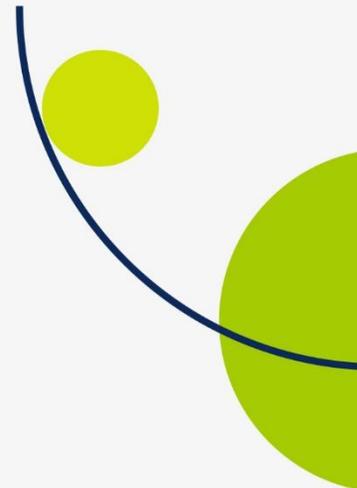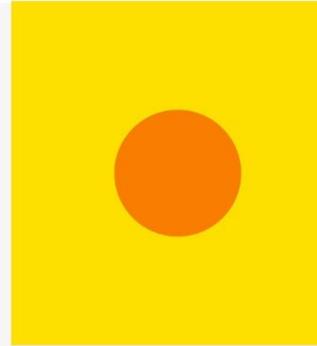# Report - Disabled people's perceptions and experiences on civil society's attitudes towards disability

PROJECT

Awareness4Change - Raising society awareness: the need for change

in disability inclusion

AWARENESS4CHANGE PARTNERS

AFID – DIFERENÇA

Diakonie Ruhr-Hellweg e.V.

APROXIMAR - COOPERATIVA DE SOLIDARIEDADE SOCIAL, CRL

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Asociatia Consultantilor si Expertilor in Economie Sociala Romania
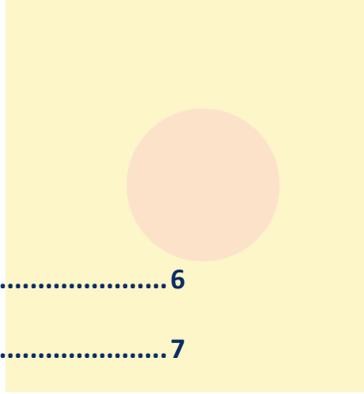
ASOCIATIA EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL INOVATION

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Contents

Introduction

There is a very well-established link between negative attitudes to people with disabilities (PwD) and the barriers to their rights. Disabled people and their families state that negative attitudes affect every area of their lives – in the playground, at work, in shops and in daily life, people with disabilities represent a group of people that is more affected by social exclusion. For instance, in 2016 in the EU-28, the poverty and social exclusion rate of people, aged 16 or over, with some or severe limitation was 30.1% of the total population. Meanwhile, the exclusion rate of people with no disability was of 20.9%, resulting in a gap of 9.2%.

In relation to the labour market the best way to bring dignity and inclusion for people with disabilities, Aweness4Change bring a new perspective of awareness of employers, human resources services and also de society.

The initiative foresees the inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream labour market through breaking stereotypes and prejudices that companies and society in general have towards these people. This document gathers information on the first result of the Awareness4Change, where, through an online questionnaire 128 employers and human resources services were surveyed in 4 European Countries.

The enterprises that responded to the survey came from a variety of different fields and were different sizes and forms for example social enterprises through to large private companies and micro businesses through to large SMEs. Though the type of enterprises and fields were very heterogenous within each of the partner countries, the results that emerged correlated with one another and were therefore homogeneous among the different countries. The majority of respondents stated that they had experience of employing people with disabilities however there was also a significant number of respondents who had no experience of employing people with disabilities. It was hoped that this would be the case in order the capture the perceptions of employers from both perspectives.

In general, from the respondents' answers there appears to be a lack of knowledge about how to support people with disabilities and the perception that the employment potential of people with disabilities is limited. This finding is of particular significance to the Awareness4Change partnership as it indicates that one of the key aspects of any Awareness4Change campaign should be to raise awareness of the work potential of people with disabilities and success stories from employers about how they support people with disabilities in the workplace.

On the following pages, the results obtained in the different countries will be presented, as well as the reflections and measures presented by employers to better integrate people with disabilities into the labor market and simultaneously in society.

About the Awareness4Change Project

Awareness4Change brings together 6 organizations from 4 European countries (Portugal, Romania, Germany and UK), aiming towards the improvement of everyday interactions and greater public education about disability. The partnership seeks to researching what civil society can do in order to improve attitudes towards disabled people and how can Human Resources departments of certain organizations be encouraged to a more accepting stance on people with disabilities. Therefore, all the partners want to fight the prejudice associated with disability, and promote the knowledge about diversity, human rights and inclusion.

The project targets companies, human resources professionals, employment support technicians, civil society and people with disabilities, with the aiming of diagnosis of the situation of people with disabilities in order to improve everyday interactions and greater public education about disability

The goals are:

- Increase understanding and acceptance of disabled people.

- Understand the European current attitudes towards disability and disabled people, focusing on the opinion and attitudes of Human Resources departments of certain organisations.

- Understand the disabled people current perceptions and experiences about civil society's attitudes towards them and their disabilities.

- Launch a transnational campaign to encourage the European public to think about how disabled people can be included more in our lives.

- Improve people with disabilities' experiences when they participate in everyday life areas, such as transport, public services, health services, etc.

To achieve the goals proposed, the consortium will develop 3 outputs:

- **Intellectual Output 1**

  Organizations' Human Resources departments report on current attitudes towards disability and disabled people

- **Intellectual Output 2**

  Disabled people's perceptions and experiences report on civil society's attitudes towards disability and disabled people

- **Intellectual Output 3**

  Awareness training materials to address attitudinal barriers and negative attitudes

Intellectual Output 2

In this document, the partnership will present the country results about the research developed.

The <u>IO2 - Conducting the focus groups on the theme - Disabled people's perceptions and experiences on civil society's attitudes towards disability.</u>

For this IO, firstly had been take into account the type of people interviewed (disabled people). In order to achieve good results, the participants in this IO had been likewise represented people with motor, intellectual and sensory disabilities. That is, the group of participants have had people with all types of disability and with that in mind the tool used in the focus group, interviews and case study had been eclectic and can be used with all participants and in various contexts. With this in mind, a review of the literature for the construction of an accessible tool is essential and will require clear definition of the information to be collected from all partners, especially those who have experience in the daily work with people with disabilities. The methodology used will be the focus group with 5 to 6 participants per group so that the interviewer / observer can detect information given through the nonverbal language of the interviewees.

It's important that the research and work of all partners culminates in an understandable and accessible tool that is a guide for the various focus groups in the various countries to collect the same type of information. Once it has been developed and approved by all partners, each partner must contact specific services for the employability of people with disabilities by using the users of these services to organize the focus groups.

In addition to being close to people with disabilities, this focus group will allow them to recognize and perceive the barriers they have in their daily lives, as well as gather information based on the perceived reality of disabled people, it will be grouped and will remain in a transnational report which will open doors for the continuity of the project and for the development of other projects and interventions related to disability. In this output the partners deliver a report with the relevant data and based on that made a short awareness movie to bring some visibility to people with disabilities.

The activities had been:

O2/A1 - Literature review focus group tools to screen perceptions and experiences

O2/A2 - Development of the focus group guide

O2/A3 - Contact employment organization and NGO working with people with disabilities (screening people with disabilities who want to take part of the project)

O2/A4 - Development of focus group, interviews, case study.

O2/A5 - Report on disability person

AFID led the IO2, and Diakonie had been the co-leader responsible to assist AFID in this task. They first created a plan for the development of output and share that information with all partners so that they can provide inputs and take responsibility for output tasks. AFID and Diakonie developed the templates/tools to collect the data and analyze it; to create a guide, with partner cooperation, for focus group with people with disability, strategies and methods to collect. Diakonie complemented on the semi-automated analysis framework and report template. EaSI, ACE-ES, Expanding Horizons and Aproximar participated in reviewing AFID and Diakonie proposals: scope, data collection tools, sharing and collecting assessment tools surveys. Moreover, they contributed to reach the goals and will contribute with its empirical knowledge and doing the critical review of the templates. EASI will be also responsible to create an innovative theme for the short awareness movie with the support and guidance of all partners.

All partners will contribute with their critical analysis of the output, apply the surveys and do a partner review of the final report. Each country will organize a validation workshop, identifying, selecting and engaging with key experts. Each country will also organize themselves to translate intermediary document, e.g. practices collected. The final output will be translated to national languages using the exceptional costs budgeted amount. All partners have accountability regarding the EU report dissemination.

National focus groups

Results of Focus group

Fundação AFID Diferença as a leader and Diakonie as a Co-leader had developed a desk check, an answers template with guidelines for Conducting the interviews of the focus groups (Annex 2), all the partners had done contributions and did a revise of the document.

1.1 Guidelines for conducting the focus group interviews

General information

- 30 participants per country are interviewed in focus groups
- Duration per interview: 60 - 100 minutes
- Due to the current situation the interviews can be conducted face-to-face or via video conferencing
- The interview will be recorded
- The data material will be treated confidentially in accordance with the data protection guidelines and will be deleted after completion of the project
- Summary is made anonymous
- With face-to-face
    - → Interior design
        - The room must be large enough to ensure sufficient freedom of movement
        - Irrelevant objects should be removed and the room should be quiet to avoid distracting participants by external stimuli
    - → offer of drinks and snacks
        - To create a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere

Procedure

- Before implementation:
    - → Dispatch of written information to multipliers and possible participants (with the name of a contact person for possible queries)

→ Obtaining the consent of the participants and keeping it in accordance with the privacy policy

→ Information event for the participants (online or face-to-face)

- During the implementation: **operation/use of the questionnaire**

→ All questions in column B must have been answered during the interview

→ The questions in column C can be used to maintain the flow of conversation, but should not interrupt the flow of conversation. These questions should be adapted individually to the group, its work experience and intellect.

- After the implementation:

→ Evaluation of the interviews is the responsibility of the respective partner after submission by the project

Conditions of Participation

- All people who meet the UN-HRC definition of disability can participate
- *Disability results from the interaction between people with disabilities and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (CRPD Preamble (e), 2008).*
- All participants should already have experience of employment subject to social security contributions or be actively seeking employment
- To ensure a broad mix of participants in terms of gender, age and other characteristics

Required personnel

- 2 moderators per focus group

→ A facilitator provides verbal guidance to the group

▪ He must build a relationship with the participants and be empathetic

▪ It must keep the debate alive

▪ Should encourage participants to formulate their answers or reflections more precisely

→ A moderator takes over the technical support during the implementation and observes the discussion

▪ Is neutral and stays out of the discussion

- ▪ Makes notes on mood, body language and non-verbal signals
- A support person is available on site if required
- An interpreter is called in if necessary

Group composition

- Number of participants
  - → Face-to-face: 8 - 12 participants per focus group
  - → Online: 3 - 4 participants per focus group
- The participants in the individual focus groups should be similar in terms of age, gender and life experience in order to achieve a homogeneous discussion
- If possible, the participants should already know each other
  - → For example, through jointly attended groups, courses, classes
  - → It is therefore important to work with different organisations that can establish contact with people with disabilities

Catalogue of questions

Column A	Column B	Column C
Subject	General direction of questioning	Possible sub-themes to ask questions about if there is no flow of conversation
General information	What is public opinion on the relation between people with disabilities and work?	• Are there prejudices, useful laws, special features? • Do you share special experiences?
Differences between workers with disabilities and workers without disabilities	Do you think there is a difference between people with and without disabilities in regard to working life?	• Do you perceive any restrictions or advantages due to the disability? • How does this become noticeable? • Were you unable to do certain jobs or were you unable to do them because of your disability? • Have you been unable to obtain qualifications, or have you been unable to obtain them precisely because of your disability?
Needs/ support	What special needs of and support systems for people with disabilities are you aware of? Is anything overlooked when it comes to work and disability?	• What support is there in your work for people with disabilities? • What support systems are available from other employers? • Have you ever been supported in the planning and implementation of your career by a special professional service? If so, how and was it helpful?

Proposed changes	What proposals do you have to help people with disabilities who face barriers and limitations in working life to overcome them?	• What have you already experienced as helpful (at work) in relation to your disability? • What should not happen under any circumstances? • What needs to be done in general?

1.2 Letter to organisations

Dear cooperation partner,

The Awareness4Change project (hereafter A4C) is an exciting European project funded by the Erasmus+ programme. The A4C partnership is made up of six different organisations based in four European countries Portugal, Germany, United Kingdom and Romania.

The aim of the project is to increase the understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities in society and especially on the labour market. In order to achieve this goal, we would like to talk to people with disabilities in an informal setting and hear their opinions. Due to the current situation, the group discussions are conducted virtually.

We therefore ask you to ask your clients/customers/students/participants whether they are willing to participate in a virtual group discussion.

Who can participate?

- All people who have already gained experience in the general labour market, have their own experience with their disability and would like to talk about both
- If possible, participants should already know each other to support a more informal atmosphere
- Participation is completely voluntary

Why is your commitment so important?

The survey is part of a research project that aims to:

- Identification of current European recruitment trends regarding disability
- Development of awareness-raising materials to inform the European public about the problems of people with disabilities
- Developing training to raise awareness of employers, human resources departments and workers of the problems faced by people with disabilities in the workplace
- Building inclusive communities

Procedure

- Virtual information event for all potential participants on XX.XX.2020
- Virtual discussion in a small group (date to be announced); duration: approx. 1 hour

- OR group discussion in our rooms (date to be announced); duration: approx. 1 hour

Technical requirements for the virtual discussion round

- Internet access

- Digital terminal with camera, microphone and loudspeaker

- Videoconferences are organised by us

Data processing

- All data collected will be treated confidentially

- The discussions are recorded on video and anonymised in key notes

- We guarantee the participants confidentiality

- Only we are allowed to make a video recording of the group. We will destroy this recording after the data evaluation is completed

Do you have any further questions?

If you would like more information or to discuss the project, please contact our manager by e-mail: example@gmail.com.

We look forward to working with you on the A4C project.

With kind regards,

Awareness4Change partnership

1.3 Letter to participants

Dear Sir or Madam,

Within the Awareness4Change - project we would like to gain insights into the topic of disability and work.

The Awareness4Change project (hereafter A4C) is an exciting European project funded by the Erasmus+ programme. The A4C partnership is made up of six different organisations based in four European countries: Portugal, Germany, United Kingdom and Romania.

The aim of the project is to increase the understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities in society and especially on the labour market. In order to achieve this goal, we would like to talk to people with disabilities in an informal setting and hear their opinions. Due to the current situation, the group discussions are conducted virtually.

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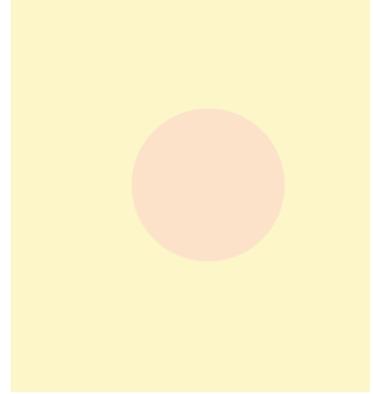
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- Digital terminal with camera, microphone and loudspeaker

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- All data collected will be treated confidentially

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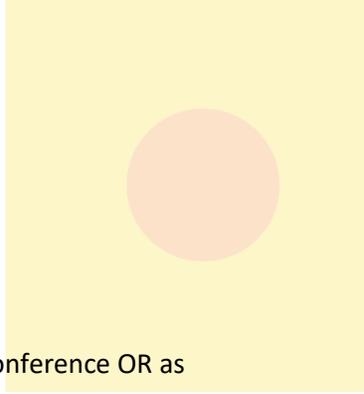
Do you have any further questions?

If you would like more information or to discuss the project, please contact manager by e-mail: example@gmail.com.

We look forward to working with you on the A4C project.

With kind regards,

Awareness4Change partnership

1.4 Declaration of consent for participants

I agree to participate in a group discussion within the Awareness4Change project.

This group discussion will be recorded and will take place virtually in the form of a video conference OR as an event on the premises of Diakonie Ruhr Hellweg.

My contact details:

Name, first name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Date of birth: _____

Gender: ☐ female ☐ male

e-mail address: _____
(mandatory)

I am affected by the following disability(ies):

_____

_____

_____

Declaration:

I agree to the video recording of the conference by Diakonie Ruhr-Hellweg e.V.

I myself will not be recording the conference. I will maintain silence about the contents of the conference.

_____

Signature (of the legal representative if applicable)

Privacy Policy:

The video recording is only used for the Awareness4Change project. The recording is only used for the documentation for the transcription and will be deleted afterwards. In the transcription, the participant data is made so anonymous that outsiders can no longer assign the data.

After the end of the project, all personal data of the participants will be deleted/destroyed.

1.5 Guidelines for the analysis of data from focus group discussions

The following framework is used to analyse the data from the focus groups.

1. Go through the recording:

   The discussion in the focus groups is recorded on video. Each participant in each focus group should be assigned a unique code (e.g. P1, P2, etc.). Make a note of the key notes. Only the most important parts of the discussion that answer the research questions need to be translated into English.

2. Familiarize yourself with the focus group material and carry out a thematic analysis:

   Then identify citations to all key questions, concepts, themes and sub-themes based on the questions and issues derived from the objectives of the study.

3. Schematic diagram:

   Insert the quotations translated into English in the appropriate columns (see the tables below) Information, issues, points of view or facts raised by the respondents themselves, which recur in the data and were not expected, can be added using the last columns of the tables below.

4. Mapping and interpretation:

   Use the tables to define concepts, map the scope and nature of the phenomena, create typologies, and find associations between themes to explain the results. The process of mapping and interpretation is influenced both by the original research objectives and by the topics that have emerged from the data itself. The main criteria for interpretation are frequency, emotion, specificity of responses, scope.

5. Summary of the results:

   Each partner should provide a short summary of the results for each section of the focus group guide.

   The template for this is still being made available.

1.6 Answers per country

General information: What is public opinion on the relation between people with disabilities and work?

Germany

PwD are labelled, they encounter lots of prejudice, are looked down upon, are not noticed and, if possible, placed in special institutions. **Little support**: obstacles are constantly put in their way and they are kept small in the support systems. The term disability is often understood by many to mean mental disability and they often develop a fear of contact.

Not solution-oriented, but deficit-oriented: the focus is on the disadvantages of a disability. There is little social competence in society. People tend to perceive the visible disabilities and generalise this to all people with disabilities. When they think of hearing impairment, many people think of deaf people and insurmountable barriers. PwD receive unsolicited (inappropriate) advice. Opinion depends on whether people themselves have PwD in their environment or in their family. Society has changed. People have to do more and more, so there is more pressure on people with disabilities. Opinion depends on people's background and perspective. Some have had the experience of people patronising them and making fun of their disability. PwD also have prejudices among themselves towards other types of disabilities.

Society sees deaf people as the poor ones, a minority of complicated persons with whom employers (and employees) do not want to

Portugal

waste time with, in what concerns, for instance, training for the job. The most frequent attitude of listeners (when they realize that they are facing a deaf person) is to move away. There is a lack of awareness and knowledge in what concerns the communication issues with deaf persons. People tend to reduce the information to what they think is essential for the deaf people to know (e.g details are omitted), even when they are writing. Although this way of communication could be effective, it is different from orality (and it also depends on the writing ability of each deaf person). They said that it put them in inequality. They make an effort to adapt themself, and there should be the same effort from the other side. One of the participants summed up this idea that the deaf, always have to make all the way to get to the others. Participants also underlined that there are different types of disabilities, with different specificities and needs. They noted that something is done, but superficially, without interest or care.

Romania

The experiences of the general public related to disabilities might result from television, social network or temporary contact with PWD, which is why there are many distortions of reality, resulting in an attitude of distrust in the PWD's ability to work. The public's opinion of people with disabilities is that they cannot work, regardless of the type of work. One of the most harmful stereotypes is that people with disabilities are limited to a very short list of jobs. Even worse, one prejudice that continues to affect people with disabilities is that they are perceived to not want to work at all. Negative perceptions can lead to a lack of opportunities, low self-

esteem, isolation and consequently to stigmatization, marginalization, and recurring negative health outcomes that prolong the discomfort of PWDs. People with sensory impairments (i.e. deafness) and physical impairments (i.e. use a wheelchair) were viewed more favourably. People with intellectual or psychological impairments were viewed less favourably in terms of employment with more people more likely to avoid those with conditions such as Schizophrenia, Depression, Intellectual disability, and brain injuries.

United Kingdom

Public opinion regarding people with learning disabilities is that they cannot understand anything, which is due to the fact that they are slower at learning or learn in different ways. There is no aspiration from people that they will work and contribute to society like other people do. Also, another participant told that when she first went to look for work in the Job Centre she was told not to worry because she wasn't expected to work and when she said she actually wanted to work, it was assumed it would be voluntary work. There are a lot of communication problems that are seen by the public, when they meet a deaf person, they question how they can communicate with that person. This can make Deaf people quite isolated from the rest of the community. There is often a view that deaf people especially in relation to work that in order to meet the deaf person's needs either in terms of having an interpreter or buying specialist equipment that it is going to be very expensive, and they don't even bother to ask what is needed. There is a perception from some people that the educational achiements of Deaf people are somehow not to the same standard as other people. Of course, looking at

schools and mainstream education there is an element of truth to this, however there is not a recognition of the specialised qualifications. It is the same in relation to blind people, there is a general nervousness and anxiety regarding the engagement with blind people which comes from not wanting to do say the wrong things or not knowing how and whether they should help.   There is no awareness of this kind of disabilities, people just think you are mad and that you are going to harm them in some way and so feel threatened. This is often excerbated within a work setting, which can be quite difficult to understand if it is not explained properly. There were participants that explained that they had direct experience of being excluded from places because they had misunderstood or not been given the right information and therefore had acted inappropriately.

Differences between workers with disabilities and workers without disabilities

Germany

For PwD, it's really difficult to enter on the labor market because of all the prejudices against them. Not all jobs are fit for everyboy, and limitations must be taken in account. Taking this into consideration, PwD have to show more and work harder than others to compensate for their deficits.

However, there exists special protection against dismissal, that means that employers are reluctant to hire PwD because they are afraid of never being able to get rid of them. While working, PwD have to keep drawing attention to themselves and their needs, otherwise they are overlooked, and no consideration is given to them. At the same time, they do not open to their employers for fear of loosing their job.

Another difficulty for PwD, is that there is a difference between visible and invisible disabilities. People with visible disabilities get more understandement.

Portugal

According to our participants, society still sees people with disabilities with pity and think they can't do anything for themselves without the constant help of others like, for example, have a job.

In the current society, there still is a lot of discrimination towards this minority. This is an opinion shared by majority of the group. They believe there is a lack of information about the various types of disabilities and about what they can and cannot do. One of the members of the group said that many people are misinformed and underestimate people with disabilities. Employers are still

unconcerned about the architectural barriers that exist. Companies are still not prepared for these people. Thus, this, they tell us that people are not the only without information, the employers also lack that knowledge.

Romania

In relation to the diferences, PwD have a lack of self-confidence. For many people with disabilities, finding and sustaining a job is a challenge. Although people without disabilities can normally apply for various jobs, PwD need to find the right job for what they know and they can do, for their specific skills. There are not many quality jobs for PwD, the ones that exist have lower pay, fact which does not ensure economic independence.

Poor self-assessment of employment opportunities combined with a passive social assistance system without employment incentives demotivates people with disabilities to look for a job. A typical restriction is the perception that PwD are ureliable workers due to frequent absences. In terms of productivity, it can be the different due to the accentuated fatigue or low resistance.

Overall, PwD are not treated any different by their employer or co-workers. People with physical disabilities normally go through normal and open recruitment and get their jobs based on the skills and merits. If they needed special equipment this had been provided through Access to Work a UK Government.

For some deaf people, work can be a very isolated place where, as most workers would say, that work is a good place to meet people

United Kingdom

and build a sociall network. Teamwork is hard. Most often, the deaf person is given menial tasks that are ofen below their aptitude. People can become very isolated very quickly in a workplace if the right support and understanding of co-workers is not put in place. Often due to the nature of these disabilities/conditions people can misunderstand communication or things that happen in the workplace and as a result can respond or act inappropriatly which can quickly escalate and lead to the person falling out of employment.

Needs/ Support

Germany

Special needs and support systems for people with disabilities indicate that people are aware of the Specialist integration services; Vocational school teachers; Employment agency; placement measures; Financial support; Legal support systems; Advisors in the company.

There are some things that are overlooked when it comes to work and disability, such as: PwD have to keep standing up for their rights and take care of themselves and demand things and employers do not respond enough to the needs of employees. Besides that, the time factor is often not taken into account: many processes take time. Through work you get self-confidence. This aspect is very important and should therefore be given more attention.

Portugal

Regarding the support that exists for PwD at work, the members of the groups talked mostly about the laws that exist, but aren't being put in practice or are not being monitored and the fact that they don't know what rights and support they have.

One thing that happens with a lot of companies is that they usually don't employ people with disabilities because they are never told all the benefits they can have by having an employee with disabilities.

In some cases, like the one of one of the participants, the company where they were going to work had already accepted people with disabilities before, so they knew what they need and gave them all

the help. In general, the elements of the group that had any labor experience, thought that the companies gave them support so they could work in the best way even with disabilities.

The main needs of PwD are: quality education, friends, acceptance and professional opportunities appropriate to their abilities. After all, the important thing is to have a framework in which to leave the house and do simple things, based on automation.

Romania

There are support systems, but many of them are just theoretically in legislation. Sheltered jobs are underdeveloped and insufficiently inclusive. The financial incentives available to employers to adapt jobs for PWDs are insufficient. There are no service providers to offer advice to employersabout the reasonable adjustment component. Occupational medicine legislation is not specific enough to ensure job adaptation.

There is no professional assessment mechanism for people with disabilities, and adult education is not adapted to the characteristics of people with disabilities. There are not enough devices and assistive technologies that people with disabilities need.

Related to the access to work, there are accessible buildings, specialist equipment or funding for the extra costs concerning transportation to and from work, as well as support programmes developed by the government in order to support people to access work opportunties. For example, the Work and Health Programme

United Kingdom

provides level 1 sign language training for the whole organisation, which would enable basic communication with deaf people, also with a Support person or interpreter to support mobility or communication. However, lots of things are overlooked when it comes to people with learning disabilities. People naturally assume that they don't understand anything and therefore, don't bother to explain things to them. They are more likely to talk to the person supporting them rather than the person themself.

Sometimes, there is a lack of progression opportunities provided to the people with this kind of disabilities and this is often because there is a lack of role models within senior positions within the labour market.

Modifications suggestions

Germany

Most of the modifications suggested the creation of new tools for PwD that would make their employment easier, like a database of organisations and employers, portfolios for PwD for work and make them avaliable to companies to find suitable employees.

Besides this, participants think that all workshops for people with disabilities should support them in their placement on the labour market.

Also, a playful approach to the subject of disability in childhood would avoid early separation of children with and without disabilities.

Occupational health and safety officers should look more closely and draw attention to grievances.

Support should be given fto PwD with part-time jobs or low weekly working hours, it is lacking and urgently needs to be expanded. Also, there should be given more information on the rights of PWD, assistance and support systems.

Employers should be held more accountable. PwD should be encouraged and not just catered for. Moreover, mixing different types of disabilities in residential facilities to create more understanding among each other as well. Show employers the benefits of employing people with disabilities.

For this question, participants expressed that a lot has to be done with companies, like pressure can be put on them to provide professional experience for people with disabilities.

Portugal

Awareness could be raised among companies so that they understand what they can do for people with disabilities and how they can adapt the workplace for these people.

In summary, the people believe that if we apply enough pressure on the companies, they'll be forced to change and to work towards a much more inclusive society, where everyone can have the same opportunities to work to develop necessary skills for life and gain their own independence.

Romania

There are already things to facilitate the work eviorment for PwD in the work sapce like an application developed with sensors and some stickers applied in some crowded public spaces so when the sensors detect a phone an audio message, it received with spatial indications. Even if participants consider that it's not so useful, another useful tool is the workcam with OCR incorporated. They are still waiting for other helpful tools, like a display that when it's pressed on the top of a book can be easy to read. Little importance is given to vocational counselling, not just for people with disabilities, but in general. It would be useful to organize some study visits for children with disabilities to various workplaces.

Peer role models who can support both people with disabilities and the employer to ensure that progression opportunties are open to people with disbilities. The peer mentor could support the employee to develop

their skllls, as well as work with the individual to understand how their experiences could match the jobs,

Ensuring that personal and professional development opportunities are accessible and open to all employees. This should be done without singling out the disabled person as the reason why the team can't do a particular activitiy.

United Kingdom

Looking at the workplace and ensuring that all areas are accessible, not just the immediate workplace of the individuals.

Further deaf/blind awareness training within workplaces to ensure that people understand how to act and be around people with sensory disabilities.

Moreover, it would be useful to have role models peer supporters who could support the individual in the workplace and use the benefit of their exerperiences to help the individual settle into the workplace and to progress within the job.
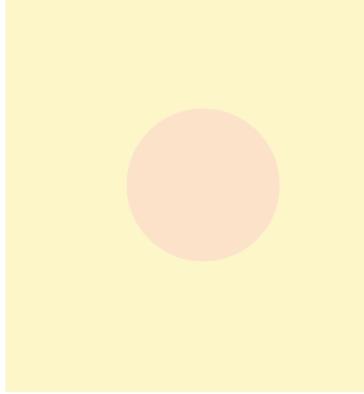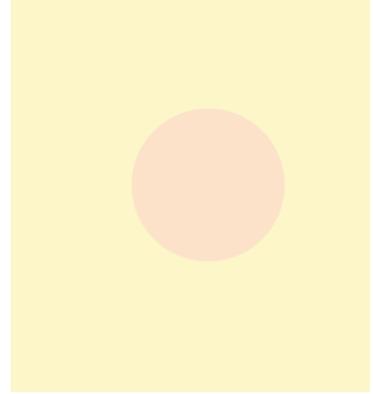
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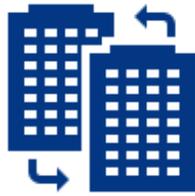
	Number of responses	Type of disbilities
Germany	31 responses	- 10 mental d. - 11 sensorial d. - 10 physical d. - 6 intellectual d.
Portugal	30 responses	- 0 mental d. - 12 sensorial d. - 9 physical d. - 9 intellectual d.
Romania	34 responses	- 0 mental d. - 10 sensorial d. - 15 physical d. - 9 intellectual d.

United Kingdom	*30 responses*	*- 5 mental d.* *- 16 sensorial d.* *- 7 physical d.* *- 2 intellectual d.*

The data presented refers to the perceptions that people with disabilities have regarding work in the 4 European countries. It will be considering their knowledge, awareness and stereotypes regarding the employability of people with disabilities.

Conclusions

The previous paragraphs presented the results of 125 questionnaires about prejudices and perceptions of people with disabilities in four different countries (Germany, Portugal, Romania and United Kingdom), about employment.

The methodology adopted for the focus group was effective to show the variety of the different perceptions in the four countries and when put against the desk-based research into the position of people with disabilities in the labor market, it provides an interesting insight into what the content of future awareness raising campaigns should be across in general and what is necessary in specific countries. In Germany, there is the opinion that the entry into employment for people with disabilities is associated with high bureaucratic hurdles. Once it succeeds, there is a lot of support from the government for employers and employees. In Portugal, the is the belief that the legislation is good, it is possible to enter the labour market, but the legal provisions are not well controlled. PwD think they need more support after starting work. In Romania, they thought that the important thing is to have a framework in which to leave the house and do simple things, based on automation is general. However, sheltered jobs are underdeveloped and insufficiently inclusive. The last country, the United Kingdom, looked at all the opportunities that exist like accessible building and workplaces including changes to work places, specialist equipment or funding for the extra costs getting to and from work and even specialist support programmes through the government to support people to access work opportunities. For example, the Work and Health Programme. Of course, the focus group had some limitations due to the different frameworks and backgrounds of four different countries.

The type of people with disabilities were very heterogeneous within the same country and in all the countries. For example, in Germany, we had all kinds of disabilities in the same amount, while in Portugal, out of the 30 participants, we didn't get anyone with a physical disability. In the end, the results that emerged are homogeneous among the different countries.

In general, from the respondents' answers, the public's perception is that they cannot work. Worse, one prejudice that continues to affect people with disabilities is that they are perceived to not want to work at all. One of the most harmful stereotypes is that people with disabilities are limited to a very short list of jobs. In the current society, there is still a lot of discrimination towards this minority, this is an opinion shared by the majority of the group. They believe there is a lack of information about the various types of

disabilities and about what they can and cannot do. Employers are still unconcerned about the architectural barriers that exist. Companies are still not prepared for these people. Thus, they say that the people are not the only one without information, the employers also lack that knowledge.
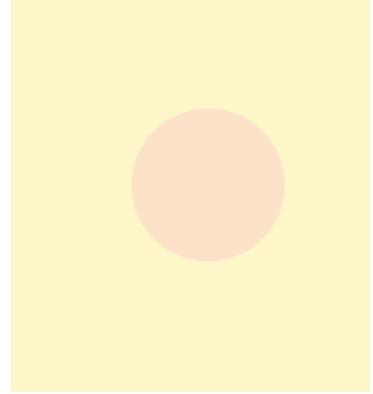
Society still sees people with disabilities with pity and think they can't do anything for themselves without the constant help of others like, for example, have a job. The most frequent attitude of listeners (when they realize that they are facing a person with disabilities) is to move away. They feel uncomfortable and they do not know how to react. No effort is made to overcome the communication barrier. Another characteristic of the listeners is the tendency to summarize the information. Because they have difficulty in communicating with people with disabilities, they tend to reduce the information to what they think is essential for (e.g details are omitted), even when they are writing. Public opinion of people with learning disabilities is that they cannot understand anything. That is because they are slower at learning or learn in different ways. This means that lots of people consider that they are unable to take part in things like work or that if they do, it should only be voluntary work. Society has changed. People have to do more and more, so there is more pressure on people with disabilities.

The Awareness4Change project aims to contribute to the process of changing employees' perceptions and to identify the area where it is important to focus. Thus, the answers and opinions of the respondents represent a suitable foundation for the conception and development of the awareness campaign, of the training materials and of the format of the training program. Through conducting these focus groups, the partnership will use the results to ensure that other project results and products have the highest impact at the level of these target groups.

This study shows quite clearly what should be highlighted in the campaign and training, which is the way employees prepare for PwD in the different countries, what are the sensitive points on which aspects to build on within both the campaign and the training program. In this way, it will be possible to identify the best types of messages, the most appropriate way of communication, the most relevant way to prepare and deliver the training program.

Thus, the Awareness4Change initiative will work to promote knowledge in areas such as the functionality of people with disabilities and the existing support for their better integration into the labour market.

Project Partners: