

## RECRUITMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, BETWEEN FEARS AND BENEFITS

Victoria-Mihaela BRÎNZEĂ<sup>1</sup>, Carmen-Gabriela SECARĂ<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Economics, University of Pitesti, Romania, [mihaelabranzea@yahoo.com](mailto:mihaelabranzea@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Economics, University of Pitesti, Romania, [carmen.secara@yahoo.com](mailto:carmen.secara@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** *People with disabilities are often not considered as potential labour members, and they face over time, barriers related to their access on the labour market. Despite the legal provisions forbidding discrimination at the employment of this category of people, prejudices, fear and myths keep limiting the understanding and acceptance of disability for jobs everywhere. Employers are reluctant when it comes to recruit people with disabilities, their main concerns being related to the fact that people with disabilities are unable to work and that the costs associated with such employees would exceed the benefits. However, studies prove that employees with disabilities do not need high costs to adjust to their workplace; they are hardworking and trustworthy. Our paper aims at presenting an image of the situation of people with disabilities on the labour market, identifying the difficulties faced by them as well as a number of good practices of some companies, which successfully prove that, with a little bit of adjustment, the community of people with disabilities can offer talented and motivated employees.*

**Keywords:** *disability, discrimination, reasonable adjustment, social inclusion, employment.*

**JEL Classification Codes:** J21, J71

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Convention on the Rights of Persons of Disabilities of the United Nations, signed on 30 March 2007, recognizes “the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities”.<sup>1</sup>

If an appropriate environment is provided for them, most persons with disabilities can be productive, however, as revealed by many studies, in most countries, either developed or developing, persons with disabilities at working age face significantly lower employment rates and higher unemployment rates than those of persons without disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

When we focus on the social, professional and economic situation of persons with disabilities, we have to notice that the statistics and the indicators concerning this category of persons are not detailed; they are not updated and are highly variable from one country to another. Beyond these problems of reliability and lack of data, the available figures are however, eloquent and show the

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Organisation, “*Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*”, art. 27, <http://www.crj.ro/userfiles/editor/files/Conventia%20privind%20Drepturile%20Persoanelor%20cu%20Dizabilitati.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization, “*World report on disability*”, Bucharest, 2013, p. 249.

difference between the intentions stated and the reality faced by the persons with disabilities. The social and economic situation of persons with disabilities worldwide is delicate in all countries and undergoes few and slow changes.

The International Labour Organization estimated that in July 2011, there were worldwide approximately 600 million persons classified as having disabilities. Countries worldwide act to give these persons a better chance in finding and keeping a workplace, sufficient to have a decent life. However, due to disadvantages invoked and to stereotypical attitudes related to what employees with disabilities can or cannot do, qualified workers are kept far from a comfortable workplace or work environment. Mark Bagshaw, Managing Director of Innov8 Consulting Group, shows that "A person with a disability brings with them something that a lot of other people don't have – they're able to manage a very difficult life." They couldn't manage ordinary life without developing excellent problem solving skills, which made them an asset, he said. "Businesses are realizing that it's reality, not a theory."<sup>3</sup>

## 2. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

In order to prepare our paper, to be able to have an overall image of everything that is implied by disability, we accessed the websites of various international bodies (ILO, UN, World Bank, WHO, DPI), identifying a number of documents referring to this field. At the same time, in the attempt to have a picture as realistic as possible of the statistical situation of persons with disabilities, in general, and especially of those at working age, we accessed many statistical and data bases made available by various bodies and institutions (ILO, WHO, EUROSTAT, WORLD BANK, INSSE, THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR, FAMILY, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND ELDERLY, FOUNDATION MOTIVATION). We also studied a number of articles and studies representative in this field, present in scientific databases (SpringerLink, Emerald, ScienceDirect), searchable via search engines Google and Google Scholar. Due to the large volume of information, we identified an adequate search strategy, by using key words, such as: persons with disabilities, employment, reasonable adjustments, discrimination and other synonyms of these words, using as inclusion criteria:

- written in Romanian, English, French or Italian;
- availability of the abstract or of the whole article;
- description of the person with disabilities at working age, as a person aged 15 and above, who has a deficiency that might restrain his/her full and effective participation into the society, on equal basis;
- inclusion of factors that might favour/disfavour the employment of persons with disabilities.

## 3. DISABILITY AS VIEWED BY THE MAIN INTERNATIONAL BODIES

Disability has various meanings for various persons, being a continuously evolving word, to which it is difficult to attach a generally valid "label". According to Disabled Peoples' International (DPI), disability is defined as being "as the outcome of the interaction between a person with an impairment and the environmental and attitudinal barriers he/she may face".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Bagshaw, "Ignoring Disability a Wasted Opportunity", mai 2006, <http://www.neon.org.nz/newsarchive/bagshawplusfour/>

<sup>4</sup> Disabled People International. (2005) "DPI Position Paper on the Definition of Disability", [http://sid.usal.es/idocs/F8/FDO7029/position\\_paper.pdf](http://sid.usal.es/idocs/F8/FDO7029/position_paper.pdf)

The World Health Organization proposes the following definition of disability: "Disability: Any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being".<sup>5</sup>

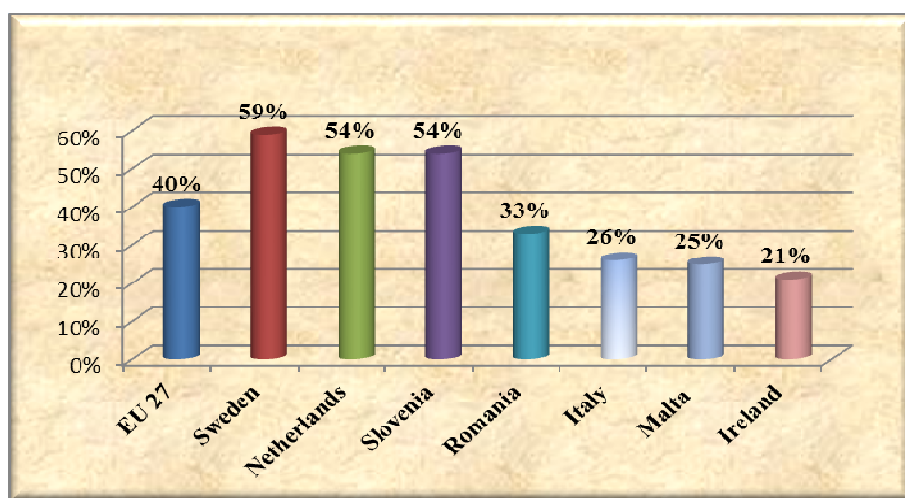
The United Nations Organization (UNO), based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons of Disabilities of the United Nations, uses the following definition: "The term persons with disabilities is used to apply to all persons with disabilities including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND THE LABOUR MARKET

##### 4.1 PERCEPTIONS ON THE POSITION OF THE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ON THE EUROPEAN LABOUR MARKET

According to the Special Eurobarometer no. 393 – “*Discrimination the EU in 2012*”, 40% of the European citizens deem that disability is the essential factor that puts job applicants at disadvantage, this being on the third place in the top of the disfavours factors, after the job applicant’s advanced age (more than 55 years old) and how he/she dresses and presents himself/herself.

In relation to Romanians’ opinion, 33% of them believe that disability will put job applicants at disadvantage, when the employing company will have to choose between two job applicants with the same skills and qualifications.



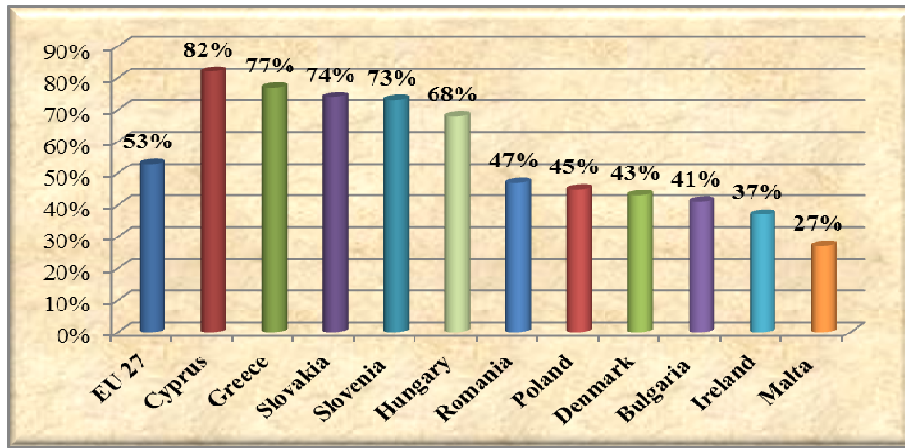
**Figure no. 1 Share of European citizens who believe that disability is a disfavours factor at employment**

“*Special Eurobarometer 393. Discrimination in the EU in 2012*”,  
[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_393\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_en.pdf), accessed on 20.08.2014

The economic crisis is also viewed by European citizens as increasing discrimination on the labour market, in general, as well as, and especially discrimination based on disability criteria, (53%), 47% of the Romanian citizens supporting this idea.

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization, „*International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps*”, Geneva: World Health Organization, 1980, p.28.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/faqs.htm>



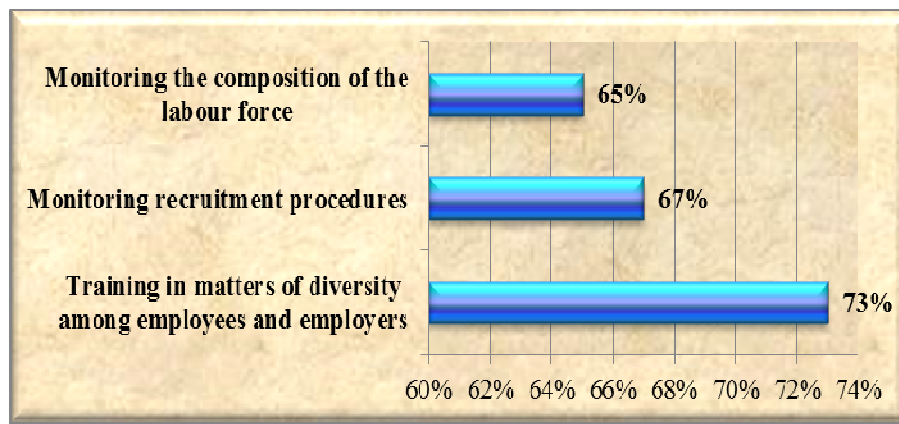
**Figure no. 2 Share of European citizens who believe that the economic crisis contributes to the increase in discrimination on disability criteria on the labour market**

„Special Eurobarometer 393. Discrimination in the EU in 2012”,  
[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_393\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_en.pdf), accessed on 20.08.2014

When it comes to promoting diversity at the workplace, there are three measures that are the most supported by the European citizens, i.e.<sup>7</sup>:

- Training in matters of diversity among employees and employers (a measure supported by 79% of the European citizens);
- Monitoring recruitment procedures, in order to guarantee to the job applicants in the groups with risk of discrimination chances equal to those of the other job applicants with similar skills and qualifications (76%);
- Monitoring the composition of the labour force, in order to assess the representativeness of the groups at risk of discrimination (69%).

In Romania, the rank of the European tendencies is maintained, the percentages being slightly different.



**Figure no. 3 The extent to which the Romanian citizens agree to the measures taken for promoting diversity at the workplace**

„Special Eurobarometer 393. Discrimination in the EU in 2012”,  
[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_393\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_en.pdf), accessed on 20.08.2014

<sup>7</sup> „Special Eurobarometer 393. Discrimination in the EU in 2012”, [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_393\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_en.pdf)

Besides the measures agreed by the European citizens, other studies also propose a number of other strategies meant to guarantee the improvement of the employment of persons with disabilities. On top of the list of these strategies there is a better training of the staff, followed by a source of expertise, at the level of the organization, on problems of reasonable adjustments, which are followed by written guides for solving issues related to disability and adjustment as well as a system for solving requests for special fit-outs.

External specialized help concerning disability and reasonable adjustment issues, as well as a diversity specialist within the organization, who should be in charge with disability issues can be equally useful. A centralized fund that should pay for workplace fitting-out is a useful measure, along with the existence of a written non-discrimination policy that should include the disability status.<sup>8</sup>

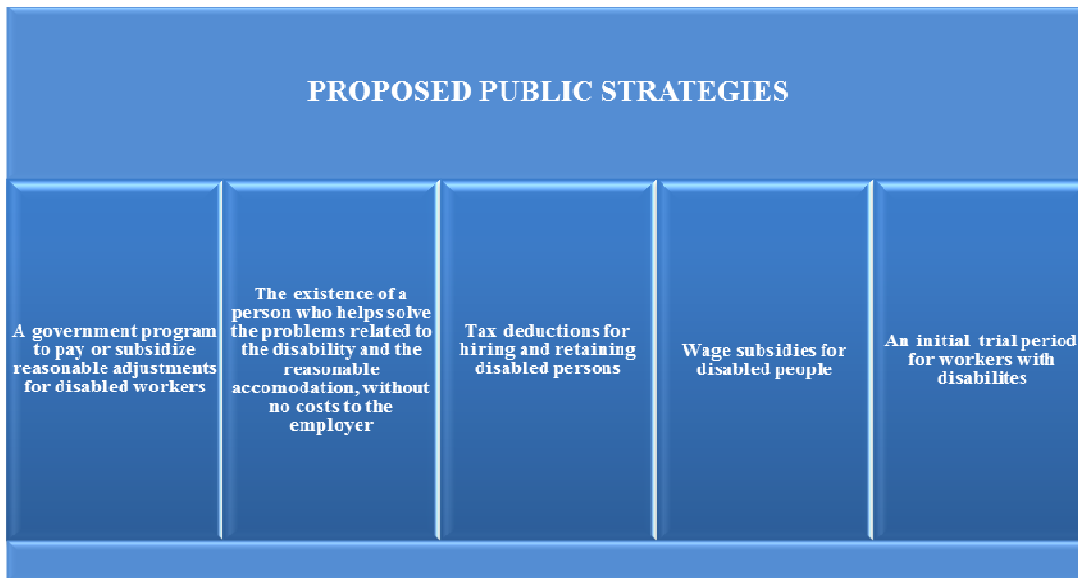


**Figure no. 4 Organizational strategies for improving the employment of people with disabilities**

Source: H. Stephen Kaye, Lita H. Jans, Erica C. Jones, „Why Don't Employers Hire and Retain Workers with Disabilities?“, *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 2011, 21, p. 532

In addition to these strategies related to the organization, we can also identify a number of proposals of strategies depending on public bodies, such as subsidies or full payments by governmental agencies of the accommodations, free external help to solve problems related to disability and special fit-outs, tax exemptions for the employment and retention of employees with disabilities.

<sup>8</sup> H. Stephen Kaye, Lita H. Jans, Erica C. Jones, „Why Don't Employers Hire and Retain Workers with Disabilities?“, *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 2011, 21, p. 531.



**Figure no. 5 Public strategies for the improvement of the employment of people with disabilities**

Source: H. Stephen Kaye, Lita H. Jans, Erica C. Jones, „Why Don't Employers Hire and Retain Workers with Disabilities?”, *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 2011, 21, p. 532

A percentage of 45% of the European employees deem that in order to promote diversity, in relation to people with disabilities, quite a lot of things have been achieved in the companies where they work, while at the opposite side, 43% believe there have not been provided sufficient improvements. Romanian and Polish employees are the least convinced that sufficient improvements have been provided in relation to the promotion of diversity in terms of disability at the workplace.

**Table no. 1 Share of European employees who believe that sufficient improvements have been provided concerning the diversity at the workplace in terms of disability**

Country	Percentage of positive answers
EU27	45%
Great Britain	65%
Denmark	56%
Finland	54%
Romania	25%
Poland	25%

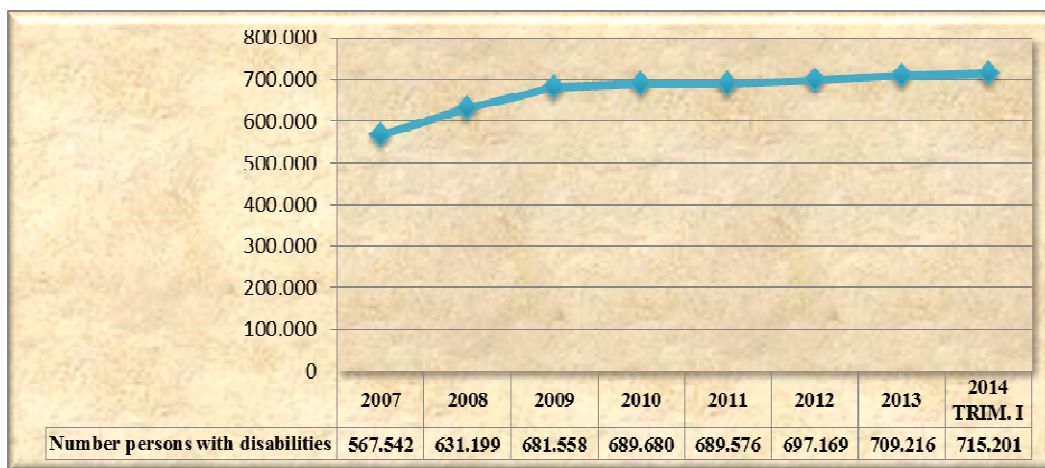
Source: “Special Eurobarometer 393. Discrimination in the EU in 2012”, [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_393\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_en.pdf), accessed on 20.08.2014

#### **4.2 PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ON THE LABOUR MARKET – RECORDED FIGURES**

In our country, the number of persons with disabilities has continuously evolved, the total number of persons with disabilities reaching, on 31 March, 2014, 715,201 persons, out of them, 97.6 % being non-institutionalized, 2.4 % being in residential public social assistance institutions for adults with disabilities. From the total number of persons with disabilities, 60,798 are



children, and 654,403 are adults. The percentage of persons with disabilities in the total population was 3.55%.<sup>9</sup>



**Figure no. 6 The evolution of the number of persons with disabilities in Romania, in the 2007-2014 period**

Source: <http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro/protectie-sociala/ppd>, accessed on 20.08.2014

From international studies we can notice that, in the European Union, persons with disabilities have a lower employment rate than persons without disabilities, and that there are large variations from one country to another. Thus, in 2011, in Bulgaria approx. 30.7% of the persons with difficulties in performing certain tasks in the everyday life were employed, while in Hungary the percentage was 23.7%. The employment rate of these persons reached, in 2011, in Switzerland, 69%, in Sweden 66.2%, in France 56.2%, in Germany 51.5% and in Great Britain 47.6%.<sup>10</sup> In Romania, in 2011, the employment rate of cu persons with difficulties in performing certain tasks in the everyday life was assessed at 31.8%, and those with limitations at work due to a long-term health condition or with difficulties in performing tasks in everyday life was 23.9%, which figures are below the employment rate of this category of persons in the European countries or the employment rate of the general population.

**Table no.2 Employment rate on types of incapacity of people aged 15-64, in 2011**

Country	Difficulties in performing certain everyday tasks	No difficulty in performing everyday tasks	Limitations at work due to a long-term health condition or a difficulty in performing everyday tasks	No limitation at work due to a long-term health condition or a difficulty in performing everyday tasks
<b>Bulgaria</b>	30,7	61,8	17,8	62,1
<b>Germany</b>	51,5	72,1	35,8	72,4
<b>Spain</b>	44,3	60,5	33,8	62,0
<b>France</b>	56,2	66,1	59,6	68,0

<sup>9</sup> The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly, Directorate for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities, "Date Statistice - 31 Martie 2014" (Statistical data - 31 march 2014), <http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro/protectie-sociala/ppd>

<sup>10</sup> Eurostat, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth\\_dlm010&lang=fr](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_dlm010&lang=fr)

<b>Italy</b>	45,6	58,9	37,0	59,4
<b>Hungary</b>	23,7	61,1	18,1	60,9
<b>Romania</b>	31,8	63,5	23,9	64,8
<b>Sweden</b>	66,2	75,7	61,5	76,6
<b>Great Britain</b>	47,6	75,4	36,0	76,0
<b>Switzerland</b>	69,0	81,6	65,0	82,5

Source: Eurostat, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth\\_dlm010&lang=fr](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_dlm010&lang=fr), accessed on 20.08.2014

In most countries, the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is higher than the employment rate for the remaining population. Moreover, the persons with disabilities who do not work have a higher likelihood of being inactive than in search of a job.

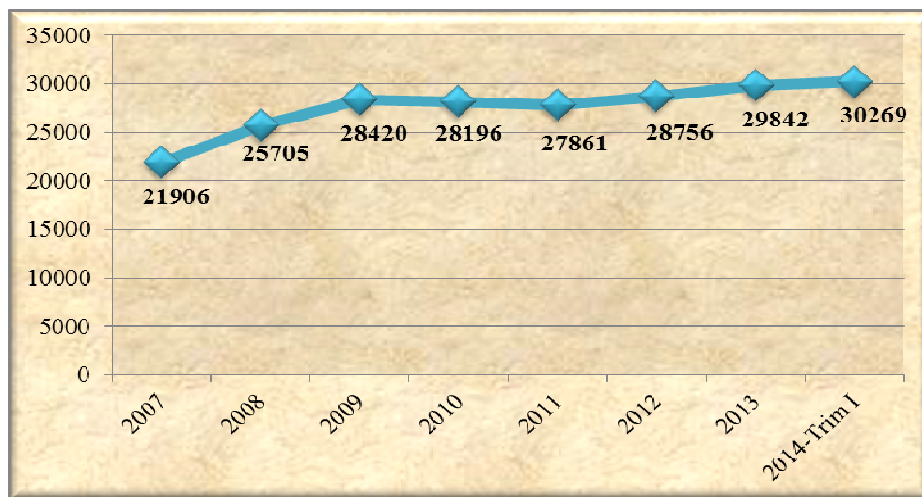
**Table no.3 Unemployment rate on types of incapacity of people aged 15-64, in 2011**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Difficulties in performing certain everyday tasks</b>	<b>No difficulty in performing everyday tasks</b>	<b>Limitations at work due to a long-term health condition or a difficulty in performing everyday tasks</b>	<b>No limitation at work due to a long-term health condition or a difficulty in performing everyday tasks</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	14,3	11,2	21,7	11,1
<b>Germany</b>	12,2	6,4	21,7	6,1
<b>Spain</b>	23,3	21,9	28,2	21,6
<b>France</b>	12,3	8,7	20,1	7,9
<b>Italy</b>	8,1	8,0	11,4	7,8
<b>Hungary</b>	19,4	10,3	25,0	10,2
<b>Romania</b>	8,1	7,5	9,1	7,4
<b>Sweden</b>	9,6	7,3	11,4	7,0
<b>Great Britain</b>	10,6	7,9	15,0	7,6
<b>Switzerland</b>	6,1	3,8	6,0	3,7

Source: Eurostat, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth\\_dlm010&lang=fr](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_dlm010&lang=fr), accessed on 20.08.2014

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly, in March 2014, the number of persons with disabilities employed was a percentage of approx. 4.75% of the total adults with disabilities between 15 and 64 years old, non-institutionalized. Although this percentage continues to be modest, the number of persons with disabilities employed has increased over time, from 21,906 persons, in 2007 to 29,842, as on 30 December 2013 and 30,269 in March, 2014.





**Figure no. 7 The evolution of the number of persons with disabilities employed in Romania, in the 2007-2014 period**

Source: <http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro/protectie-sociala/ppd>, accessed on 20.08.2014

The persons who were the most disadvantaged at employment turned out to be, both in 2013 as well as in 2014, mentally handicapped persons (only 0.82%, and 0.80% respectively of them being employed in 2013 and in the first quarter of 2014) and psychically handicapped persons (1.66% of psychically handicapped adults were employed in 2013, while in 2014 their percentage decreased to 1.62%)

**Table no. 4 The number of persons with handicap employed, as on 31 march, 2014, compared to 31 December 2013**

	Total	Physic	Somatic	Hearing	Visual	Mental	Psychical	Associated	HIV / AIDS	Rare diseases	Deafblindness
<b>31.03. 2014</b>	30.269	7.800	12.071	3.431	2.929	775	1.228	1.472	316	226	21
	4,75%	5,64%	8,95%	15,81%	2,75%	0,80%	1,62%	2,70%	5,05%	6,58%	21,21%
<b>31.12. 2013</b>	29.842	7.623	11.950	3.388	2.881	762	1.245	1.421	315	236	21
	4,77%	5,61%	9,01%	15,73%	2,72%	0,82%	1,66%	2,73%	5,20%	6,29%	1%

Source: <http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro/protectie-sociala/ppd>, accessed on 20.08.2014 and the calculations of the authors

In addition to the main reason represented by medical issues, there are also other aspects that do not allow persons with disabilities to be active on the labour market, i.e.: architectural barriers that generate movement difficulties, the negative perception of these opportunities on the labour market (many persons with disabilities were discouraged by previous experiences, they either do not have information about jobs, or the proposed salary is insufficient, etc.).

## 5. EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES, AT THE CROSSROAD BETWEEN COMPANIES' FEARS AND THE AWARENESS OF BENEFITS

Statistics everywhere show that persons with disabilities are underrepresented on the labour market. Starting from these figures, there are two questions that usually arise:

1. What are the reasons that determine employers to be reluctant when it comes to employing persons with disabilities?
2. Why should the provision of social inclusion of this category of persons be important for the company?

A number of studies we accessed helped us envisage an answer to the first question. One of the reasons of concern, when it comes to employ persons with disabilities, which is most frequently invoked, refers to the costs of adapting workplaces. Despite the fact that it was proved that reasonable adjustments are not that costly, and, moreover, they “pay themselves”, because they lead to the increase in productivity and the possibility to keep an experienced employee, employers often view their obligation to provide reasonable adjustments at the workplace as a significant financial burden, being afraid that they would have to make the whole working space accessible, which would imply much higher costs.

Another reason refers to the lack of information on how they should handle people with disabilities and their needs, which can become an additional burden for managers and for the human resources staff, who need to learn about the legal responsibilities of the employer, to identify the reasonable adjustments required, to assess costs and their benefits and to handle any problems that might occur. If the employers have not had staff with disabilities before, to see if they can manage and they do not have knowledge of any success stories of other colleagues in the industry, they can be tempted to rely on stereotypes according to which persons with disabilities are poor performers at the workplace, often absent from work, and an uncomfortable atmosphere will be created around such employees.

The fear to keep an employee with low performance, who cannot be disciplined or dismissed due to the possibility of a trial is another reason to hesitate in employing persons with disabilities.

A number of other reasons consist of the difficulty of assessing the job applicant’s ability to fulfill the job specific tasks, invoking additional monitoring time, as well as the fear that the person with disabilities would not work to the same standards as his/her fellow workers without disabilities.<sup>11</sup>

Due to all these reasons, employers discriminate job applicants with disabilities.

After seeing employers’ concerns, when it comes to employing a person with disabilities, another question arises: “Why the provision of the social inclusion of this category of persons should be important for companies?”.

A macroeconomic advantage is highlighted by Mark Bagshaw, who, talking about the costs caused by the social support of persons with disabilities, asks the following question: “What if these people could work and did work, and paid taxes and bought cars?”<sup>12</sup>

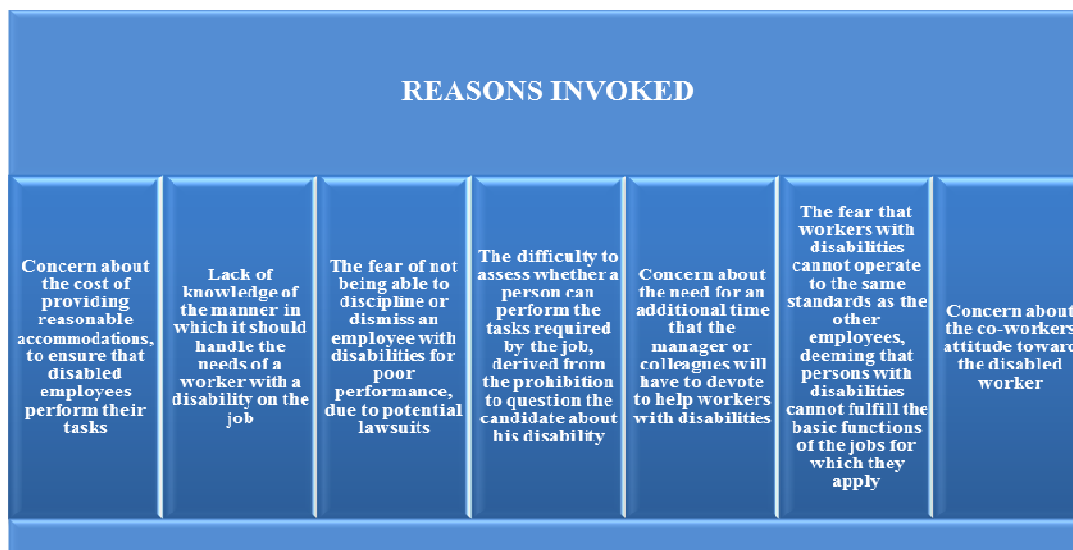
The answer most companies invoke is that they have to observe the laws in force, providing that, in the case of companies with minimum 50 employees, the percentage of employees with disabilities should be at least 4%<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> H. Stephen Kaye, Lita H. Jans, Erica C. Jones, „Why Don’t Employers Hire and Retain Workers with Disabilities?”, *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 2011, 21, pp. 530-531

<sup>12</sup>Mark Bagshaw, “Ignoring Disability a Wasted Opportunity”, May 2006, <http://www.neon.org.nz/newsarchive/bagshawplusfour/>

<sup>13</sup> *Law no. 448/2006 on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities*, art. 78, para. 2, <http://lege5.ro/Gratuit/geytinrsgi/legea-nr-448-2006-privind-protectia-si-promovarea-drepturilor-persoanelor-cu-handicap>



**Figure no. 8 Reasons invoked by employers to the detriment of employing persons with disabilities**

Source: H. Stephen Kaye, Lita H. Jans, Erica C. Jones, „Why Don't Employers Hire and Retain Workers with Disabilities?“, *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 2011, 21, p. 529

In addition to this reason, it is necessary to create a job that is more favourable to their inclusion, because the benefits of working in a diverse group of people – including persons with disabilities - can be substantiated in:<sup>14</sup>

- The possibility to answer to the future deficit of talents. Since we have been noticing a population ageing process, the talents market is decreasing, workers are ageing and there are few skilled persons to fill jobs that become available. Thus, in order to find the persons required to fill such positions, companies have to look for talents in each part of the community, and persons with disabilities are part of this market, and such persons have many capacities, at various level;

- The possibility of the company to build a strong reputation and to reflect its market. Since clients are increasingly heterogeneous, companies should reflect their markets, thus proving to their customers that they cherish and embrace diversity. As proved by numerous studies, heterogeneous teams promote creativity, innovation and a better decision-making process, and employees with disabilities come with various experiences and perspectives for solving work problems – they are often “serial innovators” as a result of the fact that they face an inaccessible world<sup>15</sup>.

Statistics show that persons with disabilities can also bring other attributes that can turn them into valuable employees:

- persons with disabilities fulfil their tasks as well as, or better than, co-workers without disabilities;

- persons with disabilities report an average or better presence;

- Staff retention is higher among persons with disabilities. The General Manager of Wollongong said that “Having got a job, they want to maintain it probably more than any other job seeker because it probably took them three times as much effort to get there.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Deloitte, “The road to inclusion. Integrating people with disabilities into the workplace” - White paper, July 2010, [http://www.deloitte.com/assets/Dcom-Canada/Local%20Assets/Documents/About%20us/Diversity/ca\\_en\\_dialogue\\_on\\_diversity\\_v2\\_080710.pdf](http://www.deloitte.com/assets/Dcom-Canada/Local%20Assets/Documents/About%20us/Diversity/ca_en_dialogue_on_diversity_v2_080710.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.workbridge.co.nz/?page=1331>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/toolaction/employmentfs.pdf>

## 6. REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS IN THE WORKPLACE

Reasonable adjustments in the workplace can be defined as all the changes made by the employer to facilitate the full exercise of the right to work of a person with a certain limitation; these adjustments can take various forms, such as the change in the work schedule, purchasing assistive equipment, devices and technologies, and other similar measures.<sup>17</sup>

These adjustments can be viewed as ways of changing the workplace so that<sup>18</sup>:

- Employees with disabilities can use their abilities efficiently;
- Job applicants with a disability can compete, based on their capacities, and can rightfully win a job.

Adjustments are a form of equal chances, and can include:

- Reorganizing the workplace;
- Changing the working area or the workplace;
- Buying or changing equipment;
- Providing flexible work schedules.

Adjustments are applied in all Human Resources fields, including:

- In recruitment, selection and appointment;
- In career development;
- In training;
- In promotion, transfer or any other labour benefit.

## 7. PRACTICES OF CERTAIN COMPANIES RELATED TO THE MANAGEMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AT THE WORKPLACE

A number of successful multinational corporations that have inclusion policies recognize the positive effects of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their labour force. A 2005 study carried out in the USA showed that 42% of the first 100 companies on the 2003 Fortune 500 list had disability included as a component of their labour force diversity policy.<sup>19</sup>

Worldwide, there are many companies who set as a main objective, and successfully promoted the right to work of persons with disabilities, providing within their departments the successful integration of this category of persons.

All studied companies commit to give equal employment chances for all employees and skilled job applicants, having a policy of equal employment chances that forbids illegal discrimination on any criteria, including disability, in any staff-related practice, including recruitment, employment, training and discipline.<sup>20</sup>

In 1999, Carrefour signed the first “Mission Handicap” Agreement, a national initiative in France that encourages private companies to recruit persons with disabilities and promote their inclusion into their labour force under the best conditions. Since then, Carrefour adopted a proactive approach of employing persons with disabilities, between 2005 and 2007, Carrefour hypermarket recruiting more than 930 persons with special needs, and they currently have 9,709 employees with disabilities, worldwide<sup>21</sup> and 5,000 of such employees in France<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Law no. 448/2006 on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, art. 5, para. 4, <http://lege5.ro/Gratuit/geytinrsgi/legea-nr-448-2006-privind-protectia-si-promovarea-drepturilor-persoanelor-cu-handicap>

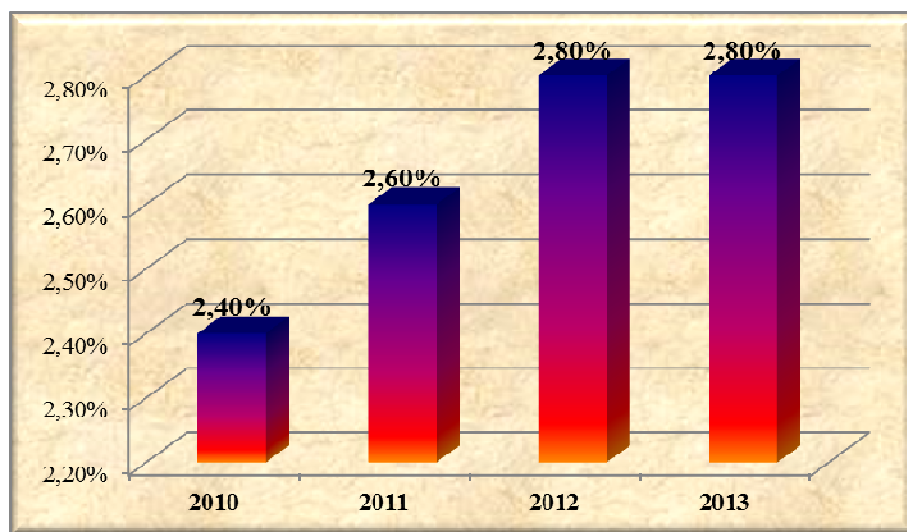
<sup>18</sup> <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/swdn/workpl1.htm>

<sup>19</sup> “Employing people with disabilities: It’s right and smart” [http://www.businessanddisability.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=180:right-and-smart&catid=45:archive&Itemid=225&lang=en](http://www.businessanddisability.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=180:right-and-smart&catid=45:archive&Itemid=225&lang=en)

<sup>20</sup> <http://recrute.carrefour.fr/diversite>, <http://www.ibm.com/ibm/responsibility/policy11.shtml>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.carrefour.com/content/human-resources-indicators>

Carrefour markets worldwide also worked to expand the creation of opportunities at the workplace for persons with disabilities. In Brazil, Carrefour developed the “Eu pratico a inclusao” programme, which led to doubling the number of persons with disabilities recruited in 2013, compared to 2012. In Poland, Carrefour encourages the contracts with the Ekon association, which led to the recruitment of 150 persons with mental disabilities.<sup>23</sup>



**Figure no. 9 Evolution of the percentage of employees with disabilities within Carrefour Group**

Source: <http://www.carrefour.com/content/human-resources-indicators>, accessed on 20.08.2014

Carrefour aims not only at increasing the number of employees with disabilities, but also at keeping and promoting them in their work field, and for this purpose, the company has developed a number of measures to facilitate the everyday work of the employees with disabilities, helping them to become fully integrated professionally. For example, financial assistance is granted to purchase assistive devices or equipment, in order to promote accessibility. Moreover, each hypermarket has at least one disability specialist among its staff, who is in charge with recruiting and assisting new employees with disabilities to adjust to their workplace.<sup>24</sup>

The commitment of IBM towards persons with disabilities started 76 years before the Americans with Disabilities Act, in 1914, when the company hired its first employee with disabilities, while in the 1940s they recruited war invalids, during World War II.<sup>25</sup> Since then, IBM introduced several various programs meant to create an inclusive labour force.

The IBM global employment standards state that "Business activities such as hiring, training, compensation, promotions, transfers, terminations and IBM-sponsored social and recreational activities are conducted without discrimination based on race, color, genetics, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, age or status as a special disabled veteran"<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, in its labour force diversity policy, IBM underlines that the company will make reasonable adjustments in the workplace in order to provide a high performance on the job for skilled persons with disabilities. In this respect, IBM

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.carrefour.com/sites/default/files/CP\\_Carrefour\\_Handi2day\\_en.pdf](http://www.carrefour.com/sites/default/files/CP_Carrefour_Handi2day_en.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.carrefour.com/sites/default/files/RA\\_VGB\\_OK\\_BD.pdf](http://www.carrefour.com/sites/default/files/RA_VGB_OK_BD.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> ILO, "Working Paper no. 3. Disability in the Workplace: Company Practices", Geneva, 2010, p.8, [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actemp/downloads/publications/working\\_paper\\_n3.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actemp/downloads/publications/working_paper_n3.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> [http://www-03.ibm.com/able/product\\_accessibility/ibmcommitment.html](http://www-03.ibm.com/able/product_accessibility/ibmcommitment.html)

<sup>26</sup> [http://www-03.ibm.com/employment/us/diverse/equal\\_opportunity.shtml](http://www-03.ibm.com/employment/us/diverse/equal_opportunity.shtml)



provides a wide range of assistive and reasonable adjustment devices for employees with disabilities, among which<sup>27</sup>:

- Building ramps, electric doors, parking facilities and other adjustments, in order to provide access for the persons with an impaired;
- Subtitled videotapes and the provisions of sign language interpreters, as well as persons to take notes at meetings for deaf employees;
- Recording the publications of the company on audio cassettes for employees with visual impairment;
- Providing adjustment services, in order to allow persons with disabilities to use the equipment in the workplace;
- Granting travelling assistance for mobility impaired employees.

In order to implement this policy, IBM established a central fund for reasonable adjustments in order to cover the costs of adjustment equipment that is not part of the standard workplace or to provide other adjustments, such as transport or interpretation services. Thus, IBM managers can employ staff based on merits and skills, without having the impediment of paying these adjustment costs from the budgets of their own departments.<sup>28</sup>

Proactive recruitment of the job seekers with disabilities is made via the relationship IBM has with various training and employment organizations. In 1997, IBM started to cooperate with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), launching the Entry Point program that provides internship opportunities to students and graduates with disabilities pursuing a career in science, technology, engineering or mathematics. Trainees are assigned experienced IBM mentors and are provided with the assistance technology to facilitate their work. Started in 1999, in the United States, the IBM ABLE project aims at increasing the representation of employees with disabilities. Thus, 84 high school students and 139 professionals with disabilities were employed via this programme, which has a network of 30 voluntary “line champions” who meet job applicants and support them to the recruiting managers, and help both managers and job applicants to prepare for interviews.<sup>29</sup>

In order to make sure that IBM successfully recruits and keeps employees with disabilities, the IBM recruitment specialists, the managers and the employees benefit from training in order to become aware of disabilities.

Microsoft commits to provide equal employment chances for all skilled employees and job applicants, having an equal employment chance policy, and a long history of recruiting, employing and keeping persons with disabilities, believing that the employment of various categories, including those with disabilities, will lead to the improvement in its products, as well as in the work environment. Among the methods used by the corporation to prepare for the recruitment of persons with disabilities there is the provision of training courses for new recruiters (New Recruiter Orientation Training). During this training modules are presented which show the general “etiquette” concerning disability (what should be done and what should not be done during the interview), the main purpose of this training being to make sure that the interviewing process highlights the person’s strengths and skills for the job for which he/she applies, not the disability.<sup>30</sup> A job applicant who applies for Microsoft can identify himself/herself as a person with disabilities, in which case the Inclusion Program Manager for persons with disabilities is announced, in order to solve the potential issues related to certain adjustments required in the workplace.

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<sup>27</sup> [http://www-03.ibm.com/able/access\\_ibm/execbrief.html](http://www-03.ibm.com/able/access_ibm/execbrief.html)

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.disability-marketing.com/profiles/ibm.php4>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.workforce.com/articles/hiring-without-limits>

<sup>30</sup> “Preparing Recruiters To Interview Job Candidates With Disabilities”, <http://askearn.org/success-Microsoft.cfm>



The funds for the assistive technology and for the reasonable adjustments required come from a centralized budget for reasonable adjustment expenses, and by using this approach, no individual team budget is negatively affected.<sup>31</sup> The adjustments for the employees with disabilities can include sign language interpretation, subtitling services, screen readers, refreshable Braille display, orientation and mobility training, for those moving into new buildings or campuses, hearing assistance devices, ergonomic office furniture, and many others.<sup>32</sup>

The Cross Disability (XD) Employee Resource Group (ERG), established in 2009, in Microsoft, with persons belonging to 10 different networks of employees with special conditions, vision impairments, mobility handicap and dyslexia, concludes partnerships with associations, non-profit organizations and special interest groups, nationwide, with the declared purpose of increasing awareness concerning disability and enables Microsoft employees to reach maximal potential, by inclusion, representation and access to the required adjustments, thus making this company the favorite employer for persons with disabilities worldwide.<sup>33</sup>

## 8. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Worldwide, a number of successful multinational corporations have begun to recognize the beneficial effects that can be provided by the inclusion of persons with disabilities into their labour force, preparing certain effective inclusion policies.

The legislation is the factor that determines companies to become more inclusive, as in many countries there is a rate system, in relation to employing persons with disabilities.

Nevertheless, besides the compliance with the law, a much more important factor can be discerned, which advocates the inclusion of persons with disabilities, namely Corporate Social Responsibility, due to the fact that consumers tend to favour companies that employ persons with disabilities. The assessments made are more eloquent: in 2013, 1.3 billion people with disabilities worldwide, plus 2.2 billion, representing families and friends, control more than 8,000 billion dollars of the global annual income.<sup>34</sup>

We can notice, from the presented examples, that over time, employers come to realize that the employment of persons with disabilities is not just charity, and that employees with disabilities can have major contributions to the profitability of the company too, turning it into a “good to do” or “smart to do” thing. “Companies do not have to hire a person with a disability. They have to hire someone with the appropriate skills to perform a given job. If that person happens to have a disability, so be it, but disability is not the point”.<sup>35</sup>

A limitation of this study is the fact that, unfortunately, when we focused on the economic and professional situation of persons with disabilities, we noticed that the statistics and indicators related to them are not very detailed, and that there are no updated data from reliable sources. Beyond this issue of the lack of data, the available figures are however eloquent and show the difference that, worldwide, the social and economic situation of persons with disabilities is

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<sup>31</sup>Robitaille Suzanne “Microsoft’s Tips for Accessible Recruiting”, <http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com/Blog/post/Microsofte28099s-Tips-for-Accessible-Recruiting.aspx>

<sup>32</sup> „Microsoft Recruits, Hires and Accommodates People with Disabilities”, <http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/news/features/2000/jul00/07-19disabilityemployer.aspx>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/diversity/programs/ergen/xd.aspx>

<sup>34</sup> Donovan Rich, “Sustainable Value Creation through Disability. The Global Economics of Disability-Annual Report”, April 3, 2013 <http://returnondisability.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/The%20Global%20Economics%20of%20Disability%20-%202013%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

<sup>35</sup>“Employing people with disabilities: It’s right and smart”[http://www.businessanddisability.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=180:right-and-smart&catid=45:archive&Itemid=225&lang=en](http://www.businessanddisability.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=180:right-and-smart&catid=45:archive&Itemid=225&lang=en)

delicate in all countries, this category of persons representing a rather large segment that is mostly overlooked on the labour market, the fear of the unknown, the fact that the reasonable adjustment expenses will be higher than the benefits, and the negative attitudes of the co-workers continue to be an everyday issue, even when employers start looking for abilities rather than disabilities.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> <http://unsdn.org/?p=13727>

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