

Preface

Access to employment opportunities is a top priority for persons with disabilities. Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on the right to work, is one of its most detailed articles, given the impact of employment on the social inclusion processes. Yet, despite efforts and focus from governments, employers and organisations of persons with disabilities, available data tells us that persons with disabilities continue to be excluded from the labour market disproportionately.

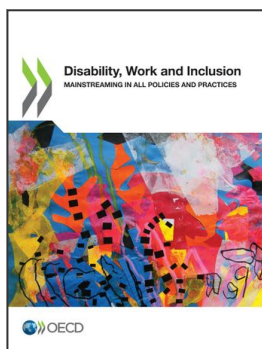
Available figures show that employment gaps between persons with and without disabilities range from 10 to over 40 percentage points, depending on the country – and in some countries, the gap is even greater for women with disabilities. Unemployment and inactivity rates have also stagnated and, in some cases, are even growing. Data from the EU shows that almost 40% of persons with disabilities between 20 and 64 years of age are left out of the labour market. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this scenario. An IDA Survey in 2021, on the impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities, reveals that 44% of respondents lost all or some of their income during the pandemic. This was even higher among persons with intellectual disabilities (62%) and people living in the Global South (53%).

As the world now shifts its attention to recovery and rebuilding, it is a good time to reflect on what more needs to be done or ‘undone’ to realise the right to work and inclusion for persons with disabilities. The OECD report *Disability, Work and Inclusion: Mainstreaming in All Policies and Practices*, therefore, comes at a very opportune time. While the report has a focus on jobseekers with disabilities, it also calls for a structural approach. This resonates strongly with the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the European Disability Forum (EDF), who call for a move away from looking at employment through a narrow lens of placing people into jobs, without securing preconditions for inclusive employment such as inclusive workplace culture, provision of reasonable accommodation, and accessible housing and transportation to work. Mainstreaming disability in employment and social protection policies also means focusing on fair remuneration, proper and non-exploitative working contracts and the ability to work without losing eligibility for necessary services or disability allowances. When discussing barriers to employment, the report also rightly highlights the crucial role that inclusive education and training play.

Implementing inclusive employment in its broadest sense means moving away from trying to fit a person to a job, and instead adapting the job and its environment to an employee with disability, simultaneously addressing system-level issues by supporting workplaces and employers to practice inclusion. For too long, the focus on disability and work has been on either the supply side – that is persons with disabilities seeking employment, without an equal focus on creating workplaces and supporting employers to be inclusive – or the demand side. It is time for the discourse to shift in order to bridge both these components. The OECD report is an important piece in this discourse. We are hopeful that the report will provide a strong impetus in our collective journey towards a sustainable transformation of the labour market, for it to be more inclusive of all persons with disabilities.



Yannis Vardakastanis,
Chair of the International Disability Alliance,
President of the European Disability Forum.



From:
Disability, Work and Inclusion
Mainstreaming in All Policies and Practices

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/1eaa5e9c-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2022), "Preface", in *Disability, Work and Inclusion: Mainstreaming in All Policies and Practices*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/2187b242-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.