 of Part I of this book. As a final remark, the team would like to emphasise the importance of revisiting this and other instruments to develop versions of them in accessible language, which will encourage their cognitive accessibility and the participation of People with Intellectual Disability in the scientific research process (Casimiro et al., 2023; McDonald et al., 2023).

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## Questionnaire Structure

### 1. Informed Consent and Data Protection

It is important that all procedures relating to informed consent are complied with, and that participants are informed of the plan for privacy and management of their data. The legal frameworks should be considered, including Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data and/or all the others that are applicable.

### 2. Demographic Data

Optionally, the teams responsible for the needs analysis can ask about the characterisation of the people who answer the questionnaire, with a view to gaining an in-depth understanding of the data obtained. In the No Barriers to Employment (2022-1-SE01-KA220-ADU-000089826) project, we chose to collect the demographic variables we are now presenting.

2.1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

2.2. Gender

<input type="checkbox"/>	Male
<input type="checkbox"/>	Female
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-binary
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say

### 2.3. Country

	Portugal (PT)
	Sweden (SE)
	Italy (IT)
	Türkiye (TR)

### 2.4. Which of these groups do you best fit into?

	Staff from a NGO
	Trainer and/or Educator
	Teacher
	Health Professional and/or Therapist
	Other professional working in the field of Intellectual Disability
	Person with Intellectual Disability

## 3. Skills and teaching methods required in the vocational training of People with Intellectual Disability

For each question, please answer by selecting between one and three options, considering your opinions and perspectives.

### 3.1. What are the most important skills required in the vocational training of people with Intellectual Disability?

	Communication skills
	Problem-solving skills
	Social skills and interpersonal communication
	Technical and job-specific skills
	Time management and organisation skills
	Adaptive and self-care skills

**3.2. What is the most suitable pedagogical approach in the vocational training of people with Intellectual Disability?**

	Individualised instruction
	Hands-on training and experiential learning
	Visual and multimedia-based instruction
	Task analysis and structured teaching
	Peer-assisted learning and collaboration
	Adaptive and personalised learning plans

**3.3. In your perspective, what are the biggest challenges people with Intellectual Disability face in training processes?**

	Difficulties with attention span and focus
	Difficulty with abstract concepts
	Communication barriers
	Social isolation and interaction challenges
	Sensory sensitivities and overstimulation
	Unequal access to resources and support
	Stigma and discrimination from peers
	Lack of trained instructors and support personnel
	Transportation and accessibility issues
	Limited access to quality training programs

**4. Reasonable accommodations in the employment context of People with Intellectual Disability**

For each question, please answer by selecting between one and three options, considering your opinions and perspectives.

4.1. In your perspective, what are the main measures to ensure all individuals with Intellectual Disability have access to reasonable adaptations in their employment context?

	Legal protections and anti-discrimination laws
	Individualised accommodation assessments and plans
	Accessible workplace facilities and assistive technologies
	Regular training for employers and colleagues
	Inclusive hiring and promotion practices
	Flexible work arrangements and schedules
	Employee assistance programs and support networks
	Collaboration with disability advocacy organisations

4.2. In your opinion, what are the main challenges that people with Intellectual Disability face in accessing reasonable accommodations and assistive technologies in the work context?

	Lack of awareness and understanding among employers
	Financial constraints for providing assistive technologies
	Inadequate legal protections and enforcement
	Stigmatisation and bias in the workplace
	Limited availability of customised accommodations
	Communication barriers in requesting accommodations
	Insufficient training for employees and hr personnel
	Bureaucratic hurdles in the accommodation approval process

## 5. Recruitment Process

For each question, please answer by selecting between one and three options, considering your opinions and perspectives.



5.1. In your opinion, what are the main characteristics of an inclusive recruitment process for people with Intellectual Disability?

	Clear and accessible job descriptions and requirements
	Equal access to job postings and application procedures
	Customised application and interview accommodations
	Inclusive language and communication
	Diverse interview panels and training for interviewers
	Flexible work arrangements and supportive environment
	Anti-discrimination policies and training
	Collaboration with disability advocacy organisations
	Regular feedback and evaluation of the recruitment process
	Ongoing support and training for hired employees with intellectual disability

5.2. In your country, what are the main challenges that people with Intellectual Disability face in recruitment processes?

	Limited awareness and understanding of intellectual disability among employers
	Lack of inclusive hiring practices and accommodations
	Stigmatisation and bias in the hiring process
	Limited access to job opportunities and networking
	Insufficient support services for job seekers with intellectual disability
	Inadequate legal protections and enforcement against discrimination

5.3. In your opinion, what are your organisation's main training needs in order to become a more inclusive working environment for people with Intellectual Disability?

	Disability awareness training for all staff
	Training on reasonable accommodations and accessibility
	Effective communication strategies
	Inclusive leadership and management training
	Mental health and wellness support training
	Anti-discrimination and inclusion policies training
	Collaboration with disability advocacy organisations training
	Job coaching and support for employees with intellectual disability

## 6. Monitoring and evaluation process

For each question, please answer by selecting between one and three options, considering your opinions and perspectives.

6.1. In your opinion, what is the best strategy for assessing how inclusive an organisation's environment is?

	Employee surveys and feedback
	External audits and assessments by diversity and inclusion experts
	Inclusion metrics and key performance indicators (kpis) tracking
	Focus groups and inclusive workplace committees
	Benchmarking against industry standards and best practices

6.2. In your opinion, what is the best strategy for assessing the specific inclusion of employees with Intellectual Disability in an organisation's environment?

	Surveys and feedback from employees with intellectual disability
	Collaboration with disability advocacy organisations for assessments
	Inclusive focus groups and workshops involving these employees
	Performance reviews and career progression tracking
	Accessibility audits and accommodation assessments

## 7. Open understanding of perspectives and suggestions

As a way of studying, in a more exploratory way, issues relevant to the labour inclusion of People with Intellectual Disability, which were not addressed in the closed multiple-choice questions, an open-ended question was designed.

7.1. Is there any other comment, opinion, or suggestion you would like to share regarding the employability and inclusion of People with Intellectual Disability?

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## Acknowledgments

This questionnaire was developed in the scope of the No Barriers to Employment project (2022-1-SE01-KA220-ADU-000089826). The full results of the pilot application of the questionnaire are present in chapter I.3. of this book – <https://doi.org/10.24140/nobarriers.v1.p01.03>.

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In the United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities it is mentioned the need of workplace inclusion for People with Disabilities. Moreover, the inclusion of People with Intellectual Disabilities into the labour market challenges ableist conventions and embraces diversity as a accelerator for social justice and economic growth.

The cooperative efforts of the Project No Barriers to Employment further shows the intricate legal, social, and pedagogical landscapes that influence PwID's professional inclusion across different countries and demonstrate a commitment to reframing work in a way that values everyone.

Neither this book nor any other should offer instructions on how to “normalize” the lives of People with Intellectual Disability so that they blend in with the workforce. Instead, books should start by developing methods for recognizing people's unique qualities so that these differences are incorporated into the definition of labor in today's society.

