



## Report on the employment of disabled people in European countries

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### Background:

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network will support the future development of the EU Disability Action Plan and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

This country report has been prepared as input for the *Thematic report on the implementation of EU Employment Strategy in European countries with reference to equality for disabled people*. The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation of the European Employment Strategy from a disability equality perspective, and to provide the Commission with useful evidence in support of disability policy mainstreaming. More specifically, the report will review implementation of EU Employment Strategy and the PROGRESS initiative with reference to policy implementation evidence from European countries, including the strategies addressed in the EU Disability Action Plan (such as flexicurity and supported employment).

## PART ONE: GENERAL EVIDENCE

### 1.1 Academic publications and research reports (key points)

Since 1997 the National Labour Market Authority (Arbejdsmarkedsstyrelsen) has run a programme on employment of people with disabilities (see 1.3 below). As part of this programme, the Danish National Institute of Social Research has made a number of research projects about employment of people with disabilities. Other research institutes have not been concerned with this topic in the period. The most important research reports are: (1), (2), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8) (see references at the end). The Danish National Institute of Social Research has also produced a yearbook on the open labour market since 1998 (9).

The key findings in (1) is that a great number of persons with disabilities – 53 % - already are in work and are managing well. For others there are a number of problems: on some working places there are attitudes that function as barriers for employing disabled people, both among employed and among employers. In other cases the problem is that the employers do not know the schemes of public support for helping with disability related problems on the working place.

An important conclusion from (1) is that the bottleneck for employing more people with disabilities is not the public provisions. New legislation is not needed for solving the great majority of the problems. It is rather a question of using the legislation that already exists. The disabled persons own attitude and self reliance is important too. Three working places where disabled people are integrated with success are portrayed in the report.



(2) is concerned with employment of persons with brain damage, mental disease or intellectual disability. It also concludes that the existing legislation gives a good point of departure for supporting people with reduces working ability for the mentioned reasons. The problems consist in lack of knowledge of the legislation and lack of coordination between actors. Seven examples of successful integration are mentioned.

(4) compares employment of people with disabilities between two surveys conducted in 2002 and 2005. In this period employment of persons with disabilities has risen from 53 % to 56 % (corresponding to ca. 25.000 persons), without a similar development taking place for not disabled. Thereby the increase in the number of disabled persons in employment has been exceeding 4x the goal (of 2000 more a year) set up in the employment policy. Still there is a wide gap between the 56 % and the 83 %, which is the employment rate for persons without disabilities.

(4) moreover finds that 75 % of the working force have a positive attitude to work together with a disabled person, and they are ready to help her or him half an hour a day. The attitude is more positive to a physically disabled than to a mentally disabled person. Only 7 % of the disabled persons that are working find that their employer does not consider the disability enough, and only 6-16 % of the disabled persons that are in job have an uncovered need of technological aids. Just as the earlier research they still find that many persons with disabilities do not know the schemes that exist. So 88 % of the disabled do not know the so-called ice-breaker scheme, and 73 % do not know the scheme with personal assistance for persons with disabilities in job.

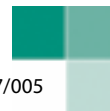
(5) follows up on the development in employment of persons with disabilities between 2005 and 2006. It finds that there has been a positive development in disabled persons working more than 15 hours a week, but not in persons without disabilities. But the data in the surveys that are compared have been gathered by different companies, so the result of this comparison must be taken with more care.

(6) finds that in a region in the country where the proportion of unskilled jobs is greater and the frequency of employment less than in the country as a whole, persons with disabilities nevertheless are as often in job as they are in the rest of the country. The attitude to disabled persons are more favourable here, and the knowledge of schemes is greater.

(7), which has just been published here in may 2008, finds that 57 % of the persons with disabilities are in job. 25 % of all persons between 16 and 64 years say that they have a disability or an illness of longer duration or are worn out from work, whereas 17 % have some degree of one of seven identified dimensions of functional limitation (legs, arms, hands, vision, hearing, behaviour or intellect). Persons with disabilities are as satisfied with their job as others, they experience their job as just as demanding as other people do, and they have the same values in relation to job.

Sick leave is three times as high among people with disabilities compared to persons without disabilities. Persons with disabilities fell more at risk for being fired and are worried about finding a new job, if they should be fired.

There has been much debate in Denmark about the so-called flexjob scheme with a permanent wage subsidy of 50 % or 65 % to persons with disabilities. It has been maintained that many has got support, who without the scheme would have been in ordinary



employment. The analysis in SFI 08:10, however, points to that the great majority of flex-jobbers would not have been in employment without the scheme.

Finally (7) estimates the number of disabled that could come into employment to 36.000, of which 21.000 could work full time.

(8) which shall be published in august 2008 gives a general description of the living conditions of people with disabilities in Denmark. Here it is shown that they are not only restricted in relation to work, but also in relation to social contacts, even with near family, and in relation to happiness and finding meaning in life.

## 1.2 Employment statistics and trends (key points)

Danish statistics does not contain any information on disability. As to disability and health related benefits, there is statistics about receivers of disability pension and sick pay, use of medical doctors and hospitals, but not about receivers of technological aids, house modifications and assistance in the household.

Is there any evidence about the employment of...

- Disabled women and men?
- Young people and older people?
- People with different kinds of impairments/disability?
- People who were disabled from birth or later in life?
- Disabled people who are migrants or from ethnic minorities?

There is some evidence, but it is not based on statistics, but on the already mentioned survey studies. Some of the surveys (In 2002 and 2005) (4) have been made by Statistics Denmark as a part of the European working force studies, some by SFI (in 1962, 1995 and 2006) (8).

(7) shows that disabled people between 16 and 64 years are 45 % men and 55 % women. For the age group 16-19 10 % of the women have a disability, growing to 40 % in the age group 60-64. For men the corresponding numbers are 7 % and 29 %. The greatest group is mobility (legs, arms, hands), then comes intellectual. If we restrict to more severe disabilities, hearing, behaviour and intellectual are each around 1/5 of mobility, and sight a little less. 11 % of the disabilities are from birth, 89 % acquired. There are fewer disabled among persons with foreign citizenship compared to Danish.

## 1.3 Laws and policies (key points)

The employment of disabled people has been an important question for policy makers and politicians for the last decade. In 1998 a major reform was made. Unemployment had been reduced since 1993. The aim of the 1998 reform was to reduce disability pension award and augment possibilities for disabled people to work.

Most of the employment legislation stems from 1998. The flex job scheme created jobs with permanent wage subsidy of 50 % or 65 %. Award of disability pension was changed into being a municipal responsibility like other maintenance benefits. These benefits are paid by state and municipality. Before 1998 they were shared 50-50, since 1998 the state share has



been greater the more active the provision. So disability pension is paid 35 % by the state, social assistance and sick pay 50 %, and flex job with 65 %.

Law on disabled persons in employment is from 1998 too. It contains among other things the so-called icebreaker scheme, where a seriously disabled person with an education can be hired with a wage subsidy of 50 % for up to 6 months, in special cases up to 9 months. Another scheme in this law is the personal assistant. Personal assistance may be given to a disabled person in job or in education, up to 20 hours a week. Originally it was only for physically disabled persons, now it has been extended to mentally disabled as well.

The reform of the disability pension scheme in 2003 has apparently had minor significance, as most of the content in this reform already was implemented by the municipalities during the preceding years.

#### **1.4 Type and quality of jobs (summary)**

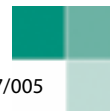
The policy has mostly been concerned with employment on the open labour market. It has been a general policy with no distinction between industries or sectors, full time or part time. Training has been contained in the icebreaker scheme, but the intent has been to create steady jobs. Social economy plays no greater role. Supported employment has only quite recently been mentioned. But the flex job scheme may be called sort of supported employment.

The groups that benefit from the policy therefore are the groups that most easily comes into employment. There has however been launched a number of campaigns and projects on special fields, such as sign language, so that more special groups have been reached too.

### **PART TWO: SPECIFIC EXAMPLES**

#### **2.1 Reasonable accommodation in the workplace**

There has for decades been a scheme so that the municipalities pay necessary adaptations to the workplace for disabled people. Earlier the award procedure was too slow, making this scheme less worth. But in the late nineties the (state) employment service also got a role here, so that the award could be made in few days. The same holds for specialist equipment and adaptive technology at work. As mentioned personal assistance for disabled people at work was part of the 1998 legislation, and has been expanded newly. Flexible employment contracts have been part of the labour market agreements for some time.



There is statistics on numbers of participants in flex jobs and in flexible employment schemes

## 2.2 Other activation policies

There are a few projects like [ijobnu.dk](http://ijobnu.dk). This internet site is made by the umbrella organisation of the Danish disability organisations. It contains relevant information on employment of disabled people and links to networks for finding jobs.

## 2.3 One example of best practice

The concept of “best practice” is not very much used in Denmark, and often considered an “EU-invention”. However, SFI 04:03 contains a chapter on “Three good examples of integration of disabled employees”. The first example is a division of the great telephone company TDC, where 6 of the 8 employees are disabled, but the two leaders are not. The second example is a cooperative enterprise, the purpose of which is to employ disabled persons (all of them blind) with telemarketing. The third example is a more ordinary private enterprise, a house painter company where two of the employed are deaf, and a number of employed are belonging to ethnic minority groups. In all of the examples the great majority of the disabled persons are employed on ordinary terms. This has in fact been part of the criterion for defining them as good examples.

Even if companies that employ special groups like the blind, companies with the purpose of employing people with disabilities, and great companies that make a division for disabled people no doubt are necessary for the employment of disabled persons, and especially persons with an extreme degree of disability, they do not solve the greater part of the problem as a whole. The research has shown that most of the disabled persons that are not employed have smaller degrees of disability, and Danish disability policy is not concerned with special solutions for disabled people, but on the contrary on mainstreaming, so that disabled people can participate in the same surroundings and on the same conditions as others. Therefore I have chosen the third example as the best practice I shall describe more fully.

(A note on mainstreaming in Danish disability policy: The principle was formulated by Niels Erik Bank-Mikkelsen and proposed in a white paper from 1969. The abolition of the Special Care and establishment of The Central Disability Council with equal numbers of disabled peoples’ organisation and state representatives in 1980 was the first example of a realisation. With a parliamentary decision in 1993 the principle was made an official principle of Danish disability policy. The Central Disability Council has been in the head of realising the principle from 1980 and at a faster rate since 1993. Since 1998 there has been a minister with responsibility for disability policy, and since 2007 every municipality must have a disability council. This structure has been developed to make sure that disability is taken into consideration in decisions on all fields (3).

The house painter company “City Group Ltd” is a little private enterprise that is run by a married couple, the wife is the master painter. They have fifteen journeymen, three apprentices and a salesman. One of the journeymen and one apprentice are deaf. The employment of disabled people began because they got an inquiry from a municipal production school (by a roundabout way) if they could employ a deaf painter apprentice.



They did so, he has continues as journeyman, and because of good experience they have later on employed a new apprentice too.

The master painter and some of the journeymen are interviewed, and the information comes from them. Therefore the report paints a rather pink picture of the company.

Because of an open minded attitude the couple already had a number of journeymen from ethnic minority groups. Many of the problems they experience are the same in relation to the two groups because it is problems of attitudes.

The customers sometimes react on the deaf painters or on the painters from minority groups with scepticism. But because these persons make a good job and make the house clean and proper after them, the customers end up with accepting that they are not quite "ordinary". Likewise, other construction companies they cooperate with may have the same attitudes. But because they do a good job and can be trusted, they are accepted.

The special problems in relation to the deaf employees consist in communication. They understand some speak by reading mouth, but to make sure that they have understood rightly what to do the always write it down. When they communicate through telephone they use SMS.

For staff meetings they are able to get a sign language interpreter paid by the municipality. They have a frame of 150 hours of translation a year. They could also have a wage support of 5 hours a week paid if they should use more time to communicate with the deaf, but they have not made use of that.

The first apprentice lacked fundamental school knowledge such as cm and m, and they had a teacher from a deaf high school to come and learn him elementary reading and math. All this is without expenses for the company.

The deaf apprentice is a rather isolated person, which may be natural because of his background in an ordinary school where he was unable to communicate with anyone. It is however a reason to annoyance with the other journeymen who think they have used a great deal of energy in establishing communication with him, but do not experience any interest from him in communicating back to them.

Example 2: the government employment strategy for persons with disabilities from 2004.

This strategy has been launched as a follow up on the legislation of 1998 and the evaluation given in (1) in recognition of the fact that implementation is as important as legislation. It was defined with three goals.

- 1- the number of employed persons with reduced functional capability shall increase with 2000 a year.
- 2- The proportion of enterprises employing persons with disabilities shall increase with 1 % point a year.
- 3- Enterprises and persons with reduced functional capacity shall have better knowledge to employment possibilities and to possibilities of receiving support or technological aids that may compensate for the disability.



The strategy had three legs:

- 1- we must know more about disability and job
- 2- we must change attitudes to disability and job
- 3- we must make it easier to combine disability and job.

The first two years it contained 12 initiatives:

1. pamphlet to schools, educations, unemployment insurance funds, unions, employment offices and municipalities, describing the legislation on compensation for disability.
2. surveys to a panel of 5000 enterprises on their knowledge about the legislation on disabled in job, and their want of more knowledge.
3. research on the special problems that persons with psychic disability experience in relation to employment, such as their lack of social competences.
4. method development in sheltered employment within municipalities.
5. sheltered employment as a road to real employment. An endeavour to get persons in sheltered employment out on ordinary workplaces.
6. newspaper on possibilities on the labour market for persons with disabilities.
7. accessibility symbol to enterprises.
8. more personal assistance to job and education. A limit of 35 hours/ week is removed.
9. personal assistance to persons with psychic disabilities. An experimental scheme is established in local areas to get experience.
10. anti discrimination legislation for disabled in job. Legislation following the EU directive.
11. development of a disability "card" where the municipality writes what the person can be supported with in a job, to inform enterprises.
12. establishment of the internet site [ijobnu.dk](http://ijobnu.dk) (into job now)

After evaluation of the first phase of the campaign, new initiatives were launched in 2006. First 31 new initiatives in January, and later 12 new initiatives in October 2006. many of these initiatives are in rather narrow areas. Among the first 31, 5 are directed against psychiatric patients, 6 against blind people, 3 against persons with late acquired brain damage, 3 against dyslectic persons, 3 against persons that are hard of hearing, 1 against deaf persons, whereas 10 are more general.

The 12 projects are directed to the same groups: 3 to the psychiatric group, 2 to the dyslectic, 1 to the blind, 2 to the deaf, and 4 are general.

As an example of these 31+12 projects, the 3 projects for the deaf shall be mentioned in more detail. The first of them makes a manifold measurement on 5 specially motivated enterprises. From each of these enterprises participate a deaf (who is sign language user), a colleague and the boss. They make an idea catalogue with 10 forwardly directed recommendations concerning the openness of the workplace towards deaf people.

The second of the deaf projects offers the possibility for remote interpretation via video telephone to 100 deaf persons. This will make the interpretation service more flexible. The goal is to make the deaf people more qualified to come into or remain in job or education.

The third project is also centred around sign language, and directly called "Time for sign language". The goal is to change the attitudes around employment of deaf people through





information and demonstration of the possibilities to communicate via sign language and interpretation.

## **PART THREE: SUMMARY INFORMATION**

### **3.1 Conclusions and recommendations (summary)**

The active labour market policy was initiated with the labour market reform in 1994. From 1998 disabled people in employment were also included in the legislation. The policy has been comprehensively evaluated from the start. From 2002 the policy as well as its evaluation has been fortified.

Persons between 30 and 60 years co-habiting persons, and men are more often in job than others. All types of disabilities limit employment chances. This is especially true for people with mental and intellectual disabilities. School education and vocational education increase the employment probability in the same degree for disabled and non-disabled persons.

The mentioned surveys show that the number of persons with disabilities in employment has been growing during the first years of the new millennium. The growth has been 8.000 more in job a year in the period 2002-2005. However, it has not been investigated to what extent this development is a consequence of the disability policy.

Moreover the surveys show that most of the persons with self-reported disabilities are in employment. The group that evaluate their working ability as full are in fact employed as often as non-disabled people. The group that evaluates their working ability as reduced are less often in work.

Please provide one (or more) recommendations for positive change in the employment situation of disabled people in your country.

- What could be changed?
- Is action required for priority groups of disabled people? (e.g. disabled women, migrants, older workers, people with specific kinds of impairment/disability)
- Is more research also needed?

The policy already is rather comprehensive. Besides the general policy many very special groups are reached. With the present lack of working force the right match of person and job is central.

Employment of disabled people is well documented through a series of surveys. What is now needed are panel studies that allow us to study the development through time. Likewise we do not know what disability services and provisions – such as technological aids, assistance in the home, and other forms of provisions – that contribute to the employment of disabled persons.





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