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National Report - Bulgaria
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I. Overview

I.1 National Background + Context

Social environment + disability

In the late 1980s Bulgaria started a process of fundamental social and political changes to develop an organized social structure built on democratic principles. Such deep social and political transformation could hardly ever be a harmonious and coherent process. Sometimes democratic changes come into conflict with archaic stereotypes of disregard for human dignity and "zero tolerance" for personal differences and individual needs.

In this dynamic environment, issues related to legal status and actual situation of people with disabilities become more and more urgent and topical. Human rights organisations and associations of people with disabilities called for overcoming the prevailing "medical" approach that led to de facto segregation and inequality of the disabled (this was also expressed by the word "invalid" used before to denote a person with disability).

According to the obsolete concept, people with permanent physical disabilities are "sick" and should be isolated from the "healthy" community. The only obligation of the "healthy" was to provide support for physical survival of the "invalid". Viewed as public practice, the "medical" approach turned a physical disability into a factor leading to social elimination of thousands of people. The social inclusion approach became a counterpoint to the old policy and exclusion of people with special needs.

Service development history

The long historic period up to the beginning of the 1990s can be described as a dominance of medical models of disability. Finally, the new understanding of disability began to change the legal framework in 1995, when the Law on Protection, Rehabilitation and Social Integration of the Disabled became a legal fact. The role of this law was to establish clear responsibility of institutions and to determine the mechanism for achieving the stated objectives. Further, however, this law was strongly criticized by NGOs dealing with issues of disability and

equality. For example, experts of the Center for Independent Living expressed the view that the law did not remove barriers to enable persons with disabilities to lead independent living, as it confused the concepts of social aid and social integration. Gradually the new attitude has been adopted that people with disabilities need special measures aimed specifically at overcoming the deficit caused by damage: people with disabilities are not needy children requiring constant assistance but persons having valuable potential as all other members of the community. The Law on Social Integration of People with Disabilities adopted in 2005 defined ways of inclusion to support equal participation of the disabled in social life - apart from medical and social rehabilitation, through education and vocational training, employment, accessible living and architectural environment, social services, social and economic protection and access to information.

There is now a growing awareness and deeper understanding of the concept of inclusion that leads to a gradual development of targeted services for people with disabilities by public and private organizations (e.g. intermediary services for job seekers, training and counselling). Yet it must be recognized that social inclusion is far from being a common and widely spread fact in the contemporary Bulgarian society.

Disability + labor market participation

According to the available estimations based on the Census of population (2001), approximately 265,353 people in Bulgaria have a medically identified disability¹. Of these 92% are aged 16-64 years. By the data of the National Social security Institute (NII), the total number of disabled people in Bulgaria is about 852,370. Some national NGOs consider this figures understated. According to NII and National Statistic Institute (NSI) there are about 200,000 disabled people of working age in Bulgaria, of which about 13% are employed.

According to the National Employment Agency in 2010 13,525 people with disabilities were officially registered as unemployed² (i.e. were considered 'actively looking for job'), representing 4% of the total number of the registered unemployed.

According to the NSI survey, nearly one third of people with medically identified disabilities think that they may exercise a certain type of work. As far as occupation preferences are concerned, 75% would prefer to be employed under a labour contract by a public or private enterprise, 22% have no specific preference and 3% want to develop their own business. 76% of those willing to work would like to be involved in special employment programmes.

In 2011 a number of measures are foreseen under the Employment Promotion Act to ensure occupation for about 1900 persons with disabilities (of whom 900 will be newly registered). Employment of People with Disabilities is currently being realized in three forms: 1) specialized enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities (covers the major part of the employed people with disabilities); 2) inclusive work environment (much less developed), and 3) through the development of private business (with the financial support of the Agency for People with Disabilities).

¹ The results of the new Census carried out in Bulgaria in February 2011 have not been published yet.

² There is a decreasing trend in the number of people with disabilities who register with employment offices.

Rationale + policy

Under the current Law on Integration of People with Disabilities, “disability” means any loss or impairment in the anatomical structure, physiology or mental health of an individual. The law also defines a “person with permanent disability” meaning an individual, whose capacity to perform labour activities has been permanently reduced as a result of anatomical, physiological or mental disability, and who has been certified by the medical expert bodies establishing the level of reduced capacity for work or reduced abilities for social adaptation up to 50% and above 50% (severe disability). Permanently reduced incapacity is established by the Regional Expert Medical Commissions and the National Expert Medical Commission.

The current policies and national legislation for persons with disabilities are consistent with the Constitution of Bulgaria and the principles enshrined in various international documents such as the UN Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the EU Framework Directive on Equal Treatment.

The key document adopted in 2003 is the National Strategy for Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities. The Strategy aims at applying the following principles:

- people with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully and actively in society;
- people with disabilities must be supported in their quest to lead an independent life according to their own beliefs and desires;
- a person with disabilities must exercise equal rights and have equal responsibilities as any other person in the society;
- any form of discrimination based on disability is unacceptable.

These basic principles have been reflected in the subsequent changes in legislation and regulation, with particular attention to inclusion of people with disabilities in work environments.

The above strategy was in force up to 2008 when the new Equal Opportunities Strategy for People with Disabilities was adopted for the period of 2008-2015. The chief objectives of the Strategy which is being currently applied are as follows:

- Development of the accessible environment
 - accessible physical environment and transportation
 - accessible information and communications
- Changing pattern of care for disabled children (from placing them in specialised institutions to care in the family)
- Guaranteed access to quality education
- Providing comprehensive medical and social rehabilitation (aids, appliances and equipment and medical devices)

In January 2011 the Strategy of Long-term Employment of the Disabled for 2011 - 2020 was adopted. This strategy presents the position of the government regarding the employment of the disabled, outlines specific steps to ensure a decent live of this vulnerable group of the society. The long-term employment strategy for people with disabilities aims at creating conditions for full integration of people with disabilities in the economic and social life of our country. This can be achieved by providing the disabled with the opportunity to access appropriate forms of vocational training and job realization. The long-term strategy sets the following operational objectives:

- Providing employment to unemployed persons with disabilities of working age in order to overcome their social isolation and achieve their full integration into society;
- Setting the stage for independent living of disabled people;
- Achieving effective social inclusion of people with disabilities through their participation in the free labour market.

The Strategy foresees the following measures with the view to implementing the operational objectives:

- Analysis of employment opportunities for people with various disabilities;
- Defining types of working activities suitable for people with disabilities according to their capabilities;
- Development and implementation of training programs;
- Establishment of training centers;
- Adaptation of existing centers for adequate learning process;
- Providing places for classroom practice;
- Encouraging employers to conduct training and retraining courses for people with disabilities;
- Training of employers and employees to work and collaborate with people with disabilities.

II. Service organizations + Agencies

II.1 Overview of Organizations

The organisations are listed following the categorization of disabilities commonly applicable in Bulgaria

- physical disabilities
- visual impairments
- hearing impairment
- intellectual difficulties
- psychiatric disorders
- communication disorders
- behavioral disorders
- multiple disabilities

GENERAL ORGANISATIONS

Union of the Disabled in Bulgaria

www.disability-bg.org

The UDB is a union of 377 organisations (regional, grassroots organizations, companies, clubs) built in 27 regions in Bulgaria with more than 72 000 individual members with different types of medical conditions. Since 2001, The Union of the Disabled in Bulgaria has been an associated member of the European Disability Forum.

Main activities and services:

Support and charity;

Services provided by the self-help groups;

Administrative and legal services and labour matters;

Supporting employment;

Health services;

Information and consulting services

National Federation of employers of people with disabilities

www.nfri.bg

The main objective of the federation is to support, promote and improve employment of people with disabilities and their inclusion. Main goals and activities:

Lobbying for equal opportunities for people with disabilities;

Strengthening and capacity building of specialized enterprises, cooperatives of people with disabilities

Ensuring participation of specialized enterprises and cooperatives in various local and international exhibitions and forums to improve their positions on the market;

Public campaigns for social inclusion, cooperation and improvement of working conditions for persons with disabilities;

Training and consultation on introduction of European employment standards;

Information services; training courses, rehabilitation and re-training of disabled employees and management staff of specialized enterprises

The Centre for Independent Living

[www.cil.bg /](http://www.cil.bg/)

Bulgarian non-governmental, non-profit organisation of disabled people. CIL has been working for a change in the governmental policy in the area of disabilities since 1995 by actively promoting the values of Independent Living and the application of the Social Model of disabilities.

Foundation “Dignified Life”

www.dostoenjivot.hit.bg

The NGO provides support and various services to women and children with disabilities. Its main objective is to assist women and children with disabilities in their training and professional realization, and to support their inclusion. The NGO collaborates acts with similar organizations in Bulgaria and abroad mainly.

Foundation “Light for Life”

<http://www.svetlinazajivot.com>

This Foundation has been providing support and care for people with disabilities since 2001. The activities of the Foundation are aimed at providing medical and social initiatives including people with permanent physical disabilities aged between 18 and 65.

The Foundation's mission is: Through specialised rehabilitation based on holistic care to give an opportunity to people with disabilities to fulfil their potential and to be accepted in society at large as full citizens. Several main programs are being implemented that provide kinesitherapy, psychological support and ergotherapy to people with disabilities, family therapy oriented towards the families of parents with disabilities and specialised transport services.

Association Marie Curie

www.marie-curie-bg.org

is a non-profit organisation founded in 1999. The organisation provides services for people with disabilities, disadvantaged and elderly people.

Aim: Improvement of educational and occupational inclusion of people with disabilities through vocational guidance, training and counselling.

Organisations of people with physical impairments

Life with dignity

www.life-with-dignity.org

Non- governmental and non- profit association of and disabled people registered in 2001.

The association has aimed at a change of state politics in the sphere of disabilities in Vidin and Bulgaria since 2001 actively supporting the value of independent life and the application of the social model of disabilities.

Main goals of the association are:

To study the need of social, educational and cultural activity in the town as well as the region in order to protect the rights of disabled people.

To help solve the problems of social isolation and contacts, work conditions actively supporting the value of independent life and the application of the social model of disabilities.

Bulgarian Association for Neuromuscular Diseases

<http://dmdbg.wordpress.com/>

It is a voluntary organisation working to meet the needs of people suffering from neuromuscular diseases. It has been created by the parents of sick children, the sick, sympathizers and doctors. It is a member of the European Alliance of Muscular Dystrophy Association.

The main objectives of the Association are:

- to defend the right to normal and full life
- to provide moral, legal, health and psychological support of the sick children and their families
- to assist in their successful adaptation to society and of society to them
- to work for the improvement of their living conditions
- to assist in their treatment

Bulgarian Neuromuscular Diseases Society (BGNMDS)

<http://www.nmd-bg.com/>

The Society was established to integrate the efforts of the experts in the field of neuromuscular diseases (NMD).

Some of the main objectives of the BGNMDS are:

- to assist in the activities of the institutions involved in the diagnostics, treatment and prevention of NMD;
- to promote the professional development and improvement of doctors and medical specialists;
- to assist and conduct research; to promote the contemporary achievements in the field of NMD;
- to participate in the building of civil society through the implementation of civic initiatives and cooperation with governmental institutions.

In February 2008 the Bulgarian Association for Neuromuscular Diseases became a member of TREAT-NMD - an EU project that integrates the efforts to improve care and find a cure for patients with neuromuscular diseases. www.treat-nmd.eu.

National Organization "Little Bulgarian People"

<http://www.lpbulgaria.org/>

The Little Bulgarian People aims to represent and defend the rights and interests of people with short stature or "little people" to government, municipal and other public bodies. Ensure the rights of its members in health care, professional activities, wages and social conditions.

Organization is working on important issues such as:

- Education and training, motivating children and young people and building a suitable environment for their inclusion among the other children and young people.
- Creating methods and guidelines for appropriate training to future employment and competitiveness of the jobs market.
- Employment and professional qualification - employment support for members of the organization.
- Health, rehabilitation and treatment, joint actions with the Ministry of Health.
- Social activities and supporting.
- Social integration through cultural, sports events and tourist activities; organization of events for members of the organization.

Organisations of people with hearing impairments

Union of the Deaf in Bulgaria

<http://www.sgbbg.com/>

Its main goal is to assert and protect the interests of the people with hearing impairments in front of the governmental, administrative, municipal and other organisations in the country and abroad; to

carry out and support at individual and group level the social, labour, medical, cultural rehabilitation of people with hearing impairment; to help society and its organisations to consider the people with hearing impairments as its full and equal members.

Bulgarian deaf sports federation

<http://www.bdsf-bg.com/>

The main task of BDSF is the development of the sport among the deaf people. BDSF priority is protection of health of the deaf people with the help of the physical exercises and sports and participation of the national teams in Deaflympic games, World and European championships and cups. BDSF has affiliated members - sports clubs in 10 big cities in the country with about 1600 involved in different sports individual members. BDSF is a member of EDSO and ICSD.

National Association of Deafblind People in Bulgaria

<http://www.nasgb.org/>

The Organisation supports the deafblind and works to improve their social condition; it assist in their rehabilitation and social integration and their equality in society; it works to improve their personal realization and enhance their cultural and educational level and, last but not least, to protect their human rights. Contacting the deafblind and conducting research on their needs and issues is a primary objective of the regional organisations of the NADPB.

Organisations of people with visual impairments

The Union of the Blind in Bulgaria

ssb-bg.net/

The Union of the Blind in Bulgaria is a non-profit association for the protection of the specific rights and interests of the blind people and their integration in society.

The Organisation unites tens of thousands of people with lost working capacity of over 71% due to impaired sight.

The structure of the UBB includes 113 primary union organisations united in 16 regional organisations in different towns and cities in the country. The Organisation works actively in the following directions: protection of rights ; rehabilitation and technical assistive devices; education, employment and asses to information; cultural activities and sports and tourism;

National Library for the Blind

www.nllb.bg/

Established in April 1928. With time the organisation of a small group of blind people became a national braille library.

Main activities: Publishing: Braille printing and book distribution (24 000 Braille books and 38 000 eBooks); Training courses: English, German, Esperanto, PC literacy, etc.; Social events: organisation of celebrations and meetings with popular musicians, writers, singers, artists, etc.; Development and implementation of projects.

Horizons Foundation

www.horizonti.bg

Horizons Foundation was established in 1995 by a group of students and specialists with impaired vision. The main goals of the organisations: to protect the interests of the visually impaired, to assist their social integration and rehabilitation, education and training, access to information, communication, professional and personal realization, placement, accessible environment.

The mission of the organisation: fostering equality, civic participation and full social inclusion of people with visual impairments in the society.

Bulgarian Association for Training of Visually Impaired Children

The organisation provides extensive assistance in improving and developing all areas of the training of visually impaired children at home, in general and special schools; it promotes the early education and rehabilitation of visually impaired children in mainstream preschools; it helps the union of parents and offers various forms of their systematic support as equal participants in the education process; it supports the Ministry of Education and Science in its educational policy in relation to the visually impaired children.

National Association of Blind Entrepreneurs

nedev.nedko@gmail.com

Training, professional orientation and social rehabilitation of blind people; counselling and assistance in starting their own business; developing and implementing projects in favour of the blind.

Foundation "Eyes On Four Paws"

www.e4p-bg.com/

The Foundation is occupied with training of lead dogs for blind people.

Rehabilitation for the Blind Foundation /RFB/

<http://www.rehblind.org/>

Established in 1993 by friends and relatives of blind people, experts in rehabilitation of visually impaired, businessmen and journalists. The aim of the Foundation is to support rehabilitation of blind and visually impaired people in Bulgaria for achieving a full re-socialization from their part.

The subject of activity of the Foundation is:

- Financial support of newly founded Centers for general and professional rehabilitation and other structural links for the rehabilitation of blind and visually impaired.
- Helping the provision of blind and visually impaired in our country with special technical devices for the everyday life, education and professional activity.
- Stimulating the development of special rehabilitation programs, literature, reference books and scientifically applicable research.
- Helping the rehabilitation of blind with heavy visual injuries of all ages through various forms and training of their relatives for full participating in the rehabilitation process.
- Taking care of the rehabilitation of blind and visually impaired with many injuries.

The National Consumer Cooperative of the Blind

<http://www.npkbsb.com/>

The Consumer cooperative is a specialized social institution created in 1945. Its structure is unique for Bulgaria. The NCCBB unifies and is open for membership to people with vision impairment accompanied by other permanent disease or impairment which makes them unfit to work even in enterprises specialized for disabled people.

Currently the cooperative has 2127 members from all around Bulgaria.

Objectives

The Cooperative achieves its aims and objectives by developing the following activities:

1. Adjustment of the work status of disabled people in order to retire and material stimulation of members with visual impairments.
2. Increasing the number of members and their shares.
3. The cooperative may participate in the creation of inter-cooperative enterprises and unions and maintain integrating relations with other economic subjects preserving its economic and legal integrity.
4. Promotion of the implementation of the international cooperative principles and values.
5. Maintaining relations with similar cooperatives and organizations abroad and international unions.
6. Promoting the development of common cooperative market.

To achieve its aims and objectives the Cooperative

1. Provides all types of protection and social rehabilitation for the integration of its members.

2. Develops wholesale and retail trade in Bulgaria and abroad with goods that were supplied to or produced by the Cooperative, and develops all types of services and activities which are not prohibited by law.

Organisations of/for People with developmental and psychiatric disabilities

EGIDA

<http://www.egida.hit.bg/main3bg.htm>

is a voluntary, non-governmental non-for-profit organization for providing support for the people with intellectual and physical handicaps. It unifies parents, relatives and friends of people with intellectual disabilities and professionals working on the problems of the people with disabilities. "Egida" was founded in 1994 as a branch of the National Association for supporting people with mental handicaps. In the year 2000 it was registered as an independent corporate body - NGO EGIDA. It is a member of the Bulgarian Association of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (BAPID) and Inclusion International.

Key goals of the organization:

Supporting people with intellectual disabilities and their families:

- representing and defending their rights according to Bulgarian and international law;
- dissemination of knowledge;
- development of higher standards of life and services provided for people with intellectual disabilities and their inclusion in the society.

Bulgarian association for persons with intellectual disabilities (BAPID)

The mission of Bulgarian association of persons with intellectual disabilities is to defend human rights, non-discrimination and life in dignity of people with intellectual disabilities guaranteed by secured access to quality services, developmental training and employment opportunities for them.

BAPID follows its mission:

- lobbying for the interest of people with intellectual disabilities and their families at the Government, the local authorities level and the international community.
- taking active part in improvement and development of social care provision for young and adult people with intellectual disabilities placed in residential homes in order to guarantee their basic human rights.
- developing own network of community Family Counselling & Consultative Centres as alternative to social exclusion of people with intellectual disability and their families.
- promoting inclusive education and mainstreaming of children with special learning needs.
- implementing new community based social care services to address the individual needs of the intellectually disabled customers.

The Bulgarian Psychiatric Association (BPA)

www.bpabg.com/

Established in 1992 in response to the need to do away with the image of psychiatry as an agency for control over the mental life of the individuals.

Main goals of the BPA, as stated in its Statutes and By-laws, are:

- To reach the common preserving differences in the name of purity and the prestige of the profession, for the welfare of its members and the society;
- To assist in improving the mental health and psychiatric care in Bulgaria;
- To forward the independent and full of dignity practice of the psychiatric profession;
- To foster and demand high professional standards in the curative, educational, research, and other professional activity;

- To advance the principles of international organizations such as UN, its specialized bodies, the WMA, the WPA, concerning human rights, medical ethics and the standards of the psychiatric profession.

Association Autism

www.autism-bg.hit.bg/

Was formed in May 2003 by a group of parents of autistic children and adolescents. It is legally registered and has an official status. The main objective of the **Association** is to stand up for social and civil rights of children and adolescents with special needs (pervasive developmental disorder and autistic spectrum disorders) and their families; to help them to override their social isolation and successfully to join the community; to give publicity of their problems.

The main activities the **Association Autism** intends to promote include creation of Resource Centers for children and adolescents with special needs, everyday training and special education, special education of parents, family members, carers and teachers, drawing the attention of the state, non-government organizations and the great community to the children and adolescents with autistic spectrum disorders.

Evropea Foundation

www.evropea.com

Evropea Foundation is a non-governmental organisation whose mission is to draw the public attention to people suffering from panic disorder, depression and other anxiety and mental disorders that limit the freedom of choice and the personal and social life of the sufferers.

Evropea is trying to assist in the social integration and personal realisation of people who as a consequence of an illness, accident, innate physical disability or stress, are experiencing temporary or permanent difficulty to leave their homes without being accompanied by someone.

Dyslexia Association - Bulgaria

<http://www.dyslexia-bg.org/>

Improvement of the qualification of Bulgarian teachers, speech therapists and psychologists;

Development and improvement of the learning environment;

Assisting institutions, organisations, communities in the full integration of people suffering from dyslexia;

Activities oriented toward children, adolescents and adults to overcome the difficulties caused by dyslexia

S-IVVENA FOUNDATION

www.s-ivvena.com

Main objectives:

- **Opening and maintaining** centres for people with communication, emotional and behavioural disorders;
- **Diagnostics, prevention, correction, therapy** of people with speech and language, behavioural and emotional disorders;
- **Opening of specialised** clinics, speech therapy centres, information centres, clubs for people with communication disorders;
- **Developing** educational programs, managing and financing own programs, participating in national and international projects and programs;
- **Training** - specialised courses for experts and parents on the issues of people with communication and emotional-behavioural disorders;
- **Providing** appropriate scientific literature related to the issues of these people;
- **Further training** of specialists working in the field of communication disorders through organising and conducting specialised courses and trainings;

Development and production of methodological materials for treatment and correction, import and distribution of methodological tools and development of software products to train people with communication disorders;

National Centre on Addiction and Substance Abuse

www.ncn-bg.org

Aims:

- Body for
- Coordination and methodological guidance on the abuse and drug addiction, including activities related to the prevention and treatment of substance abuse;
- Control of treatment of people with substance abuse or dependence issues;
- Expertise and counselling in the field of substance abuse;
- National focus centre;

Representation of the Republic of Bulgaria in the united European information system in the substance abuse area

Association for prevention and treatment of addictions “Only Today”

zavisimostite.com

Priorities:

- Initiating public debates and dialogue with the institutions regarding the issues of dependency in Bulgaria.
- Assisting in the improvement of the legal framework in this field.
- Informing society on the issues of dependency.
- Carrying out primary prevention in schools, among minority groups and people with risk behaviour.
- Developing programs for therapeutic groups for prisoners.
- Counselling for psychoactive substance or alcohol users or addicts, as well as their parents, families and relatives.
- Developing rehabilitation programs for people with mental disorders and people with dependencies.

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS, PARENTS’ ASSOCIATIONS, CHARITIES, NETWORKS

Association “We are here, too”

<http://specialchildren.all.bg/>

Main aims:

- To assist with the protection of social and civil rights of children and adolescents suffering from different physical and mental disabilities.
- To support and create conditions for effective social inclusion of these children and adolescents, overcoming their social isolation with a view to full personal realisation.
- To support and provide the exchange of information about the social practice in this field.
- To promote the issues of children and adolescents with physical and mental disabilities.

Karin Dom Foundation

<http://karindom.org>

Karin Dom Foundation supports the social inclusion of children with special needs and their families through professional services, advocacy, and raising public awareness.

Objectives of the Foundation

- to provide values based professional services to children with special needs and to their families in order to prevent children from being abandoned in institutions;
- to help successful inclusion of children into the life of the community.
- to disseminate good practices by providing trainings and consultations to parents and professionals working with children with special needs and adhering to international standards.

Karin Dom works with children from 0 months to 18 years old with physical disabilities, learning difficulties, mental disorders, sensory problems, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, and children with multiple disabilities. Around 150 children per year (up to 30 children a day) have consultations, physiotherapy, special classes, art and music sessions, swimming, and integrated activities with other children both at Karin Dom and in the community.

A professional team (physiotherapists, speech therapists, special education teachers, psychologists, social worker, pediatrician) provides individual therapy/teaching plan at the Centre. They also visit schools and kindergartens, and goes on home visits, provide training for parents and for other professionals working with children with disabilities.

Association of Parents of Hearing Impaired Children (APHIC)

<http://www.ardusbg.com/>

Established on 23rd February 1992 in Sofia. It was a natural process resulting from the increasing needs of the parents of the hearing impaired children to share their problems and to look for alternatives for integrating the children into the groups of children of their age. The main functions of the Association are to support the children and their families through organizing speech and hearing rehabilitation, trainings, cultural events, encouraging the children in visiting the public schools aiming at facilitating the process of their integration.

In 1993 Bulgarian APHIC has become an associate member of the European Federation of Parents of Hearing Impaired Children (FEPEDA).

Association of Parents of Children with Epilepsy

<http://www.frde.org/>

The leading motive in establishing the Association of Parents of Children with Epilepsy was overcoming the negative consequences of the disease and the integration of children, adolescents and adults suffering from epilepsy in society.

This condition is not well known yet and it causes fear and lack of understanding. This is the main reason why children do not attend kindergarten and mainstream schools and young people cannot find work. These factors make an impact on the development and normal communication which, in its turn, leads to disease being hidden to avoid these consequences. That's why a major objective of APCE is overcoming the stigma of the disease and the integration of those suffering from epilepsy, as well as their treatment.

During the years of its existence, the Organisation has very actively participated in the change of the legislation in the part concerning people with disabilities. To overcome the isolation, in 2005 an education program was started in schools and for social science programs at Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski". Currently APCE includes 847 families from all over the country and it is constantly growing.

Kids with developmental problems Foundation

<http://www.dpkids.org/>

The Foundation was established in 2006. Its initiators are parents of kids with developmental problems, who know the difficulties in raising them up, in their education and medical treatment and are willing to help the other families with children with cerebral palsy with attendant sensory damages, epileptic syndrome, intellectual and behavioral troubles, etc.

The main tasks we set ourselves are:

- Inform the parents about the possibilities of medical treatment and rehabilitation
- Provide moral and material support to all in need
- Support the children's integration in order to help their normal development

Short-term goals of the Foundation:

- Build a Center for active rehabilitation, therapeutic activities and care of kids with developmental problems.
- Create an information department as a part of the center with a data base of various information regarding the rehabilitation and medical treatment of kids with developmental problems in Bulgaria and abroad.

Long-term goals of the Foundation::

- Develop a center for early diagnostics of kids' developmental problems;
- Create a Montessori kindergarten and school, equipped according to the latest achievements, with rehabilitation halls, swimming pool, etc., where kids with developmental problems and kids without health problems will grow up all together.

Found a club of donors - leading Bulgarian and International companies

Parents' Association of Children with Cerebral Palsy and Children with Congenital and Hereditary disabilities

http://roditelite.hit.bg/index_files/page0001.htm

The Organisation was established in 1999 and is a member of the Municipal Council for Rehabilitation and Social Integration of People with Disabilities with Varna Municipality. Its aim is to provide favourable environment for prevention, early diagnostics and identification, adequate and good treatment and rehabilitation, training, integrated education, social and professional realization and improvement of quality of life for children with cerebral palsy and children with congenital, acquired or hereditary disabilities, as well as for their families.

The Association's members number nearly 200 parents of children with different diseases causing permanent and irreversible disabilities: epilepsy, progressive muscular dystrophy, childhood schizophrenia, Down syndrome, autism, as well as cerebral palsy in children.

The Association organizes summer schools for children with disabilities; it conducts trainings of volunteers on art therapy, occupational therapy; it works on Counterpart International - Bulgaria program to create and manage a social enterprise.

Association's experts have developed their own methods for hypotherapy, hydrotherapy, art therapy and occupational therapy.

Association of Parents of Children with Down Syndrome

<http://www.downsyndromebg.com/en/about>

The Association of Parents of Children with Down Syndrome is an organization founded with the only aim to help parents of children living with the syndrome in their raising and educating and to cooperate for their successful social adaptation and integration in the society. Among Association's priorities are: render assistance to the parents since child's birth and introduction to the modern achievements in managing with the restrictions that the syndrome forces, aiming decrease of the abandonment of the children in institutions for medical - social care; support in finding specialists - doctors, physiotherapists, speech therapists and special therapists; hold up in accepting children in regular kinder gardens and schools; cooperation and support of children and youth with Down syndrome for successful realization in the society - finding proper job and participating in social life.

The organization has for its aim to fight for ruining the negative stereotypes for the people with Down syndrome and for improving the attitude towards them and accepting them in the society, as well as for building their positive image with information for their real potential for development, capabilities, talents, successes and achievements, for their unique human makings. In general, the aim of the Association is the cooperation with other organizations interested in building up and development of a state system for early intervention and education of children with special education necessities, as well as forming an attitude in a tolerant manner towards people with special needs.

Mothers Against Drugs Association

<http://antidrugbg.com/>

Objectives: with the joint efforts of mothers, fathers and relatives of dependent children, as well as supporters, the Association fights to save the children in Plovdiv; it enhances the public awareness on the issue; it works for a change in the state policy in the field. The Association is the result of a natural, burning need to unite the suffering families that want to help other families in order to avoid mistakes and to be able to help their children in a meaningful way.

Types of approach +funding

Until the beginning of the 1990s disabled people in Bulgaria were considered mainly as medical cases and passive recipients of care and social benefits. Their chances to contribute to the society, personal development and professional realization had been hardly considered.

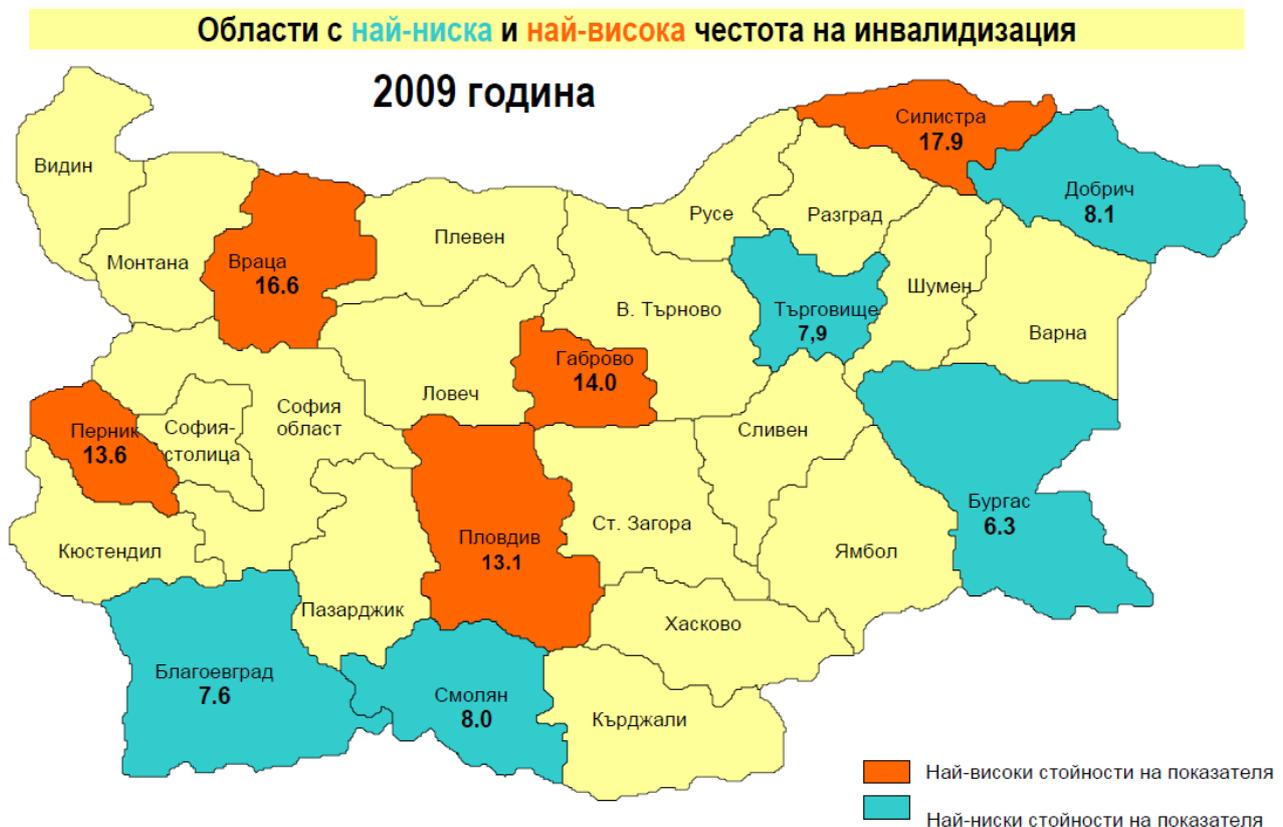
Currently the Employment Agency, along with the MLSP run disability programmes that support the demand side of the labour market. The existing welfare schemes and benefits for special enterprises account for the preferred employment in supported facilities usually managed by non-disabled people (There are 91 specialized enterprises employing 14,572 disabled people).

Substantial funding allocated for mainstream employers is not tailored to the needs of individual job applicants, which significantly diminishes its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. Though the employment authorities proclaim support to inclusive employment, lack of accessibility and individual on-the-job support still makes people with disabilities outsiders on the open labour market.

However, there is an obvious shift of the governmental bodies and agencies to introducing more effective mechanisms for ensuring real employment for people with disabilities. Generally there is a positive tendency from paying social benefits to providing employment.

II.2 Statistical Data

Regions of Bulgaria by the lowest and the highest frequency of disabilities occurrence (data for 2009)



General remarks

Generally, the number of Bulgarian disability research documents is not very big. It was only in 2001 when the National Census data included disabilities as an indicator in the data collection forms. However, finding statistical data with regard to the number of the disabled by types of disabilities is not an easy task, as it seems the updated data (if any) by categories of the disabled has not been published for wide public and is often subject to confidentiality restrictions.

Available occupational data by category

The registered job seekers are mostly people with common diseases and lost capacity up to 50-70%. They have largely maintained their capacity, which enables them to find employment easier, except for jobs related to heavy physical exertion. These people with disabilities have greater chances to be successful on the labor market.

Number by category

Available occupational data by category

The registered job seekers are mostly people with so called “common diseases” and lost capacity up to 50-70%. They have largely maintained their capacity, which enables them to find employment easier, except for jobs related to heavy physical exertion. These people with disabilities have greater chances to be successful on the labor market.

People with physical disabilities are about 20% of the total number of the registered unemployed disabled. They can hardly be offered a suitable job, moreover, they are very often unable to start work due to the lack of accessible environment.

The proportion of people with intellectual and mental disabilities registered as job seekers is about 11%. Their chances for employment are negligible. Employers refuse to hire them and their only option remains specialized enterprises and/or home-based work.

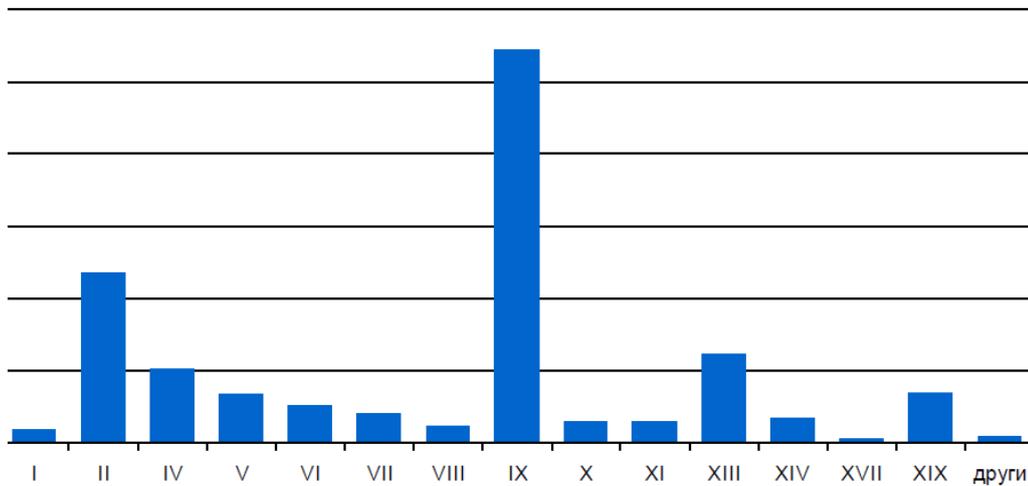
People with sensory impairments within the group of the registered unemployed with disabilities are nearly 9% and their chances for employment are very small.

Totally in Bulgaria there are nearly 17,000 people with severe visual impairments; of them only 10% have job. The diagrams and tables below provide more statistical data.

Primary disability of people by diseases (ICD-10) & loss of labour capacity (in 2009)

ICD-10	Classes	over 90%	71%–90%	50%–70%	under 50%	Total
	Total	16330	24082	21019	7647	69078
	I.Certain infectious and parasitic diseases	57	666	145	42	910
	II.Neoplasms	5662	5381	701	89	11833
	IV.Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases	343	1457	2534	802	5136
	V.Mental and behavioural disorders	789	1204	1147	208	3348
	VI.Diseases of the nervous system	683	728	797	361	2569
	VII.Diseases of the eye and adnexa	552	554	732	244	2082
	VIII.Diseases of the ear and mastoid process	28	345	526	221	1120
	IX.Diseases of the circulatory system	5766	9710	8715	2968	27159
	X.Diseases of the respiratory system	70	231	664	445	1410
	XI.Diseases of the digestive system	267	529	492	148	1436
	XIII.Diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue	874	1980	2249	1053	6156
	XIV.Diseases of the genitourinary system	321	504	677	237	1739
	XVII.Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities	17	68	169	58	312
	XIX.Injury, poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes	865	607	1267	693	3432
	Other classes	36	118	204	78	436

Persons with disabilities in 2009 by class of diseases ICD-10



Dedicated expenditure

Disability pension is the main source of livelihood for 72% of the disabled population.

The main sources of funding of activities related to the implementation of the national Strategy and programmes aiming at the inclusive measures and enhancing employment of the disabled is the state budget and municipal budgets. The largest additional source of funding for these policies is the EU Structural Funds, through their respective Operational Programmes - Human Resources Development, Regional Development, Competitiveness, etc. In 2010 under the National Action Plan for Employment 6,857,973 BGN (3,506,426 Euro) were paid for ensuring employment of 2362 persons under labour contracts.

Of the above funds 1,805,017 BGN were foreseen for providing employment to young persons with disabilities including soldiers with disabilities (up to the age of 29). By the end of 2010 over 1080 disabled of this group were employed in newly created job positions.

There is no public data available with regard to the total expenditures provided under specific programmes.

National coordinating bodies

National Assembly - Labor and Social Policy Committee - is at the forefront of the adoption, amendment or repeal of laws related to employment and integration of people with disabilities. www.parliament.bg/en/parliamentarycommittees/members/231

Council of Ministers - determines the state inclusion policy in respect to people with disabilities. www.government.bg

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - develops, conducts and coordinates the state policy on employment and vocational training of unemployed and employed persons with special abilities. Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy directly organize, coordinate and participate in developing the National Action Plan on Employment and monitors its implementation, defines financial estimations and develops budgets for the policy implementation in its field. The Ministry monitors the implementation of activities and measures related to employment of disabled people in regard to the time framework in

interaction with other departments and bodies and manage available resources for these actions. www.mlsp.government.bg

National Council for Integration of People with Disabilities established in 2005 at the Council of Ministers by the Law on Social Integration of People with Disabilities to coordinate co-operation of relevant authorities and organisations in the development and application of national policy on integration of people with disabilities. Its main functions:

- support and assistance in formulation and implementation of policies for integration of people with disabilities;
- research and needs analysis of related to the inclusion of people with disabilities and proposals to the Parliament for policy amendments with regard to enhancing social and economic efficiency of this process;
- discussions and adoption of opinions related to drafting legislation documents in the field of integration of people with disabilities;
- promoting and assisting collaboration between state, municipal, public and economic bodies and NGOs of/for people with disabilities to support their activities in the field of disability inclusion. www.saveti.government.bg/web/cc_11/1

Agency for People with Disabilities has the following competencies:

- establishing and maintaining the information database for people with disabilities;
- keeping a register of specialized enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities;
- developing programmes and fund projects to stimulate economic initiatives of/for people with disabilities and enterprise development in the interests of people with disabilities;
- develop programmes and fund projects for rehabilitation and social integration of people with disabilities; finance targeted projects addressing specialized enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities;
- provides funds to employers under Art.25 of the Law on Social Integration of People with Disabilities. <http://ahu.mlsp.government.bg/>

National Employment Agency - implements programmes, projects and other promotional activities, including national and international financing. The Agency supervises and provides the most of the information and employment mediation services and training of the unemployed. www.az.government.bg

Social Assistance Agency - performs social assessment of the individual needs of people with disabilities, their opportunities for integration into public life including opportunities for their employment, training and retraining. www.asp.government.bg

General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency - supervises the compliance with the national employment legislation including measures on the on employment promotion. www.gli.government.bg

National Council for Tripartite Cooperation is the body established to align policies of both state and non-state actors on the labour market. Its role is to represent interests of employers and trade unions and to ensure social acceptability of the policy action. www.saveti.government.bg/web/cc_13/1

Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology - is in charge of providing access of disabled people to transport and communication services through

development and supervision of relevant regulations and standards.
www.mtitc.government.bg

Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works - is in charge of ensuring accessible environment (including architectural environment), develops relevant regulations, rules, etc. and supervises their implementation. www.mrrb.government.bg

National Social Security Institute - manages the state social social security, collects social social security contributions, administers, determines the size of and pays unemployment benefits, register labour contracts and their amendments. www.nssi.bg

Demographic profiles

Among people with disabilities, 51% of men and 49% of women have a low education level (up to basic). Among the disabled completed secondary education 43% are men and 42% are women. The corresponding values for people with disabilities graduated from higher education establishments are 6% (men) and nearly 10% (women).

About 10% of the disabled live alone, 30% with another person and nearly 60% live with more than one family member.

The table and diagrams below provide more statistical data related to people with disabilities in Bulgaria.

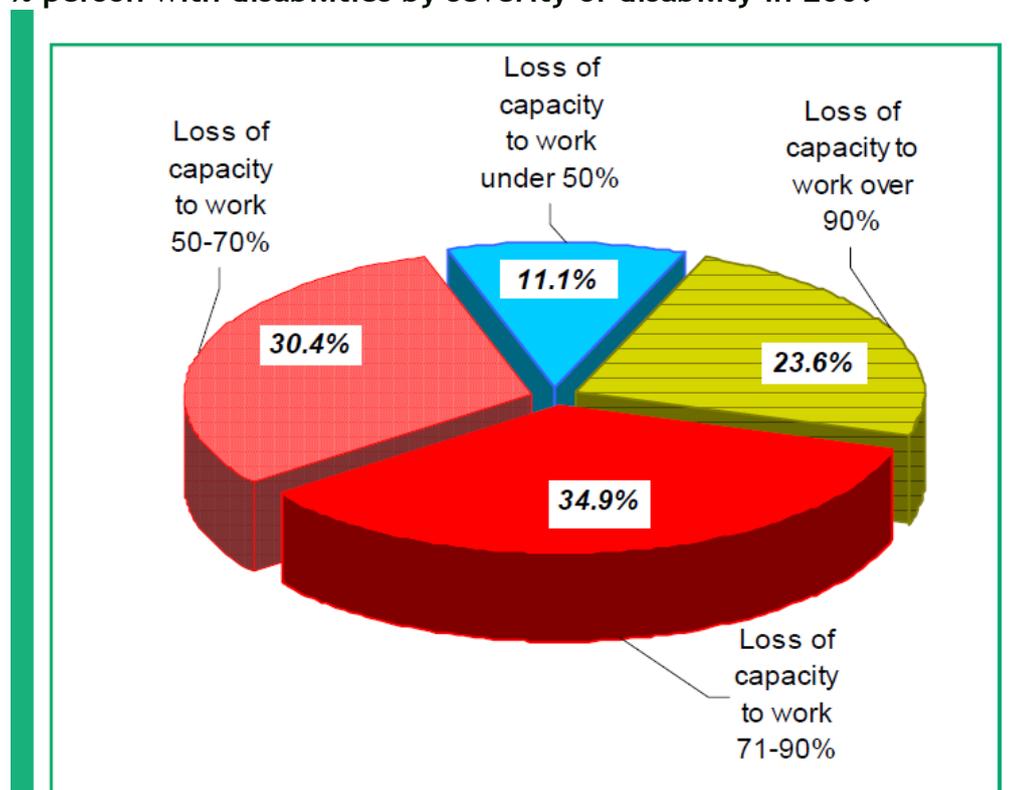
Primary Disability of Persons over 16 Years of Age

Year	<i>Loss of capacity to work</i>								<i>total</i>	
	<i>Over 90%</i>		<i>71% – 90%</i>		<i>50% – 70%</i>		<i>under 50%</i>		<i>number</i>	<i>per 1000 population over 16 years of age</i>
	<i>number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>%</i>		
2001	29335	36.8	31394	39.3	14847	18.6	4227	5.3	79803	12.1
2002	35249	34.8	40702	40.2	19578	19.3	5824	5.7	101353	15.3
2003	35535	30.6	47834	41.1	24582	21.1	8414	7.2	116365	17.6
2005	28451	24.7	44452	38.6	28837	25.0	13438	11.7	115178	17.5
2007	16376	23.1	23979	33.8	20531	29.0	9973	14.1	70859	10.8
2008	15339	24.3	22111	35.1	18544	29.4	7093	11.2	63087	9.7
2009	16330	23.6	24082	34.9	21019	30.4	7647	11.1	69078	10.7

Persons medically recognized as disabled by age group, gender and severity of disability in 2009

Age	Loss of labour capacity														
	more than 90%			71% - 81%			50 %- 70%			up to 50%			TOTAL		
	ALL	M	F	ALL	M	F	ALL	M	F	ALL	M	F	ALL	M	F
16-19	0,4	0,5	0,3	0,6	0,7	0,5	0,6	0,7	0,5	0,1	0,1	0,1	1,7	1,9	1,5
20-29	0,6	0,7	0,5	1,7	2,0	1,4	1,1	1,3	0,9	0,2	0,3	0,2	3,6	4,2	2,9
30-39	1,0	1,1	0,9	2,9	3,2	2,7	2,7	2,7	2,7	0,5	0,4	0,6	7,1	7,3	6,9
40-49	1,9	2,1	1,7	4,9	4,9	5,0	6,9	6,4	7,3	1,4	1,0	1,8	15,2	14,5	15,9
50-59	5,7	6,4	4,9	12,9	12,2	13,7	18,0	15,5	20,6	3,5	2,3	4,6	40,1	36,4	43,8
60+	12,1	12,8	11,4	11,7	12,8	10,6	7,0	8,7	5,3	1,6	1,4	1,8	32,3	35,6	29,0
	21,6	23,5	19,7	34,7	35,6	33,8	36,3	35,3	37,3	7,3	5,6	9,1	100,0	100,0	100,0

% person with disabilities by severity of disability in 2009



Research + policy resources

The domestic researches are few in number, at least as far as the ones made available to the public are concerned. Most of the research findings come from internationally funded sources. Probably the little interest of local research institutes to study disabilities from social perspective, including employment, during the past decade can be accounted for by insufficient funding on the part of the governmental bodies. A number of studies financed by private donors have been conducted but, unfortunately, with almost zero post research actions.

In 2004 there was published a report resulted from a research of the European Research and Forecasting Group on various aspects of the national disability policy 'People with disabilities and their rights in the European Union: Bulgaria and its "invisible" citizens'. It stated that disabled people in Bulgaria were not included in the open labour market and that the employment policies affected positively those people with disabilities who had no hard accessibility problems or difficulties in performing daily activities.

In 2005 the National Statistical Institute performed a Disability Research (under a EUROSTAT project) aimed at determining the health and social status of disabled people in Bulgaria and the possibilities for their integration but refrained from making policy recommendations.

Further, in 2006, Open Society Institute in collaboration with the Bulgarian Association of People with Intellectual Disabilities conducted a study on access to education and employment of people with mental difficulties. The follow-up report, which revealed almost 100% unemployment rate among the target group, contained 36 recommendations to policy makers.

In 2007 the Centre for International Rehabilitation performed a profound research covered 14 European countries including Bulgaria (publication 'The International Disability Rights Monitor 2007'). The IDRM 2007 reviews the employment policies in Bulgaria since 2000 and programmes running by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the National Employment Agency. Noting these efforts to enhance competitiveness of people with disabilities on the labour market the report points out that for 72% of people with disabilities in Bulgaria the disability pension is their only source of income; 38% receive social welfare benefits mostly in-cash, 6% have a personal assistant, and another 4% benefit from the social welfare services.

A recent research of the Agency for People with Disabilities "Analysis of the state of disabled people in Bulgaria" reveals the reasons of the still unsatisfactory level of employment of people with disabilities:

- social isolation and lack of motivation: the target groups express the view that the employment policies regarding people with disabilities are not sufficiently flexible; people's confidence in the effectiveness of employment offices is low, that is why such a small part of the unemployed persons with disabilities have registered; the disabled think that employers do not observe the provisions and decisions of the Regional and National Expert Medical Commission, most of disabled persons consider that a key factor for successful employment is the willingness and ability of the employer to adapt the working environment to the need of a concrete person with disabilities;
- inadequate attitude of employers to the target group: information gathered in the employment offices shows that employers formally allocate job positions for people with disabilities but in fact reluctantly appoint them. Usually these jobs are occupied by non-disabled people because or when applying for them people with disabilities face unrealistic demands from employers. Unfortunately, this process is exacerbated in the context of current economic crisis;

- inaccessible workplace: one of the hardest problems for people with disabilities is providing an accessible working environment. An appropriate solution has not yet been found. There has been created an adequate legal basis, specific requirements and a number of regulations concerning standards of technical design have been introduced, such as requirements for building accessible environment in urban areas, regulation of traffic with light signals, placing traffic lights at intersections located along the accessible routes, sound signals for the traffic light system, etc. A number of legal provisions have been adopted to provide physical access to the workplace, housing, administrative and cultural buildings, etc. However, the proper implementation of these provisions has not happened yet due to the lack of financial resources and proactive monitoring of the correct implementation of the obligations by the local authorities, district councils, government agencies, etc;
- lack of appropriate work environment adjusted to the particular needs of people with disabilities: one of the reasons of the weak participation of people with disabilities in the labor market is the reluctance of employers to make additional expenditures to ensure adequate working environment corresponding to the functional capabilities of a disabled individual. At present only in the Law on Social Integration of People with Disabilities certain measures are envisaged to financially support employers for adaptation of workplaces to the needs of employees with disabilities;
- low public awareness: the appropriate attitude of the society toward people with disabilities is an important prerequisite for their successful inclusion. The wide community is still dominated by misconceptions and, unfortunately, indifference and negativism. This necessitates the implementation of long-term strategies to address these "subjective" barriers to change stereotypes in perception of disability. A very important point in this approach is that people with disabilities are represented as vectors of positive roles and as equal citizens in a democratic society. The campaign to change public attitudes must go hand in hand with solving all conceptual problems related to disability;
- low qualifications of people with disabilities: a structural characteristic of this group is the predominant share of people without professional qualifications. Their share in total number of unemployed disabled workers in 2007 was 50.9%, followed by unemployed workers with low qualification (25.4%) and, finally, qualified professionals - 23.7%. Professional training of people with disabilities is carried out extensively in the special schools or in the few specialized training centers for children with visual or hearing disabilities, where the choice of profession is very limited. People with permanent disability receive retraining primarily in specialized enterprises and cooperatives, and usually it does not conform to the requirements of the labor market. The Law provides funds for vocational training and retraining of employees, but employers rarely exercise this option - in fact it happens only provided that the employed worker meets their requirements of the employer who intends to keep it for a relatively long employment period.

Public / Private

Organisations and bodies providing services for people with disabilities are mainly public. No data is available of private services.

Independent living (included in the overview of the organisations above)

Center for Independent Living - Sofia (CIL) is a non-profit organisation for people with disabilities. It has been operating in Bulgaria since 1995. It actively advocates the independent living values and inclusive models.

According to the survey of the NSI within the mentioned above EUROSTAT project In relation to the degree of disability condition, 20% have very limited independence possibilities in their daily routine, 43% experience certain difficulties in exercising autonomous living skills and 37% do not.

In this respect, 27% receive assistance from others, but only 22% think that help is sufficient. About 10% of the disabled live alone, 30% with another person and nearly 60% live with more than one family member.

III. National Employment Consultancy Services

III.1 Extent of consultancy services

Public

The general observation is that employment consultancy services are now in process of development. They present now a very topical issue on the agenda of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Providing employment mediation and consultancy is among the measures Long-term Strategy for Employment of People with Disabilities for 2011 - 2020. adopted by the Council of Ministers. By the end of May 2011 250 mediator-consultants should be appointed at 105 regional Labour Offices and 145 local branches of the National Employment Agency under OP Human Resources. This measure is aimed at strengthening the capacity of the National Employment Agency with regard to seeking employment for people with disabilities and establishing contacts with business partners to ensure recruitment of the disabled.

Private

No data has been found with regard to availability of private employment consultancy services for people with disabilities.

Community / Voluntary

There is a lot of NGOs which claim to provide consultancy services to people with disabilities with regard to searching employment, legal advice, financial aid and information access. It is difficult to assess the extent of their activity. Generally, keeping in mind the low employment rate among the disabled, it could be assumed that the summarized level of their efforts is somewhat moderate, without underestimating the importance of efforts of each actor in the field.

Usually employment consultancy services provided by voluntary organizations are temporary and operate within a limited period of funding under European or national programmes.

Self-advocacy

Some organisations of people with disabilities undertake initiatives related to consultancy and support in searching employment, e.g. through local or EU projects. One of the most active in the field is Horizonti (Horizons) Foundation which is a non-profit organization established to assist people with visual impairments in education and professional development. Thus, recently a specialized employment agency for blind and visually impaired has been launched in Sofia within a project of Horizonti Foundation for specialized social services for people with visual disabilities (supported by the European Social Fund). Another example of self-advocacy is consulting services and occupational support provided on demand by the National Association of Blind Entrepreneurs.

III.2 Nature of consultancy services

Assessment

So far assessment of persons with disabilities with regard to establishing suitable employment opportunities has a fragmentary character. The IDRМ 2007 states, as the main legal barrier to inclusion of people with disabilities in Bulgaria, the disability assessment regulations designed on the basis of medical condition without considering level of functioning: the focus is on the impairment and inability to function called 'lost capacity to work'. Moreover, all disability provisions in the Bulgarian legislation refer to "persons with 50% lost capacity to work" certified by the Expert Medical Labour Panel. No specific certified instruments are applied for social assessment which is performed on the basis of medical expertise by the provisions of the Law on Integration of People with disabilities. The social assessment aims at identification the rehabilitation needs of the disabled, their possibilities for professional development and social integration. However, the process of social assessment is not very clear and has repeatedly been criticized for having a subjective nature. Hopefully, this situation will be shifted towards real assessment of capacities and abilities in the not very distant future. In the new Long-term Strategy for Employment of People with Disabilities for 2011 - 2020 the assessment of the disabled to match various jobs profiles is set among the measures to provide appropriate forms of training and employment.

Eligibility

No licenses are required for those providing consultancy services. If, however, a company performs employment mediation, it must be registered with the National Employment Agency.

Placement

In 2010 through recruitment mediation services of the National Employment Agency 2214 people with disabilities were employed through the local branches and regional offices of the Agency. However, specific placement services for people with disabilities are not developed.

Supports

Various measures to support employment of people with disabilities are covered by specific national programs and strategic plans. The most important of them which are currently in force are presented below.

National Strategy on Equal Opportunities for Disabled People (2008-2015)

Objective 1: Creating accessible environment adjusted to the needs of the disabled

- Accessible Environment for Persons with Disabilities: physical access to public buildings, sports and cultural sites; training of designers, investors, builders, etc to apply the principles and standards for accessibility:

- Accessible transport

- Accessible information and communications

Objective 2: Changing the pattern of care for children with disabilities - from placing them in specialized institutions to the care in a family environment

Objective 3: Guaranteed access for people with disabilities to quality education

Objective 4: Providing comprehensive medical and social rehabilitation

Objective 5: Expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities and their inclusion in various programs to provide them with suitable jobs:

- Increased effectiveness of employment programs at national and local level

- Incentives for employers to provide long-term, quality jobs, improved services offered by the labour offices to employers and an increased number of jobs
- Changes of employers' attitudes regarding the employment of disadvantaged persons
- Incentives for employers to adapt the working environment to the needs of people with disabilities
- Encouraging vocational education and training of people with disabilities
- Independent economic activity and entrepreneurship of people with disabilities
- Sustainable model for development of social enterprises

Objective 6: Priority development of social services in the community. Development of alternative forms of service

Objective 7: Providing equal opportunities for sport, recreation, tourism and participation in cultural life

Objective 7: Increasing public awareness about the problems and opportunities of disabled people and changing public attitudes towards them

The main source of funding of activities in implementation of the Strategy is the state budget and municipal budgets. The additional sources of funding for these policies are the EU Structural Funds, through their respective Operational Programmes - Human Resources Development, Regional Development, Competitiveness, Transportation, etc and the PHARE programme.

Long-term Strategy for Employment of People with Disabilities for 2011 -2020

The main objective: creating conditions for full integration of people with disabilities in the normal economic and social life of the country.

Operational objectives:

1. Providing employment to unemployed persons with disabilities of working age in order to enable them to overcome their social isolation and to ensure their full integration into society;
2. Creating prerequisites for conducting a separate, independent life of persons with disabilities;
3. Achieving effective social inclusion of people with disabilities through their realization on the free labour market.

Activities and measures:

1. Providing appropriate forms of training and retraining: Analysis of employment opportunities for people with various disabilities; determining the types of suitable labour activities for people with disabilities according to their capacities, abilities and skills; preparation and implementation of training programs; establishment of training centers; adaptation of existing centers to perform an adequate learning process; providing places for practice activities; encourage employers to conduct training and re-training courses for people with disabilities; training of employers and employees to work with people with disabilities.
2. Providing appropriate forms of employment: Implementation of strategic and operational objectives of the strategy can be achieved by introducing the three forms of employment for people with disabilities: 1) Sheltered; 2) Supported; 3) Independent business of people with disabilities
 - 1) Measures for sheltered employment:
 - Creating the conditions for introducing this form of employment;
 - Developing a mechanism for determining economic sectors for sheltered employment;
 - Develop a system of incentives for local administrations to introduce this type of employment;
 - Presentation of this new form of employment;
 - Introduction of individual approach in determining the type of work for every person with disabilities.

- 2) Measures for supported employment:
 - A. Specialized enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities: • Analysis of existing system of supported employment in specialized enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities; • Establishing clear rules for the functioning of specialized enterprises and cooperatives; • Creating conditions for strengthening and enhancing the competitiveness of specialized enterprises and cooperatives; • Developing incentive mechanisms for employers of specialized enterprises and cooperatives; • Introduction of individual approach in determining the type of work for every person with disabilities.
 - B. Inclusive employment: • Introduction of quotas for all employers of inclusive working environment including state and municipal administrations; • Increasing the effectiveness of employment programmes at national and local levels through implementation of measures to create sustainable jobs and permanent employment for people with disabilities on the labor market; • Incentives for employers to provide longer-term, quality employment; • Improving and extending the services offered by the labour offices, including social enterprises; • Changing the attitudes of employers regarding the employment of disadvantaged persons; • Providing additional incentives for employers hiring people with disabilities; • Providing additional incentives for employers to adapt the workplace to the needs of people with disabilities.
 - C. Home-based and distant form of employment: • Creating the conditions for introducing this form of employment; • Developing a mechanism for determining the economic sectors for this form of employment; • Developing a system of incentives for employers providing home-based and distant employment; • Raising public awareness of this new form of employment; • Introduction of individual approach in determining the type of work for every person with disabilities; • Providing incentives for people with disabilities who practice this form of employment.
- 3) Independent business activity of people with disabilities: • Analysis of existing conditions for independent economic activity of people with disabilities; • Develop a flexible system to encourage entrepreneurship; • Creating better conditions for starting own business by people with disabilities; • Creating the conditions for expanding the already started business of people with disabilities.
3. Providing an accessible environment:
 - 1) Overcoming architectural barriers;
 - 2) Accessible transport;
 - 3) Accessible information and communications environment
 - 4) Recruitment mediation: • Creation of specialized employment mediation (agencies for recruitment and assistance) and licensing of job providers;
 - Studying and capturing territorial map to establish a National Information Bank;
 - Providing incentives to the agencies for recruitment and assistance;
 - Developing an assessment methodology for employment of people with disabilities;
 - Conducting awareness campaigns.

National Programme for Employment and Training for people with disabilities for 2011

The main objective of the programme:

Increasing employability and ensuring employment of unemployed people with disabilities registered at the Labour Offices as well as of people successfully completed drug addiction treatment as a prerequisite for overcoming social exclusion and for their full integration into society.

Immediate objectives of the Programme:

1. Creating conditions for employment of unemployed people with disabilities registered at the Labour Offices, subject to the Programme;
2. Increasing employability of the target group of the Programme through providing training;
3. Increasing public awareness about the problems and opportunities of the target groups, in order to change public attitudes and eliminate stereotypes;
4. Encouraging employers to hire unemployed people from the target groups of the Programme;
5. Development of partnerships at all levels in the implementation of the Programme.
6. Creating the conditions for a dignified and independent life for people from the target groups of the Programme.

Target groups of the Programme:

1. Unemployed people of working age with disabilities registered in the Labour Offices, a priority shall be given to the following groups: people with more than 71% disability ('lost capacity'); soldiers with disabilities (this group includes unemployed disabled soldiers and those who acquired disabilities at the defense of the country with 50% disability or more); □ people with sensory impairments; people with mental disabilities
2. Unemployed people successfully completed drug addiction treatment (confirmed by a medical certificate)

Eligible employers under the Programme:

1. Regional and municipal administrations, municipal enterprises;
2. Social Assistance Directorates;
3. Private and / or state enterprises, companies and other institutions, non-profit entities, including organizations and people with disabilities;
4. Specialized enterprises and cooperatives for the disabled;
5. Labour Offices.

Components of the program: 1. Training and 2. Employment

1. The training is organized in accordance with the specificity of the unemployed target groups and needs of employers for jobs to be created under the Programme:
 - motivational training for acquiring skills for proactive labor market behaviour and professional realization
 - training for acquisition and improvement of key competencies
 - training for acquiring professional qualification in accordance with the capabilities of the target unemployed and the needs of employers.
2. The priority is given to those successfully passed the training under Component 1. Employers create job positions for 24 months and submit an application to the Labour Offices. Priority is given to employers who have contracted for funding under provision of the Law on Integration of People with Disabilities for ensuring accessible work environment and/or adjustment of equipment for people with disabilities.

Zero-interests loan for people with disabilities

This national programme covers people with disabilities received an investment and/ or credit under the project 'Micro Credit Guarantee Funds' of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The programme aims at the development of entrepreneurial attitude and support of people with disabilities; creating conditions and support of people with disabilities in developing own business; stimulation of self-employment and creation of new permanent jobs.

Welfare and legal

The state budget provides funds amounting to 50% percent of the social social security contributions paid by employer contributions (state social social security, compulsory health

social security and supplementary mandatory pension social security) for disabled workers employed by specialized enterprises and cooperatives for persons with disabilities, which are members of national umbrella organizations of people with disabilities.

Specialised enterprises, occupational-health establishments, single production units and cooperatives enjoy tax benefits, regulated by the Law on the corporate income taxation and by the Law on the natural persons' income taxation.

People with permanent disabilities receiving incomes from employment/ occupation, enjoy taxation benefits under the same the Law. Apart from that they are entitled to financial support depending on the individual needs (established by the social assessment - see above) for a number of services, including employment and vocational training.

Under Article 42 of the Law on Integration of People with Disabilities, disabled people can apply for a "social inclusion monthly allowance". The amount is based on disability type, working capacity or otherwise incapacitating aspects of their disability. In addition to this allowance, disabled people receive support towards transportation costs, information and telecommunication services, education, rehabilitation services, accessible materials and medical prescriptions.

People with disabilities can apply for individual grants for education and rehabilitation, purchase of personal motor vehicle and adaptation of a parking place, adaptation of personal housing, hire of a personal assistant. Disabled people are entitled to priority access to council housing application.

Monitoring and follow-up

Only activities of companies which, along with consultancy services, are involved in job search brokerage, are monitored by the National Employment Agency. However, there are no specific requirements for such companies with regard to people with disabilities. Each company involved in employment mediation must submit periodically reports on the results of their activity.

Employer support

Under Article 25 of the Law on Integration of People with Disabilities, employers may apply for various support schemes to the Employment Agency providing they retain the disabled employee for more than 3 years. This includes funding schemes to adapt the working conditions, equipment and premises. Under Article 26, they may enjoy co-financing for the payment of social security contributions (30%) for a disabled employee.

Employers opening job positions and recruiting under labour contract unemployed disabled and young people with disabilities up to 29 years old, including soldiers with disabilities, receive funds from the state budget for salary and all health and social security contributions for the period of up to 6 months.

See also section IV.2 Employment Law

III.3 Training and support

Vocational training

In order to raise the employability of disabled people a number of vocational training programmes have been launched. Usually they cover specific skills such as accounting and business related training, foreign languages, computer skills, etc. and last 2-3 months. Most often they are based on targeted initiatives and projects for unemployed people with disabilities. Training providers licensed by the Vocational Training Agency are eligible for funding.

Rehabilitation

Until recently rehabilitation of people with disabilities meant mainly medical measures to reduce the effect of impairment. Law on Integration of People with disabilities describes the rehabilitation of the disabled in terms of medical rehabilitation and social rehabilitation. The medical rehabilitation is defined as medical activity carried out by multidisciplinary teams including supportive pharmacotherapy, physical therapy, speech and visual therapy, kinesitherapy, ergotherapy, psychotherapy, occupational therapy, prescription of supportive devices and facilities. The social rehabilitation according to the Law “presents establishment of abilities for independent living through rehabilitation of the visual, hearing, speaking and moving capacities, psychological assistance, provision of social services and other activities”. People with more than 90% percent lost capacity to work (severe permanent disabilities) are entitled once a year to a 14-day rehabilitation course paid with the integration allowance - by reimbursement - under the Law on Integration of People with Disabilities. The National Social Security Institute also provides ‘recovery treatment’ for workers with disabilities who make social security contributions and are referred to facilities run by the institute.

In Bulgaria there is a number of NGOs working for rehabilitation of the people with disabilities. The rehabilitation training is not structured at the national level. The recently adopted Long-term Strategy for Employment of People with Disabilities states that people with disabilities must have access to appropriate forms of vocational and rehabilitation training and employment opportunities for them must be advertised on the open labor market.

Supported employment/quotas

Employment quotas for people are determined by article 315 the Labour Code of the Republic of Bulgaria: An employer with more than 50 employees shall provide annually jobs suitable for people with disabilities, their number being 4% to 10% of the total number of job positions depending on the economic sector. According to numerous statements of umbrella organizations of the disabled, employers massively violate this requirement. In 2007, the Executive Agency 'General Labour Inspectorate' found 244 violations of the provisions of Art. 315 of the Labour Code.

According to the Law on Integration of People with Disabilities, the employment of people with disabilities in Bulgaria is carried out in inclusive and/or in specialised working environment.

In specialized enterprises and cooperatives people with disabilities represent the major part of the personnel. Such enterprises participate in the market along with companies that do not employ people with disabilities. According to the common opinion, the specialized enterprises are uncompetitive on the market and could hardly survive without support from the state. However, this form of employment is still maintained, as the government considers them an essential form of providing permanent employment for the target group. They enjoy certain tax breaks and government subsidies. However, the number of their employees with disabilities is constantly shrinking. This underlines the need for diverse forms of employment of people with disabilities. However, it is necessary to determine the direction of the development of existing specialized enterprises and cooperatives. With a certain support from the state they could take definite business niches, which is currently an obvious fact for some of them.

As far as the inclusive employment is concerned, the Strategy names it as the most effective form of integration and socialization of people with disabilities, however, the most difficult

to apply in the times of economic crisis. It is therefore necessary to introduce clear and binding rules of employment of peoples with disabilities on a quota basis. The existing legal provisions have not led so far to the expected results because there are no clearly established rules. On the other hand the employers face a number of barriers that prevent them from being flexible when hiring people with a disabilities and they generally prefer avoid it. Experience of some European countries shows that the so-called social enterprises represent an innovative practice which could be developed in Bulgaria. Apart from the above home-based and distant forms of employment are considered in the Strategy as very suitable for people of working age with severe disabilities.

Sheltered employment

Sheltered employment is not regulated in the Bulgarian legislation, which practically exclude people with severe disabilities from the labour market and dooms them to social exclusion. The new Strategy foresees the creation of conditions for introducing this form of employment and developing a mechanism for defining economic sectors where sheltered employment can be applied.

Job coaching/mentoring

There is no job coaching/mentoring system in the country. Only a very few examples of sporadic mentoring initiatives can be found.

IV. Legal Framework

IV.1 National Disability Legislation

Most of the new Bulgarian legislation passed after 1990 includes anti-discrimination provisions, including regulations related to employment. Most of the provisions were triggered by the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union alongside with the advocacy of the disability organisations. The most important legislative documents related to the field of the UEmploy project are listed below.

Constitution of Bulgaria (1991)

The Constitution of Bulgaria orders the State responsible for the well being of all its citizens. Its text does not include specific anti-discrimination clauses related to people with disabilities. However, constitutional Article 51, which deals with social security and welfare, imposes on the State the responsibility for 'social security of the temporarily unemployed, as well as for provision of 'special protection' to disabled people among other socially disadvantaged citizens. These clauses are interpreted in different ways by jurists (from unequal treatment of people with disabilities to general provisions applicable to people with disabilities). The problem, nevertheless, as has been noted in the IDRM Europe 2007, "lies in the lack of a mandatory requirement for the State to create conditions for the participation of people with disabilities, which is not stipulated in the Constitution. www.online.bg/law/const/const0.htm

Labour Code (1986, latest amendments 2006)

Section III (Articles 315-320) stipulates rules of appointment, annual leave and labour remuneration of people with disabilities. It introduces quota system applicable to enterprises having 50+ employees and provides protection against dismissal.

Specific laws

Law on Integration of People with Disabilities /IPD/ (2005, latest amendments 2011)
Protection Against Discrimination Act (January 2004, latest amendments 2011)
www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,LEGAL,,LEGISLATION,BGR,4562d8b62,44ae58d62d5,0.html

Law on Integration of People with Disabilities By this law, the National Council for Integration of People with Disabilities has been established as a consultative body at the Council of Ministers to provide cooperation in the policy development with regard to inclusion of people with disabilities and the Agency for People with Disabilities as been established as an executive agency to the Minister of labour and Social Policy to implement the state policy in this area. These two bodies share responsibility for delivery of schemes and programmes to encourage inclusive employment and promote equal opportunities of the people with disabilities.

The Law regulates the following areas: disability and ability assessment (medical and social assessment); areas of inclusion (prophylactics and rehabilitation of disabilities, education and vocational training, employment, social and economical protection, accessible environment) funding and administrative penal provisions. In the section on employment:

- a mainstream employment is mentioned (as one of the forms of employment for people with disabilities)
- quota system and benefits and obligations of employers are regulated
- specialized enterprises and cooperatives of the disabled are identified: they are registered under commercial law or a law on cooperatives, produce goods or provide services and have definite share of disabled workers (which is different depending of the nature of impairment). They specifically supported by this Law. The Agency for People with Disabilities is obliged to keep a record of specialized enterprises and cooperatives of the disabled and provide funding for their business development projects.

This Law entitles the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the National Employment Agency to develop and implement national programmes and measures to encourage employment and ensure equal opportunities to people with disabilities to participate on the labour market.

Protection Against Discrimination Act is the main Bulgarian law regarding disability-based discrimination. Section I of Chapter 2 regulates various protections relating to labour rights, access to further training, promotions, harassment, redundancy. Article 16 states that employers must adapt the workplace for disabled workers, unless the expenses for such adaptation are unreasonably excessive and would impose serious burden on the employer.

Policy objectives

The policy objectives of the contemporary Bulgarian disability related legislation which are stated in the above documents are

- to provide sustainable conditions for equality of people with disabilities,
- to guarantee their social rights
- to ensure mainstreaming inclusion of people with disabilities in the working environment

Strategic goals

Strategic goals are specified in the above laws and recent documents, such as the Long-term Strategy for Employment of People with Disabilities and National Programme for Employment and Training for people with disabilities:

- ensuring that people with disabilities can effectively exercise their right to choose freely the employment according to their preferences and capabilities to improve the quality of their life as a condition of freedom and full inclusion in public life of the society.

The key areas of intervention outlined in the policy documents are:

- improved efficiency of the employment programmes for disabled;
- better targeted incentives for the employers to hire disabled workers;
- change in attitudes of the employers;
- support for employers to adjust the working environment;
- promotion of training and lifelong learning among disabled people;
- increase in self-employment;
- promotion of social entrepreneurship

Standards

No information is available

Accreditation

No information is available

IV.2 Employment Law

Employment Promotion Act (adopted in 2001, latest changes in April 2006)

This law regulates social relations upon: 1) promotion and support of employment; 2) vocational information and consultation and the vocational training of unemployed and employed persons; 3) intermediation for furnishing information and recruitment of Bulgarian citizens abroad and of Bulgarian and foreign citizens in the Republic of Bulgaria.

This Law forbids direct or indirect discrimination and privileges or restrictions based on the nationality, origin, gender, sexual orientation, race, skin colour, age, political and religious convictions, affiliation to trade union and other public organizations and movements, marital, social and property status, and mental and physical disabilities.

Incentives & Penalties

In respect to measures to promote employment of people with disabilities, Employment Promotion Act /EPA/:

- provides to the employer funding covering wages and annual leave, social security and benefits for temporary disability, for each person with disability sent by the National Employment Agency hired at a newly opened job position. The period subsidy is not more than 12 months;
- in return, the employer is obliged to create jobs and keep them operative at least 24 months, to conclude an employment contract with a disabled person for a period not less than 24 months. The job position may be occupied successively by more than one person directed by the Labour Office. In breach of contract the employer must refund the received funds.

- The EPA allows for recruitment under the same conditions of unemployed persons with disabilities for a temporary, seasonal or part-time job up to 6 months without further commitment to continued employment of this person

Under the EPA, a selection procedure for employers is applied to implement active measures for training and employment of the disabled. It includes the following steps:

Step 1: Labor Bureau announces monthly (displays on its information board and announces at least in two local or regional media) the incentives and available financial resources to enter into contracts with employers during the next month.

Step 2: Within 7 days from the announcement of the deposited jobs, the employer submits to the Labor Bureau the application for job positions.

Step 3: Within 3 days after completion of Step 2, the Cooperation Council at the Labour Office shall select and evaluate the submitted applications and provide to the Director of Labour Office a list of employers to be contracted.

Step 4: The list of the approved employers is displayed on the information board of the Labour Office within 7 days after the completion of Step 2.

Step 5: The Director of the Labor Office notifies the Cooperation Council of the contracts with employers concluded in this month.

The evaluation of the employers is performed by criteria and parameters set out in methodology approved by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. Funds for employees under this Law are paid only for those persons who are above the average number of staff employed for the last 6 months.

Past practice has shown that this course of action is not very successful. Often, due to the lack of sufficient funds in a particular Labour Office, the employer can apply only for a limited number of workers, regardless of his desire to hire more people. Moreover, the application procedure itself is time and money consuming. At the same time the employer can choose only between the workers directed by the Labour Office, who in most cases do not have the necessary qualifications. That is why companies usually apply for jobs that do not require specialized skills, such as cleaners, porters, etc. But these jobs are not always appropriate for people with disabilities. Some employers prefer to avoid this risk and send to the Labour Office persons with disabilities suitable for the announced vacancies.

In cases where the employer decides to train the worker employed through the above procedure, the training is carried out by a licensed training organizations. The training is paid by the Labour Office.

By the of provisions of the Law on Integration of People with Disabilities, the employer may apply to the Agency for People with Disabilities for grants with the view to

1. providing access to the working place to person with disability;
2. adapting the working place of person with disability;
3. providing equipment to the working place to person with disability.

The Agency for people with disabilities provide funding for the approved projects and concludes contract with the employer. By such a contract, the employer is obliged to employ people with permanent disabilities for not less than three years from the receipt of the financing. If the employer has not used the resources in compliance with the contract, or has not employed people with permanent disabilities, he must recover the received amount along with the accumulated interest foreseen by the legislation. If the employer concluded the above contracts with the Agency for People with disabilities, 30% of the employer's social security contributions, obligatory health social security contributions and additional obligatory pension social security contributions for employees with disabilities are paid by the state (in case no such benefits have been used under the provisions of the EPA).

Job Standards

National Classification of Occupations (NCO) is applied by all enterprises and organizations to ensure the unity of management and labour relations. It contains a list of codes, an alphabetical identifier and description of occupations. Main terms applicable in the NCO-2011 are: Position/Function, Profession, Specialty, Professional Qualification, Level of Education and Qualification. No specific descriptions related to people with disabilities are available.

http://www.mlsp.government.bg/class/Obiasnitelni_belezhki.pdf

http://www.mlsp.government.bg/class/Structure_NKPD_2011.pdf

Health and Safety

The basic framework of requirements for both the employer and employee are set out in the Labor Code and the Law on Health and Safety at Work.

The employer:

- is obliged to ensure healthy and safe conditions of work so that any danger for the life and health of the employee to be eliminated, restricted or mitigated;
- shall organize periodic training of the employees on rules for ensuring safe and healthy conditions of work;
- endorses rules (by-laws) for ensuring safe and healthy conditions of work in the enterprise;
- organizes the instruction and training in the safe methods of work of all employees;
- provides free of charge special work clothes and personal protective means to the employees who work with or at hazardous machines, equipment, liquids, gases, melted metals, heated objects and the like;
- provides employees engaged in the production related to health-hazardous effects with free preventive meals, anti-toxins and other means neutralizing the harmful effects of the working environment.
- must have a contract with a labour medical service, when the number of employees is more than 5.

The employee:

- receives mandatory instruction and training;
- is obliged to use special work clothes and personal protective means only in accordance with their functions, the use being confined only during working hours.

The employees are conferred the right of refusal to perform an assignment when a serious and immediate hazard arises for their life and health, of which they have to inform without delay their immediate manager.

Any enterprise, trade company or establishment which has more than 50 employees shall establish a working conditions committee.

Employees' representatives at the working conditions committees and groups shall be entitled to:

1. have access to the existing information concerning working conditions, the analyses of work accidents and occupational morbidity, the findings and the prescriptions of the control authorities;
2. require of the employer to undertake appropriate measures and submit proposals to him to mitigate hazards and remove sources of danger to their safety and health;
3. appeal to the control authorities if they consider that the measures taken by the employer are inadequate for the purposes of ensuring safety and health at work;
4. participate in the inspection visits rendered by the control authorities

No special clauses with regard to people disabilities have been found in health and safety legislative documents.

Equality

There is number of policy documents that contribute to the shaping of the equality policy in Bulgaria. The most comprehensive is the Protection Against Discrimination Act. Its purpose is to ensure for every person the right to: 1) equality before the law; 2) equality of treatment and of opportunities for participation in the public life; 3) effective protection against discrimination.

The Revised Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2008 - 2015 and National Action Plan on Employment for 2008, www.mlsp.government.bg are the key documents that proclaim equal treatment in employment, flexibility of the labour force, lifelong learning and improved opportunities for job accommodation of all Bulgarian citizens. The Strategy to Provide Equal Opportunities for Disabled People 2008-2015, is designed to specify the measures to strengthen the position of the disabled people on the labour market. Its Goal 5 aims at “providing opportunities for employment of disabled people and their involvement in programmes for job search and accommodation”.

Rehabilitation / re-training

This field is monitored by the Agency for People with Disabilities and National Employment Agency. A number of NGOs and vocational training provider claim they provide training for the disabled. The Vocational Training Agency issues license for training programmes, however, only a small share of such trainings is licensed.

Social partner roles

The Law on Integration of People with Disabilities established the National Council on the Integration of Disabled People. It is comprised of nationally represented DPOs, government agencies, trade unions and business associations.

There is also an umbrella organization called the National Disability Council comprised of umbrella type DPOs and service providers. It is meant to provide a platform for people with disabilities to speak and be heard by policy makers and wide public to assert their rights. NDC was set up in 2003 following the advice of EU experts in order to have access to the EU policy process. NDC represents the Bulgarian disability community in the European Disability Forum. It has 9 members which are national organisations of people with disabilities representing 158,000 people with disabilities in Bulgaria.

There are also numerous community groups and independent local organisations that run strong advocacy campaigns for human rights and equal opportunities.

Although they are not funded by the government, these organizations manage to raise funds, carry out awareness raising projects and conduct advocacy and lobbying activities.

Absence Management

The currently applied rules related to the absence management are determined in the Ordinance on Medical Expertise. <http://www.noi.bg/content/laws/normativni/NME.html>

The Bulgarian health legislation use the term “temporary disability” which is a case where the health insured person is unable or prevented from working due to: sickness, accidents, occupational diseases, medical treatment abroad; sanatorium-resort treatment, urgent medical or research; quarantine, suspension from work on prescription health authorities,

viewing or quarantine sick family member; urgent care for a sick family member, medical examination or treatment in the country or abroad, pregnancy and childbirth; child care during a quarantine period in the nursery or primary school.

Generally, every health insured person can have a sick leave up to 7 days at a time and not more than 40 days per year. Doctors' consultative committees can issue sick leave documents for up to six months. If it is necessary to issue a sick leave for a longer period, it can be done through a certification by the Expert Labour Medical Commission.

Sick leave is issued on the day when a temporary disability occurs. Exceptions are allowed only in cases where the temporary disability occurs on the day when the person was at work, (regardless of hours worked), or after working hours. In these cases, the leave starts from the next calendar day. Exceptions are also permitted where the sick leave must be continued. In this cases, the leave continuation starts from the day on which the employee should be back to work in the preceding document.

Sick leave cannot be issues with regards to a disease for which the Expert Labour Medical Commission has certified 50% permanent disability (lost capacity). Exceptions are allowed when there is objective evidence of exacerbation as well as in cases of medical interventions related to treatment of the chronic disease.

Keeping in mind that the document presents very detailed specific provisions, more details can be provided on request, if necessary.

Universal Design

This area has not developed yet in Bulgaria. The information is scarce and fragmentary.

Standards

Job standards are being discussed, however, Bulgaria has yet to overcome the challenge of establishing and adopting them.

Accreditation

No information available

V. Additional Resources

V.1 Materials

Policy Documents

- ***Joint Inclusion Memorandum of the Republic of Bulgaria (2005)***
www.socialinclusion-bg.net/documents/sibg/bg/Jim_Bulgaria.pdf
- ***National Strategy on Equal Opportunities for Disabled People for 2008-2015***
- ***Action plan for ensuring equal opportunities of disabled people for 2010-2011***
- ***Report on the Implementation of the Joint Inclusion Memorandum of the Republic of Bulgaria***
- ***National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion of the Republic of Bulgaria in 2006-2008***
- ***Updated Employment Strategy of Bulgaria 2008 - 2015***
www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/docs/index.htm
- ***Long-term Strategy for Employment of People with Disabilities for 2011 -2020***
www.strategy.bg/PublicConsultations/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=315

Research Reports + Publications; Agency reports/analyses; Socio-economic reviews; Advocacy group reports

- **'People with disabilities and their rights in the European Union: Bulgaria and its "invisible" citizens'** Overview of Bulgarian and European legislations on disability issues and rights of disadvantaged people. Analysis of main problems of people with disabilities in Bulgaria immediately after 2003 - the European Year of People with Disabilities (2003). www.osf.bg/cyeds/downloads/euro_gepi_7.pdf
- **The International Disability Rights Monitor 2007** (a research covering 14 European countries including Bulgaria) www.ideanet.org/cir/uploads/File/IDRM_Europe_2007.pdf
- **How to hire people with disabilities. Employer's Handbook** www.one-stop-shop.bg/bg/component/attachments/download/9.html
- **Press release of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy about the plans of the Ministry to ensure more jobs for people with disabilities (12 May 2011)**
250 labor mediators will be appointed within a week, they will search job for people with disabilities and will mediate in their relationship with the business. This was announced by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy Totyu Mladenov. www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/news/news.asp?newsid=1887&catid=1
- **Annual Bulgaria - Public Health Statistics. Publication of the National Centre of Health Informatics** http://www.nchi.government.bg/Eng/download/healthcare_10A.pdf
- **Disability in the Republic of Bulgaria in 2001-2009 - Bulletin 10 of the National Centre of Health Informatics** www.nchi.government.bg/download/bjuletin_inv.pdf
- **Bozhidar Ivkov. Medical, social and sociological classifications of types of disability (Божидар Ивков „Медико-социални и социологически класификации на видовете инвалидност“)** http://litenet.bg/publish17/b_ivkov/poniatiata.htm
- **Bozhidar Ivkov. 'Disability' and 'disabled' /"person with disabilities"/ - the names and definitions /Sociological Aspects/ (Божидар Ивков „Понятията "инвалидност" /"увреждане"/ и "инвалид" /"лице с увреждане"/ - наименования и дефиниции /Социологически аспекти/“)** http://litenet.bg/publish17/b_ivkov/klasifikaciia.htm

Websites

Website for job seekers with disabilities <http://www.rabota-hu.com>

National Federation of Employers of Disabled people: <http://www.nfri.bg/>

Website 'National network of people with disabilities' <http://www.network-hv.com>

This site is dedicated to people with disabilities, their families and friends and is not bound by the organizations, parties and groupings. Its main purpose is to enable people with disabilities to communicate.

Information portal for people with disabilities <http://www.123.ngo-bg.org/bg>

Tools + evaluative resources

No information is available

EU project tools

No information is available

VI. Survey

VI.2 Gathering information

(questionnaire, numbers, target companies, best practice)

The Employers Survey in Bulgaria has been carried out via the electronic form of the Employer Questionnaire. The link to the online form in Bulgarian language has been emailed to 32 organisations with invitation to the employers to take part in the UEmploy project survey. By the specified deadline 11 completed online forms were received.

The target organisations vary in number of employees and represent different sectors: software companies, R&D of a university, a library, a supermarket, trading companies, international holdings, public sector organisations, a manufacturing company.

General observation: often people are reluctant to fill in their names, contact details and the names of their companies. In response to our request to fill out the questionnaire, we received several inquiries asking whether the names and contact data would be published and if they can be skipped.

As the presented below results have been obtained from a limited number of employers, it cannot be guaranteed they entirely reflect the Bulgarian employers' attitude towards recruiting people with disabilities. However, these results are quite revealing and, in our opinion, correspond to the whole situation with employment of people with disabilities:

- a very small number of disabled employees;
- a modest level of awareness among the employers - thus, some respondents suggested employers' incentives which already exist;
- shift in the common attitude towards embracing the idea of inclusive employment: the most of employers who have or had people with disabilities among their personnel describe this as positive experiences; those who have no such experience, often admit they would employ a person with disabilities, if there is a sufficient training support, more incentives for employers and funding to adjust working environment. Yet, there are a few respondents with a low awareness and subjective opinion about unsuitability of hiring disabled staff which they explain as a "specificity" of the job positions in their companies.

Currently we are establishing more contacts and involving more employers of various enterprises into the project awareness raising activities. Hopefully, the project survey will transform into an ongoing employers' self-assessment and will show the dynamics of the process.

The text copy of the survey in Bulgarian language is enclosed below (p.46).

The link to the electronic form of the questionnaire:

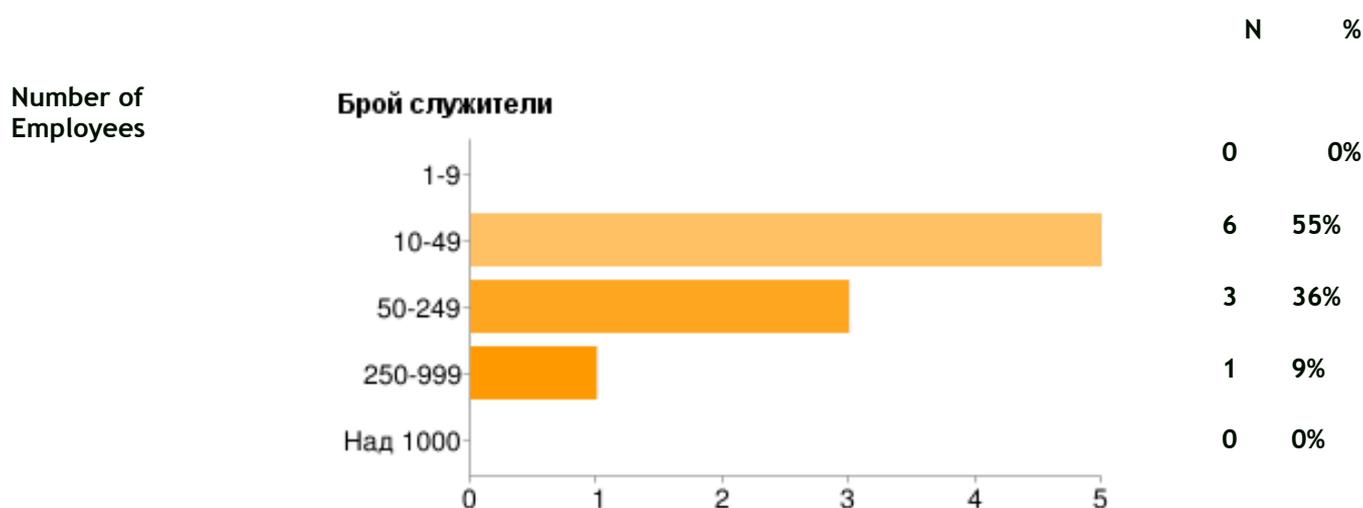
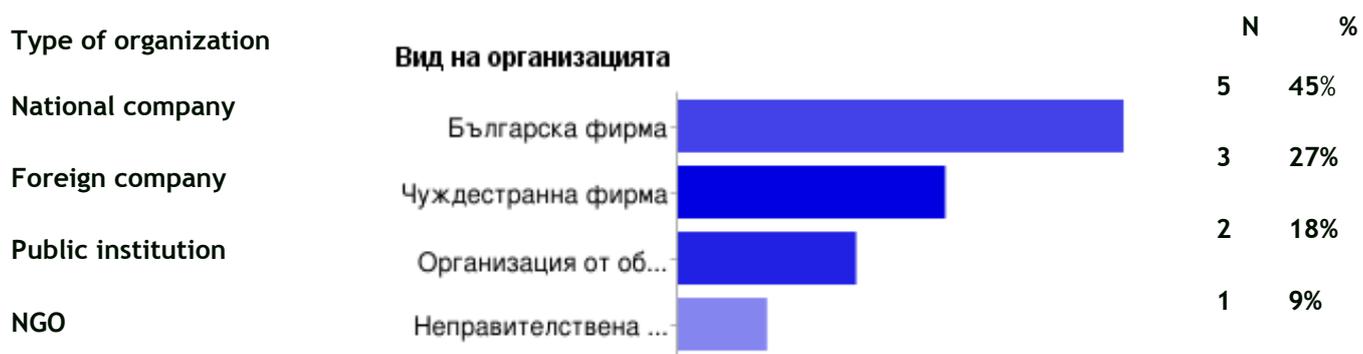
<https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dFJEVEhTcHNzSEFfVVpmUUIUOXB6MEE6MA#gid=0>

VI.2 Evaluating information

(methodology, measuring awareness, willingness + capacity to employ people with disabilities, qualitative data)

The results have been analyzed through the Google Docs automatic summary, which seems to be an effective way of collecting and processing information. The summary of responses is given in the below diagrams, accompanied by figures and %.

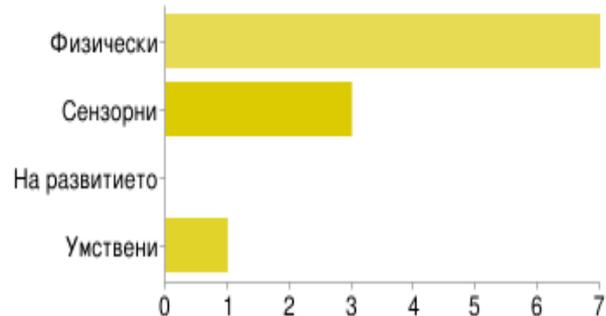
A. General information



What categories of disabled workforce have you ever employed?

Physical
Sensory
Developmental
Mental Health

Хора с какъв вид увреждания сте наемали?



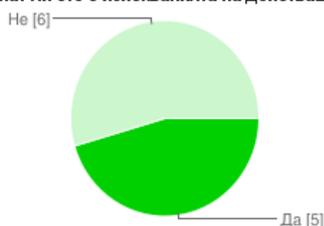
N %

7 78%
3 33%
0 0%
1 11%

B. Specific information

1.1 Are you aware of the stipulations of the current legal provisions that refer to hiring people with disabilities?

1.1. Запознат ли сте с изискванията на действащата нормативна уредба относно наемането на хора с увреждания?



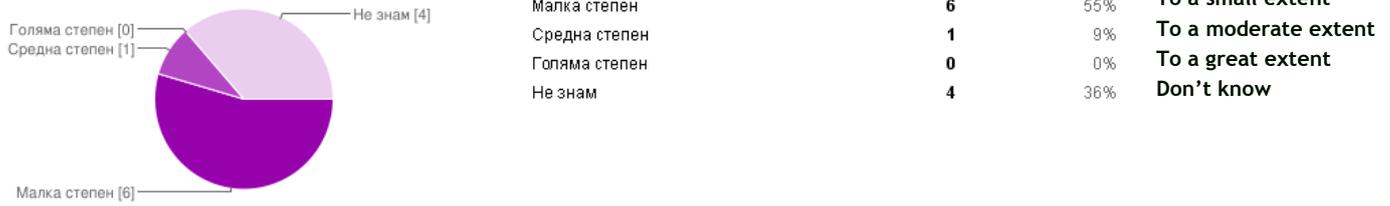
Да 5 45% Yes
Не 6 55% No

1.2 If yes, please provide at least one example

- Each year we submit information about job position suitable for employment of people with disabilities.
- Ordinance on occupational rehabilitation "Protection of People with Disabilities".
- We have an employee hired for 3 years under the existing support of the National Employment Agency.
- Visually impaired people are entitled to less deduction from wages and decreased tax.
- Strategy on Equal Opportunities for Disabled People for 2008-2015.

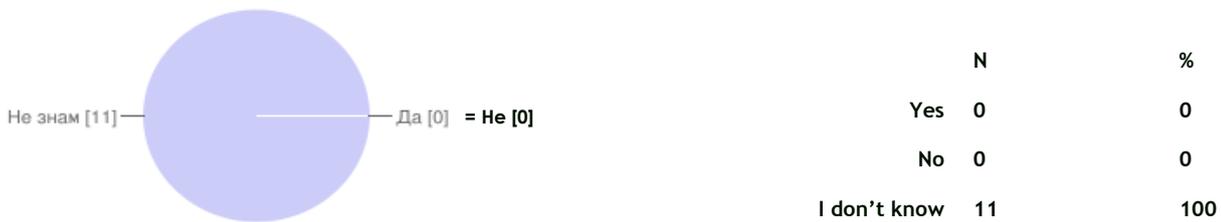
2. To what extent do you consider that the current legal provisions stimulate companies to hire people with disabilities?

2. До каква степен, според Вас, съществуващата нормативна уредба стимулира наемането на хора с увреждания?



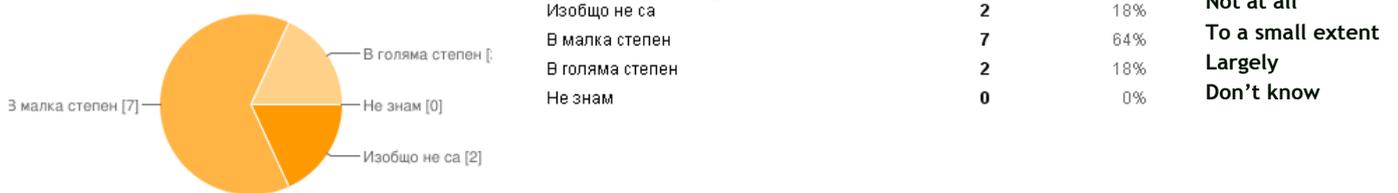
3. Do you consider that by hiring people with disabilities the profit and profitability of your company will diminish?

3. Считате ли, че наемането на хора с увреждания ще доведе до намаляване на печалбата и рентабилността на Вашата организация?



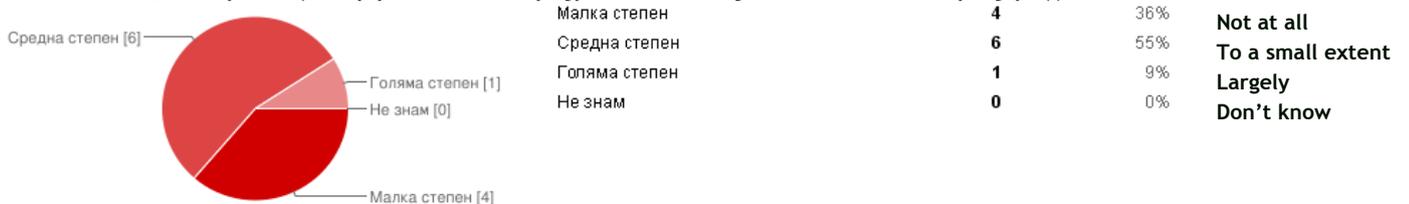
4. To what extent the working facilities in your company can accommodate people with disabilities?

4. В каква степен работните условия във Вашата организация са пригодени за хора с увреждания?

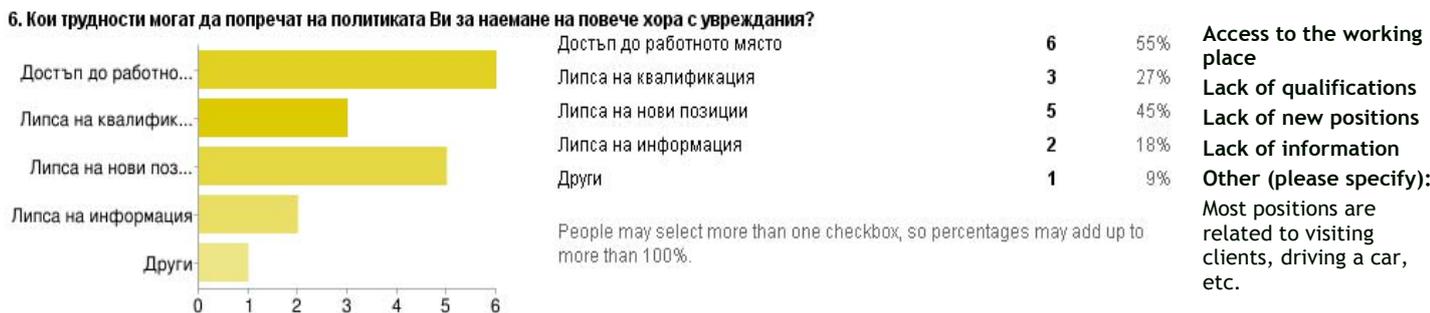


5. As far as your HR policy is concerned, to what extent do you facilitate the hiring of people with disabilities?

5. Политиката на Вашата организация в сферата на човешките ресурси в каква степен улеснява наемането на хора с увреждания?



6. What are the obstacles that may interfere with your policy of hiring more people with disabilities?



7. What other measures can be implemented in order to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities?

- Preparation of suitable working environment for the disabled - ramps, special equipment, etc.
- Accessible working places and help to the employer in their preparation.
- Speaking out of my current experience, I would like to share an opinion that most of the people with certain disabilities will be more competitive towards the labour market if the labour bureaus provide them some specific tailor made trainings. For example, handling administrative tasks training. If their disability is only physical, I suppose that such employees could be easily integrated in an administrative working environment.
- Also a prompting motive for the employer will be some tax (social security) reduction in the employer's cost.
- Information campaigns; tax relief.
- I think that existing incentives are good but seem to be underutilized.
- More information.
- Providing opportunities for improving qualifications of people with disabilities, organized by the employer from outside funding sources.- The state should assist employers in creating the necessary facilities for handicapped people.
- Co-funding of salary and social security contributions from the state budget.
- Appropriate awareness training and enhancing employment opportunities for candidates with disabilities, and considering the requirements for a properly adjusted workplace.
- Funding of the necessary equipment for disabled employees.

8. Please choose True or False for the following:

		N	%
8.1. People with disabilities miss more days at the work place	Хората с увреждания отсъхват повече от работното място		
	<p>Невярно [8]</p> <p>Вярно [3]</p>	True 3	27%
8.2. People with disabilities are liable to more work related accidents	Хората с увреждания са предразположени към повече трудови инциденти		
	<p>Невярно [7]</p> <p>Вярно [4]</p>	True 4	36%
8.3. The costs of integrating people with disabilities are far greater	Разходите за интегриране на хората с увреждания са много по-големи		
	<p>Невярно [6]</p> <p>Вярно [5]</p>	True 5	45%
8.4. People with disabilities are less efficient	Хората с увреждания са по-малко ефективни		
	<p>Невярно [10]</p> <p>Вярно [1]</p>	True 1	9%
8.5. People with disabilities require special treatment at the work place	Хората с увреждания се нуждаят от специално отношение на работното място		
	<p>Невярно [4]</p> <p>Вярно [7]</p>	True 7	64%
		False 4	36%

9. Please describe a case (good practice) when you employed people with disability with success.

- We have not had such practice so far.
- We hired a person with serious cardiovascular problems.
- Such employees are hired on so called low risk positions. We had an employee at the reception desk (helping the receptionist on a half working day). Main responsibilities of the job were helping/ assisting in some logistic tasks. Another one we had in accounting department, it was a part time job as well, mainly connected with labelling envelopes and sending ready invoices to clients.
- We have not employed people with disabilities so far.
- About 5 years ago we hired an employee with a disability of lower limbs under an existing disability mainstreaming programme. His qualification is one of the best in the office and in practice he gets a higher salary than that of the programme. He has become a part of our team, he participates in our celebrations and our corporate outings in spite of the access problems. Or, to be more precisely, we choose places taking into account his possibilities to access them.
- The Center for European Integration has hired as an expert a young employee with 100% hearing disability. She is assigned a work which is suitable for her. Requirements thereto are consistent with the type of tasks of her job and not with her state. She is involved in the projects and activities of the organisation along with all other staff taking into consideration the nature of work she is expected to perform.
- We have a visually impaired colleague who copes with his work in every respect without any problem.

10. Please describe a case (an example) when you employed people with disability with less success.

- We have no experience.
- Employing at an expert job position of a person with higher education and good command of English. Since he has 100% sight loss, he used a specially adapted computer. Integration did not occur due to lack of activities that would contribute to his inclusion in the team. Surely, however, there are other more suitable jobs where his inclusion could be achieved.

11. Please describe what specific problems did you face when you employed people with disability?

- People with disabilities with whom I had interactions in my previous experience were all intelligent, proactive and hardworking people... and as such it is normal that they always want to develop further in the organization. The problem is that higher positions are linked to more responsibilities, frequent travelling, i.e. activities that most of the times are difficult to be handled by employees with certain disabilities. Maybe it is a good idea for the employer to think about more successful integration of these people in a long-term perspective. We have to think what future development could be offered to such groups of employees. For larger companies (of about thousands employees in total) with strong social policies maybe this is

not an issue. Another issue we face is that we could not hire people with disabilities in most of the positions in manufacturing environment. That problem comes from the fact that in manufacturing area there are really specific job responsibilities and even the working environment is sometimes dangerous for such people.

- The most frequent problem is access to the workplace. Especially in our case we have to be flexible with working hours because the working environment in certain periods can cause health problems. In our case it is easy because the person is an IT specialist and in those moments can work from home.
- Reluctance of some of the other employees in the organization to adopt a more flexible communication methods; it is impossible to find training courses in the continuing training for people with disabilities (e.g. the need for specialized training in foreign language terminology); there are no courses designed for employees with disabilities.
- We have no problems, but we would have if we decide to hire an employee with physical disabilities/ mobility difficulties - such a person would not be able to access most of the offices in the building (1/4) because of the stairs and lack of an elevator or other suitable facility.
- Misunderstanding of the colleagues who sometimes have to bear some of the obligations.
- The often problem is misunderstanding by clients when they are served by people with disabilities and sometimes even arrogant behavior towards them.

The Employer Questionnaire in Bulgarian language

Въпросник на Проект „UEmploy”

В качеството си на партньор на европейския проект „UEmploy” (www.uemploy.eu), Евроинформ провежда проучване за отношението на българските работодатели към наемането на хора с увреждания, като същевременно се опитва да идентифицира пречките, с които те се сблъскват, и възможностите, които им се предоставят на трудовия пазар. Проучването се провежда на ниво 5 европейски страни (България, Финландия, Унгария, Ирландия и Румъния).

Най-любезно ви молим да ни подкрепите в успешното провеждане на това проучване, като попълните въпросника по-долу и го изпратите на следния електронен адрес: euoinform01@euoinformbg.com. Цялата информация, която ни предоставите, ще остане поверителна и вашето участие е напълно доброволно.

А. Обща информация

Данни за контакт:	Име: _____ Длъжност: _____				
	—				
	Адрес: _____				
	—				
Телефон: _____		Ел. Поща _____			
Интернет страница: _____					
Вид на организацията (Моля, отбележете съответното квадратче със ✓)	Българска фирма <input type="checkbox"/>	Чуждестранна фирма <input type="checkbox"/>	Обществена фирма <input type="checkbox"/>	Неправителствена организация <input type="checkbox"/>	Друга (моля, уточнете)
Брой служители (Моля, отбележете съответното квадратче със ✓)	1-9 <input type="checkbox"/>	10-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	50-249 <input type="checkbox"/>	250-999 <input type="checkbox"/>	Над 1000 <input type="checkbox"/>
Брой служители с увреждания (Моля, отбележете съответното квадратче със ✓)	1-4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5-10 <input type="checkbox"/>	11-20 <input type="checkbox"/>	Над 20 <input type="checkbox"/>	Няма <input type="checkbox"/>

Хора с какъв вид увреждания сте наемали? Моля, отбележете.

Физически	<input type="checkbox"/>
Сензорни	<input type="checkbox"/>
На развитието	<input type="checkbox"/>
Умствени	<input type="checkbox"/>

Б. Специфична информация (Моля, отбележете съответното квадратче със знак ✓)

1а. Запознат ли сте с изискванията и възможностите при наемане на хора с увреждания, съдържащи се в действащата нормативна уредба?

Да Не

16. Ако отговорът е "да", моля, дайте поне един пример

2. До каква степен, според Вас, съществуващата нормативна уредба стимулира компаниите да наемат хора с увреждания?

Малка степен
Средна степен
Голяма степен
Не знам

3. Считате ли, че наемането на хора с увреждания ще доведе до намаляване на печалбата и рентабилността на Вашата компания?

Да Не Не знам

4. В каква степен работните условия във Вашата компания са пригодени за хора с увреждания?

Изобщо не са В малка степен В голяма степен Не знам

5. Политиката на Вашата компания в сферата на човешките ресурси в каква степен улеснява наемането на хора с увреждания?

Малка степен Средна степен Голяма степен Не знам

6. Кои трудности могат да попречат на политиката Ви на наемане на повече хора с увреждания?

Достъп до работното място Липса на квалификации Липса на нови позиции

Липса на информация Други (моля, уточнете) _____

7. Какви други мерки биха могли да насърчат работодателите да наемат хора с увреждания? _____

8. Моля, изберете вярно или невярно за следното:

Хората с увреждания отсъстват повече от работното място	Вярно <input type="checkbox"/>	Невярно <input type="checkbox"/>
Хората с увреждания са предразположени към повече трудови инциденти	Вярно <input type="checkbox"/>	Невярно <input type="checkbox"/>
Разходите за интегриране на хората с увреждания са много по-големи	Вярно <input type="checkbox"/>	Невярно <input type="checkbox"/>
Хората с увреждания са по-малко ефективни	Вярно <input type="checkbox"/>	Невярно <input type="checkbox"/>
Хората с увреждания се нуждаят от специално отношение на работното място	Вярно <input type="checkbox"/>	Невярно <input type="checkbox"/>

9. Моля, опишете добра практика, когато сте наели хора с увреждания.

10. Моля, опишете случай, когато сте наели хора с увреждания с по-малък успех.

11. Моля, опишете какви специфични проблеми сте срещали, когато сте наемали хора с увреждания?

Благодарим Ви за времето, което отделихте, за да попълните този въпросник. Вашите отговори ще подкрепят усилията ни да направим пазара на труда по-достъпен за хора с увреждания (за допълнителна информация, посетете официалната страница на проекта. www.uemploy.eu).

<https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dFJEVEhTcHNzSEFfVVpmUUIUOXB6MEE6MA#gid=0>