

Public consultation on Enhancing the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities up to 2030

► Key messages from the International Labour Office

1. Introduction and background information

Available labour market statistics in the European Union continue to indicate persistent disparities in employment outcomes between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities. Persons with disabilities experience significantly lower rates of labour market participation and employment, reflecting ongoing barriers to equal access to decent work.¹

Of particular concern is the situation of young persons with disabilities. Data show that the proportion of youth with disabilities who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is consistently and, in many Member States, substantially higher—often around twice as high—than that of their peers without disabilities.²

Where data are available, evidence also points to the existence of a disability-related wage gap³. Persons with disabilities tend to earn less, on average, than workers without disabilities, even when in employment. For women with disabilities, this disadvantage is further intensified by gender-based pay inequalities, resulting in intersecting and cumulative wage gaps.⁴

2. Advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream training and employment initiatives

In 2025, under the Canadian Presidency of the G7, the Employment Working Group addressed the issue of labour market participation of persons with disabilities, for which the ILO prepared a policy brief⁵. The brief focused in particular on the extent to which mainstream labour market and employment programmes effectively include persons with disabilities. While some good practices were identified, the analysis highlighted that

¹ [Employment gaps for women & people with disabilities - News articles - Eurostat](#)

² [Disability statistics - access to education and training - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

³ [New ILO working paper exposes significant 'disability wage gap' | International Labour Organization](#)

⁴ [Data tools to find and download labour statistics - ILOSTAT](#)

⁵ Forthcoming publication

persons with disabilities are not sufficiently targeted within mainstream skills development initiatives, youth employment programmes and the activities of public employment services.

For example, limited information is available on the extent to which young persons with disabilities benefit from the EU Youth Guarantee. Even in the few Member States where young persons with disabilities are explicitly identified as a target group, data on their actual participation in Youth Guarantee schemes are generally lacking. This limits the ability of governments and social partners to assess coverage, effectiveness and outcomes for this group.

In the forthcoming strategy to strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities, the European Commission may wish to consider how the coverage of mainstream labour market and employment programmes can be expanded to explicitly include persons with disabilities. In this context, consideration could also be given to how existing initiatives—such as the EU Youth Guarantee—could be further adapted and implemented to better reach and support young persons with disabilities.

3. Strengthen comparability of disability-disaggregated labour market statistics

Disability-disaggregated labour force statistics in the European Union have so far been derived primarily from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)⁶. While EU-SILC has provided valuable and long-standing information on the situation of persons with disabilities, its employment questions are not fully aligned with the internationally agreed concepts, definitions and standards adopted by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS). As a result, the data derived from EU-SILC are not fully comparable with standard labour force statistics used for labour market analysis and policy design. In this context, the decision to introduce disability disaggregation into the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS)⁷ is a welcome development, that has the potential to strengthen the evidence base for monitoring labour market outcomes of persons with disabilities.

At the same time, the large variation in reported disability prevalence rates across EU Member States—even when using the same disability identification approach, such as the Global Activity Limitation Indicator (GALI)—poses challenges for cross-country comparisons. These differences make it difficult to draw robust conclusions about relative employment performance and the effectiveness of national policies for persons with disabilities. For instance, data and analysis on earnings and pay, would allow a

⁶ [Population with disability - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

⁷ [Disability statistics - unemployment and people outside the labour force - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#)

better understanding of the underlying factors contributing to disability-related wage gaps.

4. Support enterprises to promote disability-inclusive employment

Enterprises can play a central role in promoting disability-inclusive employment and advancing equal opportunities in the labour market. In the European Union, a number of enterprises have taken steps to integrate disability inclusion into their employment practices and corporate strategies.

In this context, some enterprises have begun to reflect information on the employment of persons with disabilities as part of their sustainability efforts. Such practices can contribute to greater transparency, awareness and accountability, while also supporting enterprises in assessing their own progress and identifying areas for improvement.

To support enterprises in this process, the ILO Global Business and Disability Network has developed practical guidance⁸ and tools aimed at strengthening employer capacity to recruit, retain and advance persons with disabilities in the workplace. This includes a dedicated publication that highlights good practices, practical approaches and lessons learned from enterprises across sectors and regions. These resources are intended to assist enterprises in translating commitments into concrete actions, while fostering dialogue and cooperation with workers' organizations and public authorities.

Continued engagement with enterprises, in close collaboration with employers' and workers' organizations and supported by enabling public policies, is essential to scale up disability-inclusive employment. Such collaboration can help ensure that measures to promote disability inclusion contribute to productive, sustainable and inclusive enterprises, while advancing the broader objective of decent work for persons with disabilities.

5. Promote assistive technologies and personal assistance services to support the employment of persons with disabilities

For working-age persons with disabilities who require assistive technologies, access to appropriate and affordable assistive products and services—both in employment and throughout education and training—is a precondition for accessing and retaining decent work. Ensuring such access may require legislative and policy measures to guarantee the

⁸Sustainability and ESG efforts | ILO Global Business and Disability Network, [Putting the I in ESG: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities as Strategic Advantage of Sustainability Practices for Corporates and Investors](https://www.businessanddisability.org/) Geneva: International Labour Office, 2024. <https://www.businessanddisability.org/>

availability, affordability and interoperability of assistive technologies within the EU single market.

The joint ATscale–ILO publication⁹ on assistive technology in employment, while primarily focused on low- and middle-income countries, contains relevant policy guidance and practical recommendations that may also be of value to some EU Member States.

Similarly, putting in place adequate and sustainable schemes for persons with disabilities who require personal assistance services would support their participation in education, training and employment. Such schemes may form part of broader national care and support policies. It is important to ensure that personal assistance services are accessible, responsive to individual needs and available to all persons with disabilities who require them, in order to support their full and effective participation in the labour market.

6. Ensure compatibility between disability benefits and paid work

The compatibility of disability benefits with paid employment has been identified as an area of concern by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities during the 2025 review of the European Union’s implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)¹⁰. In particular, concerns have been raised that existing benefit designs may discourage or penalise labour market participation by persons with disabilities.

The ILO has consistently highlighted in its reports and policy guidance¹¹ that disability-related benefits—especially those intended to compensate for the additional costs associated with disability—should be designed in a manner that supports, rather than undermines, access to employment. Such benefits should take into account that income from work does not eliminate disability-related extra costs and should therefore be compatible with earnings from employment.

In this context, consideration could be given to including, within the strategy, measures to encourage Member States to address the compatibility of disability benefits with paid employment. Such measures could promote benefit designs that take into account the extra cost of living faced by persons with disabilities and support the provision of income protection alongside earnings from employment and other income sources, thereby facilitating labour market participation while ensuring income security.

⁹ 2025 [ILO/AT SCALE Policy Brief on Assistive Technology \(AT\) and Employment](#)

¹⁰ 2025 [CRPD Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of the European Union](#)

¹¹ [Disability-inclusive social protection | International Labour Organization](#)

7. Prevent and address violence and harassment against persons with disabilities in the world of work

Persons with disabilities face heightened risks of violence and harassment in the world of work, often compounded by intersecting forms of discrimination, including gender. Violence and harassment against persons with disabilities should be recognised as both an equality issue and an occupational safety and health concern. In this regard, ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)¹² and its accompanying Recommendation¹³ are of particular relevance as the only international labour standard addressing all forms of violence and harassment in the world of work.

8. Ensure policy coherence for the inclusion of persons with disabilities

Ensuring policy coherence across employment, social, economic and technological policies is essential to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Also, upcoming EU legislative and policy initiatives such as the upcoming Quality Jobs Act, the revision in public procurement directives and the EU's initiatives on the digital, green and demographic transitions would benefit from disability inclusion considerations.

Rapid technological change, including the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in recruitment, workplace management and service delivery, presents both challenges and opportunities for persons with disabilities. On the one hand, AI systems may risk reinforcing existing biases or creating new barriers if accessibility and inclusion are not adequately considered. On the other hand, AI and digital technologies have the potential to improve accessibility, enhance productivity and expand employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, including through assistive technologies, flexible work arrangements and new forms of work.

Policy coherence is also relevant in the context of the transition towards a green economy and a just transition. The ILO has made progress in integrating disability inclusion into its work on the green economy.¹⁴ Embedding disability inclusion across relevant EU climate and transition-related initiatives—including through inclusive job creation, accessible

¹² [ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 \(No 190\)](#)

¹³ [ILO Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 \(No 206\)](#)

[Just Transition Policy Brief - "Nothing about us without us" Realizing disability rights through a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies](#)¹⁴

training and skills development, and targeted support measures—can help ensure that persons with disabilities benefit equitably from the green transition.

As the EU's working age population is shrinking due to demographic decline, a better labour market integration of persons with disabilities has been identified as part of the measures needed to tackle this issue.¹⁵

Across these policy areas, social dialogue remains essential. Coordinated and inclusive approaches can help ensure that technological change and economic transformation contribute to decent work, social inclusion and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

¹⁵ De Gobbi, M., Kühn, S., Heins, G., Malikova, Z. Demographic change in Europe and Central Asia: Addressing the issue of a shrinking and ageing labour force. ILO Working Paper 139. Geneva: International Labour Office, 2025