



REPORT

To establish a European Quality Framework for sheltered employment

NEW PARADIGM OF SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT FROM THE SOCIAL ECONOMY



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New paradigm of sheltered employment from the Social Economy

INDEX



1. INTRODUCTION

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3. SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT IN EUROPE. DATA OBTAINED FROM THE RESEARCH CARRIED OUT WITHIN THIS PROJECT.

4. RESULTS OF THE SATISFACTION SURVEY CARRIED OUT ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WHO CURRENTLY WORK IN SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT.

5. PROPOSAL FOR THE NEW SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT MODEL. NEW PARADIGM OF SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT FROM THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

6. BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

ATTACHMENTS:

1. COMPARATIVE TABLE

2. SATISFACTION SURVEY

1. INTRODUCTION




The Erasmus+ KA210-ADU project, called DISJOB, arises with the aim of addressing and improving the situation of protected employment in Europe. With Spain as the coordinating country and Romania and Croatia as partners, this project seeks to analyze and propose a unified model that can be applicable in all European countries. Protected employment, which focuses on providing paid work and support to people with disabilities and vulnerable situations, is a key piece for social and labor inclusion in our societies.

The initial objective of the DISJOB project was to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the current situation of sheltered employment in Europe. However, during the research, we encountered several challenges, such as the lack of consistent and up-to-date data and significant differences in the employment policies of each participating country. These difficulties have highlighted the complexity of creating a uniform model for sheltered employment that is effective and applicable in all national contexts.

Faced with these challenges, and after deep reflection, we have identified that social economy and social inclusion companies could offer a viable and sustainable solution to the current needs of protected employment. Social economy companies, which include cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations, operate with the main objective of generating a positive social impact and promoting the labor inclusion of people in vulnerable situations. Likewise, social inclusion companies, specifically designed to integrate people with integration difficulties into the labor market, play a crucial role in promoting an inclusive and equitable labor market.

Through the DISJOB project, we seek not only to better understand the realities and challenges of protected employment in Europe, but also to propose an intervention model based on social economy and social inclusion companies. We firmly believe that this approach has the potential to offer an effective response tailored to the specific needs of each country, thus promoting greater social cohesion and fairer and more equitable economic development across Europe.



Now that we have presented the project to you, we consider it appropriate to provide some important data to contextualize the content of this report. Firstly, in all EU countries there is a significant gap in the employment of people with disabilities (hereinafter PWD). The probability of having a job decreases drastically for a PWD compared to people without disabilities. Between countries, the disability employment gap varies between 10 and 42 percentage points. In the EU as a whole, 50.6% of people with disabilities are employed, compared to 74.8% of people without disabilities. In the case of individual disabilities the situation may be worse. Of the 30 million blind and partially sighted people, the unemployment rate is 75%. Among autistic people, only 10% have jobs.

Secondly, even if a PWD has a job, the working conditions are worse than those of people without disabilities. 11% of employed PWD face in-work poverty, compared to 9.1% of people without disabilities. PWD are more likely to receive temporary contracts and lower salaries and to lose their jobs in economic downturns.

Third, the risk of poverty and material deprivation is higher for PWD. 29.5% of women and 27.5% of men with disabilities are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, compared to 22.4% of the entire population. A disproportionate number of people with disabilities are homeless and are at greater risk of becoming homeless.

To increase the employment participation of people with disabilities, European governments traditionally implement active labor market policies (ALMPs). A key component of these policies is the creation and maintenance of protected employment, also called supported employment.

It is currently unknown exactly how many people with disabilities across Europe work in sheltered jobs. However, the European Strategy for People with Disabilities 2021-2030 admits that "a large number of people with severe disabilities do not work in the open labor market, but in facilities that offer so-called sheltered employment."

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sheltered employment is expanding in many countries, with various types of institutions offering an increasing number of positions to people with disabilities who want to work. The structures involved also show a growing desire to be recognized as full participants in the economy and as employers of a higher professional level. In fact, many sheltered employment providers now use management methods taken directly from the commercial world.

However, these institutional structures have evolved in very diverse legal contexts, ranging from general commercial law to special provisions governing establishments with a therapeutic function. Given this contextual diversity, issues related to the employment status and fundamental rights of the workers involved may be overlooked, sometimes crudely. This study attempts to provide an overview of this particular aspect of sheltered employment.

Two problems are especially important in this sector. The first derives from the different concepts of protected employment. Does it provide workers with long-term employment or can it constitute transitional employment on the way to entry or re-entry into unprotected employment? The second question is an extension of the first in regards to the objectives of sheltered employment. Should the production of goods and services take precedence over therapeutic, medical and social concerns?

Sheltered employment in Europe refers to policies and measures designed to ensure the labor inclusion of vulnerable groups or groups with special needs, such as people with disabilities, young people, the elderly or the long-term unemployed. This concept is based on several principles and theoretical frameworks that advocate equal opportunities and social justice in the workplace. Here is an outline of the theoretical framework for protected employment in Europe:

01 Human Rights and Labor Rights:

Protected employment is based on internationally recognized principles of human rights and labor rights. This includes the right to work (Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and equal opportunity in employment (ILO Convention 111).

02 Social inclusion

Protected employment is part of social inclusion policies, which seek to guarantee the full and effective participation in society of all citizens, regardless of their personal circumstances.

03 Principle of Non-Discrimination

Protected employment is based on the principle of non-discrimination, promoting equal treatment and opportunities in access to employment and professional development.

04 Social and Solidarity Economy

In Europe, protected employment is linked to the development of the social and solidarity economy, which includes social enterprises, cooperatives, foundations and other forms of organizations that prioritize social well-being over economic profit.

05 Employment Policies

Protected employment systems are supported by active employment policies, which include measures such as incentives for hiring vulnerable groups, specific training and training programs, and support for the creation of inclusive employment.

06 Access to Education and Training

The importance of guaranteeing access to quality education and vocational training programs is recognized to improve employment opportunities for vulnerable groups.

07 Rights and Capabilities Approach

Sheltered employment takes an approach focused on people's rights and capabilities, recognizing and strengthening their skills and potential to contribute meaningfully to the labor market and society as a whole.

08 Collaboration between Social Actors

The effective implementation of sheltered employment requires collaboration between governments, employers, unions, civil society organizations and other relevant actors to develop comprehensive and sustainable policies.

2.1 European Strategy on the rights of people with disabilities 2021-2030

In March 2021, the European Commission adopted the Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030. With this 10-year Strategy, the European Commission wants to improve the lives of people with disabilities in Europe and around the world.

The Strategy builds on the results of the previous European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, which paved the way for a barrier-free Europe in which people with disabilities can exercise all their rights and participate fully in society and the economy. Despite the progress made in the last decade, people with disabilities still face considerable obstacles and are at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The aim of this Strategy is to move towards a situation in which, regardless of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age or sexual orientation, all people with disabilities in Europe:

- can assert their human rights
- enjoy equal opportunities and participation in society and the economy
- can decide where, how and with whom they live
- can move freely within the Union, regardless of their aid needs
- and do not suffer discrimination

This new enhanced Strategy takes into account the diversity of disabilities, including long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments (in accordance with Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), who are often invisible.

Given the risks of multiple disadvantages faced by women, children, older people, refugees with disabilities and people with socioeconomic difficulties, this Strategy promotes an intersectional perspective in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To this end, the new Strategy establishes an ambitious set of emblematic actions and initiatives in various areas and establishes numerous priorities, such as:

- Accessibility: move and reside freely, but also participate in the democratic process.
- The possibility of having a decent quality of life and living independently, since the Strategy focuses especially on the process of deinstitutionalization, social protection and non-discrimination at work.
- Equality of participation, given that the objective of the Strategy is to effectively protect people with disabilities against any form of discrimination and violence and to guarantee equal opportunities in justice, education, culture, sport and tourism and access to them, as well as equal access to all health services
- The role of the EU in setting an example
- The EU's intention to achieve the objectives of this Strategy
- Promoting the rights of people with disabilities globally

Flagship initiatives

01 EU Accessibility

A knowledge base providing information and good practices on accessibility across sectors (by the end of 2022)

02 European Disability Card

The European Commission will propose a European Disability Card that will apply to all EU countries. The card will make it easier for people with disabilities to receive appropriate support when traveling or moving to another country in the European Union. (by the end of 2023)

03 Guidelines recommending improvements for independent living and community inclusion

This will help people with disabilities live in accessible and assisted housing in the community or continue living at home (2023).

04 A framework of social leave services

For people with disabilities (2024)

05 A package to improve labor market outcomes for people with disabilities

(Which will be launched in the second half of 2022)

06 Disability Platform

The Disability Platform brings together national authorities responsible for the implementation of the Convention, organizations of people with disabilities and the Commission. It supports the implementation of the strategy and strengthens cooperation and exchange in the implementation of the Convention.

07 Renewed human resources strategy

of the European Commission, including actions to promote diversity and inclusion of people with disabilities.

Implement the Strategy: close collaboration with EU countries

The Commission will support Member States in developing their national strategies and action plans to advance the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Union legislation in this field.

The European Commission calls on Member States to contribute to this new strengthened Strategy as a framework for Union actions and for the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

2.2 The convention on the rights of persons with disabilities

In its article 27, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes the right to work of persons with disabilities and establishes the legal framework for the obligations of States Parties in relation to the work and employment of persons with disabilities. .

Article 27. Work and employment

1. The States Parties recognize the right of people with disabilities to work, on equal terms with others; This includes the right to have the opportunity to earn a living through work freely chosen or accepted in a work market and environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities.

States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for persons who acquire a disability during employment, by taking appropriate measures, including the enactment of legislation, inter alia:

- (a) Prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability with respect to all matters relating to all forms of employment, including conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment, continuity of employment, career advancement and safe and healthy working conditions;**
- (b) Protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favorable working conditions, including equal opportunities and remuneration for work of equal value, to safe and healthy working conditions, including protection against harassment, and redress of grievances;**
- c) Guarantee that people with disabilities can exercise their labor and union rights on equal terms with others;**
- (d) Allow persons with disabilities to have effective access to comprehensive technical and vocational guidance programs, placement services, and vocational and continuing training;**
- e) Promote employment opportunities and professional promotion of people with disabilities in the labor market, and support them in searching, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment;**
- f) Promote business opportunities, self-employment, the creation of cooperatives and the start-up of their own businesses;**
- g) Employ people with disabilities in the public sector;**
- h) Promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector through relevant policies and measures, which may include affirmative action programs, incentives and other measures;**
- i) Ensure reasonable accommodations are made for people with disabilities in the workplace;**
- j) Promote the acquisition of experience by people with disabilities in the open labor market;**
- k) Promote vocational and professional rehabilitation programs, maintenance employment and labor reintegration of people with disabilities.**

2. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are not subjected to slavery or servitude and are protected, in accordance with the law, on an equal basis with others, against forced or compulsory labour.

2.3 Employment package for people with disabilities

On September 21, 2022, under the mandate of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Employment Package for People with Disabilities was launched.

The Employment package, which is part of the Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030, will help develop national policies that involve people with disabilities in the just green and digital transition.



The measures integrated in the package are divided into six main action areas in the form of guidance, guidelines, manuals and good practice presentations:

- Strengthen the capacities of employment and integration services.
- Promote recruitment prospects through positive discrimination measures and the fight against stereotypes.
- Guarantee the adequacy of jobs.
- Promote the permanence of people with disabilities in employment and prevent disabilities associated with chronic diseases.
- Guarantee professional rehabilitation plans in case of illness or accident.
- Study of quality jobs in protected employment and access routes to the open labor market.

This initiative aims to ensure that people with disabilities enjoy social inclusion and economic autonomy through employment. The package is expected to be approved by the conclusions of the Council of the European Union.

It proposes a series of actions for the period 2021-2030. It is based on the Social Entrepreneurship Initiative and the Emerging and Scaling Business Initiative. It has been developed through an open and inclusive process over a period of two years.

Workplace integration social enterprises are a type of social enterprise common throughout Europe. They specialize in offering job opportunities to disadvantaged people.



The package - one of the seven flagship initiatives of the EU Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030 - is in line with the UN CRPD and supports the realization of the principles of the Social Rights Pillar of the EU. Its objective is to improve the situation of people with disabilities in the labor market and reduce employment differences between people with and without disabilities. As we have seen before, according to article 27 of the CRPD, people with disabilities have the right to enjoy social inclusion and economic autonomy through employment on an equal basis with others. However, the latest data available at EU level, from 2019, shows that only 50.8% of people with disabilities are employed, compared to 75% of people without disabilities. The situation is even worse for women with disabilities: on average, only 48.3% of women with disabilities are employed.

As we saw at the beginning of this section, the package focuses on six areas of action, the results of which will serve as practical tools and guidelines for applying pre-existing employment legislation and will be published over the next two years. Among them are:

01 Strengthen the capacities of employment and integration services

By publishing a guide for Member States to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of employment services, which was published on September 25, 2022.

02 Promote recruitment prospects through positive discrimination and combating stereotypes


Through a catalog of positive actions to facilitate the hiring of people with disabilities in which employers participate (scheduled for the first quarter of 2023).

03 Ensure reasonable adjustments at work

Through the development of guidelines for employers, - one of which is the development of guidelines on reasonable adjustments at work for employers (expected for the third quarter of 2023).

04 Prevention of disabilities associated with chronic diseases

By publishing a manual for the management of chronic diseases and preventing the risk of acquiring disabilities by publishing a manual published by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (expected for the fourth quarter of 2023).



05 Ensure vocational rehabilitation plans in case of illness or accident

By publishing guidelines for effective vocational rehabilitation plans covering common illnesses and types of accidents (expected for the first quarter of 2024).

06 Exploring quality jobs in protected employment and access routes to the open labor market

By launching a study on improving the employment of people with disabilities through alternative employment models, including recommendations for fair working conditions and career development in alternative forms of employment and pathways access to the open labor market that comply with the UNCRPD (expected for the first quarter of 2024).

Although the DUE welcomes this initiative by the EU Commission, there is still work to be done to ensure that appropriate measures, tailored to different types of accessibility requirements, are not only identified but also implemented at national level, as well as to influence all future actions to ensure that the deaf perspective is reflected. For example, measures on reasonable adjustments for deaf people in employment. In fact, the joint document on the employment package for people with disabilities mentions that the package will take into account the diversity of disability, in line with the UNCRPD.

To meet the objectives of this Package, a great effort on the part of civil society will be required. Accordingly, the DUE will work with the EU institutions and support the national member associations of the DUE to advocate for the inclusion of the perspective of deaf people in the development of results. The DEU will also support its member national associations in the implementation of these products at Member State level. For example, through the dissemination of tools; Indeed, at the end of 2022, the DEU will publish a toolkit on the EU Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030, covering all relevant flagship and other actions, including: includes the topic of employment.

3. SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT IN EUROPE. DATA OBTAINED FROM THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED WITHIN THIS PROJECT

1 OVERVIEW OF SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT

1.1 Type and legal personality of sheltered employment structures

SPAIN

- Public/private establishments
- Commercial (stock and limited companies)
- Labor companies and cooperatives
- Associations and foundations

CROATIA

- Others:

Employment of people with disabilities in Croatia can be found in various sectors, including private establishments, public establishments, voluntary associations and commercial companies. Unfortunately, many organizations, whether public or private, do not have defined policies to include people with disabilities in their workforce. Currently, in Croatia, there is no legally recognized and specially regulated supported employment model, in the sense that companies are established mainly focusing on these types of employment models. Existing organizations create associations or social enterprises in which people with disabilities are employed in accordance with current legal regulations, which also apply to employees without disabilities. With the help of public institutions, employers have access to certain incentives to co-finance the salaries of people with disabilities, workplace adaptations, rehabilitation and, under special conditions, they can apply for supported employment projects for people with disabilities. disability within integrative and protected workshops

ROMANIA

- Private establishments

EUROPEAN UNION

The legal framework for the offer of protected employment varies. In most cases these are private establishments, generally managed by voluntary associations or as cooperatives or, more rarely, as genuine commercial enterprises. (In Ireland and Portugal all structures are private).

The composition of the sector as a whole varies from situations where sheltered workshops are managed by many small, voluntary associations, some of which only manage one establishment, to a situation where a single entity predominates (as in the case of Remploy in the United Kingdom) or even constitutes the entire sector (such as Samhall, a foundation that became a public limited company in 1992, in Sweden). Individual sheltered workshops employ on average between 30 and 90 PWD

In general, the sheltered employment sector has grown significantly, although obviously the pace of growth varies between countries.

1.2 Objectives and activities of sheltered work centers

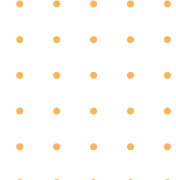

The main objectives of protected employment are:

SPAIN

- Social integration
- Professional integration
- Job offer
- Others

Compliance with employment quotas:

Compliance with employment quotas for people with disabilities in Spain is regulated by the General Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion, as well as by Royal Decree 364/2005. These regulations establish that companies with more than 50 employees are obliged to reserve a percentage of their jobs for people with disabilities.



Specifically, the employment quota for people with disabilities in Spain is 2% of the company's total workforce.

Companies that do not comply with this quota may face financial penalties proportional to the number of employees they should have hired according to the established quota.

Compliance with these quotas has been a debated topic in Spain, since some companies do not comply with these obligations and the effectiveness of the control measures and the sanctions imposed have been questioned. In addition, there has been debate about the need to promote policies that not only focus on compliance with the quota, but also promote real inclusion and equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the labor market.

CROATIA

- Social integration
- Professional integration
- Rehabilitation
- Provision of jobs
- Others


Compliance with labor contributions:

In Croatia, the legal framework regarding the employment of persons with disabilities is mainly governed by the Law on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities. The objective of the legislation is to promote equal rights and opportunities for people with disabilities in the labor market.

Employers are encouraged to provide equal opportunities for the employment of people with disabilities and to create a conducive work environment.

Croatian law obliges certain companies, especially those with 20 or more employees, to allocate a certain percentage of their workforce to people with disabilities. Non-compliance results in fines, and these fines contribute to a government fund to support the employment of people with disabilities.

ROMANIA

- Social integration
 - Professional integration
 - Job offer
 - Others
- 

Compliance with employment quotas:

Romania has the lowest employment rate compared to other European Union countries for people with severe limitations (with a difference of more than three times as much between Romania and the best-placed countries).

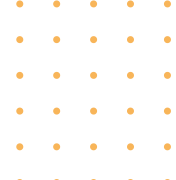

The determining causes may be: restrictions on the exercise of the right to work of Law No. 53/2003, modified and supplemented (for example, prohibiting the employment of supervised persons), the instrument to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities through the quota system does not work effectively, the budget collected from the payment of non-labor tax is not used adequately to increase the employment of people with disabilities and the subsidy system for entrepreneurs is not attractive enough.

According to Law No. 448/2006 on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, reissued, modified and supplemented, any public or private employer with at least 50 employees has the obligation to employ persons with disabilities, in a percentage of at least 4. However, statistics show that employers usually prefer the other options of the law, so that, although it was started as an active measure, the quota system has not led to an increase in the employment rate, which means that one of the future challenges is related to the increase and diversification of employment-related services using the quota system actively.

The provision of employment support services adapted to the needs of people with disabilities is one of the most effective means of employment. Regarding supported employment, although there are positive experiences of some general directorates of social assistance and child protection and non-governmental organizations in the provision of these services, there is no program at the national level.

EUROPEAN UNION

The main objectives of sheltered employment were most frequently cited as social and professional integration, and rehabilitation. In many countries (Denmark, Sweden), the creation of jobs of one structure or another was considered the main objective (Belgium even referred to "job creation"). Others cited the production of goods and services (Norway, Portugal), while the Swedish company Samhall also mentioned financial results, although only fourth on the list of priorities. In Luxembourg, however, "Production is not seen in terms of performance. It is the consequence of the self-realization of a disabled worker rather than an immediate objective."



At the opposite end of the scale of objectives clearly formulated in terms of production, or even productivity, are those related to improving the well-being of workers with disabilities, for example, to restoring their dignity. Therapeutic treatment as such was only mentioned by Greece, and a purely occupational function only in relation to the Spanish work assistance centers.


Some intermediate objectives were also often mentioned, for example, supplementing the income of workers with disabilities (Spain); vocational training (Norway, Scotland); and the transition to "ordinary" employment (Belgium, Sweden).


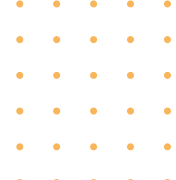
1.3 What are the types of activity carried out in sheltered employment structures?

SPAIN

- Subcontracting of an industrial service (packaging, assembly, manufacturing)
- Manufacturing
- Service sector
- Agriculture
- Commercial activities
- Others:
 - Graphic arts and bookbinding
 - Logistics services
 - Textile and clothing
 - Call Center Customer service
 - Administrative Services
 - Hospitality and Catering
 - Recycling and Waste Management

CROATIA

- Subcontracting of an industrial service (packaging, assembly, manufacturing)
 - Manufacturing
 - Service sector
 - Agriculture
 - Commercial activities
 - Others:
 - Graphic arts and bookbinding
 - Logistics services
- 


- 
- 
- Textile and clothing
 - Accommodation and food service
 - Recycling and waste management
 - Physical care Garden maintenance
 - Cleaning services
 - Public administration

ROMANIA

- Subcontracting of an industrial service (packaging, assembly, manufacturing)
- Manufacturing
- Service sector
- Agriculture
- Commercial activities
- Others:
 - Call center and customer service
 - Administrative services

EUROPEAN UNION

Although there is no precise data on the types of activity carried out in protected employment structures, the most mentioned by EU countries, in descending order: industrial subcontracting (packaging, assembly or manufacturing), manufacturing itself, services, agriculture and commercial activities.



2 LEGISLATION AND SUPERVISION

2.1 Is there specific legislation in your country on the organization or operation of sheltered workplaces?

SPAIN



CROATIA



ROMANIA



EUROPEAN UNION

The protected sector is governed by various types of legislation. While some countries (e.g. Greece, Ireland, Croatia, Romania or Sweden) lack specific legislation on the organization or operation of protected workplaces, most other countries have specific legislation or regulations governing aspects of protected employment, both to protect employees and to specify exceptions to the application of labor legislation (especially with regard to a fixed minimum wage).

However, in some countries sheltered employment is explicitly excluded from standard employment law (e.g. in Austria, unless there is an enterprise agreement or "award" in the branch of activity concerned); In other countries, existing labor law applies in the absence of any specific reference to protected employment in the law.

These workshops may be supervised directly by the Ministry of Labor at central level (e.g. Norway, for "labour market companies" (AMB), and Portugal) or at regional or local level (Spain), or by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Socially, or even jointly.

When there are two or more types of workshops, a distinction is usually made between those that are mainly dedicated to production and those that focus on treatment. They are supervised by the competent ministry (labor or health, respectively) and are subject to different regulations, especially with regard to labor legislation. Workers with less severe disabilities are mostly found in workshops that emphasize production, while treatment-oriented workshops employ a large proportion of people with a mental deficiency.

3 FINANCING AND SUBSIDIES

3.1 Protected workplaces in:

SPAIN

They combine financing from various levels

CROATIA

They combine financing from various levels

ROMANIA

They combine financing from various levels

EUROPEAN UNION

Countries fall into two broad categories: those where these centers receive funding from central government, either through a ministerial department or a national agency (for example, France, Ireland or Sweden); and those where funding is provided through national governments. at a regional or local level (e.g. Belgium, Portugal and Spain), although a few combine funding from several levels (e.g. Denmark and Scotland (United Kingdom)).

3.2 Is public financing linked to a certain level of income?

SPAIN



It is not directly related to income level, but to other aspects such as:

- Number of workers with disabilities hired.
- Employee disability level
- Compliance with established quotas
- Development of training and education programs
- Results and achievement of objectives
- Participation in specific programs

CROATIA



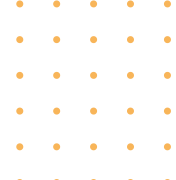

It is not directly related to income level, but to other aspects such as:

- Number of workers with disabilities hired
- Compliance with established quotas
Development of training and education programs
Participation in specific programs (funded by the EU or at national level)
Donations from citizens and companies

ROMANIA



No. There is a quota system to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities by offering them subsidies, but it is not attractive enough.



Although, according to legislation, there is an obligation in the public sector to hire people with disabilities, including organizing employment competitions dedicated to hiring them, the level of employment is low.

The most important benefit for employers with more than 50 employees who hire people with disabilities is that they no longer pay the disability fund to the State, and with the respective money they can pay the salary of a disabled person who also carries out some activity.

Employers who hire graduates with disabilities for an indefinite period will receive a monthly amount of the gross minimum wage per economy in force for the following 18 months.

Some of the most effective measures to increase the employment of people with disabilities are supported employment services tailored to their needs.


However, the number of unemployed holders of a disability certificate registered with local public employment agencies is very low.

The number of people with disabilities benefiting from labor market activation measures for the general population is very low, and the employment target for people with disabilities is also low and declining.

County employment agencies do not ensure adequate physical accessibility, nor the accessibility of information and communications.

It is necessary to improve the quality of public employment services, as well as increase and diversify private providers of this type of services.

The employment services provided are deficient in content, and their integration with other public social services is limited.



4 PEOPLE IN SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

SPAIN

In 2022 there were 1,941,900 people with disabilities of working age (16 to 64 years), which represented 6.3% of the total population of working age, and an increase of 0.6% (12,500 people) compared to 2021. Of the aforementioned population, 685,300 were active, 2.6% more than in 2021. Active people without disabilities increased by 0.7%. Within the active population with disabilities, a higher percentage of men was observed, a greater weight of the 45 to 64 year old group and a lower representation of people with higher education than in the active population without disabilities.

Protected employment rates in Spain are distributed between 60.7% for men and 39.3% for women.

By age, the majority of people with disabilities who work in a special employment center are over 45 years old (56.8%).

CROATIA

According to the Register of Employed Persons with Disabilities (September 4, 2023, Croatian Institute of Public Health), 21,616 people are registered in the Republic of Croatia. Among them, 16,944 people with disabilities (52.5% men and 47.5% women) meet the criteria established in the Regulation on the content and method of maintaining the Register of Employed People with Disabilities (NN 75/18). Employers can count these people toward their employment quota or use benefits for employing people with disabilities.

The percentage of people with disabilities employed is calculated annually, but does not represent complete statistical information. For example, in 2022, a total of 131,938 people were employed according to the records of the Croatian Employment Service, including 3,065 people with disabilities. Compared to the previous year, when 2,740 people with disabilities were employed, this represents an increase of 11.9%. Of the total number of employed people with disabilities, 1,587 are men (51.8%) and 1,478 are women with disabilities. Regarding the employment industry, the largest number of people with disabilities in 2022 were employed in the manufacturing industry (15.2%), followed by Hospitality (12.4%) and Public Administration (12%).

Unfortunately, we lack specific information about legal entities in Croatia that employ people with disabilities.

ROMANIA

As of December 31, 2022,⁴ the total number of people with disabilities reported by the General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection of the Counties (GDSACP), and respectively the local ones of the districts of Bucharest, was 857,638 people. Of them, 98.03% (840,727 people) are cared for by families and/or live independently and 1.97% (16,911 people) are in public residential social assistance institutions for adults with disabilities coordinated by the National Authority for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Children and Adoptions.

As of December 31, 2022, the rate of people with disabilities in the Romanian population was 3.87%, differentiated by region, with the regions of Oltenia South West, Muntenia South and North West recording the highest rates.

In counties/municipalities, the highest number of people with disabilities is recorded in the municipality of Bucharest (73,313 people), followed by Prahova county (37,732 people), and the smallest number is recorded in Covasna county (6,363 people).

Women represent 53.25% of the total number of people with disabilities. The number of people over 50 years of age represents 72.72 percent of the total number of adults with disabilities. From the centralization of the data by age groups, it turns out that 53.04 percent are people between 18 and 64 years old (415,995 people) and 46.96 percent are over 65 years old (368,369 people), in the total number of adults with disabilities.

Regarding the age group of 18 to 64 years, the proportion of people with disabilities is as follows: 5 between 18 and 19 years, 0.98%; between 20 and 24 years old, 2.11%; between 25 and 29 years old 2.44%; 30-34 years old 4.24%; 35-39 years old 4.14%; 40-44 years 5.35 percent; 45-49 years 5.80 percent; 50-54 years 7.25 percent; 55-59 years 6.29%; 60-64 years 10.01%.

The number of people with severe disabilities represents 40.09% of the total, people with severe disabilities 48.21% and people with medium and mild disabilities 11.70%.

As of December 31, 2022, the number of public social assistance institutions for adults with disabilities was 508, of which 453 were residential and 55 non-residential. Of the 453 public residential social assistance institutions for adults with disabilities, 85 are centers with more than 50 beneficiaries.




EUROPEAN UNION

The biggest difference between EU countries was in the actual number of people with disabilities employed in the sheltered sector and their relative size (27,000 in Sweden out of an economically active population of about 4 million).

The majority of workers in the protected sector are people with disabilities; The percentage of workers without disabilities (mostly employed in some supervisory role) typically ranges between 5% and 25%. However, in Poland the situation is unusual, with only 122,000 disabled workers in a total protected workforce of around 200,000; This anomalous situation is due to the fact that any company with a workforce of at least 40% PWD (or even 30% if they are visual PWD) can qualify for the protected employment status.

The proportion of men in protected jobs is systematically higher than that of women, constituting an average of 60% to 70% of the total (even 80% in Switzerland). There are few statistics on the age distribution of workers with disabilities.

The population of sheltered workshops tends to be larger in countries with more experience and in greater numbers.



5 NATURE OF DISABILITIES

The nature of the disability of workers in sheltered employment is rarely studied. The few figures available reveal marked differences. In Sweden, for example, only 33% are mental or psychic PWD, and 26% in Norway; only 16% are mental PWD in the UK. The percentage of people with a physical disability is around 50% in Sweden, but only 7% in centers in France.

SPAIN

- Physical and organic, sensory and psychic (intellectual and mental)
- 50% of the workers in special employment centers are people with intellectual and/or mental disabilities due to their difficulties in accessing the ordinary labor market.

CROATIA

- Long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disabilities

ROMANIA

- Physical, visual, auditory, deafblindness, somatic, mental, psychic
- Severe disabilities 40.09%, marked disabilities 48.21%, medium and mild disabilities 11.7%.

6 TYPES OF WORK SITUATION OF WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES IN A SHELTERED ENVIRONMENT

SPAIN

Special Employment Centers The CEE and the Labor Enclaves are two different models of labor integration for people with disabilities in Spain. Both concepts are briefly described below:

Special employment centers:

Definition: CEE are companies whose main purpose is the labor integration of people with disabilities. They are regulated by the General Disability Law and the specific regulations of each autonomous community in Spain.

Proportion of workers with disabilities: According to Spanish legislation, at least 70% of the workforce of an EWC must be made up of people with disabilities.

Activities and sectors: EWCs can operate in various sectors, such as services, industry and agriculture, among others. They offer employment adapted to the abilities of people with disabilities.

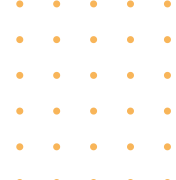

Job adaptation: EWC jobs are adapted based on the individual abilities of workers with disabilities.

Labor enclaves:

Definition: Labor Enclaves are a type of labor integration that consists of collaboration between a Special Employment Center and an ordinary company. In this model, disabled workers hired by the CEE carry out their work in the facilities of the collaborating company.

Participation of Ordinary Companies: In Labor Enclaves, the ordinary company participates in labor integration by facilitating an inclusive work environment for workers with disabilities in the CEE.

Adaptation of the job: As in the CEE, in the Labor Enclaves the jobs are adapted based on the individual needs and abilities of workers with disabilities.



Both models aim to facilitate the labor inclusion of people with disabilities, providing them with employment adapted to their characteristics. The choice between a CEE and a Work Enclave may depend on several factors, such as the specific needs of the person with a disability, the characteristics of the job and collaboration with ordinary companies. These models are part of the labor integration policies in Spain and seek to promote equal opportunities in the workplace.


CROATIA

In Croatia, the employment situation of people with disabilities in a protected environment can be of several categories. National opportunities for the employment of people with disabilities include provisions for sheltered employment. However, we would like to point out that in Croatia there is no specific legal framework for protected employment. The aforementioned opportunities can be characterized as protected employment, financed by public institutions.

These are the types of employment situation of workers with disabilities in Croatia:

1. **Sheltered and integrative workshops (Zaštitne i integrativne radionice):** these are designated workplaces that offer employment to people with disabilities. The work environment adapts to the needs and abilities of employees, offering a supportive environment. There is also a form of work unit for employing people with disabilities that the employer establishes through a special act as an independent accounting unit. The work unit will become a protected and integrative workshop if it meets the conditions for this. A sheltered workshop is an institution or a company that offers sheltered jobs to people with disabilities for whom the Vocational Rehabilitation center has determined, through an evaluation and opinion (hereinafter referred to as evaluation and opinion of the center), that only they are employable in protected jobs. Due to their disability, they can achieve between 30% and 70% of their expected work performance. A protective workshop must have at least 5 employees, and of the total number of employees, at least 51% must be people with disabilities employed in protected workplaces.

On the basis of a referral from the vocational rehabilitation center, a sheltered workshop can accept rehabilitated people for practical training. The number of sheltered workshop employees who are not disabled people employed in sheltered workplaces, together with the number of those rehabilitated in practical training, must not exceed the number of disabled people employed in sheltered workplaces.





2. Supported employment (Mjere aktivne politike zapošljavanja): this model consists of providing assistance and support to people with disabilities to find and maintain employment in the regular labor market. Support is tailored to the individual's needs and may include career counseling, workplace accommodations, and other supports.

3. Employment in social enterprises (Zapošljavanje u socijalnim poduzećima): some social enterprises in Croatia focus on hiring people with disabilities. These companies can operate in various sectors and their main objective is to offer employment opportunities and promote social inclusion.

4. Open labor market (Otvoreno tržište rada): some people with disabilities can be hired in the regular labor market with adaptations and support, with the aim of achieving full inclusion. Public sector employers are required to give preference during employment if an individual performs as well as the candidate with the highest score.


The specific type of work situation will depend on the person's capabilities, preferences, and available opportunities. The Croatian legal framework, including the Law on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, provides guidelines and regulations to ensure equal opportunities and fair treatment of persons with disabilities in the workplace.

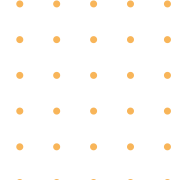

ROMANIA

Since 2010, Romania has been developing policies to increase accessibility, equal participation, education and vocational training, social protection, health and the employment rate of people with disabilities, in order to build a "Europe without barriers for all". According to the Romanian Constitution, the right to work cannot be restricted, and "people with disabilities enjoy special protection."

The state authority responsible for career advice, guidance, integration and employment is represented by the National Employment Agency and the National Authority for Persons with Disabilities (NAPD).

Until 2002, the employment rate of PWDs was never analyzed. Furthermore, employment was never, in the past, the target of an active and coherent policy aimed at addressing the special social needs of such people.





The Romanian electronic registry on disability, founded in 2011 and managed by MLFSPEP, aims to accurately estimate the degree of professional integration in this field. Data relating to inclusive education is more easily collected, mainly from inclusive schools. Some elements are missing that prevent an accurate estimate of the degree of professional integration of people with disabilities in Romania. Employment monitoring does not last long enough to eliminate all risks of abandonment by PWD

The employment rate of disabled people with disabilities in Romania remains relatively low: 12.26% (in 2019) to 14% (in 2020), compared to inclusion in the labor market in developed European countries Norway 61, 7%; Switzerland 62.0%; Austria 41.9%; Germany 46.1%; United Kingdom 38.9%), or Northern United States (Canada 56.3%; USA 38.1%).


Legal regulations and administrative policies have a huge impact on the lives of people with disabilities. According to current policies regarding the employment of PWD, anyone who wishes to integrate or reintegrate into the labor market has free access to professional evaluation and advice, regardless of their age and the type or degree of their disability.

In addition, they can receive professional advice if they are trained and of the appropriate age, if they are unemployed and without professional experience, or even if they are employed but want a professional retraining.

The vocational training of PWD is organized through initiation, qualification, requalification, improvement and specialization programs.

Employment of PWDs takes place in the open labor market, at home, or in authorized sheltered units (sheltered employment), which employ people with (more severe) disabilities, or as an intermediate stage in the open labor market.

These are entities organized as/represented by natural or legal persons, public or private; They can also be sections, workshops or other structures within economic operators or public institutions, non-governmental organizations, or they can be organized by an authorized individual disabled person, who can run an independent company, as stipulated by law. The rate of disabled personnel must be at least 30% of the workforce. The number of authorized protected units in Romania increased from 400 (in 2010) to 722 registered units in 2019. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics and European reports, more than 3,000 non-governmental organizations carry out constant economic activities, under various forms (protected workshops, authorized protected units, social enterprises, etc.)



EUROPEAN UNION

At European level there are three main types of employment status for workers with disabilities in a protected environment.

- The first is the type in which all workers in the sector are considered clients or interns, that is, they do not have a real working relationship with their employer. Germany, Greece and Ireland are examples of this category. In this case, workers with disabilities are never considered employees, even though they receive financial compensation for the work they do.
- The second category, which applies in most European countries, contains several types of employment status. They vary depending on the nature of the protected employment structure, the degree of disability and whether the employer is party to a collective agreement. The result is that some workers are considered students, interns or clients, while others enjoy employee status and all the associated rights.
- Finally, in the third category, workers in the sheltered employment sector are basically considered salaried. Among the countries in this category, Belgium, Sweden and the United Kingdom stand out. In these cases, employees sign a contract identical to those used outside the protected employment environment.

7. REGARDING FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION, CAN WORKERS IN SHELTERED WORKSHOPS JOIN UNIONS?

SPAIN

Yes, workers in Special Employment Centers in Spain have the right to join unions. Trade union membership is a fundamental right recognized by Spanish labor legislation, which applies to all workers, including those employed in the EWC.

Unions play an important role in representing workers, collective bargaining and defending their labor rights and interests. EWC workers have the right to participate in union activities, such as membership, participation in union assemblies and the election of union representatives.

It is important to note that union membership is voluntary and that workers are free to choose whether or not to join a union. Unions can offer support and advice to workers on various employment issues, such as working conditions, wages and collective bargaining.

In summary, workers in Special Employment Centers in Spain have the right to join unions and participate in union activities to protect and promote their labor rights.

CROATIA

No, in Croatia there are no unions for people with disabilities or for employees of sheltered employment workshops.

ROMANIA

Yes, workers have the right to join unions and participate in union activities to protect and promote their labor rights.

EUROPEAN UNION

When it comes to freedom of association, in some countries – especially those where workers with disabilities do not have employee status – protected workplace unionization is out. Where two types of sheltered employment coexist, as in France, workers in sheltered workshops can join unions, but are not granted that right in workplace assistance centres. In the vast majority of countries, freedom of association in these establishments exists in principle, but does not take any tangible form. Thus, there is a gap between the theoretical right to organize and a (often very) low membership rate, which can be explained by a certain disinterest shown by the large union federations towards protected personnel in general, on the one hand, and the difficulties of operating alongside voluntary associations, on the other. Finally, in the few cases where employee status is widely recognized for workers with disabilities in a protected environment, unions can be seen to play a central role: this can be seen in Wallonia (French-speaking Belgium) with rates affiliation of 30 to 40% and where 62% of protected production workshops (*entreprises de travail adapté*) have a union representative; and in Sweden, where almost 100% are affiliated with unions.

In almost half of the countries no collective agreement applies to employment. However, in the UK, by contrast, *Remploy* has its own national collective agreement, and in Belgium almost all collective agreements recognized by the National Labor Council now apply to sheltered workshops.

Similarly, when it comes to the elective representation and participation of workers with disabilities in decision-making within protected employment structures, situations vary greatly, from the "ordinary" case close to unprotected employment (for example, Belgium, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, where there are elections of union delegates), to a complete absence of representation or participation in decision-making (for example, Luxembourg and Switzerland).

8 INCOME LEVEL OF WORKERS IN SPECIAL EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

SPAIN

It will depend on the professional category for which the worker is hired.

Basic salary:

Group II. Qualified personnel between 1,800 and 1,400 euros Group III. Technical personnel between 1,270 and 964 euros Group IV. Operators 830 euros

CROATIA

We lack specific information on the exact earnings of disabled workers in Croatia. The income of disabled workers in sheltered workshops or any other type of employment can vary depending on several factors, such as the type of work, the employer and applicable regulations.

In Croatia, the Law on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities addresses issues related to the employment of persons with disabilities, including wage regulations. Furthermore, Croatia is one of the countries with a mandatory minimum wage that companies must adhere to. Minimum wages are adjusted once a year by government regulations, and these adjustments are usually announced before they take effect.

The minimum wage for the year 2023 amounted to 700.00 euros gross, while, in 2024, by decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the minimum wage will increase to a gross amount of 840.00 euros. The average gross salary in November 2023 nationwide in Croatia was 1,680 euros.

ROMANIA

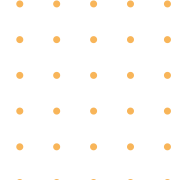

Subsidio para personas con discapacidad (disabled allowance)

Regardless of their income, people with disabilities receive a monthly allowance and a monthly supplementary personal budget.

The monthly allowance is:

RON419 for an adult with a severe disability;

RON317 for a profoundly disabled adult.



The monthly complementary personal budget is:

RON 179 for an adult with a severe disability;

132RON for a profoundly disabled adult;

72 RON for an adult with a medium disability.

The family or legal representative of a child with a severe, profound or medium disability also receives a complementary personal budget for the entire time they care for, care for and support the child, equal to:

RON 359 for a child with a severe disability;

RON 210 for a child with a profound disability;

72RON for a child with a medium disability.

EUROPEAN UNION


In more than two-thirds of the countries studied there was a minimum wage or income for workers with disabilities in protected jobs; the exceptions were Greece, India and Ireland.

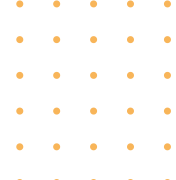

However, the existence of a minimum income does not influence either the average level or the composition of the minimum wage of these workers. In some cases, the pay is the only source of income, in others it complements a disability pension. The different forms of income of people in sheltered employment need to be looked at more closely.

In a group of countries, earned income is considered separately from other forms of income and is broadly set on the basis of standard criteria: experience, qualifications, productivity, collective agreements or awards. In some cases, these payments constitute the disabled worker's only income.

Countries in this category include Belgium, Norway, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, for structures that offer a transition to open employment; and Spain, despite their marked disparities in salary levels.

In France, the basic salary in a sheltered workshop is at least 35% of the minimum interprofessional wage (SMIC), and a supplement paid by the Government brings the total to at least 90% of the SMIC. Whatever the salary paid by the company, a worker's total remuneration cannot exceed 130% of the SMIC, which limits the possibilities of promotion, at least in terms of income. The income of a person working in a work-based assistance center is made up of a part linked to productivity (at least 15% of the SMIC) and an income supplement paid by the Government (at least 55% of the SMIC). Adults with disabilities can benefit from a complementary benefit not linked to their employment; The resulting total income then ranges between 70% and 110% of the SMIC.






Similarly, in Germany, a component evaluated based on the volume and quality of the individual's work is added to the base salary established by the labor office. In the Czech Republic, workers whose work does not justify payment of the minimum wage receive a supplement calculated according to the level of pension entitlement (which can amount to 75% of the minimum wage when the pension is paid in full, or 50% when is partially paid). In Denmark, the salary is set based on the disability pension received by each worker.

In Ireland, workers in sheltered workshops receive a pension and a supplement paid by the employer that cannot exceed 50% of the pension.

In Switzerland, the salary (usually supplemented by a disability pension) is expected to reflect the "residual" abilities that the disabled person may have (i.e. the greater the disability, the lower the salary). Similarly, in Greece, although productivity may be taken into account, income is largely assessed according to the degree of disability.

Luxembourg is an exception in this regard, since income is awarded regardless of the work performed; People officially registered as PWD receive a guaranteed minimum income regardless of whether they work or not. In all cases considered, salaries are paid in cash or into the workers' bank accounts.

Workers often benefit from a range of subsidies in addition to their salary. These include subsidized transportation in almost 75% of cases, although in various forms: partial or total reimbursement, free transportation for PWD, collection services. Likewise, almost half receive a meal subsidy. In some cases, work clothes are provided (for example, France and Ireland), although this rule often applies to all workers (for example, Belgium and the United Kingdom). In some cases, workers are accommodated on the premises (in France, this rarely occurs in sheltered workshops, but is more common in workplace assistance centres, although accommodation is always financed from an independent source). In Belgium, accommodation is sometimes provided next to sheltered employment establishments. In some cases, leisure activities are organized, as in Greece or in French work assistance centres.



9 WORKING CONDITIONS OF WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES IN SHELTERED JOBS (WORKING HOURS/WEEK, PAID VACATIONS, GRANTED PAID VACATIONS).

SPAIN

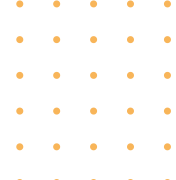

Regarding working hours, breaks, vacations, permits and licenses, the Workers' Statute (fifth section of the second chapter of Title I) applies, with the following peculiarities

1. Overtime is prohibited, except for those necessary to prevent or repair accidents and other extraordinary damages.
2. The disabled worker may be absent from work, provided that he or she notifies it in advance and justifies it, to attend medical-functional rehabilitation treatments and to participate in orientation, training and professional rehabilitation activities, with the right to remuneration, always. that such absences are unpaid, provided that such absences do not exceed ten days in a six-month period. biannual.

CROATIA

Working conditions for disabled workers in Croatia may vary depending on the specific employer, the type of sheltered workshop and the applicable regulations. Employers are encouraged to provide equal opportunities for the employment of people with disabilities and to create a conducive work environment. Below is an overview of typical employment conditions for workers with disabilities, taking into account that these details may be subject to change and may differ from one organization to another:

Working hours/week: Standard weekly working hours for employees in Croatia are usually 40 hours, spread over five working days. However, specific working hours for workers with disabilities can be adjusted based on the nature of the work and the needs of the workers. Some employers may offer part-time opportunities or flexible work schedules.



Paid leave: Croatian national legislation provides for sick leave and annual leave for all employees, including workers with disabilities. Specific policies regarding paid leave may depend on the company and the relevant employment contracts or collective agreements. According to the law, the minimum number of vacation days is 20 working days. However, disabled workers are entitled to a minimum of 25 working days if they work 5 days a week or 30 days if they work 6 days a week as part of their annual leave.

Paid holidays granted: All employees are entitled to paid holidays and weekends in Croatia each year.

ROMANIA

Depending on the qualification and degree of disability, anyone has the right to work. To increase the number of people with disabilities employed, their rights are regulated by Law 448 of 2006.

A) Conditions of employment of people with disabilities

If they suffer from a disability, the employer must provide them with all the necessary conditions so that they can carry out their work. Additionally, like any other co-worker, they have the right to be promoted.


To be placed in a job in accordance with their professional training and work capacity, they must present the certificate of placement in the degree of disability. This act is issued by the evaluation commissions at the county level or at the level of the municipality of Bucharest.

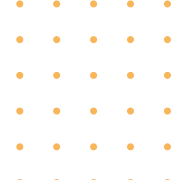

According to Emergency Ordinance 60/2017, any employer with more than 50 employees must hire people with disabilities at a rate of 4% of total employees.

Furthermore, if you are a disabled person, you benefit from a paid trial period of at least 45 days. The employer must provide you with training during this trial period and offer you the same benefits that you had in the individual employment contract.

B) Right to vocational training

Before looking for work, they should know that they have free access to career advice and guidance. Thus, they will be able to integrate more easily into a new job or even carry out a professional reconversion if they wish to change their field of activity.





They can benefit from vocational training programs if they are of the appropriate age for employment (over 16 years old). Even when they have a job but want to retrain, they can benefit from free vocational training.

C) Salary, benefits and vacation period

If you suffer from a disability, you will benefit from at least 3 days of paid leave provided by your company. Thus, apart from the minimum 21 days of paid leave that you must receive by law, you will receive at least 3 more days. Young people and people working in harsh or harmful conditions will also benefit from these extra days.

Regarding salary, the employer is obliged to offer the same salary that he would give to any other employee in a similar position. In addition, you will continue to receive the monthly disability allowance after signing the employment contract. The attendance allowance is also not revoked upon acceptance of employment.

If you have a severe disability, you may benefit from a reduced 8-hour work schedule. To have this work schedule you must present a document proving that an evaluation committee has recommended a shorter work schedule.

EUROPEAN UNION


The smallest difference between countries refers to the working day. In general, the working day ranges between 35 and 40 hours per week, except in Greece (30 hours).

The vast majority of countries reported that there are no specific measures for female workers. There do not appear to be cases of child labor (under 15 years of age) in sheltered employment structures in the countries examined.

Some disparities arise when it comes to night work. It is illegal in almost half of the countries in the sample. In Belgium it is considered exceptional or very rare, while in France it is marginal and requires special permission from labor inspection authorities and safety, health and working conditions committees. In Spain it is prohibited, unless there is a special dispensation, due to the insufficiency of public transport. It is permitted in the Czech Republic and Poland, subject to medical clearance, as well as in India, where a premium is also payable.

The system of paid leave for people with sheltered employment does not differ from the usual system in most of the countries studied.

In Luxembourg, Poland and some Belgian establishments, additional days of sick leave are granted to workers with disabilities. In the Czech Republic, Sweden and the United Kingdom, the number of days granted sick leave is higher than in "regular" employment.



10 ARE SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS APPLICABLE IN SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT DIFFERENT FROM THOSE IN OTHER SECTORS?

SPAIN

In the case of Special Employment Centers in Spain, Social Security contributions may have some specific characteristics compared to other sectors. However, it is important to keep in mind that the regulations may change and that the particularities may depend on various factors, such as regional regulations and the specific circumstances of each case.

Some aspects that could be relevant in relation to social security contributions in the CEE are:

Bonuses and reductions: In some cases, EWCs can benefit from bonuses and reductions in Social Security contributions. These tax incentives aim to encourage the hiring of people with disabilities and collaboration between EWCs and ordinary companies.

Flexibility in contributions: There may be certain flexibilities or adaptations in Social Security contributions to reflect the special conditions of employment in the CEE.

Collaboration with ordinary companies: If an EWC establishes a work enclave in collaboration with an ordinary company, Social Security contributions can be managed jointly or adapted to the needs of that specific collaboration.

Regional regulation: Some issues related to Social Security contributions may be regulated at the regional level, since in Spain there are decentralized powers in labor matters. Therefore, it is important to take into account the specific regulations of the autonomous community in which the CEE operates.

CROATIA

Social security benefits for workers with disabilities are generally subject to the same rules and principles as those in other sectors.

ROMANIA

Unlike an employed worker who does not suffer from a disability, he or she will be exempt from paying payroll tax. Retirement conditions are different from those of people without disabilities. Thus, if they suffer from a serious disability and have completed a third of their contribution period before being hired, they benefit from the reduction of the retirement age by 15 years.

EUROPEAN UNION

In almost half of the European countries studied, social security benefits applicable in sheltered employment are identical to those in the rest of the world (Czech Republic, France (for sheltered workshops), Germany, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain (for sheltered workshops), Sweden and the United Kingdom).

In Greece, although the same social security benefits apply in sheltered employment as in other forms of employment, disabled workers are entitled to a pension earlier.

In several countries the benefits paid in sheltered employment are comparable to those paid in "ordinary" employment, with the exception of unemployment benefits. In the case of disabled workers, it is calculated according to specific rules in Belgium; It is not granted in Denmark, in work assistance centers in France and Spain, or in Switzerland.

In Ireland and Luxembourg, employed workers in protected employment receive a disability pension that entitles them to other social security benefits, linked therefore to their disability and not to their professional activity.

11 SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT MODEL

SPAIN

In Spain, the model that has been developed in the majority of special employment centers is a salaried model, very similar to that developed in ordinary companies, but with specific working conditions established in the agreement. On the part of employers, their vision is much more focused on performance and profit than on the needs of the group.

Probably the special employment centers aimed at hiring people with mental disabilities do present a more therapeutic model adapted to the characteristics of people with disabilities.

CROATIA

Croatia employs a mixed (dual) model for the employment of workers with disabilities, which combines elements of both protection and paid employment. In this model, people with disabilities benefit from a supportive environment designed to fit their specific needs, while receiving a salary for their work. This dual approach aims to achieve a balance between the protection and social inclusion of workers with disabilities.

The mixed model allows for tailored adjustments in the workplace, ensuring that working conditions and tasks are adapted to the abilities of people with disabilities. Although emphasis is placed on providing a protective and supportive environment, workers with disabilities are considered employees and receive wages in accordance with labor laws.

This approach is in line with broader initiatives that promote the social and professional inclusion of people with disabilities. Recognizes the value of work as a means of empowerment and social integration, recognizing the rights of workers with disabilities to fair compensation for their contributions. The blended model reflects Croatia's commitment to fostering inclusive workplaces that enable people with disabilities to participate meaningfully in the labor market, while enjoying the necessary protection and support for their specific needs.

ROMANIA

In Romania, the model that has been developed in the majority of special employment centers is a salaried model, very similar to that developed in ordinary companies, but with specific working conditions established in the agreement. On the part of businessmen, their vision is much more focused on the needs of the group.

The following activities are carried out:

- Recruitment and selection processes according to a series of qualification criteria
- Support for employees provided by a multidisciplinary team of specialists (social workers, trainers/instructors, career guidance advisors, human resources, etc.) experts in resources and job security) to facilitate the work and social integration of people with disabilities.
- Socio-professional evaluation process for young people with disabilities (integrated individualized plan).
- They participate in a career counseling and guidance program to determine their needs and facilitate effective employment in a protected unit.
Employment is based on a legal employment contract under Romanian law.
- Individual or group counseling and career guidance are carried out based on the person's skills, work capacity and available options.
- Vocational training courses and regular support are offered to participants in the form of workshops, for example, in tailoring, hand binding, IT or crafts, painting, decorative candle production and document archiving.
- Provision of professional, social and psychological support based on needs.
- Free labor market advice is available upon request.

EUROPEAN UNION

It has seemed useful to group together the "types of protected employment situation", to better understand both the different models in question and the differences between them in terms of employment relationships and working conditions.

The therapeutic model (protection against employee status)

The therapeutic model is generally the one applied in institutions that employ people with a mental deficiency. Except in Ireland, where the centers are run by charities.

Associations of people with mental disabilities or their parents are usually very active in these institutions.

In Luxembourg, parents' associations are represented on the boards of directors of most private institutions in the sector.

In Ireland and Greece, no public authority has any particular responsibility for sheltered employment and no specific legislation applies to the sector.

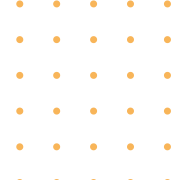

The situation in Luxembourg differs somewhat, since the Ministries of Labor and Education are co-responsible for the sector.

In this therapeutic model, workers are usually considered beneficiaries, apprentices or clients, and not employees (except in a minority of cases in Luxembourg). They therefore do not have a contract with their employers and are not covered by most provisions of the relevant labor codes (with the notable exception of all those relating to health and safety which apply equally to sheltered employment.) Similarly, workers' social security rights do not follow the model of employed workers, but are linked to their disability status and not to the work they do in a protected environment.

Except in Luxembourg, the social security applied in protected employment has little to do with that offered to workers in "ordinary" employment.

Thus, in this model, workers with disabilities do not sign employment contracts or join unions. Most responses state that union membership is possible, although not widespread, largely due to the lack of union interest in this sector. Greece mentioned the election of representatives to discuss social policy issues with management; Reference was also made to elections in several such institutions in Ireland, but only in relation to security issues. Therefore, collective bargaining is very limited and collective agreements non-existent in the protected employment environment of the therapeutic model.

Thus, the income of workers with disabilities largely comes from benefits, subsidies or pensions, and not from salaries, and is therefore not linked to the minimum wage. In Luxembourg they receive the guaranteed minimum wage, while in Ireland their income consists of a fixed pension to which a supplement is added.



In this model, working hours are shorter than those prevailing in other situations: with the exception of Luxembourg, where they can total 40 hours, they are 35 hours in Ireland and 30 hours in Greece.

The intermediate model (the disabled worker as quasi-employee)

In this model, although working conditions cannot be considered solely relative to wage employment, they do not reflect a purely therapeutic function either.

Although generally considered employees, workers may not be covered by all of the provisions governing regular wage employment. An employment contract is considered advisable, but does not always exist in practice (especially in Denmark and Germany). In this model, union membership is always considered permitted, but in practice membership levels are extremely low or even non-existent. Similarly, collective bargaining is very rare (in fact, its legal status has not yet been determined in Germany), and workers with disabilities only rarely participate in decision-making processes and elect their representatives. In all cases there are no collective agreements that can cover the sector.

However, salaries must be higher than a stipulated minimum. They may vary depending on the existing disability pension and its amount (in Denmark, the amount payable must be at least 5% of the minimum wage), or they may be made up of a base salary payable to everyone plus an individualized supplement (Germany).


However, these payments do not constitute wages in the normal sense of the term. In Portugal, they are equivalent to the minimum wage.

Unlike the previous model, social security in this intermediate model is based on that applicable to workers in general, but with certain restrictions: in Switzerland and Denmark unemployment benefit is not paid and, in the latter case, pensions are not paid. Old age pensions are only paid when the beneficiary turns 67 years old.

The working day - between 35 and 42 hours, with some exceptions - does not differ much from that observed in "ordinary" employment.

The intermediate model tends more towards the salaried employment model than towards the therapeutic model. However, unions are practically or totally absent, as are collective agreements and the participation or representation of workers with disabilities.

Working conditions in this sector in Portugal, where sheltered employment has been established much more recently than in other countries in this group (the first legal provisions date back to 1983 and the first establishment was opened in 1988), tend to reflect the model of salaried employment.



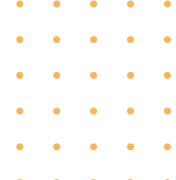

The mixed (dual) model

In this model, two, and sometimes more, types of protected employment structures usually coexist. However, this does not mean that the situations in countries with dual systems are all the same. The distinction between the different types of structures is practically identical in Spain and France (work assistance centers and sheltered workshops), since the first type of structure corresponds to the therapeutic category and the second follows the approach of salaried employment. In Norway, the principle is practically identical, but the practice is fundamentally different in that companies in the labor market are obliged to allocate half of their positions to training and rehabilitation activities for a limited period of two and a half years, and the other half to the traditional form of protected employment; Employment cooperatives (ASB and ASVO for the public sector) and production workshops (PV) offer broader protection, and represent the other facet of the Norwegian protected employment policy.

In Norway, the fixed-term nature of contracts in labor market companies is cited as one of the reasons for the low level of union membership. In lower level structures, which generally employ a higher proportion of workers with a mental disability (26% in cooperatives, 57% in the AMB in Norway and with a comparable distribution in France and Spain), Disabled workers are not considered employees (although in Norway they do sign an actual contract) and unions are virtually absent. As far as legislation is concerned, in higher-level structures the degree of participation of workers with disabilities in their own representation and in decision-making within the establishments in which they work is, broadly speaking, the same as that established for "ordinary" employment. However, in practice, the situation is not always so simple. Although the relevant collective agreements are usually those applicable to the structure's sector of activity, difficulties arise in their application, especially due to the absence of effective union representation and information on rights.

In Norwegian labor market companies (which allow the transition to "ordinary" employment), and in Spain in sheltered workshops, wages paid are calculated on the same basis as in "ordinary" employment, while in France they consist of a part paid by the employer (at least 35% of the SMIC) and a complement paid by the State. In all cases, the minimum wage serves as a reference.

On the other hand, in Spanish work assistance centers and Norwegian cooperatives, income is made up of a basic pension plus an individual premium that may vary.




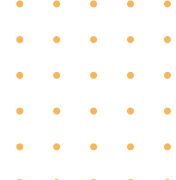

In France, the income of people working in a work assistance center is made up of the partial benefit payable to a disabled adult plus a salary paid directly by the centers themselves (at least 5% of the SMIC) and an income supplement (50% of the SMIC) paid by the labor office of the corresponding provincial authority (département). The level of social protection is also determined by the nature of the structure (except in Norway, where it is equivalent to that applicable in general employment), as it is linked to employee status in higher-level structures and depends on the pension in other structures (the issue of social protection of people with disabilities working in Spanish work assistance centers seems problematic in this regard).

The advantage of this dual system is that it allows a transition between the different types of structures; However, it can also "tie" individuals to the type of establishment furthest from "ordinary" employment (in France, for example, less than 15 percent of workers are in sheltered workshops, compared to more than 85 percent in employment assistance centers).

The salaried employment model (protection and labor legislation)

This model covers a wide variety of situations depending, firstly, on the composition of the sector (in Sweden, a single group; in the United Kingdom, a dominant company that employs more than half of the workers in the sector, together with more limited structures, private or public, at local level; in Belgium, a large number of establishments of limited size, most of them managed by non-profit associations; in Poland, an equally wide range of structures, with great variations of size, from 20 to 3,000 people); and in the proportion of employees with disabilities compared to those without disabilities (in Sweden, 90% of the workers employed by Samhall are PWD; in Poland, companies with workforces with 40% of employees with disabilities - and even a 30% if they are visually impaired - they qualify as protected companies and benefit from the corresponding tax advantages; in Belgium, the workshops also serve "workers gradually returning to employment after an illness" and "unemployed people who are difficult to place"). Although this model includes systems that have evolved very differently over time (in Poland in particular, where growth was very marked and the number of sheltered employment structures more than tripled between 1991 and 1996), its unity and its strength derives from its full integration into the world of work.






However, there are no significant differences between this salaried employment model and previous models with regard to the type of work performed by people with disabilities or the sector of activity. But it differs in that it is considered that the person with a disability has the right to work and also (as far as possible) to enjoy the same rights and fulfill the same obligations as any worker without disabilities. Responsibility for workshops under this salaried employment model generally falls on the Ministry of Labor, and people with disabilities who work in them have the status of employees. Therefore, for most of the issues considered here, these workshops operate much like "ordinary" employment structures: employees sign a contract identical to that of any other employee; union membership levels, although not high, are still significant; Employees elect their representatives and there is some collective bargaining. The sector is covered by collective agreements and deviates very little from the provisions of labor codes.

The main reservations about this model concern the people employed (in particular, a lower percentage of people with a mental deficiency than in other situations; and, more specifically, whether it can remain dynamic over time. In this regard, There is a substantial difference between the Belgian and Swedish cases. Belgium appears to reflect a tendency (mentioned by several respondents) to retain workers with greater production capacity, while workers with more severe disabilities are accepted less frequently, the rate being estimated. return to employment at less than 1%. On the other hand, with an integration rate of between 3 and 6 percent per year and a determined policy to guarantee a wide range of perspectives for its employees, the Swedish company Samhall exemplifies one facet. different from this approach to paid employment. Its approach demonstrates that considering disabled workers in the sheltered environment as full employees does not necessarily lead to a rigid system with few promotion prospects for affected people.

India could be included in this model as its form of sheltered employment differs little from regular employment, although there are large differences between small unregistered businesses and large establishments in its sheltered employment sector.

Finally, a "lower wage employment model" can be considered to apply in this case, given that, despite the virtual absence of employment protection, people with disabilities employed in this sector appear to enjoy good working conditions. very similar to those of "ordinary" employment. Furthermore, it seems likely that the same link between unspecified working conditions for workers with disabilities and a low level of social protection could occur in other countries.



12 CHALLENGES OF ACCESS TO THE ORDINARY MARKET

SPAIN

Hiring people with disabilities in conventional companies can pose specific challenges. Below we highlight some of the main difficulties that companies face in this context:

Lack of knowledge and awareness:

Companies are often faced with a lack of knowledge of the capabilities of people with disabilities and the reasonable adjustments that may be necessary in the work environment. Awareness and education are essential to overcome this obstacle.

Prejudice and stigmatization:

There are stereotypes and prejudices that can affect the perception of people with disabilities in the workplace. Companies may encounter resistance due to the stigma associated with disability.

Lack of physical and technological accessibility:

The physical and technological infrastructure of some companies may not be accessible to people with disabilities. Lack of accessibility can be a major barrier to full participation in the work environment.

Lack of knowledge of economic benefits:

Some companies may not be aware of the economic and fiscal benefits associated with hiring people with disabilities, such as Social Security bonuses and tax deductions.

Lack of knowledge of possible adaptations:

Ignorance of the work and technological accommodations available to support employees with disabilities can be a barrier. Companies may be unaware of simple and effective solutions that can be applied.



Perceived costs:

Some companies may fear that adapting the workplace to people with disabilities will involve significant costs. However, in many cases, adaptations can be affordable and have long-term benefits.

Non-inclusive selection processes:

Recruitment processes may not be inclusive, making it difficult for people with disabilities to access employment opportunities. Hiring processes may need to be reviewed and adjusted.


Lack of knowledge of support programs:

Companies may not be informed about the programs and support services offered by government agencies or non-governmental organizations that facilitate the labor integration of people with disabilities.

Overcoming these difficulties requires a comprehensive approach that includes awareness-raising programmes, diversity and inclusion policies, reasonable adjustments in the workplace and collaboration with specialized bodies. Including people with disabilities in the workplace not only benefits individuals, but also contributes to the creation of more diverse and productive teams.

CROATIA

The hiring of people with disabilities in conventional companies poses difficulties derived from the lack of knowledge and awareness about their abilities and the necessary adaptations. Prejudice and stigmatization, along with physical and technological accessibility issues, make inclusion even more difficult. Some companies are unaware of the financial benefits, tax advantages and simple accommodations available. Concern about perceived costs, non-inclusive selection processes, and lack of awareness of support programs are additional barriers. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach, including awareness programs, diversity policies, reasonable accommodations in the workplace and collaboration with specialized institutions. The inclusion of people with disabilities not only benefits individuals, but also contributes to the creation of more diverse and productive teams.



ROMANIA

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12.1 Obstacle that could prevent people or companies from participating in protected employment initiatives?

SPAIN

There are a series of obstacles that can hinder the participation of individuals and companies in protected employment initiatives, such as Special Employment Centers. Some of these obstacles are:

Lack of knowledge and awareness:

Lack of knowledge of sheltered employment initiatives and low awareness of the benefits they bring to both people with disabilities and businesses can be an impediment

Stigmatization and prejudices:

Persistent stigmatization and prejudice towards people with disabilities can be an obstacle to participation in sheltered employment programs.



Lack of knowledge of economic benefits:

Individuals and businesses may not be informed of the economic and tax benefits associated with participating in sheltered employment initiatives, such as Social Security bonuses.

Lack of accessibility:

The lack of physical and technological accessibility in the work environment can make it difficult for people with disabilities to participate.

Perceived costs:

Companies may perceive that making reasonable accommodations and participating in sheltered employment programs entail high costs, which may be a barrier.

Uncertainty about necessary adaptations:

Uncertainty about the adaptations necessary to support employees with disabilities can cause reluctance on the part of companies.

Lack of training and psychological support:

The lack of training and advice programs for companies on how to integrate people with disabilities can be an obstacle.

Non-inclusive hiring processes:


Hiring processes that are not inclusive and do not take into account the needs of people with disabilities can limit participation.

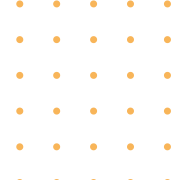

Lack of knowledge of existing resources:

Ignorance of available resources, such as employment agencies, support programs and training services, can make participation difficult.

Resistance to organizational change:

Resistance to change within companies and an unwillingness to change working practices can be significant obstacles.





Overcoming these barriers requires a holistic approach that includes raising awareness, training, promoting inclusion and access to resources and support services. Collaboration between companies, public bodies and civil society organizations can play a key role in removing these barriers.

CROATIA

Like the aforementioned challenges, participation in sheltered employment models faces various barriers. Among them, the lack of awareness and sensitization about these programs, persistent stigmatization and prejudice towards people with disabilities. Additionally, lack of knowledge about economic benefits, accessibility issues, perceived costs, uncertainty about necessary accommodations, and non-inclusive hiring processes act as barriers. The absence of training and advice for companies, lack of knowledge of existing resources and resistance to organizational change also contribute to the challenges.


According to a survey conducted in December 2023 by Croatia's largest employment portal, Moj posao, the majority of surveyed companies (69%) do not employ people with disabilities. Among companies that do hire people with disabilities, 46% say the disability is visible, 23% have employees with visible and invisible disabilities, while 31% of companies surveyed employ people with disabilities that are not visible. .

It is worrying that companies do not have established processes for hiring people with disabilities. Almost half of companies (42%) do not have measures related to the implementation of diversity policies in the workplace.

Only 16% of companies have developed a system in which people with disabilities have a place as employees, consumers of the company's goods and services, and business partners.

This study reveals a significant discrepancy between legislative frameworks and implementation practices in Croatia. On the one hand, there is a certain regulatory framework that guarantees the inclusion and integration of people with disabilities in the labor market. However, on the other hand, there continues to be notable resistance and disinterest among businesspeople when it comes to addressing this issue.

Therefore, to overcome these barriers, a comprehensive approach that includes raising awareness, training, promoting inclusion and collaboration between companies, government agencies and civil society organizations is essential.



ROMANIA

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Lack of knowledge of economic benefits:

Individuals and businesses may not be informed of the economic and tax benefits associated with participating in sheltered employment initiatives, such as Social Security bonuses.

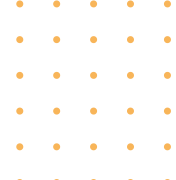

Lack of accessibility:

The lack of physical and technological accessibility in the work environment can make it difficult for people with disabilities to participate.


EUROPEAN UNION

It is clear that there is a difference in the results that can be expected for people with disabilities from different employment models. On a large scale, there has been a shift in investment towards the inclusive labor market and away from more protected options. However, the transition remains modest and, in many countries, sheltered workshops remain the predominant route for people with disabilities to access paid employment. For some people with disabilities, particularly those with ASD, intellectual disability or mental illness, the shift to individually selected jobs, supported by qualified job coaches, has increased their options for paid employment and employment outcomes.

Inclusive companies have generally created jobs that offer market-valued products and services, with longer-term contracts and salaries within the usual legal limits, with training and development. However, many people continue to receive services in sheltered centers, occupational centers and other collective employment models with low or no wages and few prospects for transition to other forms of employment. The transition between group models and individual models of labor insertion is also scarce. People with less significant disabilities are cared for within the generalized model of rehabilitation and vocational training, in which outcomes remain relatively poor.



Vocational rehabilitation must be part of the response to people who become ill for a long time or suffer from a disability and need help to return to work or change careers. However, the effective transition to open employment for the full range of people with a disability will require investment in employment methods supported by job coaches and IPS. Adequate support from open labor market employers will also benefit from direct employment services such as Supported Employment and IPS. This transition will also require changes to legislation, definitions of disability and capacity, and social benefit rules in some States to accommodate a shift towards open market employment. Sheltered work outcomes focused on existing employment may need to be improved, while establishing pathways to open employment, where prospects for immediate transition to open employment are poor. Rights-based frameworks are already well advanced across the EU, providing the opportunity to adopt policies that favor the adaptation of employers to the needs of people with disabilities, with financial support from the State, rather than granting wage subsidies that reinforce the idea that people with disabilities have low work productivity. Any use of additional employer-based subsidies will have to be creative and may be better geared towards hiring people with very significant disabilities who wish to access employment and include subsidies for additional mentoring, supervision and partial participation.





13 BENEFITS THAT SUPPORTING THE SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT MODEL BRINGS TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES, BOTH AT THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LEVEL

SPAIN

Support for protected employment, such as that offered by Special Employment Centers, can generate a series of both social and economic benefits in local communities. Below are some of the most notable ones:

Social benefits:

Social inclusion:

The creation of protected employment promotes social inclusion by offering job opportunities to people with disabilities, integrating them into work and community life.

Stigma reduction:

By encouraging the active participation of people with disabilities in the labor market, it contributes to reducing stigmatization and changing negative perceptions towards this population group.

Strengthen social cohesion:

Diversity in the work environment, which includes people with disabilities, contributes to strengthening social cohesion and the development of more inclusive communities.


Development of social skills:

Employees of the Special Employment Centers have the opportunity to develop social skills, strengthening their interpersonal relationships and their participation in the community.

Economic benefits:

Local job creation:

Sheltered employment creates jobs locally, contributing to the economic development of the community by providing sources of income to local residents.



Local economic stimulus:

The additional income generated by sheltered employment translates into an increase in the purchasing power of workers, which stimulates the local economy through the consumption of goods and services.

Reducing dependency on social benefits:

By providing sheltered employment, the dependency of people with disabilities on social benefits is reduced, which can result in a reduction in the financial burden of the social security system.

Contribution to productivity:

The workers of the Special Employment Centers contribute to economic productivity by performing functions in various sectors and branches of industry.

Tax incentives and advantages for companies:

Companies participating in sheltered employment programs can benefit from tax incentives and subsidies, which can incentivize their participation and collaboration with EWCs.

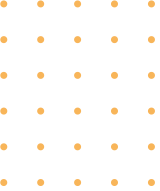
Development of job skills:

Participation in sheltered employment provides workers with the opportunity to develop and improve their job skills, which can result in a more qualified workforce at the local level.

In summary, supporting sheltered employment not only benefits people with disabilities and businesses, but also has a positive impact on the social and economic fabric of local communities, contributing to building more inclusive and sustainable societies.

CROATIA

Supporting protected employment for workers with disabilities brings important social and economic benefits to local communities. From a social point of view, it promotes inclusion by offering employment opportunities to people with disabilities, reducing stigmatization, improving social cohesion and promoting the development of social skills. Economically, it creates local jobs, stimulates the economy by increasing purchasing power, reduces dependency on social benefits, contributes to productivity and offers tax incentives to participating companies. In addition, participation in sheltered employment programs facilitates the development of job skills, which translates into a more qualified local workforce. In essence, supporting sheltered employment not only has a positive impact on people with disabilities and businesses, but also improves the overall social and economic fabric of communities, promoting inclusion and sustainability.



ROMANIA

Sheltered employment centers do create and improve social and economic sustainability because they contribute more financially to the government than they receive. They are not very profitable, but they survive in the market, hiring diverse workers and giving them an economic and social role. In response to the second research question, we can affirm that sheltered employment centers do create social value through their operation and activity.

By creating work for disadvantaged people, instead of being at home and not having a role in society, workers with a disability can be in the workplace, feeling valuable. Furthermore, the fact that these people are active could in turn reduce the cost of the health service, since they are more emotionally committed and could even be an example of effort and courage for all workers. Their families may also feel that they are less dependent.

14 HOW ARE SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT MODELS INTEGRATED WITH ORDINARY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES?

SPAIN

Integrating sheltered employment models with regular employment opportunities is essential to move towards a more inclusive labor market and offer people with disabilities diverse employment options. Here are some strategies and approaches to facilitate this integration:

Labor enclaves:

Labor enclaves are a form of integration that involves collaboration between Special Employment Centers and ordinary companies. CEE workers with disabilities carry out their tasks at the collaborating company's facilities, working side by side with ordinary employees.

Transition programs:

Transition programs can be implemented to prepare workers with disabilities who have been employed in an EWC for their integration into regular employment. This may include specific training and support to adapt to the demands of ordinary employment.

Collaboration with employment agencies:

Collaboration with employment agencies specialized in the inclusion of people with disabilities can facilitate the transition to regular employment. These agencies can help identify employment opportunities and provide ongoing support.

Training and development programs:

It can be crucial to provide training and development programs that equip workers with disabilities with the skills needed for mainstream jobs. This may include technical training, interpersonal skills, and job-specific skills.

Job adaptation:

It is essential to encourage the adaptation of jobs in normal companies to accommodate workers with disabilities. This may include adjustments to the work environment, work tools, and operating procedures.

Incentives for companies:

Offering tax incentives and subsidies to companies that hire people with disabilities, either directly or through sheltered employment programs, can encourage participation by mainstream companies.



Promoting diversity and inclusion:

Fostering an organizational culture that values and promotes diversity and inclusion can facilitate the integration of workers with disabilities into mainstream companies. To do this, it is necessary to sensitize and adequately train employees.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies:

Companies can incorporate Corporate Social Responsibility policies that contemplate the inclusion of people with disabilities in their work practices.

Development of support networks:


Facilitating the development of support networks, both within the company and through associations and organizations, can be valuable to the success of the transition to regular employment.

The effective integration of protected employment models with ordinary employment opportunities requires a collaborative approach and the active participation of companies, workers, Special Employment Centers, employment agencies and other relevant labor market agents. Promoting inclusive work environments benefits both companies and society in general.

CROATIA

Integrating sheltered employment models with regular employment opportunities is crucial to creating an inclusive labor market for people with disabilities. Strategies for integration include: transition programs that prepare workers for regular employment, collaboration with non-profit organizations focused on disability, training programs, adaptation of the job in the regular company, incentives for hiring of people with disabilities, promoting diversity and inclusion in the organizational culture, applying the Law on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities, and developing support networks. Successful integration requires collaboration between companies, workers, the Croatian Employment Service and other entities.

Stakeholders contribute to creating inclusive work environments that benefit businesses and society at large.





ROMANIA


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15 HOW CAN EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES FROM THE EU ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT IN COUNTRIES WITHOUT A LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND OF THIS SPECIFIC MODEL?

SPAIN

Examples of good practice from the European Union (EU) can play an important role in encouraging the development of sheltered employment in countries without a legislative history in that model. Here are some ways in which EU good practices can have a positive impact:

Exchange of knowledge and experiences:

Facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience between EU countries and those without a legislative history on protected employment can be valuable. Countries can learn from successful practices and avoid known pitfalls.

Networks and associations:

Encouraging the creation of networks and partnerships between organisations, governments and businesses can facilitate the dissemination of good practices and collaboration in the application of sheltered employment models.

Technical assistance and training:

Providing technical assistance and training to policy makers, employers and other stakeholders in countries without a legislative history can help develop a solid understanding of the benefits and application of sheltered employment.

Adaptation to local contexts:

EU good practices can serve as an inspiring model, but it is essential to adapt them to local contexts and the specific realities of each country. This involves taking into account cultural, economic and legislative factors.

Financial incentives and subsidies:

Examples of good practice may include strategies to implement financial incentives and subsidies that encourage companies to participate in sheltered employment models.

Development of public policies:

The successful experiences of the EU can serve as an example for the development of public policies that support protected employment. This includes the development of laws and regulations that promote the labor inclusion of people with disabilities.



Awareness campaigns:

Good practice may include effective awareness-raising campaign strategies that help change public perceptions of disability and encourage acceptance of sheltered employment models.

Evaluation of results and continuous improvement:

Sharing examples of results evaluation and continuous improvement processes in sheltered employment models can provide guidance on how to measure impact and adapt practices to obtain better results.

Active participation of civil society:

The active participation of civil society, including organizations of people with disabilities, can strengthen the application of protected employment and ensure that the needs and aspirations of this group are adequately addressed.


Diplomacy and international cooperation:

International agencies, governments and non-governmental organizations can foster diplomacy and international cooperation to share good practices in the area of sheltered employment.

By sharing lessons learned and successful strategies, the EU and other countries can collaborate to advance the development of sheltered employment and promote labor inclusion around the world. Cooperation and mutual learning are essential to overcome challenges and move towards more inclusive societies.

CROATIA

EU good practice examples play a vital role in promoting the development of sheltered employment in countries like Croatia, with no legislative history in this model. The main ways in which EU practices have a positive influence are: facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience, encouraging networking and partnerships, providing technical assistance and training, adapting practices to local contexts, displaying financial incentives and subsidies, offer examples for the development of public policies, launch effective awareness campaigns, share results evaluation processes, actively involve civil society and promote international cooperation. Collaborative efforts aim to advance sheltered employment, promote global workforce inclusion, and contribute to more inclusive societies through shared experiences and mutual learning.



ROMANIA

Examples of good practice from the European Union (EU) can play an important role in encouraging the development of sheltered employment in countries without a legislative history in that model.

For ex. Protected employment in authorized protected units "Util Deco"

The rationale behind this practice is that sheltered employment in a licensed unit can serve as a transition period into the free labor market for young people with disabilities. The participants work in the protected "Util Deco" units of the Alaturi de Voi de Iasi Foundation, a social enterprise for labor integration. They receive regular training and support to improve their skills and retain their jobs, as well as to produce competitive, quality products and services that are sold on the free market.

The objective of the practice is to offer protected employment to young people with disabilities.

"Util Deco" allocates the income obtained from the provision of services and the sale of goods produced for social purposes and the development of workshops. The Foundation provides free advisory, professional guidance, qualification and mediation services to PWDs.

"Util Deco" has prepared several manuals. They set out the operating rules, including the rights and obligations of employees in accordance with current legislation and regulations.

There is also a specific manual on the provision of psychological support and another on social assistance.

Several web pages contain information related to the consultation and have been updated within it:

- The website www.utildeco.ro describes the services and goods produced by PCD (in Romanian).
- The website www.jobdirect.eu was created in May 2016 as a Workplace Placement and Assistance Agency, offering evaluation, testing, advice, professional skills development, mediation and placement services in the labor market, as well as Job coaching for people with disabilities or for groups at risk.
- The website www.wise.travel. Wise.travel was created in August 2016, initially under the name UtilDeco Travel. In June 2018, the agency was reauthorized as a tour operator under the WISE brand. travel, offering travel services and event planning, while 50% of its profits are donated to NGOs and social enterprises.
- A video about the consultation can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsLQC55V_JE.

16 HOW CAN SOCIAL AWARENESS ABOUT SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT BE INCREASE?

SPAIN

Social awareness about protected employment involves educating and raising awareness in society about the importance of offering employment opportunities to people with disabilities. Here are some strategies that can help you achieve this goal:

Awareness campaigns:

Organize awareness campaigns at local, regional and national levels to highlight the benefits of sheltered employment. These campaigns may include media advertisements, community events, and social media presence.

Success stories:

Sharing success stories of people with disabilities who have thrived in sheltered employment environments can have a positive impact. These stories can humanize the experience and show the potential and capabilities of workers with disabilities.

Inclusive events and job fairs:

Organize inclusive events and job fairs where companies that practice sheltered employment can present their initiatives and employment opportunities. These events can attract businessmen, employees and the general public.

Collaboration with the media:

Collaborate with the media to obtain media coverage that highlights sheltered employment and its benefits. This may include interviews, reports and special programs.

Training and workshops:

Provide training and workshops to employers, workers and the general public on the importance of labor inclusion and the characteristics of protected employment.

Participation of people with disabilities:

Actively involve people with disabilities in awareness-raising initiatives. Their experiences and authentic voices can be powerful drivers of change.

Partnerships with organizations and activists:

Collaborate with organizations and activists that defend the rights of people with disabilities to strengthen awareness initiatives and reach a broader audience.

Educational programs in schools:

Introduce educational programs in schools that teach students about inclusion and protected employment. Fostering understanding from an early age can help change attitudes over time.

Presence on social networks:

Use social media to share information, stories and resources related to sheltered employment. Digital platforms are powerful tools to reach diverse audiences.

Incentives and recognition:

Establish incentive and recognition programs for companies that actively adopt and promote sheltered employment. This can motivate more companies to participate and be recognized for their efforts.

Attract opinion leaders:

Involve opinion leaders, celebrities and public figures who can amplify the message and help raise social awareness.

Open days:

Organize open days at the Special Employment Centers so that the community can learn first-hand about the work and contributions of employees with disabilities.

By applying these strategies comprehensively, a significant increase in social awareness about protected employment can be achieved, thus promoting greater acceptance and participation in the labor inclusion of people with disabilities.

CROATIA

Raising awareness in society about protected employment involves applying various strategies to educate and raise awareness in society about the importance of offering employment opportunities to people with disabilities. Key strategies include: organizing awareness campaigns, sharing success stories, organizing inclusive events and job fairs, engaging with the media, offering training and workshops, actively involving people with disabilities, partnering with organizations and activists, introducing educational programs in schools, use social media platforms, establish incentives and recognition programs for companies and involve opinion leaders. The comprehensive application of these strategies aims to significantly increase awareness, promoting greater acceptance and participation in the labor inclusion of people with disabilities.

ROMANIA

Social awareness about protected employment involves educating and raising awareness in society about the importance of offering employment opportunities to people with disabilities.

Success stories:

Sharing success stories of people with disabilities who have thrived in sheltered employment environments can have a positive impact. These stories can humanize the experience and show the potential and capabilities of workers with disabilities.

For ex. Protected employment in authorized protected units "Util Deco

The rationale behind this practice is that sheltered employment in a licensed unit can serve as a transition period into the free labor market for young people with disabilities. The participants work in the protected "Util Deco" units of the Alaturi de Voi de Iasi Foundation, a social enterprise for labor integration. They receive regular training and support to improve their skills and retain their jobs, as well as to produce competitive, quality products and services that are sold on the free market.

The objective of the practice is to offer protected employment to young people with disabilities.

Util Deco" allocates the income obtained from the provision of services and the sale of goods produced for social purposes and the development of the workshops.

The Foundation offers free counseling, career guidance, qualification and mediation services to PWDs.

Util Deco" has developed several manuals. They set out the operating rules, including the rights and obligations of workers under the legislation and the organization's policy. There is also a specific manual on the provision of psychological support and other on social assistance.

17 CONCLUSION

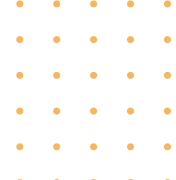

This survey repeatedly revealed a surprising diversity of situations. Depending on the approach adopted, there were every imaginable variation between two extremes: on the one hand, the conception of the disabled worker as a mainly "sick" person who needs support and who, in the context of this support, participates in some professional activity, and on the other, the definition of the protected environment as an environment that does not differ from the "ordinary" work environment with regard to the rights and obligations of workers.

The level of development of a country has little influence on the way in which working conditions in the protected environment are determined. Although more prosperous countries are expected to subsidize sheltered employment to a greater extent, the mode of financing is by no means the only criterion for judging the prospects and possibilities offered to workers with disabilities in the sheltered environment.

Ultimately, it is about whether and how the "protection and support" that are such important features of this sector affect employment relationships and working conditions. Therefore, with regard to working conditions, it could be said that the support required by the particular situation in which a person finds themselves, whatever their disability, should not limit the possibilities they have to participate fully in life. professional.

It must be recognized that, in many countries, finding employment in a protected structure is not easy and can involve lengthy procedures. In times of employment crisis, with high unemployment, some people with disabilities who otherwise could have obtained employment on the open market turn to sheltered employment. The degree to which "ordinary" employment relationships and working conditions apply appears even more important in these cases, and is especially relevant in enabling the transition from "ordinary" employment to the protected sector or vice versa.

It is also evident that the nature and quality of employment relationships and working conditions in sheltered employment structures are not directly related to the activities carried out in these establishments. In fact, in countries where the types of activity are identical or very similar, the situation of workers' rights is very divergent. Even within the same country, very similar types of manufacturing activity can take place both in the "therapeutic" structures and in those of the wage employment model, with the consequence that labor relations and working conditions are very different.



Furthermore, although a distinction is often made by the nature of the disability in countries where several different types of sheltered employment structures coexist, it is also possible for people with comparable disabilities to be channeled into structures that operate under very different systems, each one with its own style of labor relations and working conditions (even if they are only a few kilometers apart geographically). Although it is not realistic to consider that all people with disabilities should be able to take advantage of all the possibilities offered by an advanced system of law and labor relations, this is true for the population as a whole and, therefore, cannot serve to justify any restrictions. in this regard.

Restrictions on the full application of labor legislation in protected employment have their origin in the two basic definitions of the sector. On the one hand, from a strictly economic point of view, the sheltered employment sector, which has often emerged as a result of initiatives taken by voluntary associations, appears in some countries to be unable to meet the requirements of labor law, which which endangers the very survival of these establishments.


On the other hand, the therapeutic objective of protected employment is opposed to compliance with legal and social requirements regarding work organization.

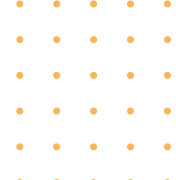

Although the absence or low level of public funding in some countries places sheltered employment in a very precarious position, the support function tends to predominate in these establishments, which usually means therapeutic care and assistance.

There is a clear correlation between the definition of sheltered employment structures as places of treatment and a lower respect for labor law, particularly with regard to issues of participation. To a certain extent, in these cases disability is considered a form of incapacity that, far from being remedied by an environment supposedly intended for it, in fact fosters the structure itself.

Consequently, it can be said that, even today, the therapeutic function continues to be widely perceived as an obstacle to the development of labor relations based on rights and obligations.

Although this is only feasible for a minority of people employed in the sheltered environment, it appears that more progress is being made towards achieving this mobility through a more open (less discriminatory) approach to the jobs themselves. work (at a technical level) than in relation to labor rights. Thus, the protected environment seems to be in a better position to assume its function of integration into the "ordinary work environment" when the working conditions it offers (in terms of statute, contract, collective bargaining, worker representation, etc.) , approximate or are identical to those that prevail in that "ordinary" work environment.





The result is that, as more cases of successful transition to employment occur, employment relationships and working conditions in sheltered employment also become normalized.

Although it is clear that some workers with disabilities will never be able to work in an "ordinary" environment, simply viewing sheltered employment as open to the outside world (and therefore as a temporary place of employment for some) creates more favorable conditions for the community of workers with disabilities as a whole.

Nowadays, although encouraging results have been obtained that seem to confirm that, in the majority of cases, a disability is not an insurmountable obstacle to integration into regular employment (both in terms of performing a job as well as personal and collective fulfillment), it remains essential to protect workers and their rights to achieve autonomy. Although PWDs, and particularly those in sheltered employment, have certain inherent characteristics, their situation must be considered as part of a broader question, namely, whether work is experienced as an imposition and a source of alienation, or can be a means of liberation and personal fulfillment.

4. RESULTS OF THE SATISFACTION SURVEY CONDUCTED ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CURRENTLY WORKING IN SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT.

In this section, we present the testimonies of people with disabilities who currently work in protected employment in the three countries participating in our project: Spain, Romania and Croatia. Through these stories, we seek to offer an authentic and human vision of the experiences, challenges and achievements that these people face in their work environments.

To do this, we carried out a satisfaction survey using Google Forms aimed at employees of protected employment entities in the three partner countries. The results of this survey provide valuable data on the perception and satisfaction of workers with respect to their employment, working conditions, the support received and their integration into the work environment.

It is important to note that surveys may present certain biases due to the difficulty of obtaining a representative number of responses and the specific nature of the group with which each partner works. Differences in the types of disabilities and in the characteristics of sheltered employment institutions in each country may also influence the results. However, the graphs and data obtained will be attached at the end of this report to offer a more complete and detailed view of the current situation of protected employment in Europe.

Through the combination of personal testimonies and survey data, this section seeks to highlight both the positive aspects and challenges faced by people with disabilities in sheltered employment, providing a solid basis for analysis and proposal for improvements in this key sector for social and labor inclusion.

Some examples of these testimonials are:

Among the positive aspects of working in a special employment center, the most common responses include

"All of them, but mainly the treatment received and the involvement with the workers"

"Integration of disabled people into the world of work"

"Man, they give you a job... that, for example, it was very difficult for me to find in another normal company and you feel fulfilled and inserted"

"Qualification/retraining courses to facilitate integration into the labor market"

Among the aspects that should change in relation to working in a special employment center, the most common points include:

"Greater investment in staff training and development"

"Really adapt the workplace depending on the disease to be able to do the work"

"Access to more qualified jobs"

"Less temporality in the adaptation of these people to the position so that they can perform it effectively and at the same time taking into account the well-being of the worker"

The most common answers to the question "If you were responsible for a special employment center, what would you take into account when hiring and working with people with disabilities?" were the following:

"Your training, your experience and your disability, to know if you can do the job in a way that does not harm you"

"That the person to be hired fits well with the rest of the team and does not create conflicts between workers"

"That the position adapts to the needs of each person"

"I would look at the desire to work and the determination to learn, whether they have experience or not, it would not matter to me, since, if we do not give them an opportunity, they will never acquire the experience that is required in many places"

Finally, some of the aspects that were highlighted by the respondents and that were not addressed in the survey are the following:

"There are workers who take advantage of their disability to work less than their colleagues. Therefore, it harms the company and the workers themselves"

"I would highlight the help when going to medical check-ups, adapting to our needs, thank you very much."

"I thank the special employment center to which I belong for the trust placed in me, because they believed in my abilities when I myself was not capable of doing so. Today, after more than three years, they continue to do so and I have regained trust in myself."

My experience has been super positive. The work I have done thanks to this special center has been very motivating for me



CONCLUSION

Taking into account the main objective of the project, that is, "to prepare a report that highlights the needs and proposals for the creation of a European quality framework for protected employment in Europe." This activity provided us with direct information from the main protagonists of this project, who are people with disabilities of working age, employed in different forms of sheltered employment facilities. By carrying out these surveys and obtaining results, we have learned how people with disabilities in "sheltered" employment feel in the countries that form the consortium of this project, revealing that the majority of respondents with disabilities have positive attitudes towards special employment centers, feel gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to be included in the labor market and society, and find fulfillment as workers. The negative aspects of social employment centers detected by the majority include lower income, lack of necessary adaptations, limited access to more qualified jobs, as well as the poor balance between the needs of a worker with a disability and the fulfilled work arrangements and adjustments. reasonable.

Positive attitudes towards sheltered employment models are reflected in the majority of responses in three countries about the usefulness of work experience from a special employment center and the possibility of changing or upgrading jobs. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting the majority of responses that confirm the application of support, equal treatment and reasonable adjustments in special employment centers.

Exchange of experiences and good practices between partner countries will help the associated consortium to develop tools to measure the effectiveness of different protected employment models, while raising awareness and promoting the improvement of employment conditions for people with disabilities.

The associated consortium hopes to establish a reference framework at European level on the current situation of people with disabilities who carry out their professional activity within the protected employment model and these results of the satisfaction survey represent a concrete step in this process.



5. PROPOSAL FOR THE NEW SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT MODEL.

NEW PARADIGM OF SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT IN EUROPE

The promotion of protected employment models through the social economy in Europe is a growing trend that seeks to address the challenges of unemployment and job insecurity. The social economy encompasses a variety of companies and organizations, such as cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations, that operate with principles of solidarity, democratic participation and reinvestment of profits in the community.

This approach seeks to create quality employment, promote social inclusion and contribute to sustainable economic development. Some key initiatives include programs to support worker cooperatives, tax incentives for social enterprises, and public procurement policies that prioritize social economy organizations.

The European Union has been actively supporting this approach through structural funds and specific programs, such as the European Social Fund and the Program for Employment and Social Innovation. In addition, strategies are being developed at the national and regional level to promote the social economy and create an environment conducive to its growth.

These efforts are aimed at generating stable employment, promoting the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labor market and strengthening the economic resilience of local communities. Ultimately, the goal is to build a fairer and more equitable Europe, where everyone has access to decent and sustainable employment opportunities.

The social economy contributes, in addition to improving gender equality, to building bridges for the integration of people with disabilities into the open labor market and providing essential services that help them lead an independent life. Social entrepreneurship and the social economy can be especially suggestive to people with disabilities. Raising awareness of these alternative business models could increase the attractiveness of entrepreneurship in general and contribute to integration into the labor market. In recent years, entrepreneurship education has become more prevalent in education systems, but social economy business models, including cooperatives, are still far from being a standard component of all entrepreneurship curricula. business and business administration courses...

The social economy and inclusion businesses are emerging as key players in economic and social development in Europe. These entities play a vital role in promoting social cohesion, labor inclusion and economic sustainability. This report examines the concept of social economy, the role of inclusion companies and their impact as a new paradigm of protected employment on the European continent.

5.1 SOCIAL ECONOMY IN EUROPE

5.1.1 Definition and Concept

The social economy refers to a set of private organizations, such as cooperatives, associations, foundations and social companies, which are characterized by their commitment to social, economic and environmental objectives. These principles include the primacy of people over capital, democratic and participatory management, and the reinvestment of the majority of its profits in improving the services offered to its members or in the collective interest.

5.1.2 Types of Organizations in the Social Economy

Social economy organizations are divided into several categories, each with its own characteristics and objectives:

- **Cooperatives:** Companies owned by their members that seek to satisfy their common needs and aspirations.
- **Associations:** Non-profit entities that operate in various fields, from culture to social assistance.
- **Foundations:** Organizations that manage funds dedicated to supporting causes of general interest.
- **Social Companies:** Businesses that combine commercial activity with an explicit social purpose, such as the labor integration of people in vulnerable situations.

5.1.3 Economic and Social Impact

The social economy represents a significant part of employment and GDP in Europe. In the European Union, more than 13.6 million people work in social economy entities, which is equivalent to 6.3% of the European active population. Furthermore, these organizations contribute to social innovation and the solution of social and economic problems that traditional models fail to address effectively.

5.2 INCLUSION AND SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT COMPANIES

5.2.1 Definition and Objectives of Inclusion Companies

Inclusion companies are entities of the social economy whose main objective is the labor integration of people at risk of social exclusion. These companies offer employment, training and support to individuals with difficulties accessing the conventional labor market, such as people with disabilities, long-term unemployed, young people in vulnerable situations, and migrants.

5.2.2 Characteristics of Protected Employment

Protected employment in inclusion companies is distinguished by:

- Workplace Adaptation: Creation of work environments that adjust to the capabilities of employees.
- Personalized Support: Provision of ongoing support and training to develop work and social skills.
- Transition to Ordinary Employment: In some cases, these companies act as a bridge to employment in the conventional labor market.

5.2.3 Inclusion Business Models in Europe

Spain: Integration Companies and Special Employment Centers

The objective of Integration Companies (EI) is the social and labor integration of people in situations of social exclusion through the development of an economic activity. They hire vulnerable people and provide them with training and work experience for a limited period of time to facilitate their transition to regular employment.

And the Special Employment Centers (SEC) are companies whose staff is made up of at least 70% of people with disabilities.

They offer paid employment, along with personal and social adjustment services, and training for workers with disabilities.



Romania: Social enterprises and social cooperatives

The first are companies that operate with the main objective of generating a social impact, rather than distributing profits among shareholders. And they reinvest most of their profits in the company's social mission, which can include the job placement of people at risk of exclusion.

And Social Cooperatives that integrate disadvantaged people as partners and employees, promoting democratic participation and improving their living conditions.

They operate under cooperative principles, focusing on labor inclusion and the training of their members.

Croatia: Social enterprises and cooperatives

In Croatia, the inclusion business model is based on social enterprises and social cooperatives similar to Romania, with an additional focus on sustainability projects

They are companies whose main objective is to address social and environmental problems, reinvesting their profits to achieve this purpose.

They offer employment opportunities to vulnerable groups and work on projects that promote environmental sustainability.


And social cooperatives that seek the social and labor inclusion of their members, combining economic and social objectives. They promote the active participation of their members in decision-making and in the management of the cooperative, with a focus on improving the living conditions of disadvantaged people.

France: Insertion companies (EI)

Integration Companies in France have the mission of integrating people in situations of social exclusion through employment and training. These companies focus on creating job opportunities for individuals who face significant barriers to finding employment.

Italy: Social Cooperatives

In Italy, social cooperatives play a crucial role in labor inclusion. There are two main types: type A, which provides social services, and type B, which creates jobs for disadvantaged people. Type B cooperatives employ at least 30% of disadvantaged people in their workforce






5.3 BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

5.3.1 Benefits

- Social and Labor Integration: They facilitate the inclusion of people with barriers in the labor market.
- Economic Stability: They provide stable income to individuals who might otherwise depend on social assistance.
- Skills Development: They offer training and work experiences that improve future employability.

5.3.2 Challenges

- Financial Sustainability: Need to balance social objectives with economic viability.
 - Regulation and Public Support: Reliance on favorable public policies and adequate financing.
 - Stigma and Public Perception: Address the perception that sheltered employment is less valuable or productive.
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5.4 EUROPEAN POLICIES AND SUPPORT FOR INCLUSION COMPANIES

5.4.1 Legal and policy framework

The European Union supports inclusion businesses and the social economy through various policies and programs, such as the Social Economy Action Plan and the European Social Fund (ESF). These instruments provide financing, guidance and a regulatory framework to encourage the creation and development of these entities.



5.5 GOOD PRACTICES AND SUCCESS STORIES

5.5.1 Local and Regional Initiatives

Several European countries have implemented successful initiatives that serve as role models. For example:

Social Enterprise Initiative in the United Kingdom: Program that facilitates access to financing and supports the growth of social enterprises that seek to solve social problems.

Network of Social Cooperatives in Italy: Project that promotes the creation of networks of cooperatives to share resources and improve their impact.


5.5.2 International Collaboration

Collaboration between countries and international organizations has allowed the dissemination of good practices and the strengthening of the social economy at the European level. Initiatives such as "Interreg Europe" and transnational learning networks facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences between regions.




5.6 CONCLUSION

Inclusion businesses and the social economy represent an emerging paradigm that combines economic sustainability with social justice. These entities not only offer effective solutions for the labor integration of people at risk of exclusion, but also contribute to a more inclusive and resilient economy. The expansion and continued support of these initiatives is crucial to address contemporary social and economic challenges in Europe.





5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Strengthening the Legal and Political Framework:** Governments must continue to develop policies and regulations that support the growth of the social economy and inclusion businesses.
 - **Fostering Public-Private Collaboration:** Public-private partnerships can provide additional resources and expand the impact of these organizations.
 - **Promoting Social Awareness:** Increasing the visibility and understanding of the social economy is essential to combat stigma and encourage greater public and private support.
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Annex I

COMPARATIVE TABLE



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BRÚJULA
Formación Inclusiva



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REGISTRATION SHEET

Overview of sheltered employment

Point	Spain	Croatia	Romania	European Union
Type and legal personality of protected employment structures	Public/private establishments	Private establishments	Private establishments	Private establishments
	Commercial (public and limited companies)	Public establishments		Voluntary associations
	Labor and cooperative societies	Voluntary associations		Cooperatives
	Associations and foundations	Trading companies		Trading companies
Main objectives of protected employment	Social integration	Social integration	Social integration	Rehabilitation for social and labor integration
	Professional integration	Professional integration	Professional integration	Provision of jobs (Denmark, Sweden, Belgium)
	Provision of jobs	Rehabilitation	Provision of jobs	Production of goods and services (Norway, Portugal)
	Compliance with employment quotas	Provision of jobs Compliance with employment quotas	Compliance with employment quotas	Therapeutic treatment (Greece) Vocational training (Norway, Scotland) The transition to "ordinary" employment (Belgium, Sweden)



Point	Spain	Croatia	Romania	European Union
What are the types of activity carried out in protected employment structures?	<p>Industrial subcontracting (packaging, assembly or manufacturing)</p> <p>Manufacturing</p> <p>Services</p> <p>Agriculture</p> <p>Commercial activities</p> <p>Graphic arts and bookbinding</p> <p>Logistics services</p> <p>Textile and clothing</p> <p>Call center and customer service</p> <p>Administrative services</p> <p>Hospitality and catering</p> <p>Recycling and waste management</p>	<p>Industrial subcontracting (packaging, assembly or manufacturing) manufacturing</p> <p>Services</p> <p>Commercial activities</p> <p>Graphic arts and bookbinding</p> <p>Textile and clothing</p> <p>Accommodation and catering</p> <p>Recycling and waste management physical care</p> <p>Culinary</p> <p>Gardening</p> <p>Maintenance</p> <p>Cleaning services</p> <p>Public administration</p>	<p>Industrial subcontracting (packaging, assembly or manufacturing)</p> <p>Manufacturing</p> <p>Services</p> <p>Commercial activities</p> <p>Call center and customer service</p> <p>Administrative services</p>	<p>Industrial subcontracting (packaging, assembly or manufacturing)</p> <p>Manufacturing itself</p> <p>Services</p> <p>Agriculture</p> <p>Commercial activities</p>
Is there specific legislation in your country on the organization or operation of protected workplaces?	And	No	No	<p>No (Greece, Ireland, Croatia, Romania or Sweden)</p> <p>Yes (Austria, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, Italy...)</p>



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Point	Spain	Croatia	Romania	European Union
Financing and grants	Combine multi-level financing	Combine multi-level financing	Combine multi-level financing	<p>Central government funding (France, Ireland, Sweden)</p> <p>Funding is granted at regional or local level (Belgium, Portugal).</p> <p>Combine multi-level funding (Denmark, Scotland, UK)</p>
Public financing is linked to a certain level of income	No	No	No	

Demographic characteristics

Gender

Country	Masculine	Female
Spain	60,7	39,3
Croatia	52,5	47,5
Romania	46,75	53,25



Nature of disabilities

COUNTRY	TYPES OF DISABILITY
Spain	Physical and organic, sensory and psychic (intellectual and mental) 50% of the workers in special employment centers are people with intellectual and/or mental disabilities due to their difficulties in accessing the ordinary labor market.
Croatia	Long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disabilities
Romania	Physical, visual, auditory, deafblindness, somatic, mental, psychic Severe disabilities 40.09%, marked disabilities 48.21%, medium and mild disabilities 11.7%.
UE	Sweden - mental or psychological deficiency (33%), physical deficiency (50%) Norway- mentally or psychologically disabled (26%)

Article	Spain	Croatia	Romania
Types of employment situation of disabled workers in a protected environment	EEC of the Special Employment Centers Labor enclaves	Protected and integrative workshops Supported Employment Employment in social enterprises Open labor market	Open labor market Authorized protected units (protected employment)
Freedom of association for sheltered workshop workers	And	No	And



Article	Spain	Croatia	Romania
<p>Salary income of disabled workers in protected jobs</p>	<p>Basic salary:</p> <p>Group II. Qualified personnel between 1,800 and 1,400 euros</p> <p>Group III. Technical personnel between 1270 and 964 euros</p> <p>Group IV. Operators 830 euros</p>	<p>Specific information on the exact income of disabled workers is lacking.</p> <p>The minimum wage for the year 2023 amounts to 700.00 euros gross.</p> <p>The average gross salary in November 2023 nationwide in Croatia was 1,680 euros</p>	<p>It may vary depending on several factors, such as the type of work, the employer and applicable regulations.</p> <p>Regardless of their income, people with disabilities receive a monthly allowance and a monthly supplementary personal budget.</p> <p>The monthly allowance is: RON 419 for an adult with a severe disability; RON 317 for a profoundly disabled adult.</p> <p>The monthly supplementary personal budget is: RON 179 for an adult with a severe disability; RON 132 for a profoundly disabled adult; RON 72 for an adult with a medium disability.</p>
<p>Working conditions of disabled workers in protected jobs</p>	<p>JUST LIKE THE OTHER WORKERS</p> <p>Overtime is prohibited, except for those necessary to prevent or repair accidents and other extraordinary damages.</p>	<p>Working conditions for disabled workers in Croatia may vary depending on the specific employer, the type of sheltered workshop and the applicable regulations.</p> <p>40 hours, spread over five working days</p> <p>Disabled workers are entitled to a minimum of 25 working days if they work 5 days a week or 30 days if they work 6 days a week as part of their annual leave.</p>	<p>In case of severe disability, you may benefit from a reduced work schedule of 8 hours. To have this work schedule you must present a document proving that an evaluation committee has recommended a shorter work schedule.</p> <p>The employer is obliged to offer the same salary that he would give to any other employee in a similar position.</p> <p>Disabled people benefit from a paid trial period of at least 45 days.</p>



Article

Social security benefits applicable in protected employment different from those in other sectors

Spain

Bonuses and reductions
Flexibility in contributions
Collaboration with ordinary companies
Regulations of the Autonomous Communities

Croatia

Social security benefits for workers with disabilities are generally subject to the same regulations and principles as those in other sectors.

Romania

Exempt from paying payroll tax
Reduction of retirement age by 15 years

Point

What is the protected employment model in your country?

Spain

Salaried model

Croatia

Mixed (dual) model of employment for workers with disabilities, which combines elements of protection and salaried employment

Romania

Salaried model

European Union

The therapeutic model (protection against employee status) - Luxembourg
The intermediate model (disabled worker as quasi-employee) - Denmark, Germany
The mixed (dual) model - France, Norway
The salaried employment model (protection and labor legislation)
"lower wage employment model"



ARTICLE

COMMON ASPECTS THAT AFFECT ALL COUNTRIES IN EUROPE

The challenges that companies face in the open market

- Lack of knowledge and awareness
- Prejudice and stigmatization
- Lack of physical and technological accessibility
- Lack of knowledge of economic benefits
- Lack of knowledge of possible adaptations
- Non-inclusive selection processes
- Lack of knowledge of support programs

Barriers that may prevent the participation of individuals or companies in protected employment initiatives

- Lack of awareness and sensitization
- Stigmatization and prejudice
- Lack of knowledge of economic benefits
- Lack of accessibility
- Perceived costs
- Uncertainty about necessary adaptations
- Lack of training and psychological support
- Non-inclusive hiring processes
- Lack of knowledge of existing resources
- Resistance to organizational change
- Lack of awareness and sensitization about these programs, persistent stigmatization and prejudice towards people with disabilities.

The benefits to local communities of supporting the sheltered employment model, both social and economic contributions.

- Social inclusion
- Stigma reduction
- Strengthen social cohesion
- Development of social skills
- Local job creation
- Less dependence on social benefits
- Contribution to productivity
- Tax incentives and advantages for companies
- Development of job skills



ARTICLE

COMMON ASPECTS THAT AFFECT ALL COUNTRIES IN EUROPE

How sheltered employment models integrate with regular employment opportunities

Labor enclaves
Transition programs
Collaboration with employment agencies
Training and development programs
Job adaptation
Promoting diversity and inclusion
Corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies
Corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies

How can examples of good practice from the EU encourage the development of sheltered employment?

Exchange of knowledge and experiences
Networks and associations
Technical assistance and training
Adaptation to local context
Financial incentives and subsidies
Public policy development
Awareness campaigns
Evaluation of results and continuous improvement
Active participation of civil society
Diplomacy and international cooperation

How to raise awareness in society about protected employment?

Awareness campaigns
Success stories
Inclusive events and job fairs
Collaboration with the media
Training and workshops
Participation of people with disabilities
Partnerships with organizations and activists
Educational programs in schools
Attract opinion leaders



Annex II

SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS ON SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT



LA
BRÚJULA
Formación Inclusiva



Županijska
udruga slijepih
SPLIT



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Activity II:

RESULTS OF THE SATISFACTION SURVEY FOR WORKERS OF SPECIAL EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

Introduction

The objective of the Erasmus+ project entitled Sheltered Employment in Europe – Disjob is to understand the situation of sheltered employment in the countries that form the project consortium, that is, Spain, Romania and Croatia, through, among other things, the exchange of experiences and good practices between partner countries, the development of tools to measure the effectiveness of different protected employment models and raising awareness and promoting the improvement of employment conditions for people with disabilities.

The term "protected employment" refers to those jobs created to be occupied by people with disabilities, who have difficulties accessing the ordinary labor market. They are characterized by being paid and productive jobs with special characteristics such as:

- Adapting the job to individual needs
- Flexibility in carrying out daily work
- Knowledge of the characteristics of the group of people with disabilities with whom they work
- The provision of the necessary resources for the social and labor integration of its workers

In addition to the above, protected employment has working conditions that are much lower than those of ordinary employment, in terms of salary, type of contract and especially in the jobs offered, since they tend to be low-skilled jobs, mainly related to the services sector and to which not all people with disabilities can access due to lack of adaptations in jobs.



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Taking into account the above, the objective of this activity is to create an evaluation tool on the quality of protected employment currently present in the partner countries of this project, which has been completed by people with disabilities who currently work in special employment centers. . This tool is in the form of a survey in which all aspects involved in the integration of people with disabilities outside of ordinary employment have been taken into account, such as: salary, working hours, type of contract, adaptation to the job, management of the human resources of specific protected employment companies, degree of worker satisfaction, etc.

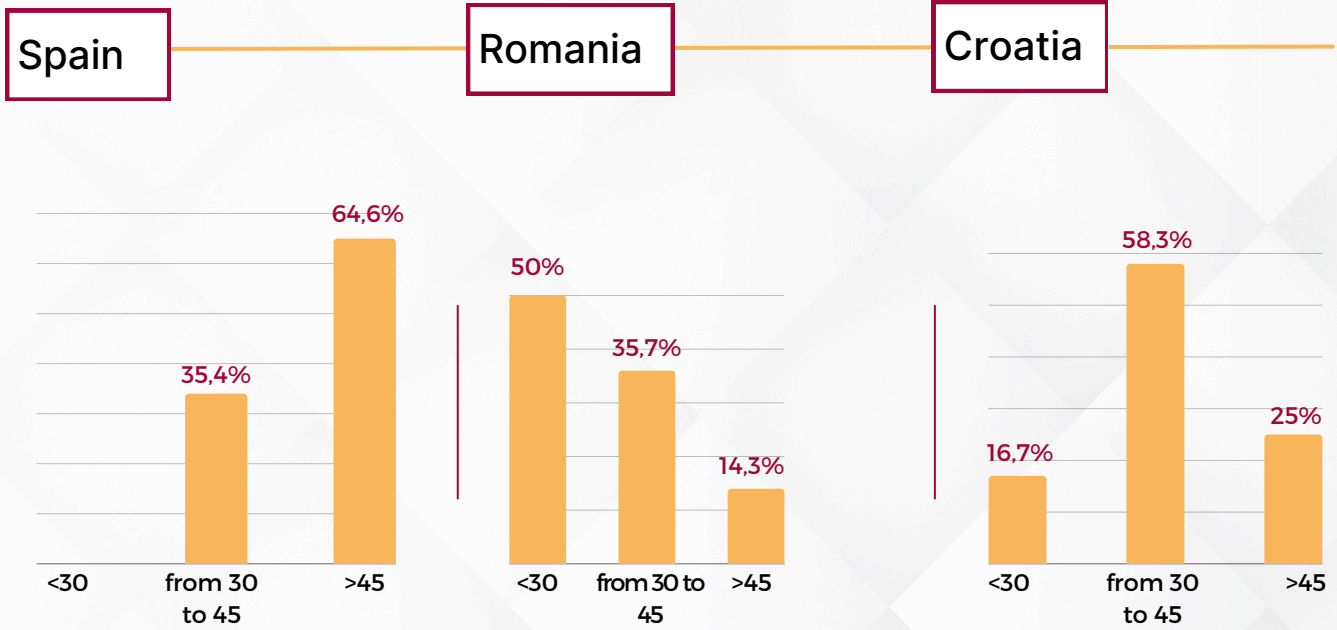
This activity aims to obtain information from the true protagonists of this project, that is, people with disabilities who currently carry out their professional activity within companies that carry out the protected employment model.

Each member of the project consortium, i.e. La Brújula, Inclusive Training, AJOFM and CABPS, translated the survey from English to their national language and conducted the survey as a Google Form at the national level. There were 97 responses in total, of which 49 were in Spanish, 24 in Croatian and 14 in Romanian. Not all respondents answered all questions.

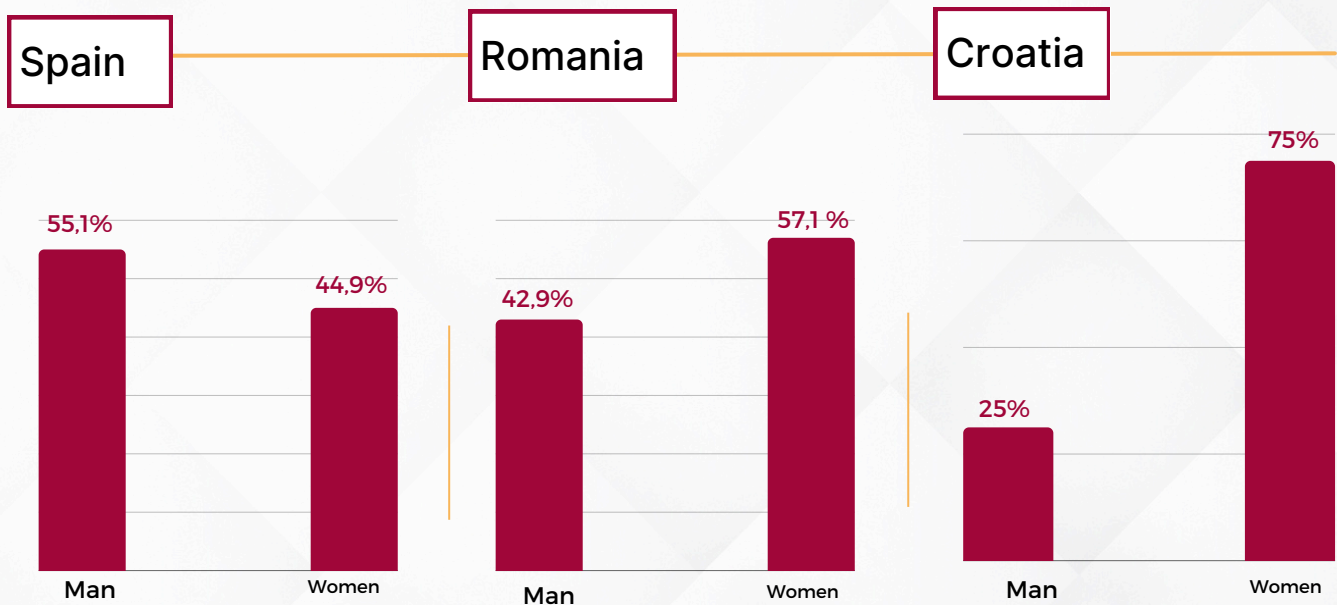
Results



Data related to age



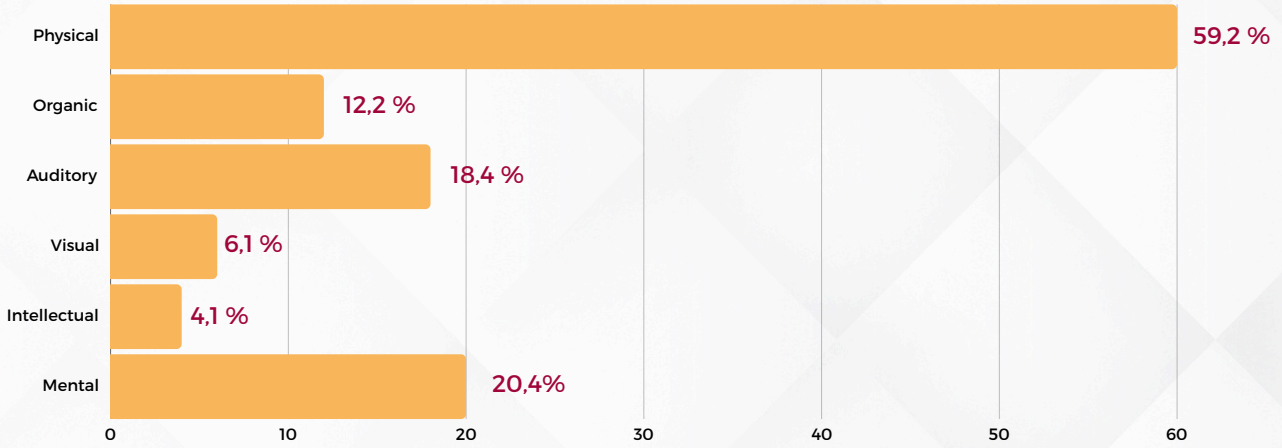
Data related to Sex



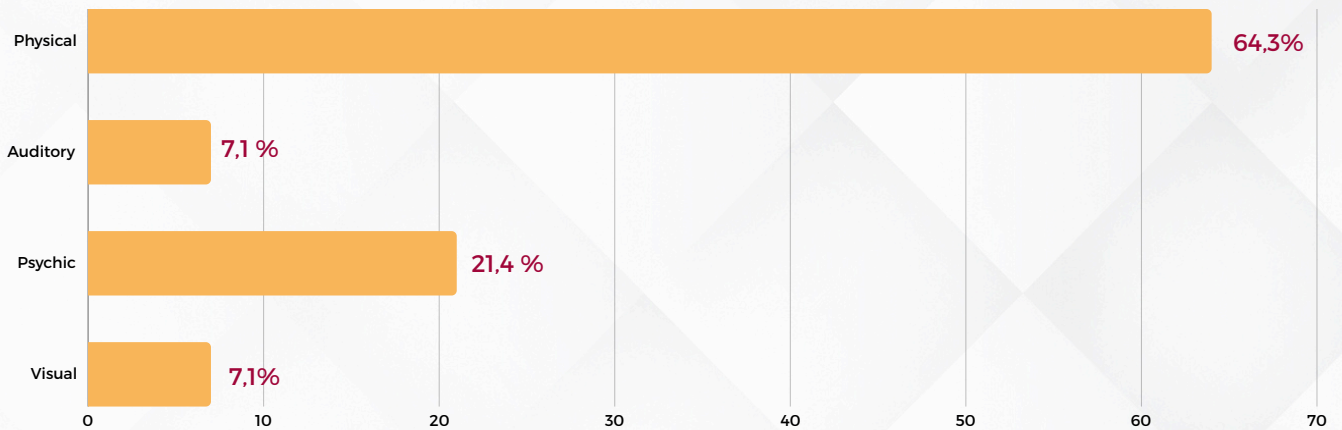


Data relating to the type of disability

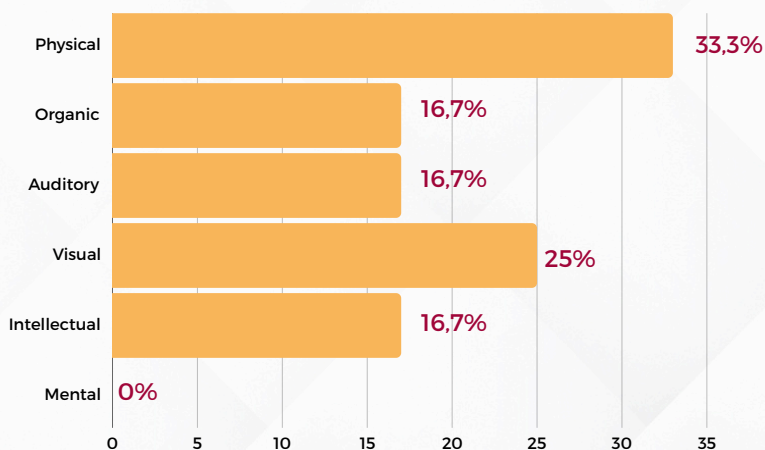
Spain



Romania



Croatia



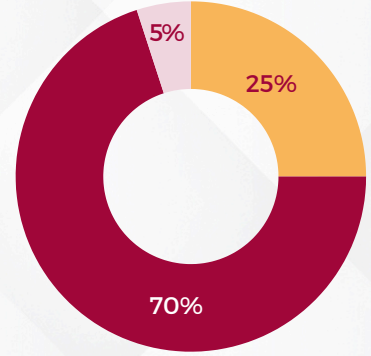
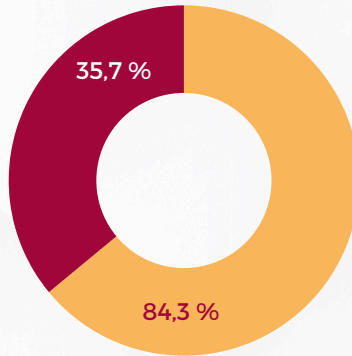
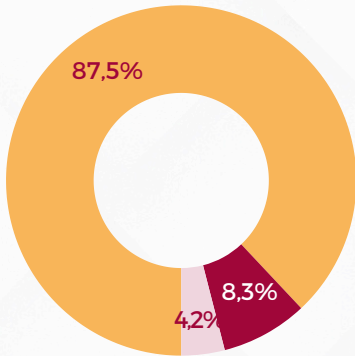


Data relating to the percentage of disability

Spain

Romania

Croatia



Between 33% and 64%

>65%

Equalization due to incapacity for the usual profession

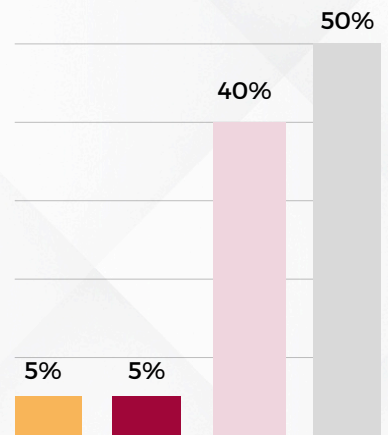
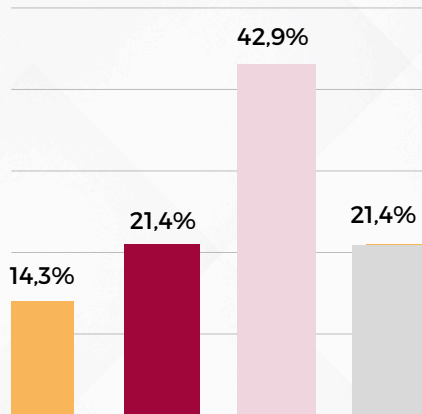
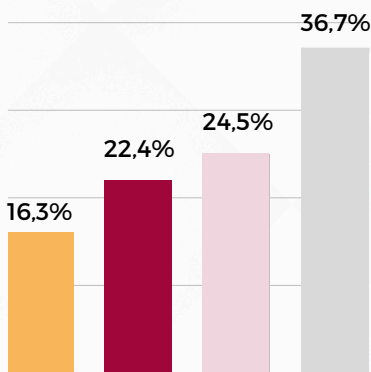


Data relating to time working in sheltered employment

Spain

Romania

Croatia



less than 6 months

From 6 months to 1 year

From 1 to 3 years

More than 3 years

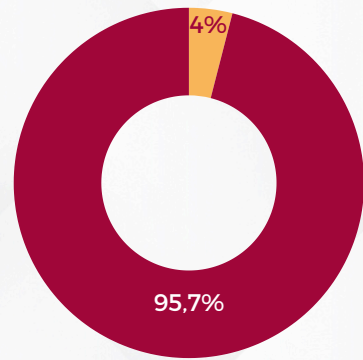
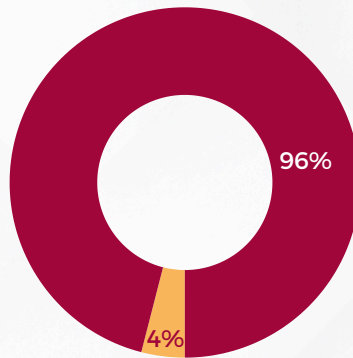
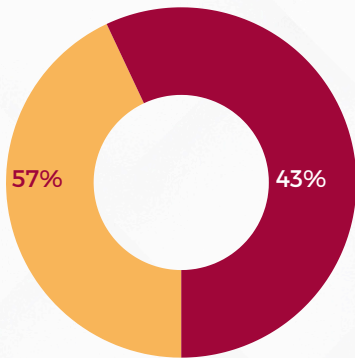


Have you worked in sheltered employment before?

Spain

Romania

Croatia



■ And ■ No

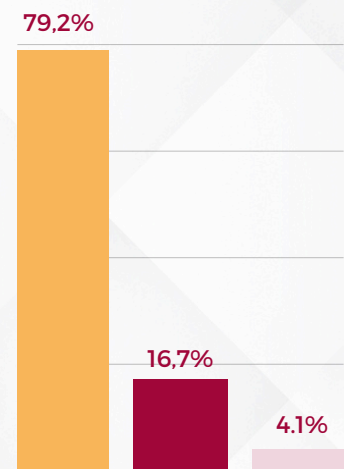
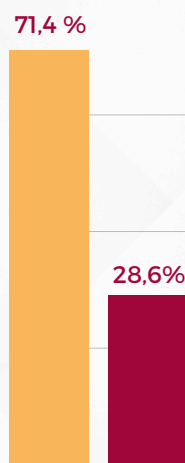
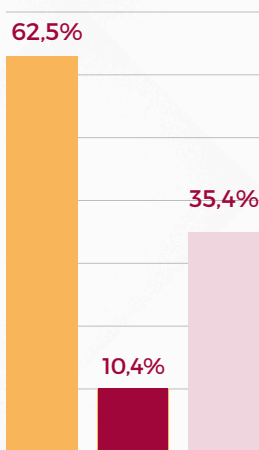


Have you worked in an ordinary company?

Spain

Romania

Croatia

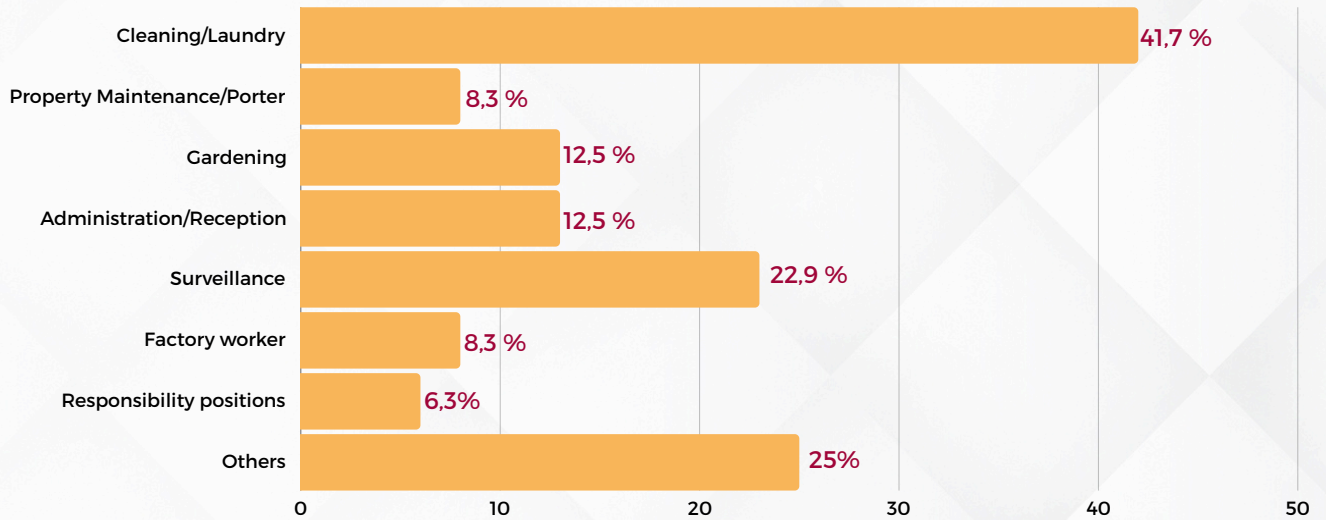


■ And ■ No ■ Yes, before having the disability recognized

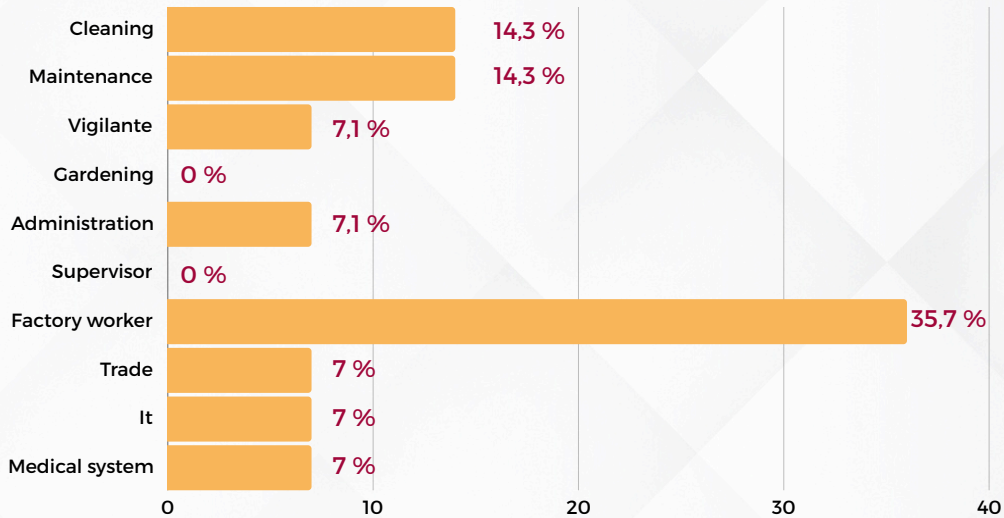


Employment sector in which you are currently working

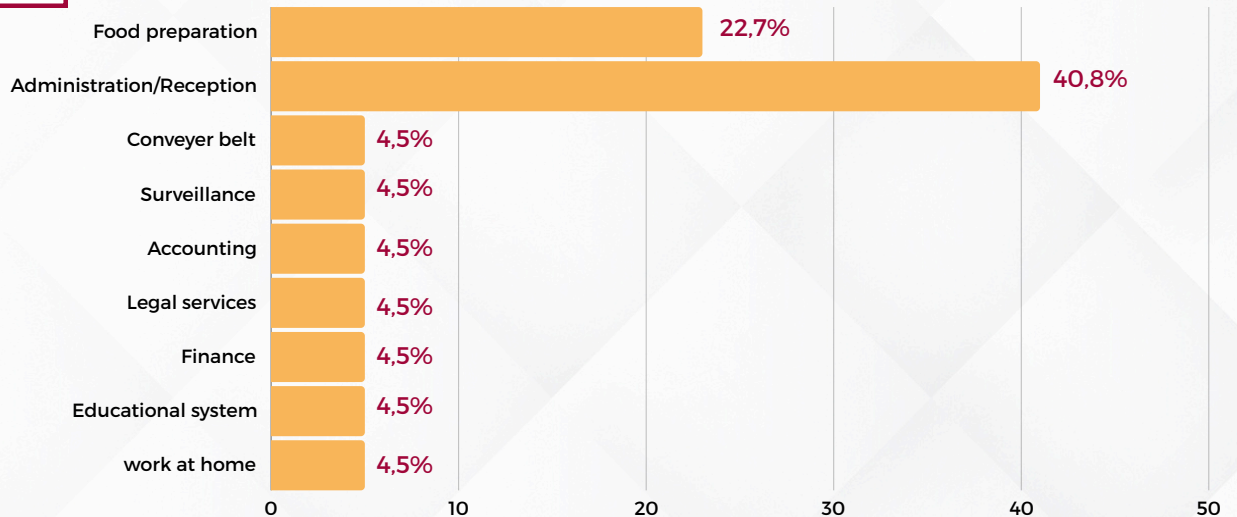
Spain



Romania

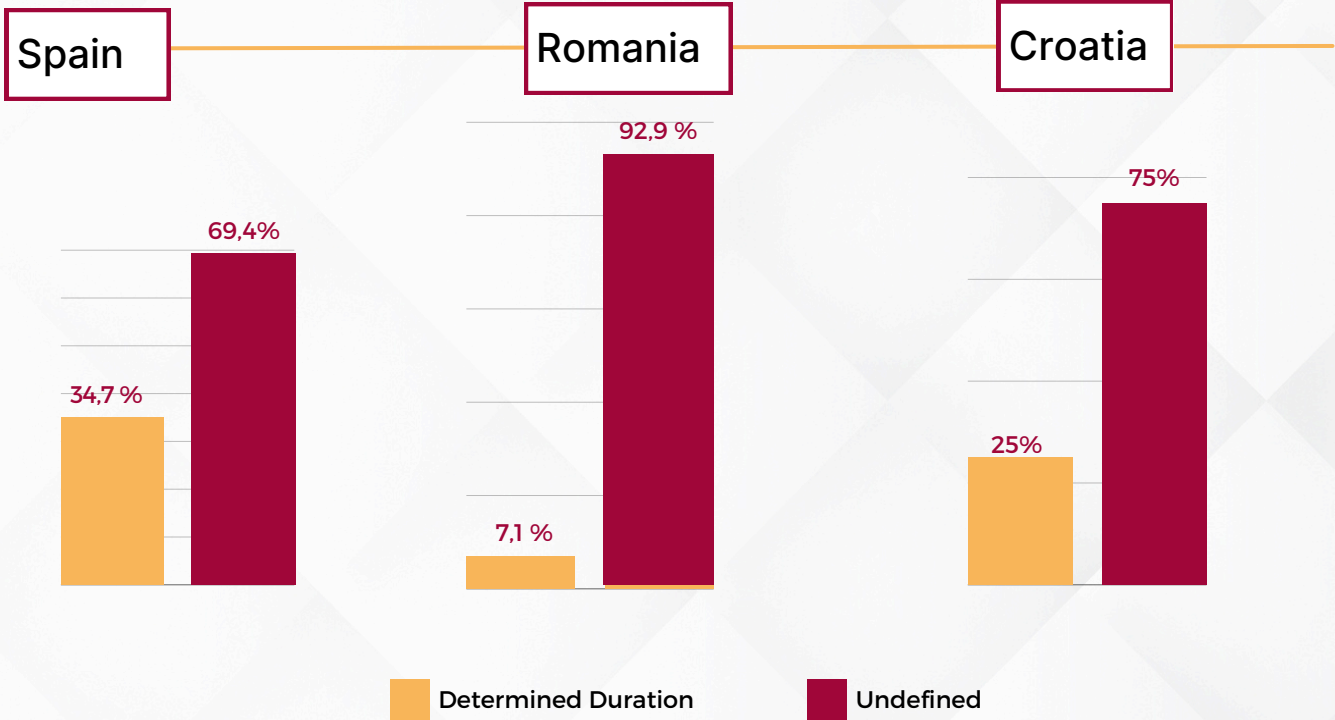


Croatia

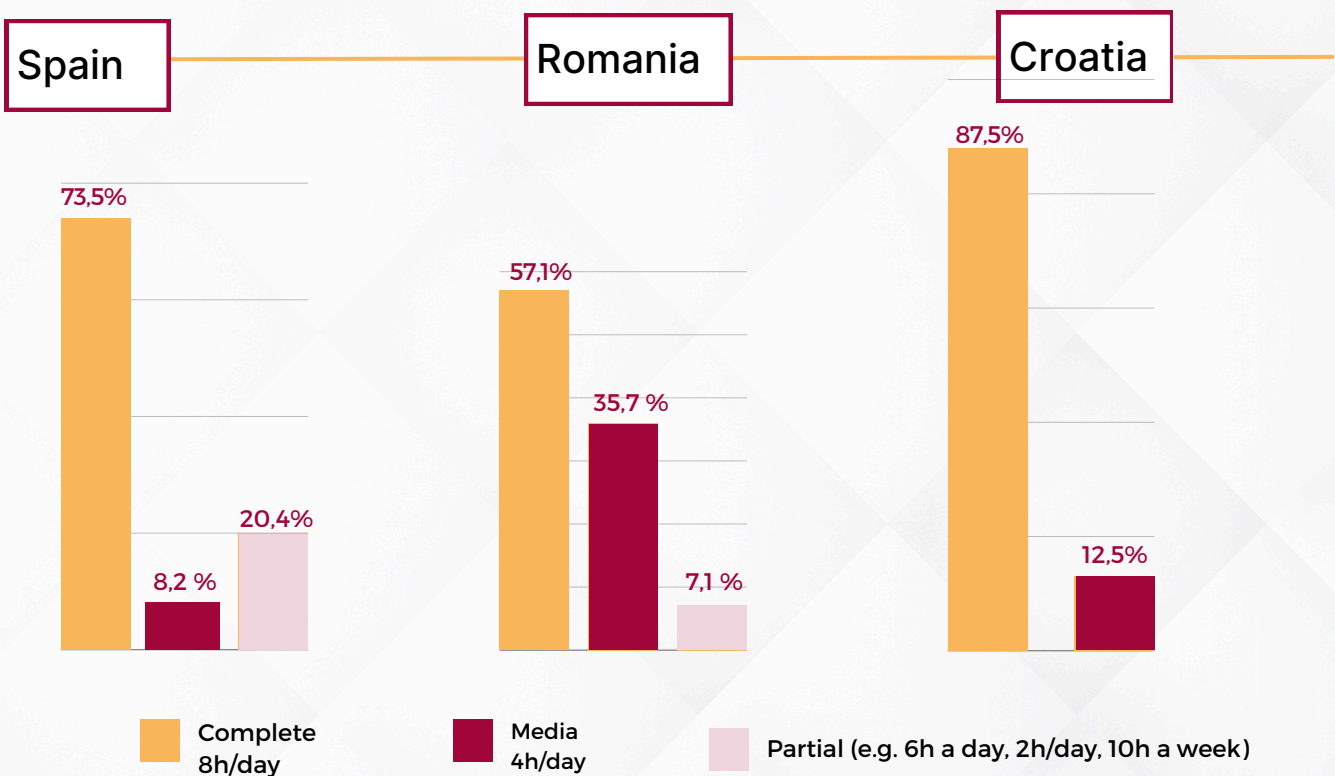




Data relating to the type of contract



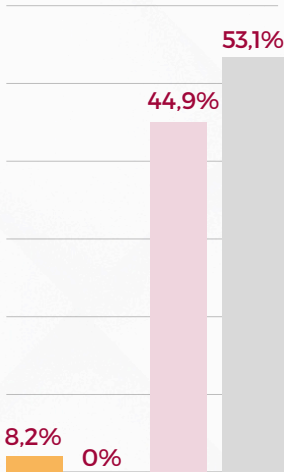
Data relating to the type of working day



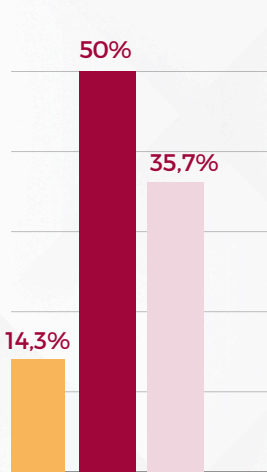


Salary data

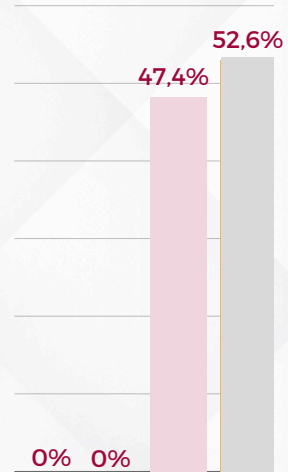
Spain



Romania



Croatia



< 300€/month

Between 300 - 1000€/mes

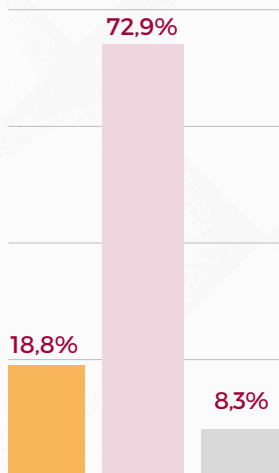
between 500 - 1000€/month

> 1000€/month

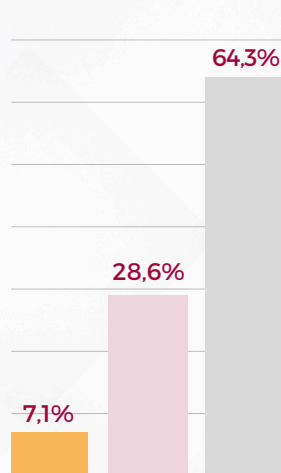


Adaptations in the workplace

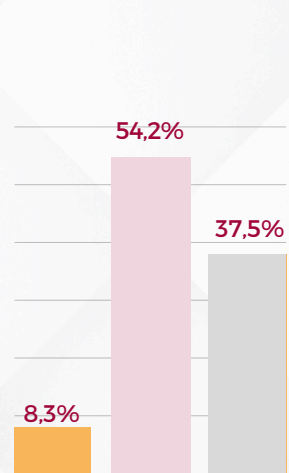
Spain



Romania



Croatia



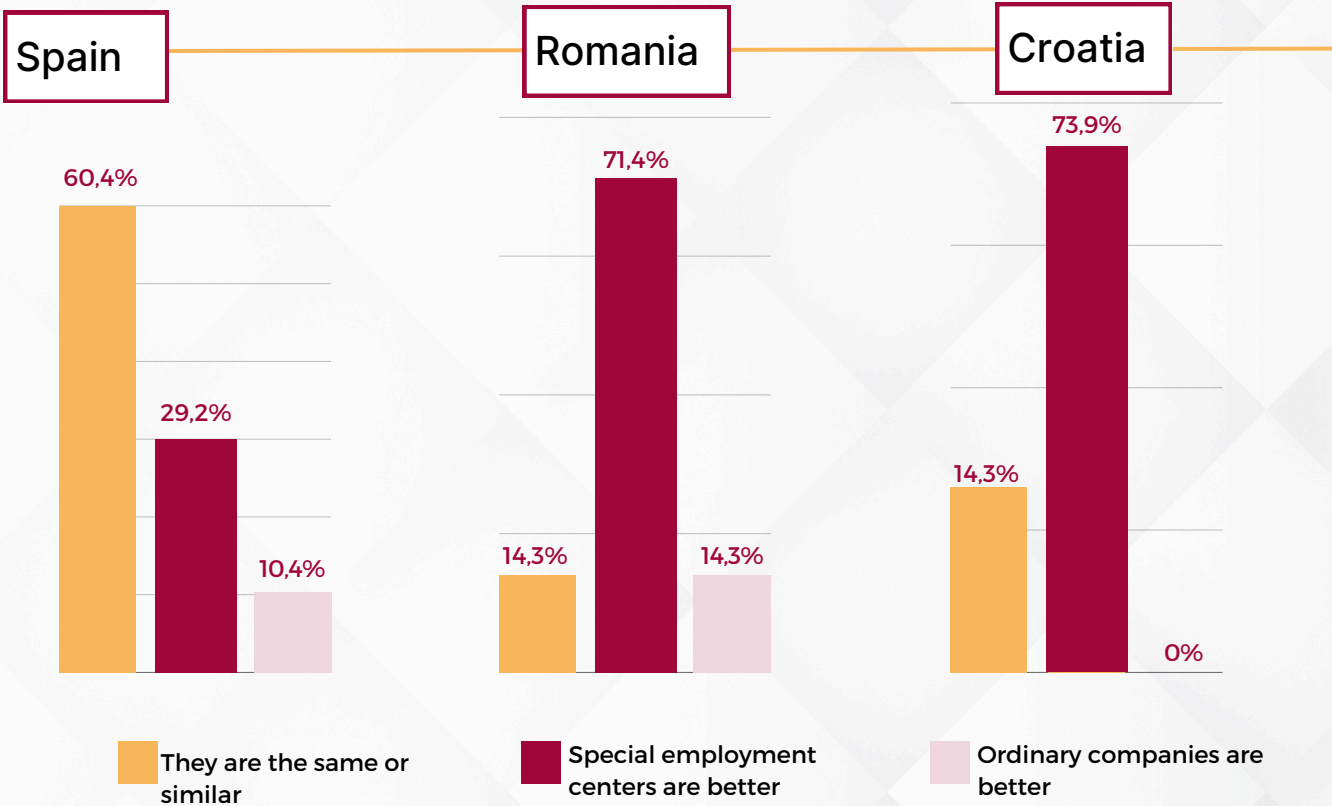
No, no modification has been made to the position despite needing it.

No, because my disability does not require adaptation of the position

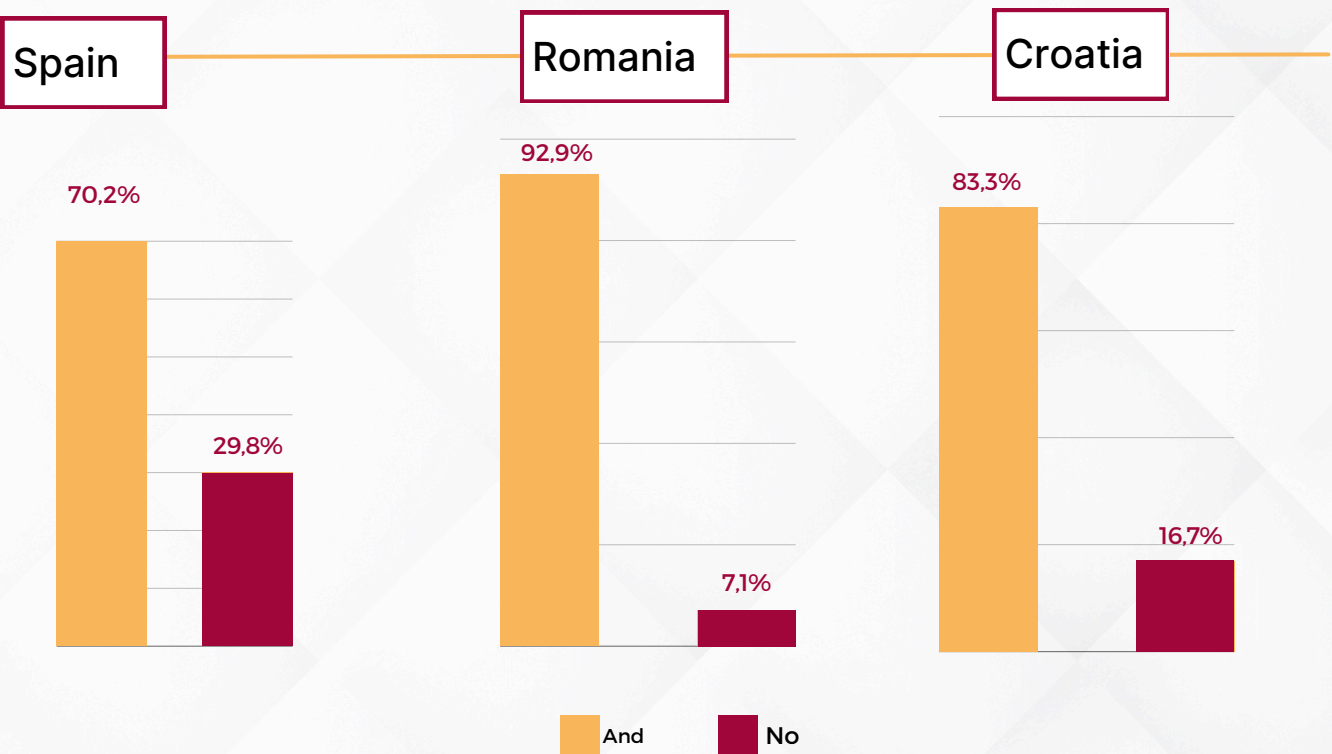
And



Special Employment Center Vs Ordinary Company

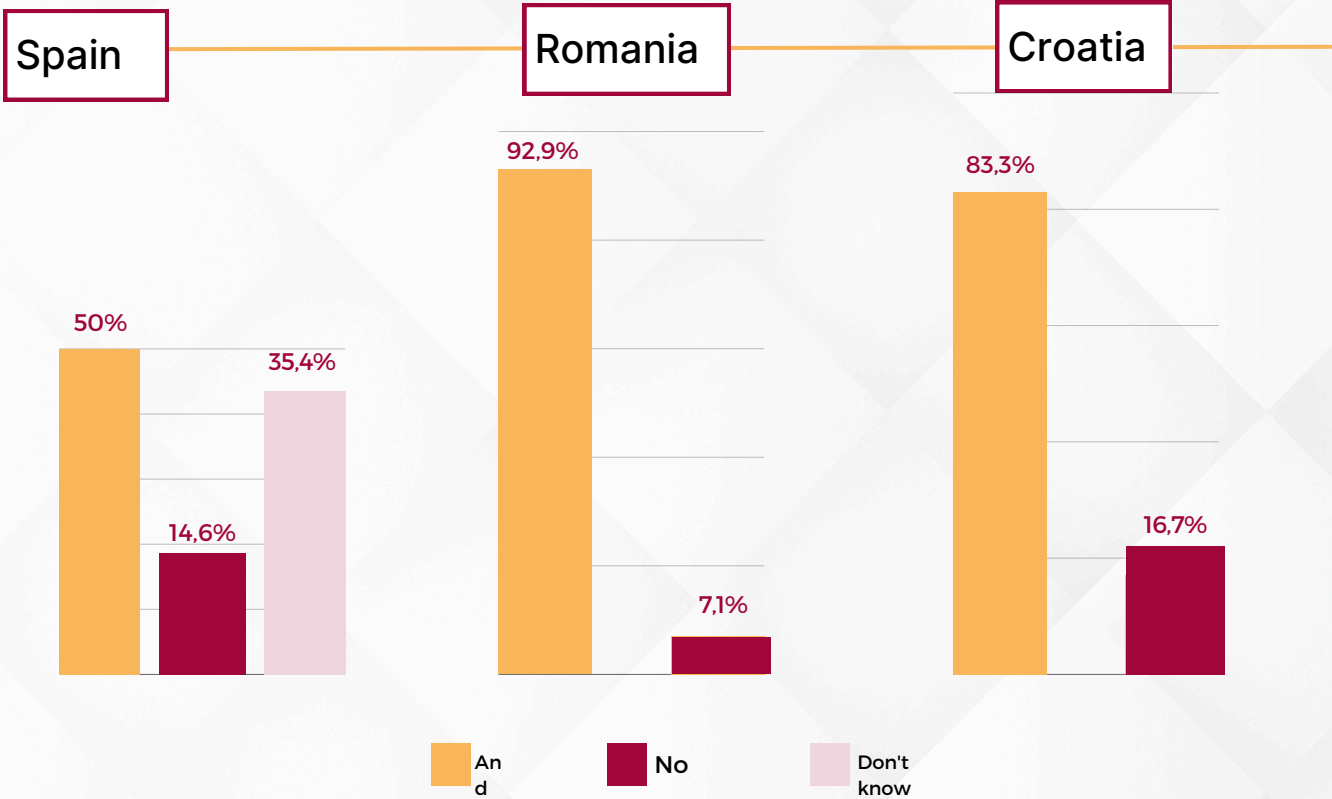


Working in sheltered employment facilitates access to ordinary employment

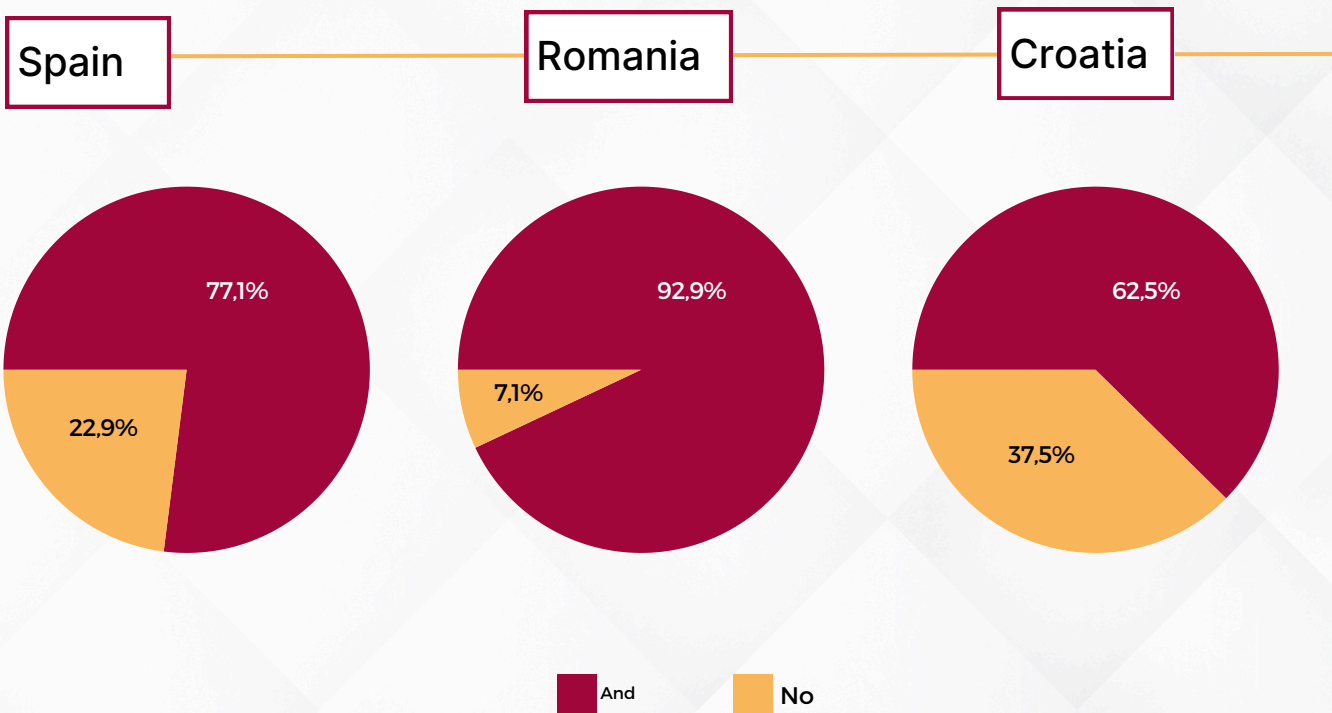




Does the center where you work have employment support units?



Do managers or bosses take disability into account?



Open questions

Among the positive aspects of working in a special employment center, the most common responses include:

- "All of them, but mainly the treatment received and the involvement with the workers."
- "Integration of disabled people into the world of work."
- "Man, they give you a job... that, for example, I had a hard time finding in another normal company and you feel fulfilled and integrated."
- "Qualification/retraining courses to facilitate integration into the labor market."

Among the aspects that should change in relation to working in a special employment center, the most common points include:

- "Greater investment in staff training and development."
- "Really adapt the job depending on the disease to be able to do the work."
- "Access to more qualified jobs."
- "Less temporality in the adaptation of these people to the position so that they can perform it effectively and at the same time taking into account the well-being of the worker."

The most common answers to the question "If you were responsible for a special employment center, what would you take into account when hiring and working with people with disabilities?" were the following:

- "Your training, your experience and your disability, to know if you can do the job in a way that does not harm you."
- "That the person to be hired fits well with the rest of the team and does not create conflicts between workers."
- "That the position adapts to the needs of each person."
- "I would look at the desire to work and the determination to learn, whether they have experience or not, it would not matter to me, since, if we do not give them an opportunity, they will never acquire the experience that is required in many places."

Finally, some of the aspects that were highlighted by the respondents and that were not addressed in the survey are the following:

- > "There are workers who take advantage of their disability to work less than their colleagues. Therefore, it harms the company and the workers themselves."
- > "I would highlight the help when going to medical check-ups, adapting to our needs, thank you very much."
- > "I thank the special employment center to which I belong for the trust placed in me, because they believed in my abilities when I myself was not capable of doing so. Today, after more than three years, they continue to do so and I have regained trust in myself. THANK YOU."
- > "My experience has been super positive. The work I have done thanks to this special center has been very motivating for me."

Conclusion

Taking into account the main objective of the project, that is, "to prepare a report that highlights the needs and proposals for the creation of a European quality framework for protected employment in Europe." This activity provided us with direct information from the main protagonists of this project, who are people with disabilities of working age, employed in different forms of sheltered employment facilities. By carrying out these surveys and obtaining results, we have learned how people with disabilities in protected employment feel in the countries that form the consortium of this project, revealing that the majority of respondents with disabilities have positive attitudes towards the centers. special employment opportunities, feel gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to be included in the labor market and society, and find fulfillment as workers. The negative aspects of social employment centers detected by the majority include lower income, lack of necessary adaptations, limited access to more qualified jobs, as well as the poor balance between the needs of a worker with a disability and the fulfilled work arrangements and adjustments. reasonable.

Positive attitudes towards protected employment models are reflected in the majority of responses in the three countries, regarding the usefulness of work experience from a special employment center and the possibility of changing or improving jobs. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting the majority of responses that confirm the application of support, equal treatment and reasonable adjustments in special employment centers.

The exchange of experiences and good practices between partner countries will help the associated consortium to develop tools to measure the effectiveness of different protected employment models, while raising awareness and promoting the improvement of employment conditions for people with disabilities.

The associated consortium hopes to establish a reference framework at European level on the current situation of people with disabilities who carry out their professional activity within the protected employment model and these results of the satisfaction survey represent a concrete step in this process.



NEW PARADIGM OF SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT FROM THE SOCIAL ECONOMY



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