

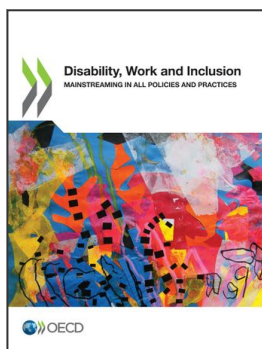
Foreword

The OECD report *Disability, Work and Inclusion: Mainstreaming in All Policies and Practices* is an attempt to better understand the labour market situation of people with disability and derive and propose innovative ways to improve their labour market participation. People with disability continue to face disadvantages in the labour market, resulting in considerable employment, unemployment and poverty gaps compared with people without disability. Twenty years ago, the OECD has promoted a paradigm shift in disability policy to strengthen the focus on employability and employment. Policy makers have acknowledged the need for this fundamentally different way of viewing disability policy and tried to strengthen employment elements in their approach. Labour market outcomes of people with disability, however, have changed little.

The report begins with an overview of labour market outcomes for people with and without disability covering all 32 OECD countries for which comparable data is available. This is followed by a focus on policies and developments in six OECD countries (Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland) which provide a broad range of approaches and belong to the countries which have undergone significant reform. The four policy chapters of the report – on youth, social protection, the future of work and skills – cover policies and practices in these countries, informed by a wide range of research from across the OECD. The policy considerations build on this material and are relevant for the OECD area as a whole. The policy conclusions also build on recent and ongoing country-specific work by the OECD, on Ireland, Italy, Korea and Slovenia, which has focussed on aspects that are only covered in passing in this report, including the role of the public employment service (Ireland), ways to improve disability assessments (Italy), the necessity of an effective system of paid sick leave (Korea), and the critical role of policy co-ordination and early intervention (Slovenia).

The key conclusion from this analysis is that the shift in the approach to disability and the implementation of actual change has fallen short of what is needed to achieve substantially better employment outcomes and greater labour market inclusion of people with disability. While the growing evidence base continues to suggest that the previously proposed paradigm shift in disability policy is the right direction to travel, the report concludes that the paradigm itself needs to evolve as well, to capture elements that have not been covered sufficiently so far: youth with disability, the skills of people with disability, and early intervention in the course of a health problem or disability. The report suggests that the necessary policy shift can only be achieved by rigorous *disability mainstreaming* throughout all policies and practices. Mainstream systems must target the needs and strengths of everyone and be accountable for providing their services to people with disability to the same extent as people without disability.

The case for change is very strong now as countries work on building a stronger and more resilient labour market after the COVID-19 pandemic without leaving anyone behind and further increasing inequality.



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