

# WP 2 / Activity 1 National Report BELGIUM

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**HdBA**  
Hochschule der  
Bundesagentur für Arbeit  
University of Applied Labour Studies



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## 1 Introduction

In size, Belgium is one of the five smallest countries in the EU, but it is very densely populated with 11.5 million inhabitants (Statista, 2022). Since 1993 Belgium is a federal state with three language-based communities (Dutch-speaking Community, French-speaking Community and German-speaking Community) and three territorial regions (Flemish Region, Walloon Region, and Brussels-Capital Region). The German-Speaking Community, called East-Belgium, is part of the Walloon Region and the smallest community with only 78,000 inhabitants.

Competences for the work and the health sector are shared between the federal state, the regions and the communities. In this paper, we can only discuss the competencies at the federal and the German-speaking-community level and in part of the Walloon Region. The communities are very strictly divided and there is little interchange.

In Belgium, we assume a rate of 9 % on people with disabilities in the age from 15-64 (that is 675,000 people in total), in East-Belgium we call them PmU (Personen mit Unterstützungsbedarf), that means people in need of support (Statbel, 2018). We assume that one third of this number are people with mental disabilities, but we cannot divide this rate in different kinds of disabilities, because there are no statistics available.

### 1.1 Social and Labour Market Policy concerning people with disabilities (data in general)

Because of the federal system and the different languages in Belgium, we have a fragmented policy in the social and the labour market field. According to the “European Semester 2020-2021 country fiche on disability equality”, this situation creates more barriers for specific target groups than they lead to more participation. Belgium lacks a cross-cutting policy in which different policy areas such as mobility, education, employment, sport, culture, leisure.... are interlinked. Finally, it is still worrying that a part of disabled citizens is not included in the statistics collected. Therefore, the situation of persons with a disability (certainly in metropolitan areas) is often complicated by other dangers such as poverty and mental health problems.

In 1990 the decree of the executive of the German-speaking Community establishes a new service. It is called *Office of the German-speaking Community for handicapped persons as well as for special social assistance* (Dienststelle der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft für Personen mit Behinderung sowie für die besondere soziale Fürsorge, DPB). It offers assistance for people in need of support, that is people with disabilities of each age and elderly people. In the other communities have been installed similar services: the Flemish Agency for Persons with a Disability (VDAB), the Agence wallonne pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées (AWIPH) and the Service bruxellois francophone des personnes handicapées (Phare).

Since 1994 the Government *Decree on the Promotion of the Employment of Persons with a Disability in the Open Labour Market* (Erlass der Regierung zur Förderung der Beschäftigung von Personen mit einer Behinderung auf dem freien Arbeitsmarkt) exists a close cooperation between the DSL and the employer in the private sector. The Service grants employers who employ a worker with a disability a financial contribution to that worker's wages and social charges corresponding to that worker's established underperformance, up to 40% of their wages. This contribution is paid for at least one year. The grade of the contribution based on the expert opinion of the DSL. The report is based on a thorough assessment of the skills and development potential of the employee concerned and on an analysis of the requirements of the job (Erlass, 1994).

## 1.2 Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and its influence on social and labour market policies and regulations (national program, status quo)

The first national policy for people with disabilities in Belgium is the *Royal Decree on the Social Reintegration of the Disabled*, (Königlicher Erlass über die soziale Wiedereingliederung der Behinderten) from 1963 (Erlass, 1963). It determines on the social reintegration of the disabled and entrusts a National Fund with the identification of disabled persons for social reintegration with the possibility of acquiring employment. The disabled person was accompanied by a legal representative or his doctor in the preparation of the application. The opinion of the treating doctor still decided the career of people with impairments. Without a medical diagnosis, support was not possible.

Centres, such as sheltered workshops established by the National Fund, were able to provide the necessary skills to people with disabilities. The aim at that time was already to guarantee disabled people not only meaningful and rewarding work under medical and vocational supervision, but also opportunities for vocational adaptation and advancement and, as far as possible, the transition to normal employment. Special institutions for schooling for general education or technical training were established during this period.

If the disabled were able to work in private enterprises, they could register as job seekers through the National Fund. These were forwarded to the company, which received a subsidy for employment. Sheltered workshops were established in the German speaking Community in the 1970s (Moniteur Belge o.D.).

Until the 1980er Belgium was at the bottom of the European league in terms of the integration of people with disabilities. The **Special act of 8 August 1980** has the task to change this situation. It gave the communities and the regions competences in the field of social assistance to people with disabilities. This was done in several phases:

1. The first phase consisted in the communization of the *Fund for Medical, Social and Educational Assistance to the Disabled*. FONDS 81 was dependent on the National Ministry of Public Health and its mission included, among other things, intervention in the costs of housing, maintenance, treatment, and training of disabled people.
2. The second phase was the communization of the National Fund for the Social Reclassification of the disabled people, which was dissolved from 1 January 1991.
3. Then, created with the decree of 3 July 1991, the *Community Fund for the Social and Professional Integration of disabled People* (F.C.I.) succeeded which manages matters relating to vocational guidance and training, work placement and social assistance within the French Community. Medical and paramedical services for functional rehabilitation are then transferred to the Disability Health Insurance (I.N.A.M.I.).
4. The next phase, in correlation with the issue of Decree II from 22 July 1993, saw the abolition of the F.C.I. was abolished. From this time, the Walloon Region and the Commission of the French Community (COCOF), on the territory of the French-speaking Region and Brussels-Capital, exercised the competences of the French Community as laid down in the Special Act of 8 August 1980 on institutional reforms, as amended by the Act of 16 July 1993, in particular with regard to policies for the disabled, including training, retraining and re-education of the disabled people.

The rules and funding of disability benefits, including individual cases and the rules for financial intervention to employers who employ disabled people, remain the responsibility of the federal government.

The foundations of today's policy for persons with disabilities dates to this decree. At that time, the aim was to give persons with disabilities more opportunities to integrate into society. Society had taken measures so that the needs of persons with disabilities could be met in terms of work, housing, and education.

Today the people concerned are included in the decision-making processes. Their will, their willingness, and their acceptance of their disability play an important role to give them orientation. Now the process of social rehabilitation and reintegration aimed at ensuring that the disabled persons attained the highest level of physical, mental, and occupational performance and that they were placed in appropriate employment, considering their abilities and skills. A comprehensive needs assessment was followed by counselling, education and vocational training or retraining with social support and a selective accommodation into work. The process of reintegration was left to specialists and heads of school counselling and specialized vocational counselling.

Emancipation and participation are now the key words in disability welfare. This means, among other things, that persons with disabilities must have access to all sectors of society, not only to buildings, public transport, employment, and education (Behindertenpolitik, 2011).

In 1990 the DSL takes over the mission of the former National Fund, but also all aspects of social assistance and the allocation of allowances to sick or handicapped people. Cooperation agreements have been adopted between the Walloon Region and the COCOF and between the Walloon Region and the German-speaking Community.

From January 2017 on, the DPB is called Service for Self-Determined Living (Dienststelle für selbstbestimmtes Leben) DSL. This service integrates the previous service for persons with disabilities and, in addition to the business area of persons with support needs, will also include the area of pensioners with care needs, and the service is responsible for all citizens of the DG who register support needs. The service strives to promote the best possible accompaniment of persons with support needs and to provide the necessary means and resources for this purpose ([www.selbstbestimmt.be](http://www.selbstbestimmt.be)).

The objective that DSL sets for itself is to place its clients (primarily) in the primary labour market. The methodology used for this is that of supported employment. Part of this methodology is follow-up care in the workplace.

In addition, the DSL has measures whereby employers can save up to 40% of the wage costs of their target group. The service actively works to raise awareness among employers in the region. Those who are most difficult to place are further directed to pre-services and integration measures.

Clients come to the service in different ways. The social welfare centres and the employment office refer clients because the DSL is the only provider of supported employment. Clients are free to choose whether to go to the service, but often have a dilemma. Either they are recognised and then have a stigma of disability or long-term illness, or they are not registered and then do not qualify for accompaniment. Prompt and supportive accompaniment is essential for the positive development of the person in the vocational field (Wets, Van Dooren, De Cuyper, 2015).

The DSL and the other services are now functioning as a focal point for the implementation of the UN-Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities from 2006. The DSL is responsible for the coordination and the reporting of the measures, and it does own projects. The work of the DSL has also the objective to raise awareness and sensitization for the problem of people with disabilities. Furthermore, many public and private institutions are aware of their tasks and responsibilities in inclusion policy for people with disabilities.

The fight against discrimination is based on the law of 10 May 2007 on combating certain forms of discrimination. This law prohibits any form of discrimination based on various criteria: Age, sexual orientation, family status, birth, performance, faith or belief, political opinion, present or future state of health, disability, physical or genetic characteristics, social origin, or language (Behindertenpolitik, 2011).

The Federal Royal Decree of March 2007 concerning the recruitment of persons with disabilities states that a quota of 3 % of all federal employees should be persons with disabilities in all federal departments. A recent evaluation of this policy plan for the Flemish speaking part of Belgium shows that at the end of 2018, 678 registered persons (1.8 %) with a disability or chronic illness were employed within the Flemish administration (compared to 585 at the end of 2017). The proportion of employees with a disability or chronic illness grows to 2.2 % after several years stagnating at around 1.4 % (Country fiche, 2021, S. 15).

For the fulfilling of paragraph 2 article 33 of the UN-Convention, and the establishing of an independent mechanism the Belgian state has installed the *Interfederal centre for equal opportunities and against racism and discrimination* (Interföderales Zentrum für Chancengleichheit und Bekämpfung des Rassismus und der Diskriminierung). Within this centre was created a *Service for the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNIA)*. This service is based on a cooperation between the Federal State, the regions, and the communities. Its target group are not only people with disabilities, but all parts of the society, that are in danger of discrimination.

According to paragraph 3 of the same article of the UN-Convention a monitoring committee is assigned to this service, which is made up of representatives of the associations and federations of and for persons with disabilities, the social partners, and the academic world. In this one seat is reserved for a representative of the disabled people from the DG.

This person is appointed by the Forum of Associations and other associations of and for people with disabilities. This forum furthermore takes over according to Article 4 Paragraph 3 of the UN Convention, this forum also assumes the tasks regarding the participation of persons with disabilities in the decisions that affect them. The forum is consulted by the DSL when it comes to implementing the UN Convention and developing new concepts, measures, and regulations.

In 2014 the plan of action has passed the DSL-Plenary meeting and the governmental committees. It shows concrete measures for the implementation of the UN Convention. The plan contains 10 fields of action which objectives are the result of consultations of the people with disabilities and correspond their needs. The action fields are focus areas and are of particular importance for the inclusion of people with disabilities. One important field is no. 5: *Employment and vocational training*.

But there is still a gap between the plan and the reality. In 2016 Nils Muižnieks from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights says after his visit to the country: "Belgium does not respect the rights of persons with disabilities to a self-determined life and inclusion in society. Implementing the planned measures should be a priority" (Europarat, 2016)

The Royal Decree defining the conditions for positive actions from 2019 applies to the private sector and creates a framework for positive action in the workplace. Positive action is meant as an exception to the prohibition of discrimination. In positive action measures, equal treatment is given way to a higher social goal, mainly the elimination of social disadvantages. Positive actions then refer to measures aimed at a 'disadvantaged' group, the members of which carry a well-defined protected criterion, and which aim to reduce the disadvantages suffered by the group and related to the protected criterion. Positive action measures are thus aimed at obtaining a more balanced distribution among the members of the different population groups.

A positive action measure can only be taken if the following conditions are met:

- there must be manifest inequality,
- the disappearance of this inequality must be identified as an objective to be promoted,

- the affirmative action measure must be of a temporary nature and such that it disappears once the intended objective has been achieved,
- the measure of affirmative action must not unduly restrict other people's rights.

In the last two years, the Belgian government has put its focus on the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market. That can be seen in two points:

- In April 2022 there was a hearing on the concept of *Supported Employment*. This principle is widely used in other European countries like Germany. Supported employment is the individual in-company qualification, training, and occupational support for people with disabilities with special support needs in companies of the general labour market. The goal is an employment relationship that is subject to social security contributions.

It has a vast variety of methods to support the people with disabilities like:

- Job analysis and adaptation
- Work trials, supervised internships
- Preparation of an induction and support plan
- Job coaching, on-the-job qualification
- Counselling and support of colleagues in the company

In part, the DSL offers this service, but it's not implemented in a methodical whole. But the employment agency and the ÖSHZ doesn't have the resources for such a support. The government is now on the way to organize the advanced training of the employers. (Anhörung, 2022)

- The second step is dated in November 2022. The government has issued a *Decree on the Creation of an advisory Council for People with Disabilities*. The goal of this law is the creation of the *Advisory Council for People with Disabilities*. The tasks of the Advisory Board include:
  - the issuing of expert opinions and statements on the living situation of persons with impairments in the German-speaking Community, either on its own initiative or at the request of Parliament, the Government, the municipalities of the German-speaking area or the Service.
  - the issuing of opinions on any amendment to the present Decree, either on its own initiative or at the request of the Government.
  - the constructive accompaniment and monitoring of the implementation of and compliance with the UN Convention and the elaboration of approaches to inclusion.
  - the constant exchange with the associations of or for people with disabilities in the German-speaking Community and ensuring close cooperation with them.
  - submitting proposals for the appointment of a representative to boards, committees and commissions in which decisions are made in the areas of competence of the German-speaking Community.

Participants of the council are representatives of the association of or for people with impairments, at minimum three persons with disabilities of full age and four representatives of the municipal advisory councils for people with disabilities. (Dekret, 2022)



## 2 Participation in working life of people with intellectual disabilities

The employment rate of people with disabilities in Belgium remains still below the EU average. In 2018 the employment rate of people with disabilities was 43.8 %, compared to 75.6 % for other persons and still -7.0 points below the EU27 average. Based on the same data there is an unemployment rate of 17.5 % for people with disabilities compared to 5.7 % for other persons.

Only one of 409 employees in Belgium has a disability, but their number has increased by almost ten per cent in the last five years. When they do find their way into the regular labour market, it is mainly in the service sector (0.27%), in the hospitality industry (0.26%) and in the non-profit sector (0.24%). (Grenzecho, 2022)

Data from EU-SILC (European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) indicate an employment rate for persons with disabilities in Belgium of 43.8 % in 2018, compared to 75.6 % for other persons and approximately -7.0 points below the EU27 average - resulting in an estimated disability employment gap of approximately 32 percentage points (EU27 average gap 24.2, see Tables 1 and 2). (Country fiche, 2021, S. 11).

Table 1: Employment rates, by disability and gender (aged 20-64)

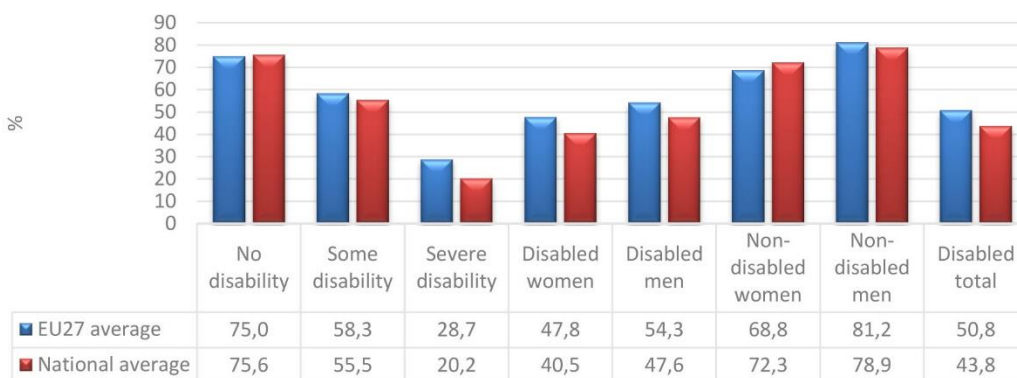
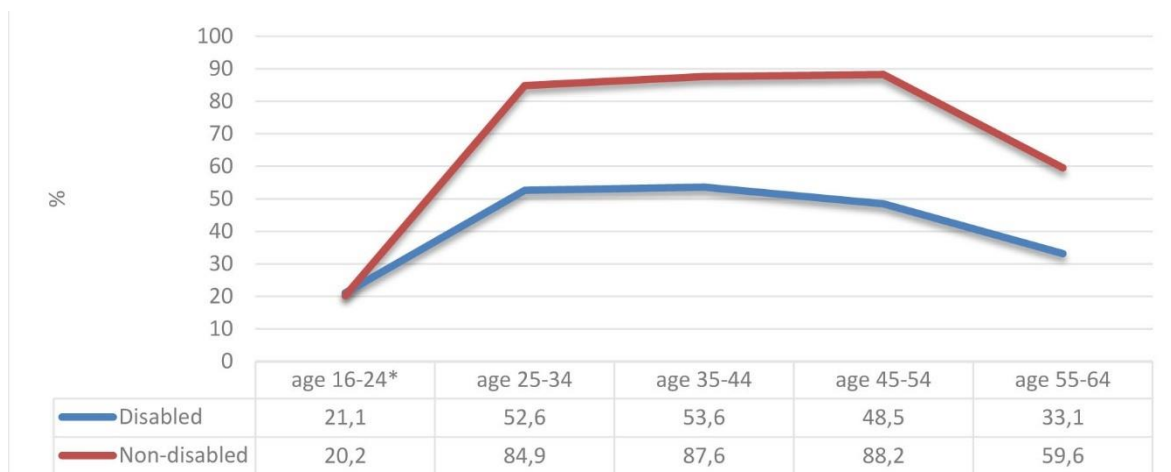
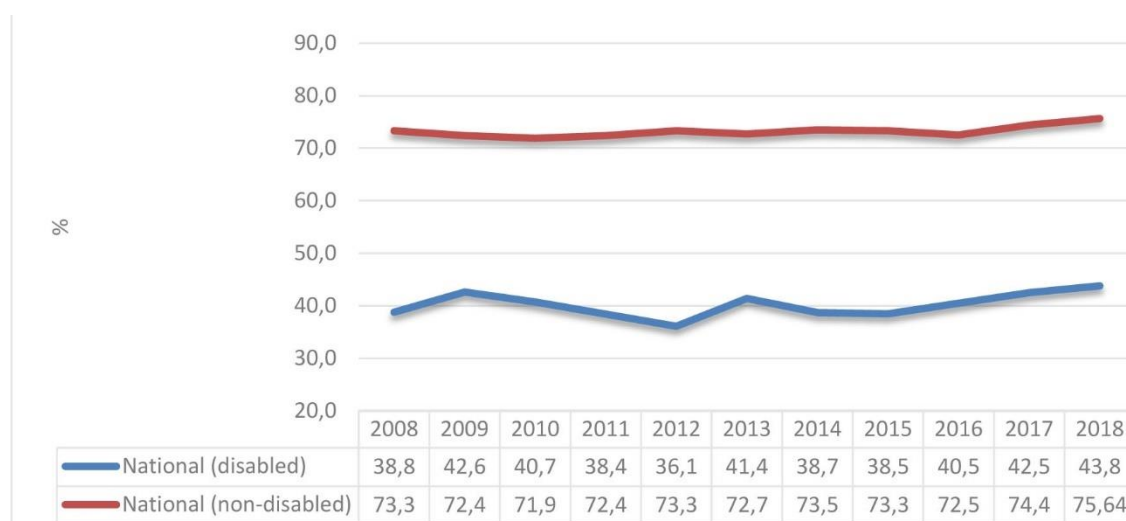


Table 2: Employment rates in Belgium, by disability and age group



Country fiche, 2021, S. 30

Table 3: National trends in employment rates, by disability status (aged 20-64)



Country fiche, 2021, S. 31

In all age groups (see Table 2) from the age of 25, we can see a particularly large gap in employment rates between people with and without disability. While the gap between 25 and 44 years is approximately 30 points, we see a widening to around 40 points in the age group 45-54 years.

Over a period of 10 years (2008-2018), the national trends in employment rates (aged 20-64) show a stability in the difference between groups of people with and without disability. If the percentage of employed citizens without disability fluctuates between 71 and 75 % during this period, people with disability usually lay behind by around 30 points. This gap is not closing, despite a slightly increasing trend in employment rates for people with disabilities in recent years.

Another difference is that 41% among the 15-64-year-old in Belgium who are severely affected by disability or long-term health problems work part-time, compared to a quarter of the total labor force.

In turn shows the unemployment rate (Fig. 6) a significant divergence between disabled and non-disabled persons. But the national trend shows accordingly a decline of the rate over the last 10-15 years (Fig. 7) (Country fiche 2021, S. 11f)

Table 4: Unemployment rates in Belgium, by disability and age group

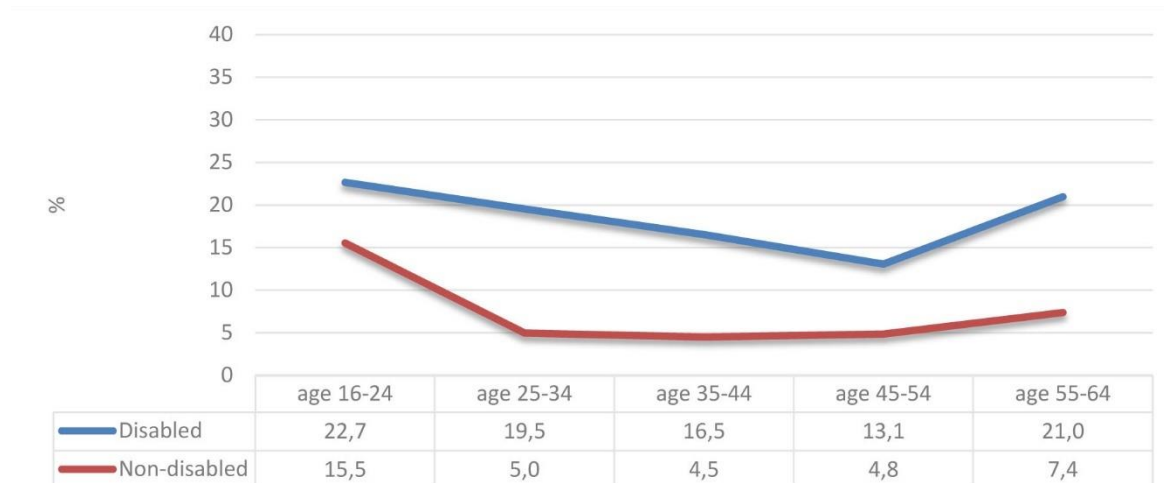
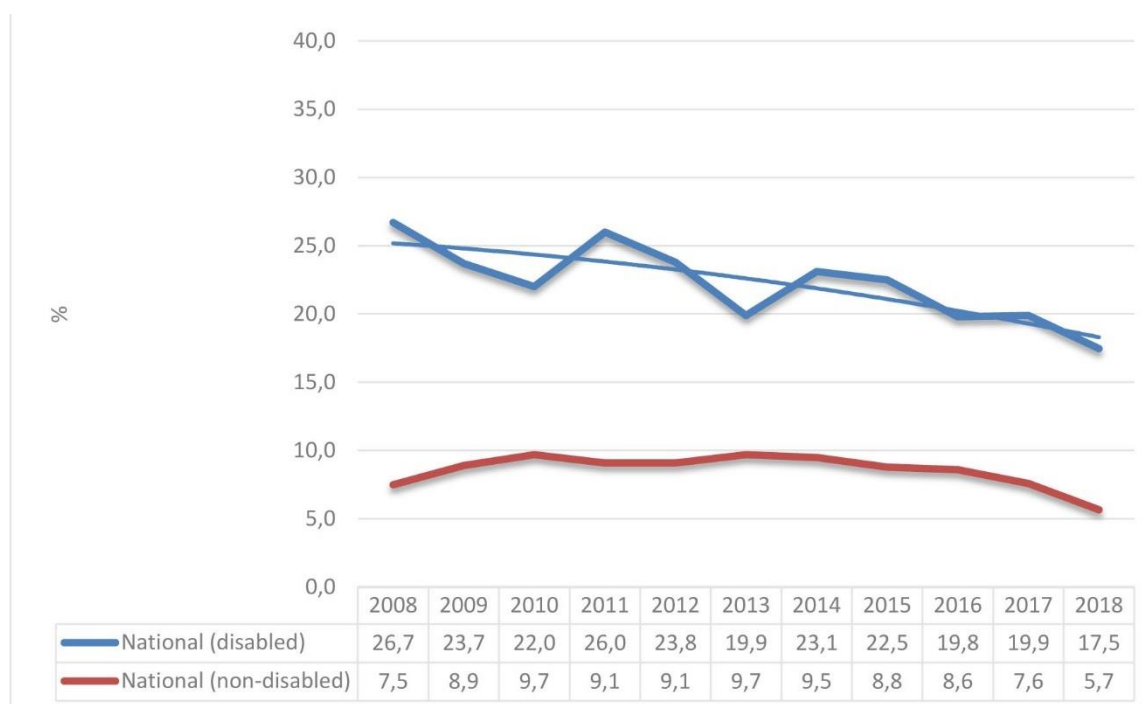


Table 5: National trends in unemployment rate, by disability status (aged 20-64)



County fiche, 2021, S. 32

The UNIA report from 2021 says: “According to the latest figures from Statbel, the employment rate in Belgium of people with disabilities is 26% (compared to 65% of the total population aged 15 to 64). Their unemployment rate is 8% (compared to 5% of the total population). The vast majority (72%) of them are inactive: they therefore do not have a job, are not looking for one or are not available for work (compared to 31% of the total population). People with disabilities also work more part-time (39% compared to 25% of the total population).

Vocational training is still too little accessible to people with disabilities, who are still too regularly referred to specific training (when it exists). This is particularly significant for French-speaking deaf people who very rarely benefit from sign language interpretation during their training.

People with disabilities are still heavily discriminated in the labor market. For example, discrimination tests carried out in Ghent revealed that deaf applicants are 42% less likely to get a positive response when applying.

Too few resources are directed towards job search and employment support in the mainstream. Public funding is still mainly directed towards employment in adapted work companies. In Flanders and Brussels, there is three times as much budget going towards adapted work companies rather than towards inclusive employment. In Wallonia, 67% of the budget devoted to the employment and training of people with disabilities is intended for sheltered workshops. (Unia report, 2021, S. 23)

## 2.1 Definition people with intellectual disabilities (data in concrete)

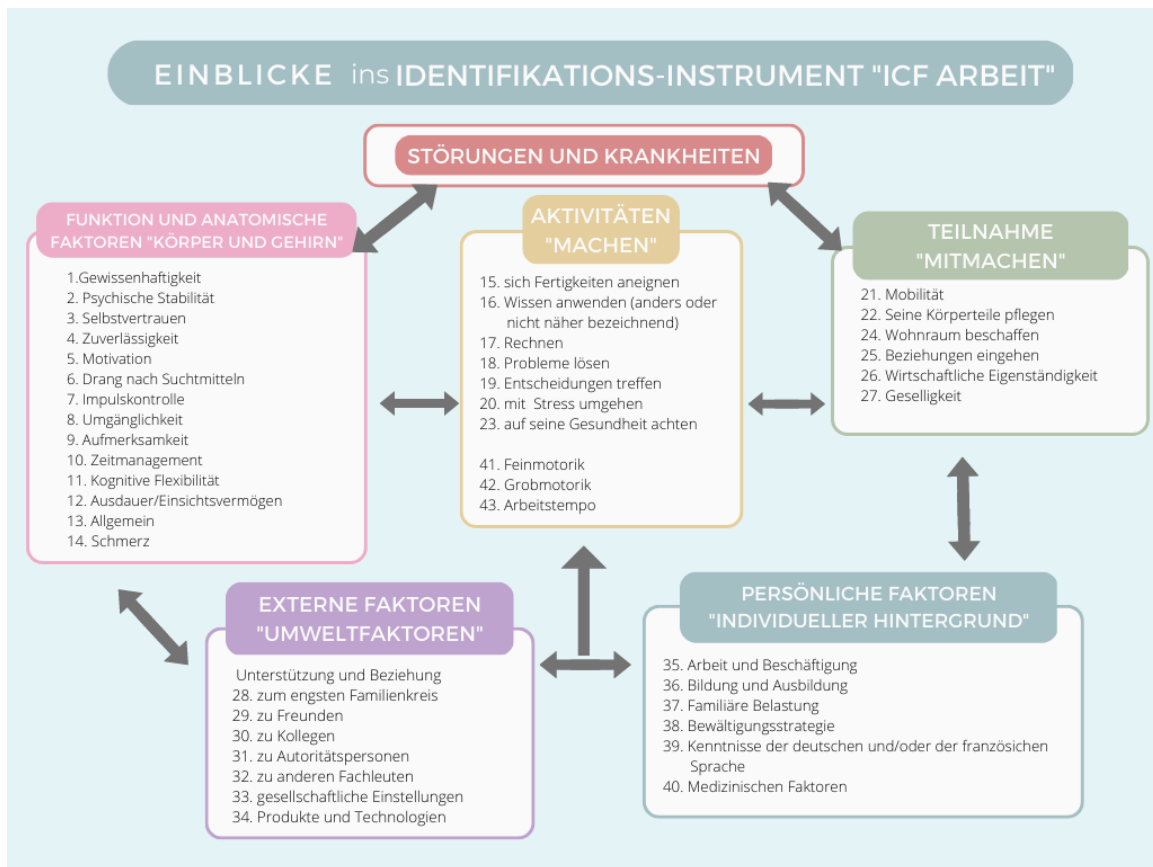
According to the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, persons with disabilities are "those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may prevent them from participating fully, effectively and equally in society". A disability exists as soon as someone is impaired in the performance of certain tasks in the long term. Now, psychological stress (burnout/depression) is a big issue. The concept of disability is evolutionary and systemic. This is because a disability develops in response to adaptations or barriers in the environment.

This expanded concept of disability includes motor disabilities, chronic or disabling illnesses, visual impairments, hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, mental disorders, autism spectrum disorders and learning disabilities.

In this definition, the focus is on the external occurrence of a disability rather than on the person themselves. Thus, a person may be disabled in one external situation and not in another. Incidentally, today's broader concept of disability includes not only physical, sensory, and mental impairments, but also chronic or degenerative diseases, mental disorders and, in certain cases, even obesity. (Arbeiten mit Behinderung, 2017, S. 9)

Therefore, the DSL has established a screening-tool for scoring how much support the PmU needs. This tool is based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health from the WHO. The Flemish Agency for Persons with a Disability (VDAB) has developed a screening-tool with 43 categories. The DSL has adopted this tool and does interviews on this base.

Figure 1: ICF-Screening-Tool



*Dienststelle für selbstbestimmtes Leben, 2023*

The tool has work-related factors and assessments, also environmental and personal factors. For the screening the PmU must be interviewed at several dates for 1-2 hours, that depends on the special case and the biopsychosocial condition. Besides the tool there can be integrated other sources as family, former employer, even teachers, if the person is very young.

The aim of the screening is not to diagnose, but to determine limitations and to look how one can deal with. In the past the scoring has depended only on the medical diagnosis. The tool helps to score independently of the diagnosis. It is all about to hear what this person really wants. Each person receives individually tailored support, which is based on the talents and abilities of each person. The aim is to achieve a higher self-esteem.

The survey serves as a basic orientation and personal preferences stand in the foreground. The scorer, for his part, gives professional assessments. Interviews with other persons (source interviews) can take place if an employment relationship already exists.

It is always only possible with the consent of the person interviewed. The report is only for the PmU and all sources are anonymous.

The objective of the interview is to decide whether the person with disabilities is entitled to support or to subsidization. After the interview the DSL makes a report which is only for the person themselves. And the person must decide whether they go to sheltered workshop (BW = Beschützende Werkstätte) or to an employer in the labor market.

## 2.2 The system of the Sheltered workshops

### Legislation concerning sheltered workshops:

At the end of the Second World War a European concern for the rehabilitation of disabled people and their integration into the socio-economic market was born in Belgium.

April 28, 1958: A first law in favour of the social reclassification of people with disabilities is promulgated. A national organization is set up to prepare less able-bodied people to access employment: the Protected Workshops.

The 1963 law instituted sheltered workshops (*Entreprises de Travail Adapté*) and imposed a series of conditions on these collective social assistance institutions which were dependent on the *National Fund for the Social Reclassification of the disabled people*. In 1963, the Fund depended on the Ministry of Employment and Labour. It had financial resources at its disposal, including a 7.5% levy on transport insurance, fire insurance and industrial accident insurance premiums. This budget enabled it to carry out its mission and build up financial reserves.

In 1964, the first Protected Workshops open their doors. In April 1963 a law establishes the *National Fund for the Social Reclassification of Disabled Persons* which in 1964 gave rise to the first approved Protected Workshop.

To be approved and subsidised, the ETAs had to comply with the provisions of article 47 of the aforementioned law:

- They give priority to people with disabilities who are registered with the National Fund (and therefore have a mental disability of more than 20% or a physical disability of more than 30%) and who, because of the nature or degree of their disability, are temporarily or permanently unable to work in a normal working environment.
- Not only have they to ensure that people with disabilities are able to perform useful and gainful work, but also offer them opportunities for vocational adaptation and promotion and, as far as possible, access to mainstream employment. To ensure this training, sheltered workshops must secure the services of professionally qualified supervisory staff.
- People with disabilities must be employed under a contract of employment and have adequate health and safety conditions.

The 3 sheltered workshops in the German Speaking Community started their work in 1972. This time, they were small businesses in which socially motivated people started with the main aim of bringing people with disabilities out of their isolation through meaningful employment.

In 1978, managers of sheltered workshops get together and create EWETA, a federation capable of defending the interests of their companies on a legal, economic, and social level.

In the 1980s: Competences regarding the integration of disabled people, which had been federal until then, are communally and then regionalized.

In the 1990s: the employment provided in sheltered workshops is recognized by the public authorities.

In 1995 the sheltered workshops change their name to *Entreprises de Travail Adapté* (companies of adapted work). This change emphasises the "company" and "employment" aspects. This year also marks the birth of the *Agence pour la Vie Wallonne pour l'Intégration des Personnes Handicapées - AWIPH*, a public body of the Walloon Region now renamed *Agence pour une Vie de Qualité - AviQ*.

The Decree of 6 April 1995 modifies the condition of admission to ETA for disabled people by specifying: "any minor or adult presenting a significant limitation of his or her capacity for social or professional integration as a result of an alteration of his or her mental, sensory or physical faculties, which generates the need for intervention by society, is considered to be disabled". (Dekret 1995)

In the Walloon Region, the latest phase of regionalisation began with the decree of 6 April 1995 establishing the Walloon Agency for the Integration of People with Disabilities - AWIPH, a public interest organisation. This decree aims to:

- to put the disabled person in the focus of the integration process and to find the best reclassification solution for him or her,
- to emphasize and develop the role of the regional offices in monitoring, by introducing the concept of loss of earnings (<https://eweta.be>).

From this time, the work of the sheltered workshops changes. They must pay the normal minimum wages for their people and have to generate 70% of their financial requirements by itself. Only 30% are paid by the DSL. They are now operating as a social enterprise and have their focus on the customers.

#### **Adapted Work Enterprises, some figures of 2018:**

- **55** Adapted Work Enterprises (ETA) throughout the Walloon region, including the German-speaking region representing more than 10,250 workers (able-bodied and disabled), including nearly **8,500 workers** with a disability, more than
- **8,500** production workers,
- nearly **90%** fixed-term contracts and
- **85%** of disabled workers,
- male-female split: **70%-30%**,
- **361 million** euros of total production
- **20** sectors of activity
- **3** sheltered workshops in the German Speaking Community (**Adapta, Die Zukunft, BW Eupen**)

The progressive professionalisation of the company structure and management has enabled the sheltered workshops to reorient themselves with a strong diversification of services and ever new product ranges. The workshops all developed from original occupational work studios into expanding social enterprises.

The types of activities developed by the ETA's are multiple, with more than 20 major sectors of activity: food, crafts, animals, construction, wood, electricity, electronics, packaging, horticulture, printing, rental, mechanics, metals, cleaning, paper, plastics, catering, textiles, glass, and others. In the last years, the enterprises have developed into large companies. (<https://eweta.be>)

#### **External groups:**

In addition to the wide range of services, the ETA's offer external groups that support other companies - private or public - at their place of business. Here, a form of inclusion is lived in the company.

This makes it easier and quicker for the client to communicate, there are shorter decision-making processes, work can be organised more flexible and transport distances are saved.



If a client has long-term work in his company that employs a group of people and he would like to have them picked up by external service providers, then the BW realises this within the framework of company contracts and sends its employees and companions to the respective companies.

In the meantime, the external groups have become an integral part of the service, assembly, and packaging activities of some companies in the region.

#### **New fields of activity:**

In addition to the main target group - persons with disabilities - the 3 sheltered workshops in the DG also employ persons with so-called placement barriers. Both groups of people complement each other in joint work. In this way, other production groups can be built, and new fields of work can be opened.

So, the ETA's in Belgium function as a social enterprise. In the production unit of the BW Eupen are only 2/5 people with disabilities and the rest are people with other placement barriers such as language problems, learning disability, psychic problems and so forth.

#### **Financial support of the DG:**

As specialized social economic institutions sheltered workshops play an important role in the employment of persons with disabilities. Alongside supported employment in the private sector, they act as one of the two pillars of employment policy for people with disabilities and receive a DG endowment.

These finances are used to pay proportionately for the wage costs of cadre and support staff, the costs of training departments, subsistence allowances and wage subsidies for persons with disabilities.

The remaining costs are paid by other job creation measures for persons with multiple placement barriers, but mainly from the money generated by the ETA's.

#### **The person with impairments as employer:**

People with disabilities are seen as normal employees in the sheltered workshops and receive a minimum wage like all other employees. They are also represented in the company by a works council and a trade union representative.

But they are affected by unemployment or short-time work just like all other workers in Belgium.

If a disabled person is no longer able to perform on the job, due to age or increased incapacity, the BW Eupen offers a care place where they can perform simple activities for the society with a orientator, such as small cleaning jobs, kitchen work, but also handicrafts and other creative activities.

### **2.3 Vocational training Concept in Sheltered Workshops**

The Decree of the Government of the German-speaking Community of 03/01/1997 states that there is an urgent need to offer persons with disabilities a socio-professional perspective. This is to be done by setting up training departments in the sheltered workshops, by offering support with a view to preparing them for a work contract.

Newcomers in the ETA starts with an internship in the training department. In this training they go through all departments to find out their skills. The classification of skills is done by a supplement to the of the ICF schema. They are not only taught vocational skills, but also social skills such as motivation, interest, social behavior, communication skills and independence, which are indispensable for working life and to broaden their horizons. They do not have an employment contract, but are financed through other sources (DSL, pension fund).



If they are able, they are taken into production. They can also move directly into the primary labour market. The transition to the primary labour market is organized by the DSL. If they do not manage to do this, they can remain in the status of internship up to three years. If there is other funding available, they can stay in a permanent internship and do easy work for the sheltered workshop like doing laundry or cooking or in a creative workshop.

## 2.4 Counselling Guidance Concept in Sheltered Workshops

The training departments are designed flexibly and each person with impairment is individually supervised to ensure tailor-made training as a stepstone to a self-determined life in society. This ensures that the complex needs as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each person are addressed. This type of placement can be carried out for three years.

- Enrolment with the DSL is required and is valid for 12 months.
- The service considers one full-time employed trainer per group of 8 persons with disabilities.
- The training of persons with disabilities is provided by specialized staff with basic pedagogical training.
- The training program is designed in such a way that the person with a disability is specifically supported because of his or her abilities and interests with a view to employment in a sheltered workshop. (Dekret, 1997)

## 2.5 Transition from Sheltered Workshop to the labour market

At the end of this training, a final assessment takes place in which it is decided with all stakeholders what the professional future of the person with impairment looks like and in which professional direction the path goes:

- to the open labour market
- into another form of employment
- into a wage relationship with the sheltered workshop
- into a long-term internship at the sheltered workshop.
- or the person needs a more intensive social framework, and it is currently not possible for them to work independently.

In addition, long-term internships are offered to people who, after the three-year training, have not reached sufficient competences to work in a wage employment, but are still motivated to work in the sheltered workshop. They have the status of the internship and get their payment from other social institutions or pension office. This department is also completely flexible according to the limits and abilities of the persons.

### 3 Single Case Studies of Good practice

The DSL offers two possibilities to make the transition to the first labour market easier for the people with disabilities. The first one is called **“Apprenticeship placement”** (AP). It offers support for people who are not quite sure whether they are able to meet the requirements of an employment. The contract lasts for a maximum of one year and can be extended as often as deemed appropriate.

The second one is called **“On-the-job training”** (AIB). It is an in-company training and is used to train a person with support needs in the workplace. The trainee is trained for specific tasks that arise in the company. The aim of AIB is to subsequently employ the person in the training company. The training period is limited to a maximum of three years. Training contracts can be concluded for a maximum of one year.

The premises for the two offers are, that the person with disability

- wish to undergo vocational training or retraining,
- live in the DG,
- are entitled to the measure according to the "ICF Work" evaluation tool,
- are at least 18 years old.

#### 3.1 Vocational training concept

In these measures, the vocational training lies with the employer. The company trains the apprentice for specific tasks in the workplace and supports the apprentice according to his or her abilities.

The trainee is integrated socially and professionally, is part of a team, a company. He or she has a meaningful job according to his abilities and interests.

In the AP, the intern receives a monthly compensation from the company. This amounts to a maximum of **185.92€** and is not taxable. The company has no wage costs, does not have to take out work accident and trainee. This is taken care of by the DSL.

In the AIB the apprentice receives a training allowance from the employer, which depends on the year of training, on the age, family expenses and substitute income:

- 1st year of training: € 375.00/month
- 2nd year: € 525.00 /month
- 3rd year of training: € 675.00 /month

In addition, the employer pays a bonus of € 0.99 per hour worked, a reimbursement of travel costs according to the social tariff, furthermore the child allowance, if the entitlement exists.

The company registers the person as trainee and takes out work accident and liability insurance. The costs will be reimbursed by the DSL

*Table 6: AIB In-company training*

Attribute	Single case study
Subject of single case studies	Vocational Training Concept and inclusion in a private firm
Project name	AIB In-company-training
Responsible institution(s)	DSL– Dienststelle für selbstbestimmtes Leben
Target group	Enterprises of any kind that are in Belgium and wish to train a person with disabilities.
Short project description	<p>In-company training (AIB) is used to train a person with support needs in the workplace. Together with the DSL or the Jobcenter, the trainee choses the kind of work he or she likes to do. The Start-Service from the DSL is counselling the company and the trainee as well. In East-Belgium there are 40 persons in this measure.</p> <p>The Jobcenter offers a special kind of vocational guidance for people with disabilities. They focus on the skills of the person and are looking for the right place to realize them. That can be technical or mental skills. To find these abilities, there is a test, in which reasoning and visual thinking will be checked. In the focus stands the wishes of the person and her interests.</p> <p>In the AIB the trainee is trained for specific tasks that arise in the company. The aim is a subsequently employment in the training company. The training period is limited to a maximum of three years. Training contracts can be concluded for a maximum of one year.</p>
Innovative aspects	The training is directly in the firm and with the colleagues so you can see how the inclusion works for all parts.
Why is this project interesting for Include <sup>3</sup> ? Which aspects can be transferred to Include <sup>3</sup> ?	<p>The trainee prepares himself for his integration in the workplace and expands his skills and knowledge.</p> <p>The DSL offers trained staff to accompany the process.</p> <p>It is a good practice for both, the person with disabilities and the employer because it is a training in sheltered circumstances and with low costs for the Enterprise. The trainee can at any point stop this training and go back to the ETA or another employer.</p>
Link to project information	<a href="https://selbstbestimmt.be/arbeiten/ich-moechte-einen-beruf-erlernen/">https://selbstbestimmt.be/arbeiten/ich-moechte-einen-beruf-erlernen/</a>

*Dienststelle für selbstbestimmtes Leben*

Table 7: AP Traineeship

Attribute	Single case study
Subject of single case studies	Vocational Training Concept and inclusion in a private firm
Project name	AP Traineeship
Responsible institution(s)	DSL – Dienststelle für selbstbestimmtes Leben
Target group	Enterprises of any kind that are in Belgium and wish to train a person with disabilities
Short project description	The training internship (AP) is aimed at people with support needs, who, despite support, are not (yet) able to meet the requirements of an employment contract. The requirements of an employment contract. The contract is concluded for a maximum of one year. It can be extended as often as deemed appropriate.
Innovative aspects	The AP training is a kind of trial run with a short duration. It shows the person with disabilities whether the work on the labour market is right or too stressful. In the same way can the enterprise test, whether it works with the colleagues.
Why is this project interesting for Include <sup>3</sup> ? Which aspects can be transferred to Include <sup>3</sup> ?	The AP is a bit of a test for the enterprise and for the person with disabilities. It can be one step for the inclusion. In Belgium it works for many years.
Link to project information	<a href="https://selbstbestimmt.be/arbeiten/ich-moechte-in-einem-oeffentlichen-oder-privaten-unternehmen-arbeiten/">https://selbstbestimmt.be/arbeiten/ich-moechte-in-einem-oeffentlichen-oder-privaten-unternehmen-arbeiten/</a>

*Dienststelle für selbstbestimmtes Leben*

The third single case we wish to describe is an offer from the sheltered workshops in Eupen and Kelmis (BW Eupen und Adapta), which is called “Outgroups”. In this project people with disabilities, who are employed by the BW Eupen, work in private firms. This is a kind of lending them for special works. They have tasks like packaging or storage, they even work on machines.

The firms cannot afford this work with their normal employees because they are too expensive. But the workers from the sheltered workshops get their payment from the BW Eupen and they charge a smaller amount.

*Table 8: Outgroups*

Attribute	Single case study
Subject of single case studies	External work in the first labour market
Project name	Outgroups
Responsible institution(s)	BW Eupen and Adapta Hergenrath
Target group	Industrial Enterprises
Short project description	<p>People with not so serious disabilities can work in private firms, but they are under the employment of the ETA. In Belgium, the ETAs pay minimum wages. The workers do simpler work, such as storage, packaging, or cleaning. The benefit for the enterprise is a more flexible employee. The wages differ from the normal rate.</p> <p>This work is not for a limited time, some do it for several years and in the meanwhile, they are more part of this firm than of the ETA. The whole measure is attended by a group leader from the ETA.</p>
Innovative aspects	<p>This is a kind of dispatched labour and offers more possibilities for the people with disabilities, but they must not leave the security of the employment in the ETA.</p> <p>The person with disabilities is part of the production-team and works in a common enterprise.</p> <p>So far, several workers have been taken on. And they can improve their skills, can for example learn to work with machines. This is not possible in an ETA, because they don't have handicraft machines.</p>
Why is this project interesting for Include <sup>3</sup> ? Which aspects can be transferred to Include <sup>3</sup> ?	<p>This could be a kind of first step to the labour market. People with disabilities can do practical work on the first labour market, are part of working team, but have the shelter of the ETA and the safety of the employment there.</p> <p>For the assessment, the ETA uses a special part of the beforementioned ICF screening tool. In it are differentiated issues to determine, such as sitting or standing mobility, fine motor skills, but also social abilities, like punctuality, tolerant, or critical faculty.</p>
Link to project information	<a href="https://www.bweupen.be/dienstleistungen/aussengruppen/">https://www.bweupen.be/dienstleistungen/aussengruppen/</a>

*BW Eupen*

### 3.2 Counselling guidance concept

The counselling part is for the DSL. The department agrees on training objectives with the company and the trainee,

- checks the effective implementation of the training program.
- advises the training company and the trainee,
- Holds a review meeting with the training company and the trainee at least every 6 months,
- can identify and implement technical and organizational adjustments to the workplace,
- supports the trainee at the workplace if this makes sense.

## 4 Conclusion

In sum we can see that Belgium is a bit late with its measures for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market. It always needs a kick from the EU or other organisations to come up with a plan. But the concept of the DSL seems very good, because the concerns of people with disabilities lay in one hand and they don't have to switch their counsellor. Especially the ICF-Screening-Tool seems to us a very good basis to work on. With this tool the DSL can fix a status of the person with disabilities in which their wishes are a very important part.

In the past, the focus of the DSL has lain on the sheltered workshops, because they are also financed over the department. This has changed in the last years and the DSL focusses now on the labour market. That is a problem for the sheltered workshops because they have to make profit as every other company and have to look for good workers. They are now mainly looking for people with other placement barriers.

Very good seems to us the salaries of the people with disabilities. They get minimum wages as every other worker without disability and have their own parity commission, the Belgian committee for the payment negotiations.

The vocational training is a bit of a problem. The DSL doesn't offer such a training, it is the task of the employer. Therefore, it lacks a basic concept. The employer can advise a tutor for the persons with disabilities. They can get a payment for the training of this tutor. In sum is to say, that an employer on the first labour market must be very interested to hire people with disabilities, because there are many obstacles.

A good intermediate step seems to us the AIB-Training. It offers for the person with disabilities and for the employer a possibility to test who it works with the colleagues and the work. The employer has to pay a reduced wage and the person has the security of the sheltered workshop.

For the peoples with disabilities the entry in the first labour market is not easy and it is a challenge because the sheltered workshops in Belgium offer a comfortable place to work, a good payment and a good place to be within a social surrounding.

The BW Eupen already presents itself as an inclusive company in a very special way. Due to labour market policy developments, several target groups of workers are employed at BW Eupen. Through the supervision of the DSL, people with disabilities are supported by the maxim of "self-determination". This gives many of them the opportunity and freedom to determine their own career path and at least to help shape it.

In addition to this group of workers, many other groups are already employed at BW Eupen. These are people from the social economy who are practising their career entry, schoolchildren who are doing an internship, and recently very often people with psychic problems or the long-term unemployed who are cautiously seeking a way back into employment with small steps. This diversity makes the company an open employer with an inclusive character.

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**HdBA – the University of Applied Labour Studies**, as the national institution responsible for the education of specialists to work in the Federal Employment Agency, has a particular expertise on questions of vocational education and training (VET) and counselling with regards to such questions. This includes the education and training of counsellors working in the specialist departments for supporting people with disabilities who are, among other things, responsible for assigning clients into the VET section of sheltered workshops. HdBA has a specialised chair for inclusion studies and focused resources on this area over recent years.

**Contact person: Silvia Keller, [Silvia.Keller@hdba.de](mailto:Silvia.Keller@hdba.de)**

**OZARA** service and disability company d.o.o. is one of the national key service providers in the field of vocational rehabilitation and social inclusion. Enjoying indisputable status of professional authority in the field of training, employment of persons with disabilities, social inclusion, vocational and employment rehabilitation in Slovenia, OZARA d.o.o. brings crucial resources to the consortium by transferring its knowledge regarding the needs identified in the scope of project proposal. It has around 150 potential end users, and tens of professional workers and mentors, supporting these disadvantaged groups.

**Contact person: Gregor Cerar, [gregor.cerar@ozara.si](mailto:gregor.cerar@ozara.si)**

**The VHS Bildungsinstitut** (Adult Education Centre) is the educational service of the Christian Labour Movement (CAB) in East Belgium, in the German speaking Community. The CAB is the largest social movement in Belgium. The VHS is engaged mainly in social-political learning activities, such as trainings for project coordinators for cultural and social projects, and in the ACADEMY 50+ in training for elderly people in different subjects such as politic sciences, sociology, philosophy, history, cognitive stimulation, etc. After 2015, the VHS coordinated the integration pathway in East Belgium with language classes (German) on different levels and civic lessons for all people coming to the German speaking Community. The VHS is also involved in trainings for unemployed persons in application techniques, and integration into the labour market. These are also topics that are discussed in several Erasmus+ projects.

**Contact person: Liliane Mreyen, [l.mreyen@vhs-dg.be](mailto:l.mreyen@vhs-dg.be)**

**SYNTHESIS** Center for Research and Education Ltd is a pioneering organisation which initiates and implements projects of positive social impact, with a focus on social inclusion and accessibility of services and products for everyone. SYNTHESIS is one of the leading institutions in Cyprus in the fields of social entrepreneurship and social innovation. It founded and manages HUB NICOSIA, an educational centre and a community of organisations with cultural, environmental and social aims. SYNTHESIS main target groups are people from the marginalised/ disadvantaged / vulnerable parts of the society, such as youth, adults and the aging population, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, people with physical and mental disabilities.

**Contact person: Irene Kamba, [irene.k@synthesis-center.com](mailto:irene.k@synthesis-center.com)**

**VšĮ "eMundus"** has a broad expertise in the development of various ICT applications. The mission of eMundus is to actively promote the development of the knowledge society by developing services related to educational activities, information technology, innovation and practical applications in education and social activities, ecology, healthy lifestyles and harmonious education in order to ensure quality cooperation.

**Contact person: Vida Drąsutė, [info@emundus.lt](mailto:info@emundus.lt)**

