



Labour market participation of persons with disabilities – how can Europe close the disability employment gap?

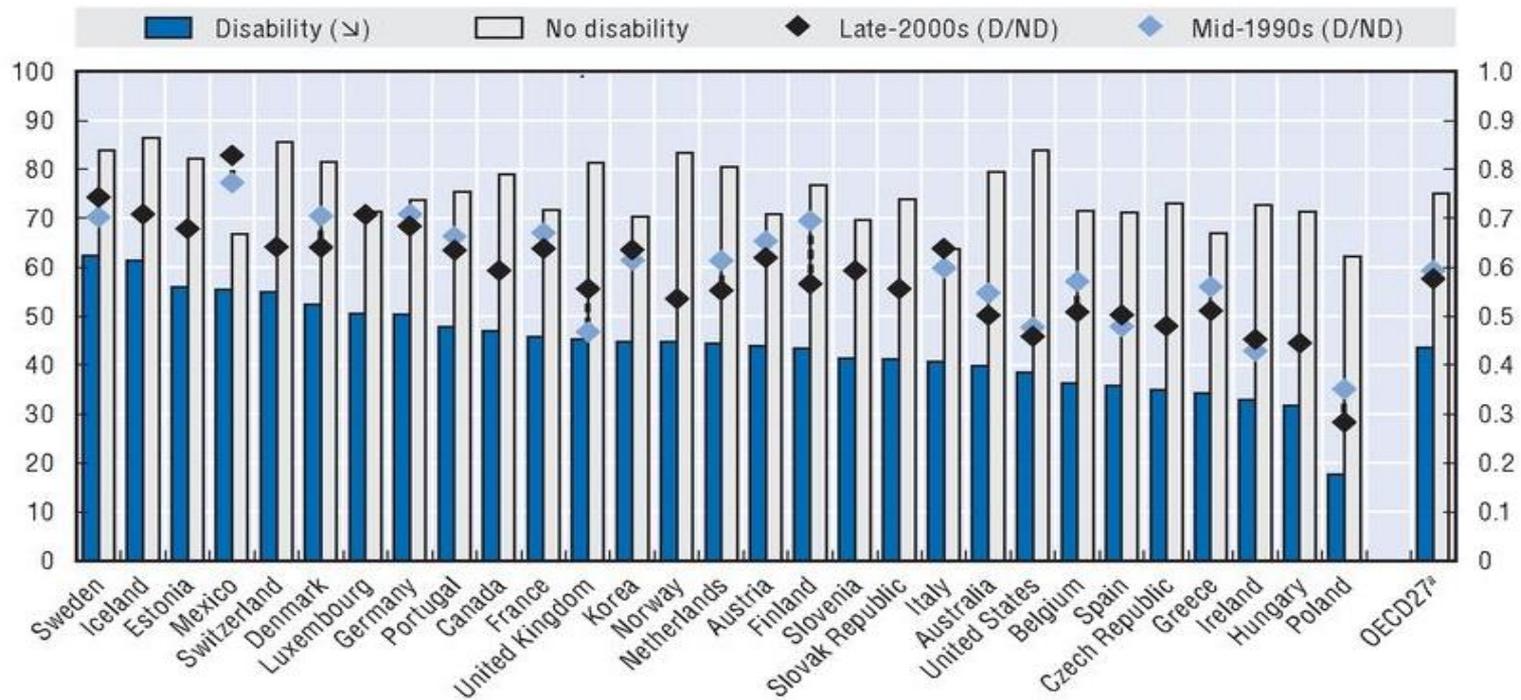
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The Right to Work of Persons with Disabilities – International Perspectives
University of Kassel, 8-10 March 2017

The disability employment gap across OECD countries

Employment rates of people with disability are low and have been falling in many countries

Employment rates by disability status in the late-2000s (left axis) and trends in relative employment rates since the mid-1990s (people with disability over those without, right axis)



The problem/challenge

- Employment outcomes for people with health problems or disability are disappointing, especially so for people with mental health issues. Good economic conditions prior to the recent recession did not help them into work in larger numbers.
- Rates of unemployment of people with disability were much higher than for other groups before the current jobs crisis. If anything, the recent deterioration of labour market opportunities will increase the disability gap in unemployment.
- Despite increased efforts to develop and expand employment integration measures, employment levels of people with disability have not improved.

(from **OECD (2010) *Sickness, Disability and Work. Breaking the Barriers***)

The DISCIT study

Main objectives of DISCIT

- Produce knowledge enabling Europe to achieve **full and effective social participation** of persons with disabilities.
- Work packages on
 - Access to social services
 - Community living
 - Employment
 - Technologies
 - Financial innovation
 - Political participation



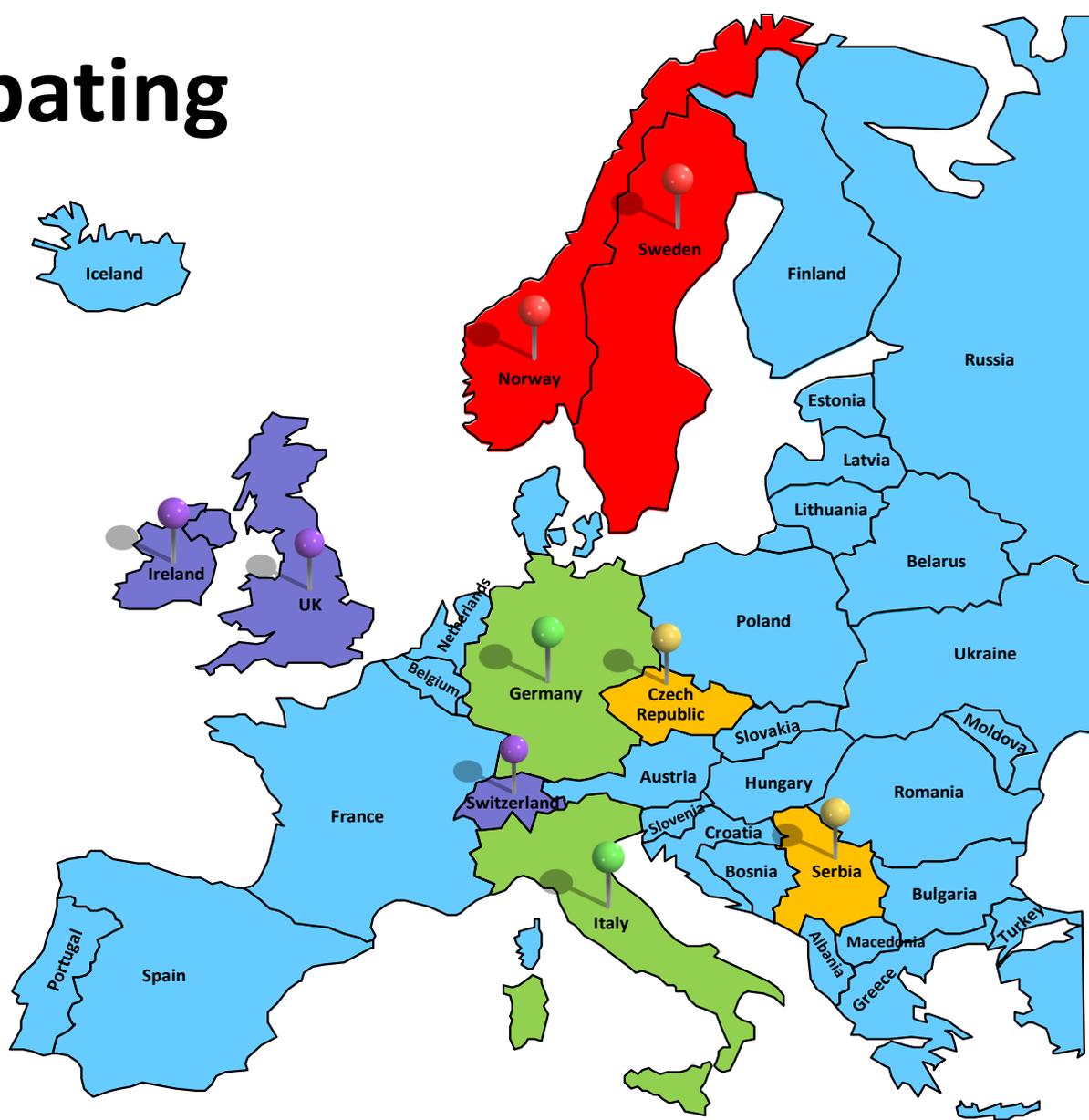
Main objective of **WORK PACKAGE on employment** was to generate knowledge on:

- the **labour market situation** and employment of persons with disabilities;
- the **availability of policies** at different levels of governance (international, European, national and sub-national) aimed at enhancing the employment of persons with disabilities.

...as a step towards **the adoption of innovative and user-sensitive approaches to employment promotion.**

DISCIT participating countries

-  UK, Ireland, Switzerland
-  Germany, Italy
-  Czech Republic, Serbia
-  Norway, Sweden



Responsibilities of States under the UN CRPD

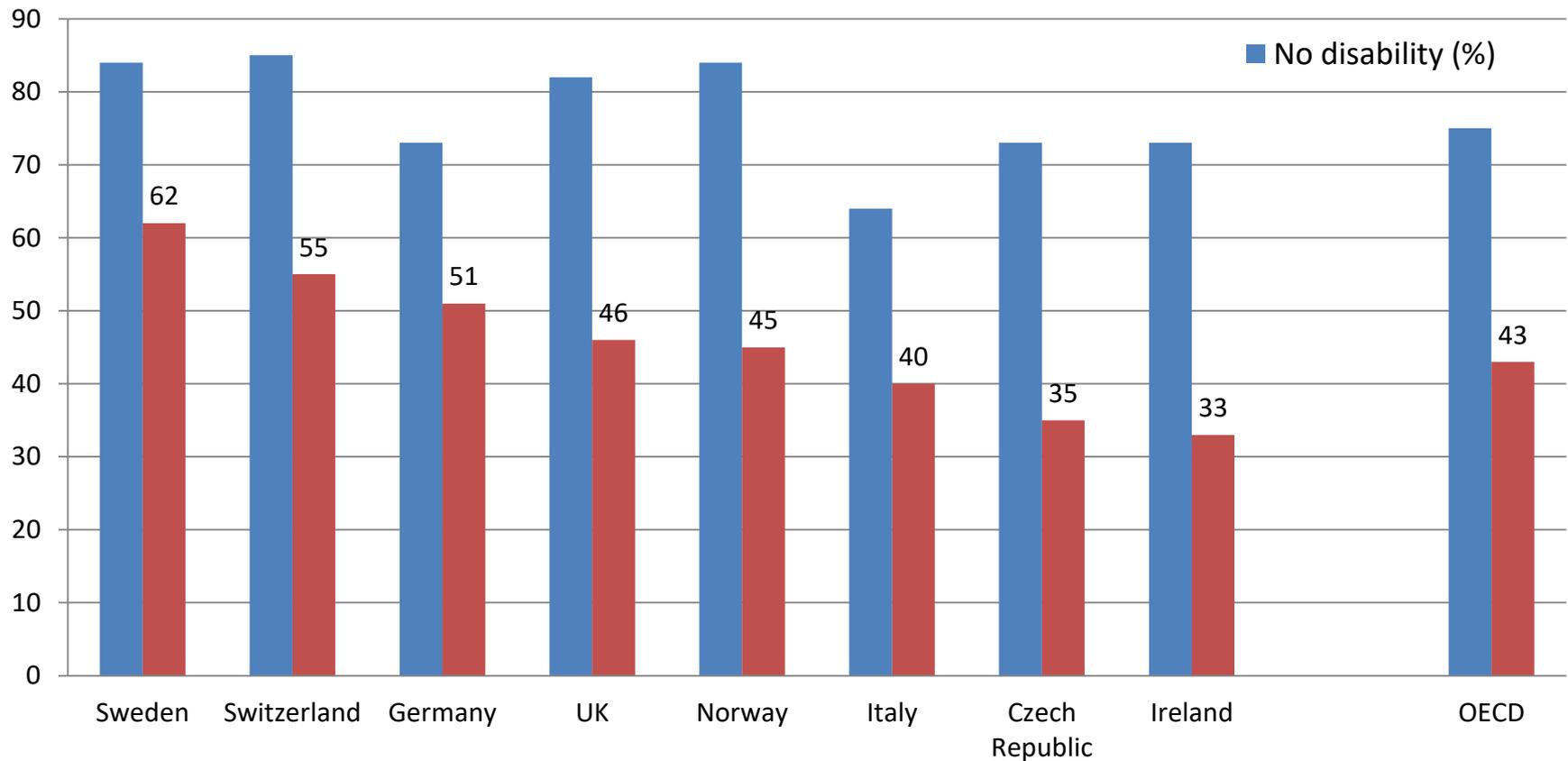


CONVENTION on the RIGHTS of PERSONS with DISABILITIES

Article 27 provisions on employment:

- (a) Prohibit discrimination
- (b) Protect the rights of persons with disabilities,
- (c) Ensure people can exercise labour and trade union rights
- (d) Effective access to technical and vocational programmes
- (e) Promote employment opportunities and career advancement
- (f) Promote opportunities for self-employment
- (g) Employ persons with disabilities in the public sector
- (h) Promote the employment in the private sector
- (i) Ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided
- (j) Promote work experience
- (k) Promote vocational and rehabilitation, job retention and return-to-work programmes

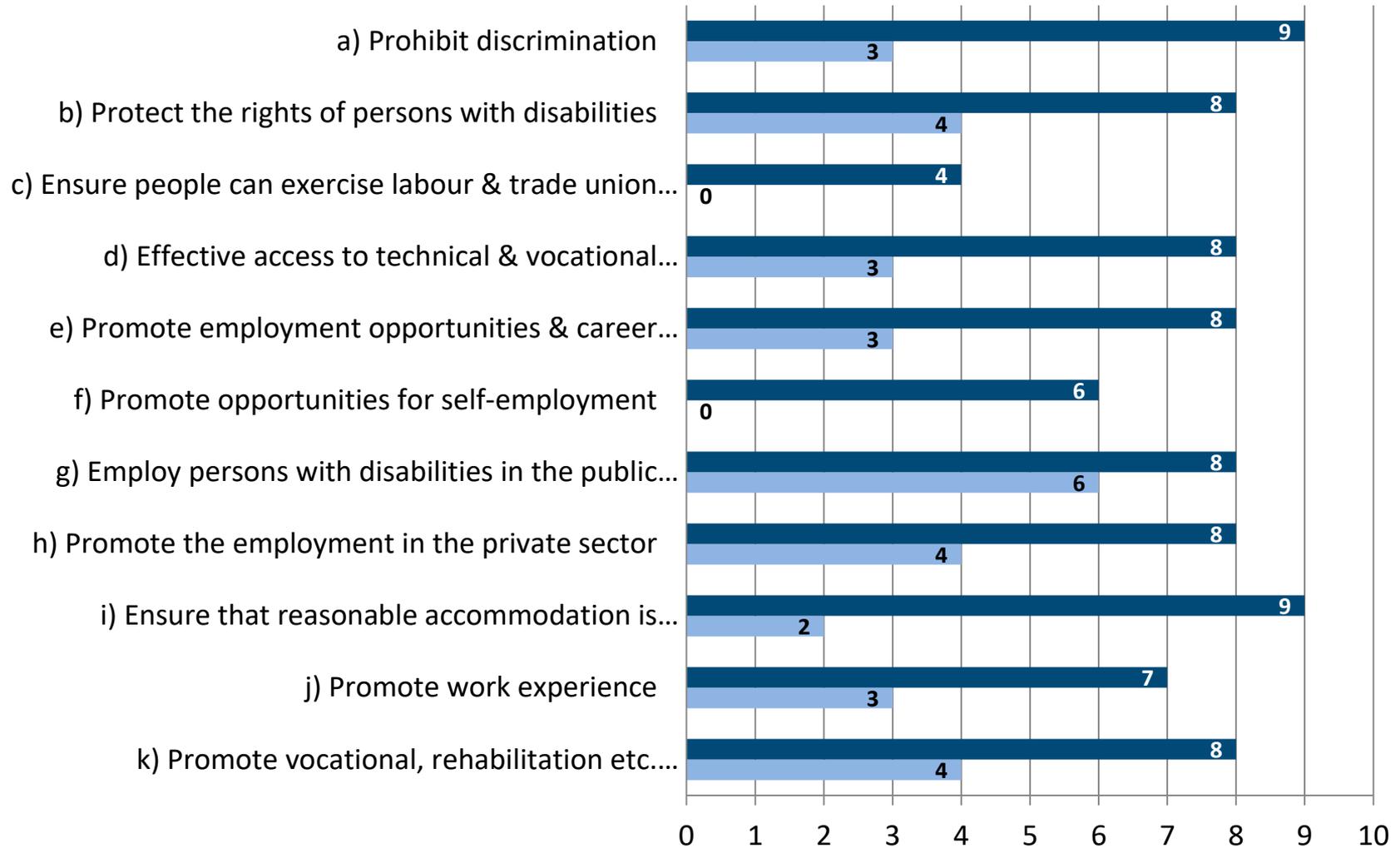
The disability employment gap in 8 DISCIT countries



Study design

1. A review of labour market data, and a review of policies and programmes in each country
2. Interviews with persons with disabilities about their lives
3. Interviews with expert stakeholders in each country (including disabled people's organisations, policy makers in government, service providers)

How DISCIT countries have addressed Article 27 of the UN CRPD



Problems identified with increasing employment rates of persons with disabilities

- **Economy** – lack of jobs in the mainstream economy that disabled people can do; decrease in number of public sector jobs due to recession/austerity/cuts. Public sector has usually been a better source of jobs for disabled people than the private sector.
- **Employers** – low levels of recruitment.
- **Attitudes/stigma** – there are problems here re employers and disabled people alike.
- **Implementation/enforcement** – the problem here is that although measures are in place that can promote the employment of disabled people they are not being implemented by, for example, employers and/or not being monitored and enforced by the regulatory authority.
- **Substance of national policies** – the issue here is that even when there are policies and programmes in place they lack sufficient substance to make a difference. They lack content.
- **Skills/experience deficits** – these are a problem of labour supply. Disabled people haven't the right levels of education, training skills and experience to get jobs in the open market. They are chronically disadvantaged.
- **Lack of targeted opportunities outside mainstream** – some respondents regretted the loss of sheltered and/or supported employment opportunities.
- **Technology** – some experts referred to the lack of technology as a means of enabling disabled people to work.

The UK approach to the disability employment gap

- In 2015 the Conservative Party manifesto stated that a Conservative government would **‘halve the disability employment gap’**. There was an implication that this was an objective to be achieved in the 5 years of the next Parliament.
- The disability employment gap was 32 percentage points at the time.
- To reduce the gap by half requires that over one million persons with disabilities find work
- The Government’s own forecast of the number of new jobs created in the UK economy by 2020 was 500,000.
- The government has subsequently published a ‘Green Paper’ consultation document (in October 2016)
 - This includes its policy ideas
 - The timeframe is now 10 years.

The UK consultation document on the disability employment gap

The government wants to:

- ensure that disabled people have **equal access** to labour market opportunities
- **help employers** take action to create a workforce that reflects society as a whole
- ensure access to **personalised employment and health services**
- **invest in innovation** to gain a better understanding of what works
- **change cultures and mind-sets** across all of society.

The government asks:

- How big a role can we expect **employers** to play?
- How can **work coaches** play a more active role?
- How can we improve the **welfare system**?
- How can we ensure that people have timely **access to health and employment support**?

(from *Improving Lives. The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper*, October 2016, UK Department for Work and Pensions and Department of Health)

Ideas for the future (from DISCIT policy experts)

Some general views:

- We need existing policies to be better resourced and implemented effectively
- We need to learn from other countries (policy transfer)
- We need to change the culture towards persons with disabilities to be more inclusive
- We need to do something to create jobs for persons with disabilities, not just increase their employability

Specific suggestions:

- ➔ Quota systems
- ➔ On-the-job support
- ➔ Reform social security benefits
- ➔ Informed and inclusive workplaces
- ➔ 'Therapeutic' employment
- ➔ Personal budgets
- ➔ Create jobs specifically for disabled people
- ➔ Sheltered employment
- ➔ Social enterprises

A critical view of current policy direction

- Many policy ideas are based on:
 - Increasing the employability of persons with disabilities
 - Addressing the barriers persons with disabilities face in the labour market
 - The assumption that employment in the open/mainstream labour market is the preferred outcome
- The UN CRPD has a focus on labour supply issues
- The UK Green Paper has a focus on labour supply issues
- The DISCIT study had a focus on labour supply issues

- But the disability employment gap across Europe has persisted for decades
- “Despite increased efforts to develop and expand employment integration measures, employment levels of people with disability have not improved.” OECD.

- Therefore, perhaps we need a new focus on labour demand issues.

A new focus on labour demand issues?

1. Working with mainstream employers
 - Wage subsidies
 - Increase knowledge/reduce negative attitudes
 - In-work support schemes
 - Niche jobs
 2. Looking outside mainstream employment
 - Sheltered employment
 - Social enterprises
- Change the focus from *the job* to the *individual*

Building on positive experiences and learning from (possible) mistakes

- A small success story from the Czech Republic...



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dr7C1v7_uzM&feature=youtu.be

- ... and a cautionary tale from the UK
 - The rise and fall of Remploy



Some questions for discussion

- Has policy been failing persons with disabilities?
- How can we best improve employment rates for persons with disabilities?
- What should be the role of European institutions and national/local governments?
- Do we need NEW solutions, or implement existing ones better?
- Should we focus on how to **create employment opportunities** more than increasing employability?





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Thank you - Danke sehr

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Forthcoming publications

Sainsbury, R., Coleman-Fountain, E. and Trezzini, B. (2017 forthcoming) How to enhance Active Citizenship for persons with disabilities in Europe through labour market participation – European and national perspectives, in Halvorsen R, Hvinden B, Bickenbach J, Ferri D and Guillén Rodríguez AM (eds) (2017) *The Changing Disability Policy System: Active Citizenship and Disability in Europe, Volume 1*. London: Routledge.

Coleman-Fountain, E., Sainsbury, R., Trezzini, B. and Káňová, S. (2017 forthcoming) Diversity and change in the labour market careers of persons with disabilities in Beadle-Brown J, Biggeri M, Halvorsen R, Hvinden B, Tøssebro J and Waldschmidt A (eds) (2017) *Lived Experiences of Persons with Disabilities: Active Citizenship and Disability in Europe, Vol. 2*. London: Routledge.