

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.

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