AWARENESS 4CHANGE

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Training materials

Module V
Awareness Campaigns

EaSI

a. How to change minds (experiences in hiring people with disabilities)

Brief description

The goal of this module is to share good practices on hiring people with disabilities, to present and promote networking among companies working with people with disabilities, and for those who want to work with them to support and spread access to inclusive work. It is also important to engage people with disabilities in this process, learning from them to better design awareness campaigns that fit their goals and needs.

The final challenge of this module will be to design an employability promotion campaign for people with disabilities with the support of the manager or recruiter from your own organization. It would also be a good idea to build an employee development strategy or job retention plan.

Learning objectives

- Promote successful stories of companies hiring people with disabilities and learning from their experience
- Promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in work contexts
- Develop competencies to improve the employment of people with disabilities
- Increased understanding of the methods of inclusion in the labour market for PwD
- Increased understanding and knowledge of hiring and retention methods of PwD
- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of hiring PwD based on other companies' examples.

European context

Although progress has been made at policy level, people with disabilities are still facing challenges in terms of insertion on the labour market, this issue being aggravated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The European Commission (2020b) sheds light on the scarce inclusion of PwD and mentions this is "one of the disadvantaged groups which have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis, including in the field of employment." (Eurofound, 2021)

"Eurostat statistics show that the employment rate of people with disabilities remains below that of people without disabilities (50.8% compared with 75%), pointing to the risk

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of people with disabilities being stuck in long-term unemployment and struggling to access the labour market." (Eurofound, 2021)

A research report by Eurofound (2021) on the policy trends and support regarding disability and labour market integration highlights some key lessons based on their analysis. Below are the main formulations:

- Support for job creation
- Support for individuals with disabilities (employees, jobseekers)
- Support for employing organisations
- Support for the institutional environment
- **Support is most useful when it is visible, inclusive and accessible**

As such, it is vital not only to create inclusive work environments but to increase awareness of their existence to the target audience. That is, both people with disabilities and their network, as they can support each other in finding professional and inclusive opportunities.

Hiring and retention are at the basis of inclusive employment. Large scale companies have already in place programmes and tools to ensure diversity in the workplace from which smaller sized employers could learn from. In the following lines, we will present you a selection of companies that can be defined as disability-friendly employers with data confirming this aspect. Having a diverse workforce has plenty of benefits for both the employee and the employer which will be detailed below.

Based on the analyses business cases identified in a report from ILO (2010), we provide you with a **selection of practices for disability employment and inclusion**.

- Policy statements related to non-discrimination and inclusion of disabled persons
- Benchmarking activities
- Measures to make the workplace, printed materials, the online environment and commercial outlets or distribution points accessible
- Employee disability networks
- Disability awareness training for management and co-workers
- Specific recruitment or community outreach techniques and programmes
- Internships, training programmes and mentoring or leadership programmes specifically oriented to people with disabilities
- Reasonable accommodation to meet individual needs
- Allocation of designated human resource or management staff trained or knowledgeable about work-related disability issues
- Policies and practices for business-to-business relationships with entrepreneurs with disabilities.
  (International Labour Office, 2010).

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Good practices – Companies hiring people with disabilities

1. Walgreens[1]

- Walgreens opened a distribution center in 2007 where 30% of employees were people with disabilities. The center was 20% more efficient than comparable facilities without people with disabilities (Kaletta et al., 2012).
- People with disabilities had fewer incidents/accidents than the non-disabled workers at Walgreens.
- Employee turnover of people with disabilities was lower (at half) than the rest of the colleagues.
- Small changes within the company can make a difference when integrating people with disabilities, "for example, by creating a little more space for a wheelchair user or by breaking a production step into two simpler individual operations."
- Other changes can include tasks' adaptation to the person's needs or changing the working schedule (Kuznetsova and Cerdeira Bento, 2018).

2. Asperger Informatik AG[2]

- This company employs people with Asperger's syndrome, which is a mild form of autism.
- To provide an appropriate working environment for people with Asperger's syndrome, the company tried to minimize stress and pressure by identifying suitable tasks and work processes.
- "People with intellectual disabilities often work more concentrated and accurately, which is why they perform repetitive tasks particularly well". For this reason, working in information technology is a suitable industry for people with the Asperger's syndrome, which often proves attention to detail and a great ability to concentrate.
- Unfortunately, not every employer is aware of the gifts of a person diagnosed with Asperger's, and, for example, the applicants for an accounting role receive approximately 26% fewer expressions of interest from the recruiter/employer Ameri et al., 2018).

[1] Aichner, T. (2021). "The economic argument for hiring people with disabilities". *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 8, 22. Available at: https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-021-00707-y.

[2] ibidem

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- Lack of knowledge and awareness over the advantages of welcoming diversity at the workplace can be some of the explanations for people with disabilities exclusion for various positions.

3. Alphapointe

- Alphapointe employs over 120 blind persons, making up more than 50% of the total workforce.
- The company positively exploits the opportunity of remote working, as it can be a great integration method of people from all over the world, including those with disabilities.
- Alphapointe's CEO declared that "People who are blind are capable, productive, skilled and loyal employees when given the opportunity to prove themselves. Truly, hiring someone who's blind is the same as hiring someone who's sighted".
- Equal treatment and equal opportunities are the basis of inclusion in the labour market, and companies like Alphapointe can be an example of good practice in this sense.
- Adapting not only to the working context, but to the persons' needs is key to both employee retention and satisfaction and company's productivity.
- Moreover, public statements coming from the company's representatives contribute to raising awareness over the issue in hand – hiring and retention of people with disabilities.

4. Accor[3]

- Accor is a good example for communicating as an equal employer.
- The company created an awareness campaign called #DisabilityStories which included fiver real-life stories of employees and guests with disabilities.
- They presented the campaign via educational comic strips, each portraying a story.
- Accor highlights the importance of awareness raising on the integration of people with disabilities and draws attention on the fact that 80% of declared disabilities are invisible. Moreover, "one in two people is affected by a disability in some point in their life – either temporarily or permanently."

[3] Accor (n.d.). *#DisabilityStories to promote disability awareness*. Available at:

https://group.accor.com/en/Actualites/2020/12/international-day-persons-disabilities-stories

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- In this sense, Accor declares that the company provides suitable and adapted solutions for people with disabilities, in order to provide them with the environment to grow and develop their skills.
- Accor focuses on skills, rather than differences. They respect the differences and embrace diversity.

5. Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Kamloops[4]

- We present you with a success story of a prospective employee with Down Syndrome who introduced herself to an employer at a job fair.
- Dominique Baird made a positive impression and later on she was hired as a Breakfast Host.
- The company has never worked before with a person with a disability, but giving her a chance, changed their whole perspective on hiring and retention.
- Testimonial by Steve Earl, General Manager, Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Kamloops:
  "Dominique quickly proved herself to be a model employee who makes a lasting impression on everyone she meets. Every morning she gives all her co-workers a hug to start their day. What a great way to start a work day! She is sincere with every guest she encounters and is genuinely interested to know where they come from, why they are in Kamloops and how their stay is. I have received more positive comments from guests about their contact with Dominique than any other employee. They ask to speak to a manager in person, complete guest surveys and contact the Marriott Guest Experience Department to express their gratitude when they encounter Dominique.

  Dominique loves everything about her job, looks forward to coming to work and truly defines what it is to provide genuine and sincere customer service. My only regret in hiring an individual with a perceived disability is that I did not do it many years ago. In my opinion Dominique's Down Syndrome is not a disability, it actually gives her a unique ability to connect with guests.

  If your business needs an individual to make a connection to your customers, I would encourage you to consider hiring someone with a disability. It can be difficult for someone with a disability to find employment and they are generally under-represented in the workforce. It will be a decision that will benefit your customers, employees and your overall business."

[4] Go2HR (n.d.). *Hiring people with disabilities: an employer's testimonial.* Available at:

https://www.go2hr.ca/recruitment/diverse-labour-pools/hiring-people-with-disabilities-an-employers-testimonial

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6. IBM[5]

- IBM is another equal employer who states that they see the interest of the employee, providing suitable conditions according to the persons' with disabilities needs. As such, not only does the employee can accomplish their professional objectives, but the company can ensure productivity and employee performance.
- The company organizes training sessions for current employees (managers, recruiters, employees) in order to promote diversity at the workplace and to ensure that the workforce understands and applies non-discriminatory behaviours. The training also contributes to the equal and fair recruitment process and retention.
- IBM has a series of internal documents which clearly state a reference on non-discrimination. Documents: Workforce Diversity Policy, Global Employment Standards Policy, Diverse Business Relationships Policy, and Supplier Conduct Principles.
- "For example, IBM's Global Employment Standards states that "IBM will not discriminate in hiring, promotion, compensation of employees and employment practices on grounds of race, color, religion, age, nationality, social or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, marital status, pregnancy, political affiliation, disability or veteran status".

7. Manpower[6]

- Manpower focuses only on finding talented and qualified people, as they believe "there is a job for every person and a person for every job".
- The company is set to promote diversity and integration of people with disabilities.
- As people with disabilities are often under-represented in the workplace, Manpower aims to change this and provide its clients talented, qualified candidates with disabilities.
- In order to implement this mission, Manpower also organizes awareness training sessions for employees, focusing on the inclusion of people with disabilities.
- Moreover, to better reach this target group, the company has partnerships with community rehabilitation providers at the national and international levels.

[5] International Labour Office (2010). *Disability in the Workplace: Company Practices* Available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/@ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_150658.pdf

[6] ibidem

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8. Microsoft[7]

- Microsoft encourages applications from all people, and when applying for a job, the person can self-identify as a person with a disability. When doing this, an alert is sent to the Disability Inclusion Program Manager, and they will know that there might be a need for accommodation.
- A needs assessment is completed, and it involves three actors: the employee, human resources personnel, and the manager. Afterwards, Microsoft can evaluate and see what need(s) should be accommodated.
- The company ensures that the needs of the person are met and that they can perform their tasks in a suitable and safe working environment.
- On top of that, recruiters are trained in order to ensure a fair recruitment process. They are trained in interviewing people with disabilities and in how to pay attention to the applicant's qualifications, not the disability.

Other disability-friendly employers[8]:

- Ernst & Young
- KPMG
- Sodexo
- Aetna
- Cisco Systems
- Merck & Co.
- Procter & Gamble
- Accenture
- Capital One
- Humana
- Pricewaterhouse Coopers
- Deloitte

[7] ibidem
[8] Very health (2020). *Best Workplaces for People With Disabilities*. Available at: https://www.verywellhealth.com/top-disabled-friendly-workplaces-1094498

P&G (n.d.). *People with disabilities drive accessibility for all with a unique perspective.* Available at: https://www.pgcareers.com/ability

Monster (n.d.). *Find Leading Disability Employers*. Available at: https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/disability-friendly-companies.

Deloitte (n.d.). *Supporting people with disabilities*. Available at: https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/supporting-people-with-disabilities.html.

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Job sites and consultancy services for people with disabilities[9]:

UK

- "Careers with Disabilities enables jobs for disabled people by providing information, support and connection for disabled jobseekers and inclusive employers.
- Disabled Workers Co-operative advertises job vacancies.
- EmployAbility has opportunities for disabled and dyslexic students and graduates.
- Evenbreak matches disabled job seekers with employers that want to build a diverse workforce.
- Incluzy is a disability jobs board.
- Jobs4Disability is an accessibility friendly job board that advertises jobs from companies with a transparent, diverse and inclusive recruitment strategy.

Romania

- OLX Romania: created a category which displays job ads for people with disabilities.
- Job Direct: a platform for assistance and placement at work for people with disabilities.
- Ability Hub: offers free counseling services provided to disadvantaged individuals that include but are not limited to assessment, training, reorientation, and career development, specialized recruitment of people with disabilities.

Germany

- Diakonie: supports the participation of people with disabilities in social life and is a specialist integration service.
- JobVerde: supports people with disabilities in their job search and presents employers who fill positions for people with disabilities.

Portugal

- Valor T: is an employability agency exclusively dedicated to people with disabilities.

[9] Scope (n.d.). *Job sites aimed at disabled people*. Available at: https://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/disability-friendly-employers/.

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- CareerJet: has a section offering professional opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Inclusive Community Forum: is university-based platform dedicated to the lives of people with disabilities that aims to showcase job offers to PwD at university level.
- OED: organization dedicated to support the professional integration of people with disabilities, contributing to increase their employability in different areas of the economy, thar also provides a pool of job offers.

Worldwide

- Podium offers skilled disabled people freelance opportunities working from home or on projects."

Disadvantages of NOT hiring PwD:

- Lack of alternative approaches to problem-solving (Aichner, 2021).
- For example, in Germany the approximate number of "people with disabilities that are considered to be qualified specialists is higher than amongst people without disabilities." As such, an employer not hiring a person with disabilities due to their biases and reluctance can miss out on skilled workers (Aichner, 2021).
- Missing opportunities of developing and selling products directed to an important share of population (15%) – to people with disabilities (statistic according to WHO). A person with disability involved in the product development could contribute with some key insights into the creation of a useful, tailored, and suitable product for other people with disabilities. By not doing this, companies could lose market share and have lower returns (Aichner, 2021).
- Causes for not hiring people with disabilities: lack of knowledge and awareness, prejudices, biases, social barriers resulting from lack of social support (Naraine and Lindsay, 2011 apud Aichner, 2021).

Additional resources:

Videos

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1. 3 Reasons why organizations should hire people with disabilities | Emily Munson | TEDxIndianapolis. See here.
2. Disability and work: Let's stop wasting talent | Hannah Barham-Brown | TEDxExeter. See here.
3. Employers Rarely Hire People With Disabilities. Here's Why They Should [Insights]. See here.
4. The Ability Factor: Employing people with disabilities makes good business sense. See here.

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