



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).

The first version of the report was published in 2008. This is the second version of the report updated with information available up to November 2009.



Summary of changes since 2008

New quantitative data

The data presented here are from 2008. The effects of cut backs and other changes will not be seen in the statistics until the end of 2010. The number of disabled people is continuing to fall (it has decreased since 2000). The employment rate has decreased and it is now at the lowest point over the last 10 years. However, there has been a falling trend since year 1998. This is also reflected in an increase of 0.3% in the unemployment rate, to 6.5%. It should be stressed that the figures are for the entire group of disabled people. When looking at the group of disabled people with reduced work capacity (54% of all disabled people compared to 81% for non disabled people) the employment rate is much lower (55%) etc.

New policy changes

No new laws of significant importance for employment have been implemented during 2008. However, more restrictive applications of a number of services related to employment have been reported, although these changes are not yet reflected in the statistics. The National Labour Market Board, the Swedish Social Administration, the National Agency for Education and the National Board for Health and Welfare were asked by the Government to formulate a common strategy for making more functionally disabled people able to earn a living. The strategy was submitted to the Government in February 2008. It focused on three domains: increasing cooperation between all relevant actors, improving the rehabilitation process and removing obstacles in the legislation. A plan for implementing the strategy has not yet been presented.

New research evidence

There are a number of research projects in the field of disability and employment; however no scientific publications for 2008 and 2009 have been found. Results from reports not published in peer review journals indicate no changes in the general picture of the labour market situation for disabled people.

The economic crisis

A number of support services have been cut and as a consequence the application of services has been much more restrictive. However, this process started in 2009 (and will be continuing in 2010) and the results can not be seen in the statistics due to the fact that statistics lag one year behind.



PART ONE: GENERAL EVIDENCE

1.1 Academic publications and research reports (key points)

There is a special research council in Sweden to support research on persons with impairment and employment called the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Life. This area of research has a high priority, resulting in relatively extensive research with good scientific publications. Results from the research show that generally people with impairments are to a larger extent than others excluded from the work force. Furthermore it is clear that this is a heterogeneous group. An important distinction is made between disabled people with and without reduced work capacity. Their relationship to working life varies, according to, among other things, age, gender, education, ethnicity, type of impairment and whether work capacity is reduced or not (see e.g. Szebehely, Fritzell & Lundberg, 2001). Analysis shows that persons with impairments, to a larger degree than persons without impairments, remain outside the employment market; but at the same time they do not leave the employment market at a higher rate than the population as a whole. The employment level of the group that was least vulnerable, persons with a hearing impairment, was at the same level as the population as a whole. However, the group is considered to have a psychosocial vulnerability that leads to among other things a larger extent of early retirement (Danermark & Coniavitis Gellerstedt, 2004). Comparing groups with various forms of mobility impairment, vision impairment, intellectual disabilities and prolonged psychiatric problems, employment levels were considerably lower in regard to those with mental problems.

During the years 1988/1989 and 1998/1999 there was a general reduction in the level of employment of nine percent for both men and women and for persons with impairment. It is worth noting that women with impairments, irrespective of group, had a higher unemployment rate than men. Working life has a structure that often favors men and research has not given the gender perspective enough consideration (Tideman, 2000), and women with impairments are exposed to a double vulnerability (Barron, 1999, 2004; Jansson, 2003; Michailakis, 2000).

In a study of people with mild and moderate traumatic brain injuries (TBI) Strandberg (2009) showed that due to the long term medical effects of such an injury, there were significant difficulties in returning to work or the labour market, despite strong motivation, and that this is a large psychosocial problem for the person with TBI. Of 15 people with brain injuries, only one was close to the labour market (work rehabilitation). For the other 14 the demands were too high.

Rydberg et al (2009) reported that in 2005 63% of the deaf population was employed, as compared to 78% of a reference population of non deaf people. When it comes to activity/sickness compensation, the percentage of the deaf population (31%) is almost three times higher than the percentage for the reference population (11%). The Odds Ratios were virtually unaffected (changed 0.1-0.9) by adjustments for differences between the two populations regarding age, sex, immigration background, level of educational attainment and region. Hence, the confounders do not affect the Odd Ratios in any significant way. The authors conclude that in the categories studied here, it seems to be deafness that is the main factor behind the different positions in the labor market between the populations.

Research on ethnicity and disability (Bohlin & Erlandsson, 2002; Integrationsverket; 2006; SIOS & SIH, 1998) shows that persons with an immigrant background have a considerably higher average of unemployment than persons born in Sweden. To have an impairment and in addition to be an immigrant means according to Bohlin (2001) and Söderlindh (1992) a double vulnerability, poor health compared to Swedes, and that for this group the employment level is lower than their level of education.

Several studies show that education has an impact on the possibilities to obtain employment (Boman & Nilsson, 1998; Göransson, 2002; Integrationsverket, 2006; Lindqvist, 2007, Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2003; Sjödaholm, 1996).



These studies together show that people with impairments have a lower level of education compared to the population as a whole and that students with impairments are faced with more hinderances than those students without impairments. In addition, one finds more often persons with impairments within professions that are monotonous.

1.2 Employment statistics (2008) and trends (key points)

More than 900,000 persons in Sweden aged sixteen to sixty four have some form of disability (13% of the total population). More than half a million of these persons regard their ability to work as being reduced. A larger percentage of women than men report some form of disability. There are also more women than men among the disabled population who regard their abilities to work as being reduced. The most common disabilities are motor disabilities and asthma or allergies or some other form of hypersensitivity. There has not been any increase in any type of disability since 2006. Nearly half of disabled people are aged fifty to sixty four and more than half of those have a reduced ability to work.

The level of education is lower among the disabled than among the population as a whole. Post-secondary education among the general population is 33%; among disabled persons with reduced ability to work it is 21%.

In 2008, 66% of disabled persons were in the labour force (of these, 55% has a reduced ability to work) compared to 81% for non-disabled persons. There has been an increasing tendency towards distance from labour force participation since 2006 between the disabled and the non disabled population.

The percentage of employed persons among the disabled is 62% and (50% among disabled persons with reduced ability to work) compared to 75% for non-disabled persons. The corresponding figures for unemployment are: 6.5%, 9.1 and 4.9% respectively.

The percentage of full-time employees among the disabled is 65% and among the non disabled it is 79%. Disabled persons without reduced ability to work work full time to the same extent as the non disabled. Since 2000 the percentage of full-time employees with disability has decreased from 73 percent to 65 percent in 2008. (Statistics Sweden, 2009)

There are no great differences with regard to permanent or temporary employment among disabled people with or without reduced ability to work and non disabled people. The percentage of permanent employees has increased among the population since 2006 but the increase is not statistically significant for persons with disabilities. More disabled men have permanent employment than women, and women have temporary employment to a greater extent. In contrast, there is no difference between the sexes among persons with disabilities who have reduced ability to work.

Almost one in ten persons is self-employed and of disabled people with reduced ability to work, it is even more common to be self-employed. There is a larger percentage of men than women in both the population and among the disabled who are self-employed. Persons with disabilities work in the municipal sector to a greater extent than the population as a whole although a majority is working in the private sector. This applies to a greater extent for disabled people who also have reduced ability to work. (Statistics Sweden, 2009)

The Swedish Social Insurance Agency (2003) carried out a study "Inequality's life conditions – a comparison between people with impairment and the general population", using a questionnaire where about 7000 persons with impairment between the ages of 23 – 64 were asked about their life situations. The results of the report made it evident that of the people questioned only 22 % had unsubsidized employment in the open market.



At the same time, the survey indicated that people with impairments have significantly more often economic problems, a circumstance which corresponds with the results of a study carried out by the National Board of Health and Welfare on healthcare in Sweden (2005). The report pointed out that persons with impairments have on average lower income levels (concerning both salary related income and disposable income) than the general population.

1.3 Laws and policies (key points)

No significant changes or new laws in this field have been implemented during 2008. However, several measures have been taken for persons with impairments with the purpose of increasing possibilities and reducing hinderances to employment in the ordinary employment market. The most important measure during this period has been "Prohibition of Discrimination in Working Life of People with Disability Act" (1999:132)" [<http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/108/a/2535>]. However, the law has been criticized for individualising the problem and not addressing the behaviour of the market (Michailakis, 2000). Another important measure has been the stipulation through the Work Environment Act that the working environment must be accessible for all employees' special needs. It has been considered especially significant to support and encourage young persons with impairments to look for employment in the open market.

About 20 programmes aiming at increasing the possibility to get a job were carried out 2008. Eight of them are specially targeted at disabled people. A work rehabilitation programme, employment training and different forms of vocational training are examples of mainstream programmes. The most extensive ALMP measure is that of wage subsidy, however, the number of disabled people entering this programme has decreased compared to 2007, by about 7 %. In 2008 there were in total 70,400 disabled people in any form of supported employment, including sheltered employment: an increase of about 1.3% from 2007. Arbetsförmedlingen / Employment office/, 2009)

Marginalization in regard to the employment market, as well as dependence on social grants has increased for persons with psychiatric problems. Between 1990 and 2004 the government's measures for young persons receiving early retirement have increased by 300%, to 16 billion kronor. In a report the national coordinator has stated "Research shows that integrated support taking individual needs and resources as a starting point should be given, not in artificial environments, but in real life work places" (p. 12). The system has four different responsible authorities (The Swedish Public Employment Service, The Swedish Social Insurance Agency, social services and health care) and these counteract this kind of individually- based support as often the organization's own needs and interests steer the choice of support offered. It is necessary to develop cohesion, with one organization having financial, political and organizational responsibility for the rehabilitation of persons with psychiatric problems.

1.4 Type and quality of jobs (summary)

The most common type of work is that which does not require more than compulsory school. It is more frequent among disabled people than non disabled people that they have a job lower than their educational level, i.e. their pay following higher education is lower. The two most common areas of employment are construction and manufacturing i.e. work that does not require higher education (Statistics Sweden, 2009).

The need to adapt working conditions to the needs of disabled people with reduced ability to work

Barely three-quarters of employed disabled persons with reduced ability to work report that they need adaptation of their working conditions. Adapted work duties, adapted work rates, adapted working time and/or adapted aids are mainly needed. The majority report that they receive the help they need. Among those not employed nearly half consider that at least some measure should be implemented for them to be able to work (Statistics Sweden, 2009).



Discrimination

22% among the disabled with employment and with reduced ability to work have been discriminated against. 6% of those with a reduced ability to work say that at some time during the last five years they have been unfairly treated and were denied jobs for which they had sufficient qualifications due to their disability, and a slightly fewer felt that they had been passed over due to their disability when seeking advancement in their jobs. The same pattern is shown for salary negotiations, taking part in staff training, layoffs or dismissal, bullying, harassment or being offended (Statistics Sweden, 2009).



PART TWO: SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

2.1 Supported Employment

One method that has been successful in a number of Swedish projects has been the implementation of supported employment. The method has developed during the past 10 years and has been evaluated a number of times. The evaluations have shown the method to be effective (see e.g. Antonson, 2002). Reaching employment, to be employed and keeping employment are three problematic phases for the complex process that persons with impairments face in trying to become established within the market. To “reach an employment” means that the person is active, and maybe with some kind of help and support, acquires competence for the job. Here, the person has, through his/her own energy and motivation, shown an interest and in several cases got an education and can even show other qualifications for employment on the market. A period of job training is also required in preparation for entrance to the job market.

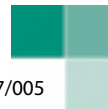
“To be employed,” means that an employer employs a person with an impairment and as a rule receives a wage subsidy from the government for this. The person is now employed and is no longer in training for a job. But they may then be on trial. The work that the person performs is a necessary job that has to be done at a place of employment and which could be performed by a person without impairment. It is possible to formulate a job description and to give a title to the specific job function. The employee with impairment is needed for his/her capability and competence.

“To keep employment,” means that the person with an impairment continues to want to work and considers himself/herself capable to work. It also means that the employer protects the employee, and sees the employee as an important person for the job to be carried out, the quality of the work and for the working environment. The employee with impairment (as for other employees) can receive an increase in salary through his/her contract, receive opportunities for training or education in order to raise their competence and to develop through employment. The person is the same “as everyone else”, there is a job description and a professional title. She/he is a natural part of the team, a colleague the same as other colleagues.

The method of supported employment is practiced with great success at Misa AB in Stockholm, and also at The Activa Foundation and the employment office’s rehabilitation programme in Örebro. Through a close cooperation between these three organizations and the Swedish Institute for Disability Research at Örebro university, supported employment has developed and been implemented. Misa means “Method of development, Individual support, participation in Society and sympathy at Work” and Misa AB offers work related activities to people that have experienced obstructions for work. The aim is to give individual support in work, for example in the form of rehabilitation, assessment of work abilities and daily training. Misa AB receives contracts from the municipalities according to the law concerning support and service for persons with certain functional impairments (LSS 1993) and the law on social services (SoL). The company has 110 employees. Currently there are 10 units within Misa AB. The units are specialized according to the various barriers to work.

The Activa foundation is located in the county of Örebro and has 29 employees and activities in the county’s twelve municipalities. The foundation offers help and support to unemployed people who experience difficulties accessing the labour market; they help the applicant to find permanent employment or training and educational programmes in order to reach a higher education level. Applicants are sent to the foundation from the local insurance office, the social services or the employment service, where a consultation procedure takes place. People with impairments can contact the foundation directly, but the foundation can only offer help if one of the above-mentioned authorities has given their consent.

A number of scientific publications on supported employment in Sweden are in progress.



PART THREE: SUMMARY INFORMATION

3.1 Conclusions and recommendations (summary)

An important measure was the introduction of the "Prohibition of Discrimination in Working Life of People with Disability Act" (1999:132)". This law concerns both direct and indirect discrimination against persons with impairments. The law applies regardless of an employer's intentions.

There are about 20 programmes, (of which 8 are especially targeted for disabled people), where disabled people are a prioritized group. Overall there have not been any cut backs in these programs during 2008. In 2008 a total of 900 more disabled people were employed through these programmes compared with 2007. In 2009 we have seen a more restrictive interpretation of some of these programmes by some of the agencies, although we have so far no statistics confirming this trend.

The relationship between disability and employment is complex. A number of factors influence the possibility of reaching and keeping a job. The relationship to the employment field varies depending on e.g. age, gender, education, ethnicity, type of impairment and whether or not a person's capacity to work is reduced or not. Young persons with impairments are especially marginalized as are persons with psychiatric problems. The Swedish government has tried, both through legislation and direct measures, to contribute to an increase in possibilities of employment. However it can be seen that these measures are insufficient, as the trend shows that unemployment is increasing slightly for persons with impairments. The measures to facilitate and support groups taken at local level have met with problems regarding cooperation between the partners concerned.

We want to point out three areas that need further development:

1. Comparative evaluations (between countries) of ALMP.
2. Continued development, implementation and evaluation of Supported Employment.
3. Knowledge about how cooperation between agencies may be developed and implemented in practical activities.

3.2 References

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Annex 1: quantitative data on the employment of disabled people

Year: 2008	Absolute (N)	Percentage (%)	Change (from previous year)
Disability rate	921,000	15.5 (of total population in Sweden)	- 0.2% (previous year=2006)
Employment rate of disabled people	571,000	62%	- 1.0% (previous year=2006)
Activity rate of disabled people		93.5%	-0.3%
Inactivity rate of disabled people		6.5% (unemployment rate)	+0.3%
Employment in open labour market			
Employment in sheltered workshop	≈ 21,000	3.6% (of all employed)	0%
Reason for leaving the labour market due to disability or long standing health problem	No data		

Year: 2008	% Permanent	% Temporary
Permanent contracts vs. short term contracts	86.4%	13.6%

Year: 2008	% Full-time	% Part-time
Full time vs. part time jobs	47.6%	52.4%

Year:	Public sector	Private sector	(e.g. comment or give % employers meeting obligations?)
Fulfilment of employment quota (if it exists)	-	-	

Participation in training of disabled people	2008: 4,763 disabled persons started a labour market training programme.	(e.g. comment or give number of people participating in vocational or work-related employment)
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Annex 2: 2008-9 laws and policies on the employment of disabled people

No new laws of significant importance were implemented in 2008

Name of law:	
Date of entering into force:	
Objective:	
Impact assessment (positive/negative):	

Name of law:	
Date of entering into force:	
Objective:	
Impact assessment (positive/negative):	

Name of law:	
Date of entering into force:	
Objective:	
Impact assessment (positive/negative):	



Annex 3: 2008-9 research/evaluation on the employment of disabled people

Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	
Key findings from the research:	
Comment or assessment:	

Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	
Key findings from the research:	
Comment or assessment:	

Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	
Key findings from the research:	
Comment or assessment:	