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EMPOWERED
WESTERN BALKANS

APRIL 2026

LABOUR MARKET INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN WESTERN BALKAN REGION

Report prepared within activity 1.2.1.3. Provision of services for preparation of the regional Declaration on inclusion of PwDs

INCLUSION | EMPLOYMENT | SKILLS

RIGHTS | INSTITUTIONS | PARTNERSHIP

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Report is prepared with financial assistance of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany. The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the author and it does not necessarily reflect the official views of the German Government..

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Acquis	Acquis Communautaire
ADRF	Albanian Disability Rights Foundation
ALL	Albanian currency (LEK)
ALMM	Active labour market measures
BD	Brčko district
Budget fund	Budget fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs
CDCCU	Central Disability Certification Coordination Unit in North Macedonia
CfP	Call for Proposals
CPwD	Council for Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil society organization
DSK	Down Syndrome Kosova
EC	European Commission
ESF/ESF+	European Social Fund/ European Social Fund +
EUROFUND	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
EUR	Euro (Official currency of EU)
EU	European union
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FMLSP	Ministry of labour and social policy in FBiH
FPES	Federal Public Employment Service
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
HANDIKOS	The Association of Paraplegics and Paralysis of Children of Kosovo*
ICF	International Classification of Functioning
ILO	International labour organization
IT	Information technology
KAD	Kosovo Association of the Deaf
KAS	Kosovo Agency of Statistics
KCIL	Kosovo Centre for Independent Living
KDF	Kosovo Disability Forum
LSF	Lino Spiteri Foundation
MDRI-K	Mental Disability Rights Initiative Kosovo
MECI	Ministry of Economy, Culture, and Innovation in Albania
MFLT	Ministry of Finance, Labour, and Transfers in Kosovo
MNE	Montenegro
MoLEVSA	Ministry of labour, employment, veteran and social affairs in Serbia
MS	Member state
NAES	National agency for employment and skills in Albania
NCB	National coordination body in North Macedonia
NCD	National Council on disability in Albania
NCDO	National Council of Disability Organizations in North Macedonia
NDC	National Disability Council in Kosovo
NES	National Employment Service in Serbia
OPD	Organizations for PwDs
PAMARK	Multidisciplinary education centre in MNE
PES	Public employment service
PwDs	Persons with disabilities
RS	Republic of Srpska
Serbia	Republic of Serbia
SILC	Survey on income and living conditions
UN	United Nations
UNCRP	United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
WB	Western Balkan
ZAPOVIM	Association of protective enterprises for PwDs in North Macedonia
ZOPT	Centre for training and professional rehabilitation of PwDs

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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Introduction

In the period December 2024 - March 2025 detailed research on labor market inclusion of PwDs in Western Balkan region was performed. Research was done within the project: **"Empowered - Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), Regional Cooperation and Development in the Western Balkans"**. The project is led by the German organization **Arbeiter Samariter Bund Deutschland e.V.**, and it is funded by the **Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany.**

Main objective of the report is to support project in development of **Joint Declaration of Western Balkan economies in social inclusion of PwDs.** This declaration is expected output of the project and should be adopted/endorsed at the end of the project as clear commitment of WB economies in improving the role and position of PwDs.

Even though social inclusion of PwDs is broad area covering inclusive education, employment, social protection, technology, infrastructure, and other policy areas, this report is focused on labor market inclusion of PwDs. Labor market activation of PwDs plays an important role in enhancing the quality of life of this population. However, it requires robust cross - sector collaboration among various stakeholders within society.

Report thoroughly assesses key mechanisms of labor market systems for inclusion of PwDs in Western Balkan economies, derives conclusion and identify recommendations for further development of labor market systems so more inclusive and equal societies in WB region are developed.

Methodology

Report is based on qualitative assessment of existing legal, institutional and financial framework for labor market inclusion of PwDs in WB economies. For that purpose, a PwDs labor market inclusion profile is made for each of WB economy, so report follows country – based assessment structure. Quantitative assessment of data on labor market inclusion of PwDs was also used in development of this report focusing on assessment of two important instruments for labor market inclusion of PwDs: usage of Budget Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs and enterprises for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs. To achieve this, tailor made questionnaire (Annex 1) was developed, submitted and completed by national authorities accountable for labor market inclusion of PwDs in WB region.

Some of the key research questions examined within this report are related to policy, legal and institutional mechanisms for labor market inclusion of PwDs having in mind their relevance on this target group. In that regard very important role had assessment of financial framework and active labor market measures (ALMM) for employment of PwDs, adjustment of work duty, workability assessment procedure, etc. so these aspects of labor market inclusion of PwDs were also assessed. Institutional mechanisms for stimulation of cross - sectoral cooperation and inclusion of PwDs in design of the employment policy were encompassed in analysis as well. Detailed list of the research questions and labor market aspects examined within this report are presented in Annex 2.

Specific chapter in the report is devoted to the examples of good practice among EU Member States in improving the labor market position of the PwDs. Examples of Germany, Estonia and Malta are presented in detail focusing on innovations in labor market inclusion of PwDs such as post-placement support for PwDs, PwDs universal allowance and PwDs job carving. Also, new trends in labor market inclusion of PwDs in EU are presented so contrast with WB economies is made.

Significant aspect of the report is related to the relevant EU and international legal framework for improving the status of PwDs. In that regard specific attention was given to assessment of implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and EU acquis in that regard (Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC)) in WB region.

In order to verify the findings from the report a consultative process is conducted with WB partners[1] in implementation of the project. Their inputs presented valuable contribution to assessing labor market mechanisms for inclusion of PwDs in WB economies.

[1]LIR civil society (LIR CD) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, PREDA Plus from Kosovo*, Alfa Centar (Alpha Center) from Montenegro, Community Development Institute (CDI) from North Macedonia, Initiative for Development and Cooperation (IDC) from Serbia and Albanian Disability Rights Foundation (ADRF) from Albania.

Republic of Serbia

According to the 2022 census in Serbia lives 356.404 PwDs (M: 148 104 - F:108 300) which is 5.46% of the total population.[1] Additionally, there is 109.343 persons for which disability status is unknown due to the fact citizens did not want to answer to census question if they are PwDs or not.[2]

The total number of PwDs registered with the National Employment Service (NES) (regardless of their status and readiness for employment) **in 2024 was 15,931, while the number of unemployed PwDs registered at NES is 10,715** (M: 5.982 - F: 4.733).[3]

A GIZ report from 2022, established that **PwDs had a 72.7% probability of becoming long-term unemployed**, mostly women (71%) which keeps them too long in unemployed status affecting their skills, knowledge and labor market activity.[4]

In Serbia, labor market inclusion of PwDs is under the jurisdiction of **Ministry of labor, employment, veteran and social affairs (MoLEVSA)/Sector for protection of PwDs.** Beside Sector for protection of PwDs, **Sector for labor and employment within MoLEVSA is also important** having in mind that design of active labor market measures (including ALMM for PwDs) is under its jurisdiction.

In January 2025 Serbia has adopted the new **Strategy for improvement of persons with disability position in Serbia for 2025 - 2030 period**[5] with Action plan for implementation of the strategy covering 2025 - 2027 period[7] which presents the strong ground and vision for improvement of role and position of PwDs in Serbian society.

[1]LIR civil society (LIR CD) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, PREDA Plus from Kosovo, Alfa Centar (Alpha Center) from Montenegro, Community Development Institute (CDI) from North Macedonia, Initiative for Development and Cooperation (IDC) from Serbia and Albanian Disability Rights Foundation (ADRF) from Albania.
[2] https://popis2022.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/5-vestisaopstenja/news-events/29112023-invaliditet/?a=0&s=0
[3] Ibid
[4]National employment service report for 2024: https://www.nsz.gov.rs/filemanager/Files/Dokumenta/Izveštaj%20i%20program%20rada%20NSZ/Izveštaj%20o%20radu%20NSZ%20za%202024.%20godinu.pdf
[5] Analysis of Structure and Long-term Position of Unemployed Persons in the Context of the Active Labour Market Policies, September 2022
[6] https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2025-01/Стратегија%20унапређења%20положаја%20особа%20са%20инвалидитетом%20у%20Републици%20Србији%20за%20период%202025-2030.%20године.docx
[7] https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2025-01/Акциони%20план%20за%20спровођење%20Стратегију%20унапређења%20положаја%20особа%20са%20инвалидитетом%20у%20Републици%20Србији%20за%20период%202025-2030....docx

Roof policy document on labor market inclusion of PwDs is Employment Strategy in Republic of Serbia for 2021 - 2026 period[8] (Employment Strategy) with Action plan for period 2024 - 2026 for implementation of Employment Strategy.[9] In addition to the standard ALMM aimed for employment of PwDs implemented by NES, AP 2024 - 2026 envisages piloting of innovative service for PwDs - post placement support for employers and PwDs as well in order to ensure job retention for PwDs.[10]

Main legal act regulating the labor market inclusion of PwDs is the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities.[11]Other relevant Laws for the position of PwDs in Serbia are the Labor Law, Law on employment and unemployment insurance, The Law on Healthcare Protection, the Law on Fundamentals of the Education System, the Law on Patients' Rights, the Law on the Protection of Persons with Mental Disabilities, the Law on Movement with the Help of Guide Dogs, the Law on the Use of Sign Language , the Law on the Rights of Users of Temporary Accommodation Services in Social Protection, and the Law on Planning and Construction all contain anti-discrimination provisions against PwDs.

Even though Serbia has developed legal framework on the rights of the PwDs it still needs to be further aligned with the EU acquis and European standards, including the European Accessibility Act and the Commission Guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community of persons with disabilities in the context of EU funding.[12]

Main legal provisions setting the obligations for employers in employment of PwDs are stipulated in **Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities.** Article 24 defines that an employer who has from 20 to 49 employees is obliged to employ one person with a disability. An employer with 50 or more employees is obliged to employ at least two persons with disabilities, and one person with disabilities for each subsequent 50 employees.

Under the Article 26 of the same Law an employer who does not employ PwDs in accordance with Article 24 is obliged to pay the 50% of the average salary in Serbia according to the last published data of the state authority responsible for statistics for each PwDs whom it did not employ.
Serbian Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs envisages three different institutional solutions for employment of PwDs: a) enterprises for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs, b) work centers and c) social enterprises.

Out of three institutional mechanisms, only first one is regularly exercised. Work centers as institutional instrument is not developed yet and the Law on social enterprises has been adopted in 2022. However, this Law still require adoption of relevant bylaws so full implementation of the Law is ensured.

Law on employment and unemployed insurance in Serbia (article 7) envisages that only NES and employment agencies can provide employment services in Serbia. Participation of civil sector in this regard is not legally possible. When it comes to employment of PwDs, Serbia relies solely on the capacities of NES. Having in mind the existing legal framework for employment of PwDs, **Serbia does not have legal framework for effective stimulation of cross - sectoral cooperation between public and civil sector in terms of employment of PwDs.** CSOs in Serbia are active in providing certain employment/employability services for PwDs mostly through project-based services funded by bilateral/multilateral donors.

1[8] https://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Strategija_zaposljavanja_u_Republici_Srbiji_2021-2026_engleski.pdf
[9]https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2024-07/Action%20Plan%202024–2026%20for%20the%20Implementation%20of%20the%20Employment%20Strategy%20....pdf
[10]AP 2024 - 2026 Measure 2.6., Activity 2.6.3
[11] "Official Gazette of RS", no. 36/2009, 32/2013 and 14/2022 - other laws
[12] EC Progress Report on Serbia 2025: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/6e68ce26-b95b-48e1-921a-c60c12da8f00_en?filename=serbia-report-2025.pdf

Under the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs (Article 28) Serbia has established Budget fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs under the mandate of the ministry accountable for employment.

All companies choosing to fulfil their legal obligation in terms of employment of PwDs through financial compensation are paying to this Budget fund which can be exclusively used for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs according to the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs.

Table 1. Budget Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in Serbia

Period	Budget Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs (EUR)	Budget allocation for PwDs (EUR)	%	No. of employers contributing to the Budget Fund
2021	51.488.988,61	10.163.111,562	19,7	6.398
2022	60.914.246,942	10.015.137,774	16,4	6.532
2023	72.056.603,279	10.027.847,546	13,9	6.688
2024	84.669.016,94	10.725.129,87	12,67	6.773

Source: Tax administration - Ministry of Finance, Republic of Serbia

On a positive side the overall financial volume for Budget fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs grew over the time presenting the stabile financial framework for employment of PwDs. On the other side, annual budget allocation for employment of PwDs decreased over the time. In 2024, only 12.67% of the Budget Fund was used for employment of PwDs.

At the same time, we record an increasing number of employers opting to fulfil their legal obligations in employment of PwDs through financially payment instead of hiring PwDs. In essence, this practice weakens the primary objective of promoting inclusive employment laying behind the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs.

Budget fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs resources in Serbia are distributed between ALMM for employment of PwDs implemented by NES and financing of enterprises for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs implemented through the MoLEVSA.

Table 2. Utilization of Budget Funds for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in Serbia

Period	Budget for ALMM implemented by NES (EUR)			Financial support to enterprises for the professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs implemented through MoLEVSA (EUR)		
	Planed	Implemented	%	Planed	Implemented	%
2021	4.677.582,72	4.003.138,92	85,58	5.485.528,83	5.484.301,14	99,98
2022	4.687.936,83	4.078.214,60	86,99	5.327.200,94	5.325.749,65	99,97
2023	4.693.886,08	4.219.633,68	89,90	6.016.708,52	6.013.524,08	99,95
2024	4.700.256,12	3.316.511,24	70,56	6.024.873,75	6.024.356,70	99,99

Source: NES Performance reports, Final report on budget RS utilization and calculation of author

In reference period NES funds for ALMM aimed for employment of PwDs are stable. Also, NES spends almost 90% of allocated funds, except for 2024 where financial absorption dropped. On the other side, financial support for the professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs enterprises is growing over the period and absorptions are almost 100%. However, having in mind current labor market trends in Serbia in last few years (growth of minimum wage, price inflations, etc.) we can conclude these financial allocations for PwDs are not sufficient and can impact the quality/sustainability of the measures aimed for employment of PwDs.

Main programs available for employment of PwDs are offered by the NES and could be categorized in two types:

- employment of PwDs under general conditions
- employment of PwDs under specific conditions

As for the employment measures under the general conditions available measures are:

- wage subsidies for PwDs without work experience
- work activation of PwDs (maintaining and improvement of working capabilities)
- public work for PwDs

As for the employment measures under the specific conditions available measures are:

- job duty station adjustment
- professional support to a newly employed PwDs - professional work assistance at job duty

Table 3. Number of unemployed PwDs and included in ALMM

	2024	2023	2022	2021
No. of unemployed PwDs at NES register	10.715	11.494	12.131	12.628
No. of PwDs included in ALMM	1.772	2.224	2.335	1.876
Percentage of unemployed PwDs included in ALMM	16.54%	19.35%	19.25%	14.86%

Source: NES Annual Performance Report for 2021-2024

Table above indicates both positive and negative trends. Total number of PwDs and unemployed PwDs n Serbia decreased over the course of time which is desirable trend. However, **percentage of unemployed PwDs included in different ALMM decreased in the reference period meaning that significant percentage of unemployed PwDs remained uncovered by ALMM (16.54% in 2024).**

Table 4. Number of PwDs included in different ALMM for 2021 -2024

Type of ALMM	2024	2023	2022	2021
Education and training	196	299	357	27
Employment subsidies	1094	1011	936	969
Public works	193	819	954	800
Job duty adjustment	54	35	28	21
Professional support to a newly employed PwDs -work assistance	73	60	40	32
Work activation	133	/	/	/
My first salary	29	/	20	27
Total	1.772	2.224	2.335	1.876

Source: NES Performance Report for 2021-2024

Assessing the type of ALMM in which PwDs are included it is noticeable that **PwDs are largely included in employment subsidies, public works and education/training measures.** As of 2024, Serbia introduced one new ALMM for PwDs (work activation) as intensive support for motivation and activation for inclusion of PwDs in the labor market and work-social integration in order to preserve and improve work abilities.

This measure provides the opportunity for PwDs to obtain work experience through the acquisition of practical knowledge and skills for performing a specific job. Also, as of 2024 Serbia reserved public works only for PwDs when employed by local self-governments which explains sharp drop of PwDs included in this measure compared to previous years.

Table 5. Professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in Serbia

Period	Number of enterprises for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs	Number of PwDs included in enterprises for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs
2024	61	986
2023	61	1.056
2022	62	1.192

Source: MoLEVSA, Republic of Serbia

In referencing period financial resources and number of enterprises for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in Serbia are stable, but number of PwDs included in work of these enterprises is slightly decreasing.

Table 6. Inclusion of PwDs in ALMM and professional rehabilitation enterprises in Serbia

Period	Number of PwDs included in ALMM	Number of PwDs included in professional rehabilitation enterprises
2024	1.772	986
2023	2.224	1.056
2022	2.335	1.192

Source: PES performance report for 2022-2024 and MoLEVSA

[13] Measure was no implemented in this year

Comparing the number of PwDs included through enterprises for professional rehabilitation and employment and through different ALMM in the same period (Table 6), it is evident that **Serbia gives more priority to employment of PwDs through ALMM which is desirable trend.**

Most of the enterprises for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in Serbia are located in the Belgrade (15), Južnobački (9), Raški (4), Južnobanatski (4) and Šumadija county (3). At the bottom of the list are following counties: Pirotski, Borski, Sremski, Severnobanatski, Pomoravski, Rasinski and Pčinjski county, with one professional rehabilitation enterprise. In 6 counties (Zapadnobački, Kolubarski, Podunavski, Zaječarski, Toplički and Jablanički) there are no active enterprises for the professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs which presents an additional obstacle for PwDs from these counties in terms of accessibility to labor market.

When it comes to the institutional mechanisms for inclusion of PwDs, legal framework does not envisage specific counseling body for PwDs at a Government level. However, **in December 2025 Government of Serbia elected new members for Council for persons with disabilities**[14] where both public and private sector are represented including representatives of enterprises for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs.

Council for persons with disabilities is chaired by the MoLEVSA Sector for PwDs protection. At its first session in 2025 a Rules of Procedure and annual Work Plan of the Council was adopted.[15] Worth mentioning, **enterprises for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in Serbia do have association which represents their interests and views in policy processes**.[16]

Serbia is currently using medical based workability assessment model and needs to yet shift to social model. However, in October 2025, with the support of the UNDP, Serbia developed a **Roadmap for the Reform of the Disability Assessment Roadmap** which will support Serbia in this regard including further enforcement of UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[17]

CSOs working with this sensitive target group are mainly included in design of particular policies and legislation through participation in work groups established for those purposes. Companies from the other side are mostly represented by the **Serbian Association of Employers**. However, this is general association of companies mainly focused in representing their views and interest in areas other than inclusion of PwDs.

[14] Firstly, established in 2005, followed with different changes in membership
[15] Measure was no implemented in this year
16] Measure was no implemented in this year
[17] Measure was no implemented in this year.

Montenegro

According to the last census from 2023 in Montenegro there are registered 53.251 PwDs (8.53% from total population). Additional 3101 MNE citizens did not want to declare themselves as PwDs.[1]**According to the Montenegro Public Employment Service there were 9.694 registered PwDs (58.2% female)**[19] which is less than 20% compared to census data.

According to the analysis of the implementation of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (2009-2025), **main reasons behind gap in registered PwDs and PwDs census data are structural, not statistical nature.** More precisely, gap comes as a consequence of fear of PwDs of losing acquired rights when registering as unemployed, long-standing distrust of PwDs in employment institutions, physical, communication, and informational inaccessibility of employment services etc.[20]

In Montenegro, labor market inclusion of PwDs is under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of labor, employment and social dialogue** (Directorate for the policy and access to the labor market).[21] However, under the Ministry of human and minority rights a Directorate for Protection and equality of PwDs is accountable for development and monitoring of regulations in the field of protection of PwDs human rights, protection against discrimination of PwDs and promotion of equality of PwDs.[22]

Roof document establishing the policy for employment of PwDs is the National Employment Strategy for 2021 - 2025.[23] Document identifies specific measures aimed for labor market inclusion of PwDs (measure 3.5. Improvement of labor market position of PwDs). One of the key interventions under this measure is establishment of the precise PwDs register. In 2022 the Government of MNE adopted the Strategy for prevention of PwDs discrimination and equality promotion which identify the need to stimulate the employers through various forms of support and affirmative actions to employ PwDs, reduce the discrimination of this target group and develop conditions for professional growth of PwDs in stereotypes and prejudices free environment.[24]

Main legal act regulating this area is the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs adopted in 2008 with additional amendments in following years.[25] One of the most relevant articles of the Law (Article 22) envisages that companies who do not employ PwDs can fulfil its obligation through financial compensation (special contribution for employment of PwDs). The special contribution rate is 20% of the average monthly salary in Montenegro in the previous year (significantly lower compared to for example to Serbia where this rate is 50% for each unemployed PwDs).

[18]https://monstat.org/uploads/files/popis%202021/smetnje%20cg%20SAOPSTENJE_Popis%20stanovnistva%202023.pdf
[19] https://www.zzzcg.me/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Rjesenje-UPI-br.-06-23-100-32-od-27.07.2023.-god.pdf
[20] https://smartbalkansproject.org/document/pod-lupom-analiza-primjene-zakona-o-profesionalnoj-rehabilitaciji-i-zaposljavanju-lica-sa-invaliditetom-2009-2025/
[21]https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.gov.me/mrzs&ved=2ahUKEwi4q_yY87KRAxVU4AIHHcgCNNsQFnoECBsQAQ&usg=AOvVaw3MHL7kEJZ5zm4i_6OeecER
[22] https://www.gov.me/mmp/zastita-i-jednakost-lica-sa-invaliditetom
[23] https://www.zzzcg.me/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/predlog-nacionalne-strategije-zaposljavanja-2021-2025-s-predlogom-akcionog-plana-zaposljavanja-za-2021-godinu.pdf
[24] https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/e9659c4e-e7f6-41f2-ab98-0fd115b80601
[25] "Official Gazette of Montenegro", no. 49/2008, 73/2010, 39/2011 and 55/2016.

According to this Law (Article 15), PwDs could be employed under general and specific terms. Unlike employment of PwDs under general terms (open labor market employment), employment under specific terms is done with an adjustment of the job duty for PwDs.

Article 36 of the Law identify which benefits companies in MNE can obtain when employe PwDs, namely:

- grants for adjustment of the work duty and working conditions for the employment of PwDs
- credit funds under favorable conditions for the purchase of machines, equipment and tools necessary for the employment of PwDs
- contribution in financing of expenses of personal assistants (work assistants) for PwDs
- wage subsidies of employment of PwDs.

In 2024, MNE PES included in total 1235 persons in different ALMM. As for the PwDs, in total for 2024 only 38 (3.08%) PwDs were included, which is significantly lower compared to 2023 (176). PES MNE data on PwDs inclusion in ALMM for 2022 are unavailable, and for 2021 only aggregated data our available, but no predictable trends can be made. Compared to 2021 (82 PwDs), in 2024 (38 PwDs) we record significant decrease in ALMM coverage in MNE which implies on constrains that MNE PES is faced in expanding the coverage of PwDs included through ALMM.

Table 7. Number of PwDs included in different ALMM in MNE

Type of program	2024	2023	2022	2021
Education and training	17	98		
Training for work at the employer	1	14		
Training for autonomous work	1	5		
Incentives for employment	/	/		
Self - employment incentives	11	3		
Public works	8	56		
Total	38	176	N/A	82

Source: MNE PES performance reports for 2024, 2023 and 2022 (table 80)

Law (Article 12) also recognize institutions for professional rehabilitation of PwDs. Main aim of the institutions for professional rehabilitation is social and labor inclusion of PwDs. It includes measures and activities that prepares PwDs for the labor market, train PwDs for work, maintain and grow in their work and/or change their professional career.[26]

According to the MNE PES there are in total three active institutions for professional rehabilitation of PwDs (PAMARK, Center for professional rehabilitation, and ZOPT).

[26] "Official Gazette of Montenegro", no. 49/2008, 73/2010, 39/2011 and 55/2016.

Table 8. Number of PwDs included in institutions for professional rehabilitation in MNE

	2024	2023	2022
PAMARK	136	181	170
ZOPT	145	179	216
Center for professional rehabilitation	47	47	44
Total	328	407	430

Source: Performance report of MNE PES for 2024 - 2022

Total number of PwDs included in institutions for rofessional rehabilitation institutions declined between 2022 and 2024, with the most pronounced decrease recorded in PAMARK and ZOPT, while participation in the Center for Professional Rehabilitation remained stable.

A PwDs in MNE could be employed in a special employment organization, if PwD cannot be employed by an employer under the general or specific terms (Article 15). Special employment organization under the Law are: protected workshop, work center and protected plant (Article 11).

Table 9. Enterprises for employment of PwDs in MNE

Period	Number of enterprises for employment of PwDs	Number of PwDs included in these enterprises
2024	9	210
2023	8	185
2022	4	140

Source: Ministry of labor, employment and social dialogue, MNE

In 2024 in MNE, there were 9 registered companies for employment of PwDs encompassing 210 PwDs. Compared to the 2022, number of these enterprises and PwDs included in them almost doubled. This trend is sensitive in particular having in mind that some of these forms of employment of PwDs are considered as segregated employment and not aligned with UN Convention on Human Rights of PwDs. [27]

[27] "Official Gazette of Montenegro", no. 49/2008, 73/2010, 39/2011 and 55/2016.

The Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs does not envisage permanent counseling body which will advise the Government of MNE in regard the social inclusion of PwDs. In 2021 the Government of MNE formally established the **National Council for the right of the PwDs**, but the body started its work in 2024.

According to the decision from 2024, this body consist of both from the public and civil sector, but no representatives from **private sector are evidenced**.[28] This entity is accountable for monitoring the implementation of all laws and strategies to promote rights and better coordination on disability issue. However, EC report on MNE accession to EU identifies that **this body is still unable to carry out its work due to lack of institutional will.**[29]

Same report urges that MNE should ensure implementation of the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of PwDs, especially regarding the reform of guardianship and decision - making on behalf of PwDs. In March 2025, Montenegro set up a commission to draft an action plan to implement the Committee's recommendations.[30]

Another specifcity of Montenegro's institutional framework for PwDs is the existence of a **Parliament for PwDs, which operates as part of the Committee for Human Rights and Freedoms within the Montenegrin National Parliament.** This body is consisted from representatives both from public and civil sector active in PwDs inclusion, but also from international organizations and the diplomatic corps. [31]

In June 2025 a new process for development of Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs was initiated and one of the key objectives of this process should be alignment of the Law with UN convention on PwDs human rights as indicated in EC Progress Report for MNE for 2024.[32] **In July 2025 the Government of MNE adopted the draft of the Law on single PwDs employment capability assessment which should lead to the establishment of the single PwDs register and reduction of 40 different active Commissions for assessment of disability level.**[33] **Adopted Law also envisages shifting from medical to human rights approach in workability assessment procedure and in line with UNCPD and European standards.**

Table 10. Budget Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in MNE

Period	Budget Fund for Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of PwDs (EUR) [34]	Budget allocation for PwDs (EUR)	Difference (EUR	Difference (%)
2024	20.500.000	35.740.000	15.240.000	42,64
2023	13.000.000	23.880.000	10.880.000	45,56
2022	11.500.000	16.370.000	4.870.000	29,75

Source: Ministry of labor, employment and social dialogue, Government of Montenegro

[28] https://www.gov.me/clanak/odrzan-konstitutivni-sastanak-vladinog-savjeta-za-prava-lica-sa-invaliditetom-zastita-i-drustvena-afirmacija-lica-sa-invaliditetom-je-pravni-i-eticki-imperative-svakog-drustva
[29] https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/9ae69ea7-81d6-4d6a-a204-bd32a379d51d_en?filename=montenegro-report-2025.pdf
[30] Ibid
[31] https://www.skupstina.me/me/clanci/u-skupstini-crne-gore-odrzano-drugo-zasijedanje-parlamenta-za-osobe-sa-invaliditetom
[32] https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://umhcg.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/24-VII-25-Analiza-primjene-Zakona-o-profesionalnoj-rehabilitaciji-i-zaposljavanju-lica-sa-invaliditetom-2009-2025.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjrp_qCnbWRAxXC2QIHHTIVBwgQFnoECBsQAQ&usg=AOvVaw1tpHVbX8XdILz-2hZc-roL
[33] https://www.dan.co.me/vijesti/drustvo/vlada-usvojila-predlog-zakona-o-jedinstvenom-vjestacenju-invaliditeta-5307873
[34] Funds collected through quota system

Budget fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in MNE grew in referencing period. However, Government of MNE had to heavily subsidize the Budget Fund every year reaching 42.64% of subsidies in 2024.

Budget Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in MNE has a wide mandate such as: professional rehabilitation for unemployed and employed PwDs, co-financing of special organizations for employment of PwDs, financial support for programs in which PwDs participate, different subsidies for an employer who employs a PwDs. Also, **Budget Fund could be used for financing the grant schemes** and financial assistance for unemployed PwDs during the professional rehabilitation and inclusion in the active labor market measures for employment, education and training of adults.

Table 11. Utilization of the Budget fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in MNE

Type of Expenditure	2022	2023	2024
Wage subsidies	14.460.908,84	21.824.284,10	33.165.921,02
Subsidies (co-financing of personal assistant work-related costs)	489.623,27	704.368,46	730.935,16
Subsidies (adaptation of workplaces and working conditions)	64.488,17	110.286,24	100.362,56
Financing of grant schemes	873.778,05	745.235,08	1.166.162,56
Professional rehabilitation programs	370.361,14	459.296,00	432.463,05
Cash assistance to program participants	37.821,54	43.617,51	22.322,57
Fees for members of the Professional Rehabilitation Commission and the Fund Council	74.141,06	76.571,53	124.806,89
Total (EUR)	16.371.122,07	23.887.087,39	35.742.973,81

Source: Ministry of labour, employment and social dialogue, MNE

Total expenditure for employment and professional rehabilitation of PwDs in MNE increased sharply between 2022 and 2024. **Wage subsidies dominate in spending of the Budget Fund and account for the vast majority of growth, confirming focus of PwDs employment policy more toward financial aspect of it.** Support measures such as personal assistance and workplace adaptation increased moderately, but secondary in terms of spending. Professional rehabilitation programs remained relatively stable in absolute terms, but their share in total expenditure declined.

One of the challenges in implementation of the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in MNE remains the **institutional position of the Budget Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs** (organizational unit of the PES) and usage of the financial resource of the MNE Budget Fund. According to the thorough analysis on implementation of the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs performed by the Association of youth PwDs in MNE **one of the key objectives of new Law in this area should be establishment of Budget fund as independent body with much more financial resources used for social inclusion of PwDs.**[35]

In referencing period (2022-2024) every year MNE PES implemented the grant schemes for employment of PwDs. **The grant scheme is considered as effective mechanisms for stimulation of cross - sectoral cooperation where grant funds are distributed to civil sector. In 2024 MNE PES launched the Call for Proposals (CfP) under the Grant Scheme worth 500.000 EUR aimed for civil sector who further implemented different activation measures for PwDs.**[36] Under this CfP 41 CSOs were granted with funds for social inclusion of PwDs and will significantly contribute to the labor market inclusion of PwDs.

According to the MNE Law on employment and unemployment insurance (Article 8) only PES and employment agencies are legally recognized as employment providers (identical as Serbia legal framework in this area). However, in this case the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs (Article 39) prevailed over the Law on employment and unemployment insurance since Budget Fund are distributed to the civil sector which provided employment services for PwDs.[37]

Table 12. Employment of PwDs through different labor market inclusion mechanism in MNE

	2022	2023	2024
Wage subsidies	2.830	4.010	4.340
Grant schemes	160	170	180
Enterprises for employment of PwDs [38]	140	185	210
Total	3.130	4.365	4.730

Source: MNE PES Performance report for 2022-2024 and Ministry of labor, employment and social dialogue

Wage subsidies for employment of PwDs outpace all other instruments in both scale and growth. They account for the largest share of beneficiaries in every year and show the **strongest increase over the referenced period**, indicating this measure is the principal driver of PwDs employment. Employment of PwDs through grant schemes and enterprises for employment of PwDs is considerably lower and demonstrates more modest growth over the observed period.

[37] https://www.zzzcg.me/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/scan0007.pdf
[38] 50% of employed are PwDs

When compared against the number of PwDs employed through ALMM (38 PwDs in 2024, 176 in 2023 and 82 in 2021) **employment of PwDs in MNE through ALMM implemented by PES is significantly lower indicating that MNE PES requires additional support and resources in order to increase the coverage, type and quality of ALMM aimed for labor market inclusion of PwDs.**

In conclusion, some of the key challenges in labor market inclusion of PwDs in MNE remain: low participation and coverage of PwDs in ALMM, dominance of passive and non-inclusive solutions, weak cross-sectoral cooperation with no involvement of private sector in design of PwDs employment solutions and institutionally vulnerable position of Budget Fund.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina there are no precise data on number of PwDs. However, according to the latest census data from 2013 there is 294.058 PwDs. (8.33% of BiH population)[39]. The other sources claim there is 569.000 PwDs in Bosnia with 199.000 living in RS, 356.000 in FBiH and 14.000 in Brčko district[40]

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a specific constitutional arrangement with two entities within it (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska). The area of labor, employment, social protection and pension in Bosnia and Herzegovina is under the jurisdiction of the entity (Republic of Srpska), the sub-jurisdictional entity and canton (Federation of BiH), i.e. under the jurisdiction of the Brcko District of BiH.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs coordinates activities in the field of labour, employment, social protection and pensions at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the activities are carried out through the coordination activities of the Department of Labor, Employment, Social Protection and Pensions. Activities are aimed at harmonizing plans of entity authorities, defining strategies on the international level and ensuring efficient data exchange and cooperation with domestic and international institutions. [41]

Significant role in inclusion of PwDs at BiH level has a Ministry of human rights and refugees. Under this Ministry operates permanent, professional, inter-sectoral advisory body which supports the Council of Ministers in policy, legislation, and rights of the PwDs - Council for Persons with Disabilities (CPwD) of BiH.

It was established in 2010 to work on issues concerning the rights of PwDs. Its functions includes:

- formulating policies to achieve equal opportunities
- rehabilitating and promoting the rights of PwDs
- coordinating cooperation among state and entity institutions.

The body is comprised from 30 representatives mainly from public sector (country and entities level), but it includes representatives from civil society sector as well. Eight (8) representatives are from Associations/organization of PwDs from Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, six (6) representatives from Associations/organizations of PwDs from Republic of Srpska and one (1) representative from Associations/organizations of PwDs from Brčko district (Article 4). The body has its own Rules of procedures, it can establish specific working bodies in order to perform more effectively its role (Article 7). **Work of the body is financed from the Budget of BiH and its integral part of the Ministry of human rights and refugee's budget**, but it can be financed from the donations (Article 9). CPwD reports annually to the Council of Ministers of BiH through annual performance report.[42]

Even though this body has a unique role in inclusion of PwDs embedded in the BiH institutional system, it is still faced with challenges. EC report on EU accession of BiH records that The Council for Persons with Disabilities needs to be further involved in all relevant legislative processes.[43] **We also note that no representatives of private sector are included in the work of this body.**

[41] https://www.mcp.gov.ba/Content/Read/rad-zaposljavanje-pocetna#displayed
[42] https://www.mhrr.gov.ba/PDF/LjudskaPrava/Odluka%20o%20formiranju%20VOI%20BiH%20Sl.%20gl.%20BiH%2057-23.pdf
[43] EC Progress report on BiH 2025: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/5d8fc547-f8f8-456f-84e3-b38998acfafd_en?filename=bosnia-and-herzegovina-report-2025.pdf

Important role and part in institutional landscape of BiH in PwDs inclusion plays also the Union of organisations of PwDs in BiH. It is the umbrella organisation of PwDs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The organisation aims to develop and improve the rights of PwDs in its country.[44]

In order to assure implementation of the most important international policy and legal documents relevant for inclusion of PwDs in 2008 the Council of Ministers of BiH issued the Policy in the field of disability in BiH.[45]

Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

According to the 2013 census data there are 181.927 PwDs living in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) (8.2% of FBiH population).[46]

Main legal acts in regard to inclusion of PwDs in FBiH are the Labor law[47], the Law on intermediation in employment and social security of unemployed[48] and the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of PWDs.[49]

The responsible institutions in FBiH for the development and implementation of employment policy for PWDs are the **Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy** (FMLSP), Federal Public Employment Service (FPES) and the **Fund for Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of PWD**, established as a public institution in accordance with the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of PWDs.

Professional rehabilitation is organized under general and special conditions and comprises a set of activities directed at recognizing remaining working capacity and implementing various programmes with regard to individual and group counselling, training, motivation and provision of assistance in keeping current or finding a new job (Article 8).

Table 13. Employment of PwDs in FBiH through professional rehabilitation

Period	Costs for professional rehabilitation of PwDs [50]	Number of PwDs included in prof-reh programs
2021	95.682,34 EUR	61
2022	90.872,73 EUR	51
2023	52.294,94 EUR	34

Source: Strategy for improvement of rights and position of PwDs in FBiH 2025 – 2030

[44] https://unija-osi.ba
[45] Council of Ministers of BiH, Policy in the field of disability in BiH, Official Gazette No. 76/08
[46] https://fzs.ba/index.php/popis-stanovnistva/popis-stanovnistva-2013/konacni-rezultati-popisa-2013/
[46] The Labour Law, Official Gazette of FBiH No. 26/16
[47] The Law on intermediation in employment and social security of unemployed, Official Gazette of FBiH No. 41/01
[48] The Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of PWDs, Official Gazette of FBiH No. 9/10
[49] Origianl data are in KM. Average course of EUR for 31.12. 2021, 2022, and 2023 is 1,955830 KM
[50] Origianl data are in KM. Average course of EUR for 31.12. 2021, 2022, and 2023 is 1,955830 KM

From the table above we conclude that budhet for professional rehabiliation of PwDs in FBiH decreased significantly from 2021 to 2023, by nearly 45% over the three-year period. At the same time, the number of PwDs included in programs declined from 61 to 34, indicating a substantial contraction in program reach. Secondly, the decline in funding is proportionally aligned with the decrease in beneficiaries, suggesting that the reduction reflects a lower volume of program activity rather than increased efficiency or cost optimization. This trend may indicate reduced institutional capacity, limited demand, or policy deprioritization of professional rehabilitation within the broader support framework.

Employment of the PwDs can be done through general and specific terms (Article 18). Employment of PwDs **under general terms is done through quota system** (1 PwDs for each 16 employees) and companies who employ PwDs can obtain financial incentives and taxes/import taxes reduction.

Employment under **special conditions is assured by establishing enterprise for employment of PwDs with assessed disability of at least 60%, sheltered workshops for employment of PwDs** with disability of at least 70%, **working centres** for employment and/or rehabilitation of PWDs whose working capacity is lower than 50% of the capacity of a person of the same age and same professional qualifications needed for the job (Article 20 - 35).

FBiH Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of PWDs also recognize the institute of **Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs funded (Budget Fund) by the employers. It is established in 2010**, and funds can be used for: 1) monetary compensations and subsidies for employment, 2) financial incentives for new employment of PWDs and 3) financing and co-financing projects to support sustainability of employment of PWDs, the development of enterprises for employment of PWDs and their professional rehabilitation (Article 47 - 65).

In accordance with the quota scheme, **employers with at least 16 employees are obliged to employ one PWD or pay a financial contribution to the Budget Fund**. In FBiH it amounts to 25% of the average salary for each PWDs they have an obligation to employ. Employers with less than 16 employees pay financial contributions to the Budget Fund amounting to 0.5% of total gross monthly salaries should they do not employ any PWD. **In FBiH, additional funds** for the operation of the Budget Fund and implementation of the programmes directed at PWDs **are collected from various sources** such as the Federal budget, 10% of FPES budget directed at ALMPs in accordance with annual operational plans, 5% of the cantonal budgets directed at ALMPs and other sources[51]

Table 14. Budget fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in FBiH

Period	Type of employer	No. of employers contributing to Budget Fund	Amount (EUR)	Total no. of employers contributing to Budget Fund	Total amount of FBiH Budget fund (EUR)
2021	Public	449	960.485,34	21.429	12.410.310,04
	Private	20.980	11.449.824,7		
2022	Public	445	1.049.523	22.003	14.124.284,568
	Private	21.558	13.363.619,9		
2023	Public	489	1.350.970,10	23.054	17.908.230,06
	Private	22.565	16.557.260,86		

Source: Strategy for improvement of rights and position of PwDs in FBiH 2025 – 2030

[51]www.fond.ba Guidebook on the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of PWDs

Between 2021 and 2023, both the **number of employers (both from public and private sector) paying financial contribution** and the **total amount paid into the FBiH Budget Fund increased steadily**, indicating a widening scope of employer choosing to fulfil its obligation with financial contribution to Budget Fund instead of employment of PwDs questioning the overall idea and objective of the quota system (employment of PwDs).

Table 15. Subsidies and employment of PwDs from the Budget Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in FBiH

Public call	Amount (EUR)	Employed PwDs	Employment under general	Employment under specific
Mar 2021	1.685.422,55	301	74	227
Aug 2021	1.342.754,73	240	46	194
Mar 2022	1.827.088,75	286	90	196
Aug 2022	1.359.908,581	214	60	154
Feb 2023	2.200.950,19	298	81	217
Sep 2023	1.818.242,94	250	64	186
Total	10.234.368,00	1589	415	1174

Source: Strategy for improvement of rights and position of PwDs in FBiH 2025 – 2030

In accordance with the above table, it can be concluded that FBiH allocated more funds for employment of PwDs over the referencing period and consequently more PwDs in total was employed. **Since 74% (1174 of 1589) of the PwDs were employed under the specific terms** (companies for employment of PwDs, protected workshops, organizations of PwDs and PwDs self-employment) we conclude that less inclusive forms of PwDs employment dominate and that prejudice in employment of PwDs at open labor market conditions still exist in FBiH.[52]

In FBiH, **the Draft Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the Government in April 2025 and sent for parliamentary procedure.** This draft proposes several innovations: a rights-based approach to employment support, clearer roles for cantonal and federal institutions, improved financing mechanisms through dedicated funds, and expanded responsibilities for employers, including a gradual increase in employment quotas.[53]

[52]Between 2021 and 2023, both the number of employers (both from public and private sector) paying financial contribution and the total amount paid into the FBiH Budget Fund increased steadily, indicating a widening scope of employer choosing to fulfil its obligation with financial contribution to Budget Fund instead of employment of PwDs questioning the overall idea and objective of the quota system (employment of PwDs).
[53] RCC, ESAP 3:Performance of the WB six regarding European pillar of social rights, Bosnia and Herzegovina

There are no precise data on number of PwDs in Republic of Srpska (RS). However, we can rely on data obtained from **census conducted in 2017 at territory of Republic of Srpska where 102.626 persons with different obstacles[54]** has been registered (M: 46.720 - F: 55.542) with more females registered as persons with obstacles.[55] The same data are recorded by Republic of Srpska Institute of statistics[56]

Table 16. Number of persons with obstacles in Republic of Srpska

Total with obstacles	Vision obstacles even though wears glasses	Hear obstacles even though wears hearing device	Walking or going upstairs	Memory or concentration	Clothing and personal hygiene	Communication with others
102.262	43.020	26.055	63.381	18.330	13.502	10.723

Source: 2013 census in Republic of Srpska

Employment of PwDs in RS is under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of labour, war veteran and disabled people protection.** However, **RS PES is also important** having in mind implementation of ALMM aimed for PwDs labour market inclusion.

Roof policy document regulating the area of employment is Employment Strategy of Republic of Srpska for 2021 - 2027 period[57] with Action plan for implementation for 2025 - 2027 period.[58] However, none of these two policy documents recognize PwDs as specific target group of ALMM, with no precise measures for their inclusion in labour market.

Strategy for improving the social position of persons with disabilities in Republics of Srpska 2017 - 2026[59]is an additional policy document which recognize the importance of improvement of PwDs role in different areas such as health, education, social protection, sport etc. In that regard the main institution in RS accountable for labor market inclusion of PwDs is Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs.[60]

[54] In measurement of PwDs a social approach was used where person even with health issues does not have obstacle in performing everyday duties, go to work, school with usage of aid
[55]https://www.rzs.rs.ba/static/uploads/bilteni/popis/gradovi_opstine_naseljena_mjesta/Rezultati_Popisa_2013_Gradovi_Opstine_Naseljena_Mjesta_WEB.pdf
[56] https://www.rzs.rs.ba/static/uploads/bilteni/godisnjak/2024/StatistickiGodisnjak_2024_WEB.pdf
[57] https://vladars.rs/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mpb/PAO/Pages/Стратегија-запошљавања-РС.aspx
[58] https://vladars.rs/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mpb/PAO/Documents/Акциони%20план%20запошљавања%202025-2027.година.pdf
[59] https://www.vladars.net/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/MZSZ/dokumenti/Documents/Strategija%20unapređenja%20društvenog%20položaja%20lica%20sa%20invaliditetom.pdf
[60] https://www.fondinvrs.org

Main legal act in RS in regard to PwDs is the Law on professional rehabilitation, training and employment of PwDs adopted in 2012.[61] Other relevant legislation act in inclusion of PwDs are: the Labor Law[62], the Law on intermediation in employment and rights in the case of unemployment.[63]

According to this Law (Article 21), PwDs could be employed under general and specific terms. Employment of PwDs under general terms could be done individually by PwDs, through Employment Agencies or RS PES, but without adjustment of job vacancy or work duty.

According to the Article 25 employment under specific terms is mandatory for RS public authorities, local self-governments, justice authorities, public institutions and fond, but private companies are exempted from the obligation to employ PwDs.

At least one PwDs should be employed for 16 employees working in public institutions. In case public institutions do not employ PwDs they are obliged to pay 0.2% from monthly gross salaries of all employees to the Tax Authorities (Article 26). Private companies have slightly lower financial burden in case they do not employ PwDs (0.1% from monthly gross salaries of all employees to the Republic - Article 27).

Employer who employs PwDs has right on:

- Tax benefits in accordance with tax regulations
- Financial stimulants for adjustment of work duty and work conditions, purchase of machines, tools and equipment required for employment of PwDs

In case of not employing PwDs, **employers both from public and private sector are paying financial contributions to Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs** (Article 13).

Table 17. Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in RS

2022				
Program	Planned	Spent	Spending rate %	PwDs
Cash Incentive	552.204,00	130.381,50	23.61%	45
Contribution Refund	2.524.628,60	2.472.761,90	97.95%	1257
Employment Sustainability	153.390,00	151.344,80	98.67%	101
Economic Support	102.260,00	72.860,25	71.25%	57
Professional Rehabilitation	0	0	0.00%	0

[61] The Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of PWDs, Official Gazette of RS No. 37/12, 82/15
[62] The Labour Law, Official Gazette of RS, No. 1/16
[63] The Law on intermediation in employment and rights in the case of unemployment, Official Gazette of RS No. 30/10

2023				
Program	Planned (€)	Spent (€)	Spending rate (%)	PwDs
Cash Incentive	289.395,80	2180325,10	75,44%	61
Contribution Refund	2.812.150,00	2,710,020.89	96,37%	1259
Employment Sustainability	204.520,00	191,737.50	93,75%	94
Economic Support	153.390,00	166,428.15	108,50%	93
Professional Rehabilitation	0	0	0%	0
2024				
Program	Planned (€)	Spent (€)	Spending rate (%)	PwDs
Cash Incentive	255.650,00	198.980,58	77,83%	48
Contribution Refund	3.093.365,00	3.194.434,23	103,27%	1.238
Employment Sustainability	127.825,00	115.349,28	90,24%	71
Economic Support	102.260,00	102.259,93	100%	83
Professional Rehabilitation	0	0	0%	0

Source: Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in RS[64]

From table above we conclude structural **dominance of the Contribution refund program across 2022 – 2024 period**.

This program consistently absorbs over 80% of total annual spending of the Budget fund with spending rate are above 95% in most years. Consequently, this program includes majority of the PwDs (over 1200 annually). In referencing period no PwDs were included in program for professional rehabilitation since program started with implementation in 2025.

Table 18. Budget for professional rehabilitation enterprises in RS

Year	Budget Allocation (€)	Implemented (€)	Spending rate (%)
2024	3.721.465,35	398.368,63	10%
2023	3.396.952,44	328.287,61	9%
2022	2.956.259,90	169.868,95	5%

Source: Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in RS

Reflecting on the table above we monitor **a steady increase in total budget allocations for professional rehabilitation enterprises in RS,** reflecting a gradual strengthening of financial commitment over time. At the same time, **spending rate remain relatively low** compared to allocated resources, with execution rates rising from 5% in 2022 to 10% in 2024 suggesting more PwDs under the work of professional rehabilitation enterprises in RS could be encompassed.

[64] Original data are in BiH KM. For the purpose of comparative overview the fixed exchange rate 1 KM = 0.5113 EUR was used.

Table 19. Number of PwDs employed through eterprises for profesional rehabiiliation in RS

	2023	2024	2025
No. of PwDs	36	19	79

Source: Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in RS

RS Law on professional rehabilitation, training and employment of PwDs recognize several mechanisms for employment of PwDs:

- Enterprises for employment of PwDs - 51% of employee must be PwDs and can have capacities to accommodate disabled employees (Article 28)
- Sheltered workshop - employment and work of PwDs (operates under law which regulates work of public services (Article 35)
- Work centre - reserved for PwDs which could not be employed either under general or specific terms (Article 38).
- Institutions for professional rehabilitation

All these types of sheltered employments are exempted from taxes and customs in accordance with legislation in these areas (Article 47).

Professional rehabilitation and training of PwDs could be done under general and specific terms. In first case it is done within education system. However, Professional rehabilitation under specific terms is done in specific Institutions for Professional rehabilitation under (Institutions) (Article 7).

Having in mind some of the terminology used in the Law on professional rehabilitation, training and employment of PwDs (such as invalid[65]) and that Law envisages more sheltered employment than activation measures we can conclude that Law is more oriented in providing social protection/assistance to the PwDs. **As stated in the EC report on EU accession of the BiH, country also needs to align its legislation with the EU acquis**, including in the area of accessibility, and develop models for supported decision-making which promote the independence and autonomy of persons with disabilities. The country needs to both ensure a uniform definition of disability in line with international conventions and harmonise eligibility criteria for, rights to, and standards of social protection.[66] The crucial Convention in terms of the inclusion of PwDs that should be transposed in national legislation is the UNCPDs[67]

Labor market research done by PES in RS in 2024/2025 shows that 79.1% of the employers are not willing to employ the PwDs with only 6.4% employers confirming their readiness to employ PwDs.[68] This attitude of the employers in RS proves that **PwDs are still faced with stigma when it comes to the labour market inclusion.** Also, it indicates the need for proactive approach in combating prejudice of the employers when employing PwDs, targeted support so gap between PwDs skills and employers' needs is decreased, etc.

Even though at BiH level there is a roof institutional body for inclusion of PwDs it still needs to obtain new functions, influence more on relevant legislation and include private sector as well so employers are properly represented in CPwD. In addition, **the definition of PWDs should be broadened to include more categories, apart from the two general categories of war veterans and other PWDs.** Also, the quota scheme in RS and FBiH aims primarily at financing the Budget Funds while the EU emphasise more employment of PwDs on open labour market and intensify design and implementation of ALMM for PwDs (employment fairs, training for identified employer, job clubs, training for active job search, various subsided for employment of PwDs etc.).

[65] Common understanding: Persons with disabilities
[66] https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/5d8fc547-f8f8-456f-84e3-b38998acfafd_en?filename=bosnia-and-herzegovina-report-2025.pdf
[67] https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-articles
[68] https://zzzrs.net/files/Istraživanje%20trzista%20rada%20u%20RS%20%202024,%202025.pdf

One of the crucial elements of labour market inclusion in BiH remains establishment of well-built monitoring and reporting system so labour market inclusion of PwDs is evidence based, tailor made and individualized.

Brčko district

Brčko District (BD) Assembly **adopted a Law on professional rehabilitation, training and employment of persons with disabilities in September 2025.**[69] PwDs from this territory now have complete legal framework for obtaining different services in labour market inclusion.

In focus of this Law is professional rehabilitation of PwDs which could be done by the institution for professional rehabilitation or other legal actor established for that purpose which fulfils conditions for that purpose prescribed by the Law. The method of selecting a professional rehabilitation service provider and the conditions that the professional rehabilitation service provider must meet are regulated by an Act adopted by the Employment Agency of the BD. (Article 10). According to the **Article 15 of the Law, a special organization unit for professional rehabilitation, training and employment of PwDs will be established within BD Employment Agency.** It will be funded by the BD budget and funds aimed for employment of PwDs.

Article 18 of the Law envisages that employers can employ PwDs at open labour market, it has obligation to reasonably adjust the work duty.

Article 20 of the Law envisages usage of quota system where **employer is obliged to employ one PwDs for every 40 non-PwDs employees in first year of the Law implementation**. A public sector employer who has not fulfilled the obligation of PwD employment is obliged to pay remittance to the BD Employment Agency special account each month, when calculating the salary, in the amount of 25% of the average net salary in the BD for the calendar year that is two fiscal years prior to the year in which the remittance is paid. This rule applies for every unemployed PwD. If public employer employs PwD with 90% of disability, it is considered that it has employed two PwDs.

Article 21: Private sector employer has also obligation to employ PwDs and it can obtain financial stimulance and tax deduction if employs PwDs. However, if does not employ PwDs employer pays monthly contribution (0.2% of the gross calculated salary of all employees).

Control of employers' obligation in regard to remittance obligation is mandate to BD Direction for finance – **Tax authority (Article 22).**

Control of employers' obligation in regard to remittance obligation is mandate to BD Direction for finance – Tax authority (Article 22).

Employment of PwDs under specific terms (Article 23)

- Employment of PwDs in legal entity for employment of PwDs
- Self-employment of PwDs, as well as agricultural activities as the sole, main or supplementary occupation.

[69]https://skupstinabd.ba/3-zakon/sr/Zakon%20o%20profesionalnoj%20rehabilitaciji,%20osposobljavanju%20i%20zapos--ljavanju%20lica%20sa%20invaliditetom/01S32-25%20%20Zakona%20o%20profesionalnoj%20rehabilitaciji,%20osposobljavanju%20i%20zapos--ljavanju%20lica%20sa%20invaliditetom.pdf

In any case, employment of PwDs under specific terms is subsidised.
Article 24 of the Law defines the possibility and condition for establishment of the legal entity for employment of PwDs (40% of the employees must be PwDs, disability average in total employed PwDs must be 65%, workspace must adjusted to PwDs, legal entity can obtain subsidies etc.

Article 25 of the Law identifies the protected workshop as PwDs sheltered employment mechanism, conditions for establishment of workshop, etc.

Since the BD Law on professional rehabilitation, training and employment of persons with disabilities has recently been adopted its effects are yet to be seen and examined.

Kosovo

The state of play of labour market inclusion of PwDs in Kosovo [70]should be understood within a political context shaped by institutional fragmentation, limited statistical capacities, and ongoing efforts to harmonise national legislation with international and EU disability standards. **Official data on the unemployment, employment, and labour market participation of PwDs are not systematically collected or monitored.** In Kosovo, this challenge is further compounded by the absence of national-level records on registered PwDs within Public employment service.

According to the results from the 2024 population census, the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) reports that Kosovo has 1.585.566 population (1.739.825 in 2019). **Also, 337.859 individuals are identified as having long - term difficulties in performing daily activities** (21.3% of the population). This marks a substantial rise compared to the 2011 census, which recorded **93.288 persons with long-term difficulties** (around 8% of the population).[71] [72]

Central policy document shaping the inclusion of PwDs topic is the **National Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Kosovo 2025–2030 (NSRPD)[73]**, addressing key areas such as accessibility, education, health, employment, social protection, and participation. Office for Good Governance (OGG) under the Office of the Prime Minister leads this initiative. OGG also chairs the Committee on Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluating the NSRPD. However, the Committee **for Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation of the** NSRPD 2013–2023 did not operate as an independent body.[74]

One of the primary goals of this strategy is **to increase employment opportunities for PwDs through wage subsidies and employer incentives designed to encourage the hiring of PwDs**. Additionally, the strategy seeks to expand inclusive education programmes at both the primary and secondary levels, ensuring that children with disabilities have access to quality education alongside their peers. Improving physical accessibility standards in public infrastructure is another important aspect of the strategy, as it seeks to make public spaces more accessible to individuals with mobility challenges. Furthermore, **Kosovo plans to introduce community-based services, including mobile teams for home care and social work, to provide personalised support to individuals with disabilities in their own homes and communities.** These initiatives represent a significant step towards improving the rights, opportunities, and quality of life for PwDs in Kosovo.

[70]Designation for "Kosovo" is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence
[71] https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/SDPAK-2025-2030-Zyrtar-Anglisht.pdf
[72]https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099446001262338576/pdf/IDU0c94b5e380a97e043fe0ae7004c952e7e18e6.pdf
[73] https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/SDPAK-2025-2030-Zyrtar-Anglisht.pdf
[74] https://globaldisabilityfund.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/sitan-kosovo-full-report.pdf

In Kosovo, institutional responsibility for the employment of PwDs is shared among three key ministries. The **Ministry of Finance, Labour, and Transfers** (MFLT) is responsible for designing and implementing vocational training programmes, ALMM for PwDs, as well as administering social schemes and benefits related to labour market inclusion. Ministry of Health (MoH) oversees healthcare access, including rehabilitation and inclusive medical services. Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) guarantees inclusive education and leads on special education reforms.

Institutional framework on PwDs in Kosovo recognize also the **National Disability Council (NDC)**. NDC was re-established in June 2021 and chaired by the Third Deputy Prime Minister, the NDC advises the government on policies to improve the lives of PwDs. It is mandated to meet at least twice annually, although it did not convene in 2023. The Council includes representatives from government institutions and Organizations for PwDs (OPD), but **its effectiveness has been limited due to irregular engagement and unclear enforcement capacity.**[75] **No evidence on inclusion of private sector in the work of NDC were found.** Also, existence of the NDC is based on Government of Kosovo decision since it is not recognized in the roof Law on employment of PwDs (Law No. 03/L-019).

The most important laws in Kosovo specifically dedicated to PwDs are:

- Law No. 03/L-022 on Financial Support for Families of Children with Permanent Disabilities
- **Law No. 03/L-019 on Vocational Training, Rehabilitation, and Employment of Persons with Disabilities**
- Law No. 04/L-092 on Blind Persons
- Law No. 05/L-067 on Recognition of Status and Rights of Paraplegic and Tetraplegic Persons

A significant development in improving the legal framework on inclusion of PwDs in Kosovo occurred **in 2023** when the **Constitutional Court of Kosovo ruled that the CRPD Convention is compatible with the Constitution of Kosovo**. However, the incorporation of the CRPD Convention is still pending.[76]

Law No. 03/L-019 identifies that PwDs could be employed under general and specific terms. In first case PwDs are employed in the open labour market and in second case employment of PwDs may occur in **working centres, protective workplaces** or through self-employment and family economies (Article 11).

Law No. 03/L-019 (Article 12) defines some of the most important mechanisms for employment of PwDs including quota system. State administration bodies, employers of private and public sectors and also nongovernmental organizations are obliged to employ PwDs with appropriate conditions. Additionally, each employer is obliged to employed PwDs for every fifty (50) employees. Employer who does not meet obligations referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Article 12 is obliged to pay monthly contributions for incitement of employment for PwDs in the level of 1% of minimal wage to the Kosovo budget.

PwDs also has a possibility to be included in vocational training and rehabilitation to prepare for the labour market. This may take in general training systems or specialized institutions depending on the disability. Activities of Vocational Rehabilitation and ability are realized in educational institutions, employment offices, Centers of Vocational Training, and other legal persons, who meet conditions for vocational training and education (Article 8).

Vocational training and professional rehabilitation of PwDs in Kosovo is managed by Center of Rehabilitation of Kosovo.

[75] https://globaldisabilityfund.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/SitAn-Kosovo-Brief.pdf
[76] https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/127563ea-4c03-44a4-b56c-2d569afd86a5_en?filename=kosovo-report-2025.pdf

Table 20. Number of PwDs included in vocational training programs in Kosovo

	2024	2023	2022
Total PwDs	36	60	35

Source: Ministry of labour, Kosovo

The number of PwDs involved in vocational training programs fluctuated over the period, increasing from 35 in 2022 to 60 in 2023, before declining to 36 in 2024. **This trend suggests that the expansion observed in 2023 was temporary**, with participation levels in 2024 returning close to those recorded in 2022.

Kosovo has one enterprise for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs.

Table 21. Enterprises for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in Kosovo

Period	Number of enterprises for	Number of PwDs included
2024	1	70
2023	1	70
2022	N/A	N/A

Source: Ministry of labour, Kosovo

Table above suggests stable, but **limited institutional capacity for inclusion of more PwDs in this mechanism** since only one enterprise for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs is active in Kosovo, while the absence of data for 2022 prevents assessment of longer-term trends.

Assessment of PwDs workability is regulated within article 6 and 7. Workability assessment procedure is shared between Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in cooperation with Ministry of Health with special sub legal act determining the level of working capacity of PwDs (Article 7).

Workability assessment procedure in Kosovo is purely based on medical aspect. Kosovo lacks overarching legislation to regulate identification, assessment and determination of disability.[77] However, the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers is preparing a Law on Social Reforms (Social Assistance Services) and a **Law on Disability Assessment Reform, which will shift the eligibility process from a purely medical to a bio-psycho-social model**, aligning it with the CRPD Convention and in accordance with the World Health Organisation Disability Assessment.[78]

[77] https://globaldisabilityfund.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/sitan-kosovo-full-report.pdf
[78] https://www.esap.online/download/docs/Performance-of-Western-Balkan-economies-regarding-the-European-Pillar-of-Social-Rights-Kosovo.pdf/13243d748ae6d9bc69732b31f5a360dc.pdf

Employer who employs PwDs as well as the PwDs who exercises independent activity has the right for customs and tax facilitation in accordance with tax/custom laws in force. For a person with hundred percent (100%) disabilities user of pension for disabilities, the pension shall be transformed to personal assistance for assistant at work (Article 18).

Article 24 of the Law No. 03/L-019 envisages establishment of the budget for rehabilitation, vocational training and employment of PwDs managed and overseen by the Ministry for labour and social welfare. Funds collected are dedicated for:

- vocational rehabilitation and employment of PwDs
- financing institutions for vocational rehabilitation
- payment of material stimulation in money
- joint financing of programs for maintaining employment of PwDs;
- for other job positions of PwDs.

Legal framework in Kosovo does not envisage existence of Budget fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs as independent and autonomous agency/body with its oversight, management and implementation structures independent from the Ministry accountable for employment/labour. Funds collected through financial compensation of employers are rather distributed through different ALLM, wage subsidies, training and implementation of different projects (contribution to the EU, UNDP and other bilateral projects).

According to data received from Kosovo Ministry of Labor, **the total amount of funds collected during the previous year (2025)** by employers who, in accordance with the legislation in force[1] are obliged to pay compensation **for non-employment of PwD is 654,582.40 €.**

According to the Kosovo Law on registration and providing of the services for unemployed, jobseekers and employers (Law No. 05/L - 077) employment service provision is strictly mandated to the **Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo** (EARK) (Article 1).[80] In practice this means that other entities such as private employment agencies, CSOs, etc., are not able to provide employment services and receive funds from the national budget.

According to the Article 12 Law No. 05/L - 077, Kosovo ALMM programmes include employment subsidies on the job training, vocational training, internships, self-employment and promotion of entrepreneurship, public works and other measures related to the employment service.

Financial support for implementation of ALMM in Kosovo are provided by the General Budget of Kosovo Government. However, due to the lack of evidence on cost structure for implementation of ALMM in Kosovo it is not possible to determine the cost of ALMM for employment of PwDs.

Table 22. Number of PwDs included in ALMM in Kosovo

	2024	2023	2022
Total PwDs	8	15	10

Source: Ministry of labour, Kosovo

[80] https://cps.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/LAW_NO._05_L_-_077___ON_REGISTRATION_ANDPROVIDING_OF_THE_SERVICES_FOR_UNEMPLOYED_JOBSEEKERS_AND_EMPLOYERS.pdf

Having in mind the table above we conclude that total number of PwDs included in Kosovo via ALMM fluctuated over the period, increasing from 10 in 2022 to 15 in 2023, before declining to 8 in 2024. This indicates that the rise observed in 2023 was temporary, with participation decreasing again in the following year. **Compared against the number of PwDs included in vocational rehabilitation and training and/or PwDs included in enterprise for employment of PwDs (36 and 70 for 2024), we observe the need for more investment in institutional capacities of KAS so more PwDs are included in ALMM based on individualized need of PwDs.**

KAS (2023) reports that only 15% of PwDs are formally employed, with most concentrated in public administration or short-term contract jobs. A Situational Analysis (June - November2024) delivered by the Global Disability Fund reports an employment rate of approximately 15 % among PwDs, and less than 20% of public buildings were accessible to wheelchair users, based on a monitoring report by HANDIKOS and the Kosovo Disability Forum (2024).[81]

Same report confirms that employers are willing to employ PwDs, but they did not obtain adequate support confirming they have inadequate knowledge regarding employment of PwDs, being not aware of the requirement of hiring 1 PwD for every 50 employees. Main reasons for **not employing the PwDs according to the UNDP study was that employers had not received applications from PwDs** (62% of 202 companies who participated in survey).[82]

In terms of employment policies, the EARK has introduced hiring incentives as part of its ALMMs, particularly focusing on PwDs and minority women. For example, wage subsidy schemes now offer a higher reimbursement rate (up to 70%) to employers who hire from these groups. **However, there are no available/reliable data on inclusion of PwDs in ALMM.**

Worth mentioning is that Kosovo remains the only one among the Western Balkan Six without an unemployment insurance system. This significantly impacts many without income support during joblessness, affecting youth, informal workers and those with low educational attainments.[83]

Despite reforms and progressive initiatives (such as piloting of youth guarantee program, more investments in ALMM, etc.), **EARK remains under-resourced.** Institutional fragmentation, limited outreach capacity, and inconsistent performance across municipalities constrain the impact of ALMM. A **more coordinated approach linking employment offices with vocational training centres, municipalities, and private employers is urgently needed** to create stronger pathways to decent work, particularly for women, minorities, and persons with disabilities.[84]

Beside ALMM, Kosovo has several social protection mechanisms for PwDs including **disability allowance of €120 per months for individuals with permanent disabilities.** Additionally, Kosovo has three different pensions schemes for PwDs. First scheme is for blind with benefits ranging from €180 to €360, depending on the levelof need, and including compensation for a personal assistant. The second scheme supports individuals with paraplegia or tetraplegia, offering monthly payments between €180 and €435. The third scheme provides a monthly benefit of €120 for individuals with permanent disabilities who do not fall under the other two categories.[85]

[81] https://www.esap.online/download/docs/Performance-of-Western-Balkan-economies-regarding-the-European-Pillar-of-Social-Rights-Kosovo.pdf/13243d748ae6d9bc69732b31f5a360dc.pdf
[82] https://globaldisabilityfund.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/sitan-kosovo-full-report.pdf
[83] https://www.esap.online/download/docs/Performance-of-Western-Balkan-economies-regarding-the-European-Pillar-of-Social-Rights-Kosovo.pdf/13243d748ae6d9bc69732b31f5a360dc.pdf
[84] Ibid
[85] https://www.esap.online/download/docs/Performance-of-Western-Balkan-economies-regarding-the-European-Pillar-of-Social-Rights-Kosovo.pdf/13243d748ae6d9bc69732b31f5a360dc.pdf

Key Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) active in disability rights advocacy and service provision in Kosovo include HANDIKOS[86], Down Syndrome Kosova (DSK)[87], Kosovo Centre for Independent Living (KCIL), Mental Disability Rights Initiative Kosovo (MDRI-K), the Association of the Blind of Kosovo, and the Kosovo Association of the Deaf (KAD) At the coordination level, **the Kosovo Disability Forum (KDF) was established as an umbrella platform intended to strengthen joint advocacy and policy influence.**

HANDIKOS is one of the oldest and largest OPDs, with a decentralized network of local branches and implements programmes related to vocational rehabilitation, skills development, and supported employment. **DSK** has developed supported employment models and partnerships with private sector employers to facilitate labour market inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities. **KCIL** promotes independent living and labour market participation through advocacy and capacity-building, while other disability-specific organisations contribute indirectly by empowering beneficiaries, advocating for reasonable accommodation, and engaging with institutions and employers.

In conclusion, Kosovo made a certain progress in development of inclusive society through EU accession process. However, **legal and institutional framework on the rights of PwDs is incomplete, and implementation is insufficient.** PwDs continue to experience discrimination, and accessibility remains limited in healthcare, education, physical infrastructure and transport. Thus, **better alignment with the EU acquis is needed, including as regards the European Accessibility Act**. The enactment of the Law on the rights, evaluation, treatment, and status recognition of PwDs and the associated services is overdue. [88]

Republic of Albania

Data sources on PwDs in Albania are fragmented. There is no central register on PwDs which collects all data and profiles PwDs accurately. The most recent statistics for registered PWD identifies 148.269 PwDs of which 71.973 are work invalids and 76.295 are beneficiaries of non-contributary disability schemes. [89] According to Albania's latest Population and Housing Census conducted in 2023, **6.5% of total population in Albania aged 5 or more live with some form of disability.**[90]

Table 23. Employment programs in Albania implemented by PES in Albania

Program type	2024	2023	2022
Employment Program 1	33	19	16
On the job training/training at workplace	2	0	0
Internships	8	2	3
Community work	59	0	4
Self-Employment Program	1	0	0
VKM 608 (8-month program) [91]	0	0	1
Total participants	103	21	24
Total cost [92]	€383.680,00	€82.106,00	€93.912,00

Source: NAES, Albania

[86] https://handi-kos.org/history/
[87] https://downsyndromekosova.org/informate-per-dsk/
[88] https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/127563ea-4c03-44a4-b56c-2d569afd86a5_en?filename=kosovo-report-2025.pdf
[89] https://smartbalkansproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Raport-ANALYSIS_COMPATIBILITY_LEGAL_FRAMEWORK_CRPD.pdf
[90] This data captures self-perceived, functional limitations across daily activities rather than just medically certified cases
[91] Program does not exist anymore. Implemented within Covid 19 related issues.
[92] Original costs in Albanian Lek. Conversion rate used: (1 ALL ≈ 0.0103788 EUR)

Total participation of PwDs in Active labour market programs increased significantly in 2024 compared to previous years. This growth is largely driven by Community Work Program. On the other side, Employment Program 1 doubled the volume across the three years (16 – 19 - 33), suggesting consistent, but limited absorption capacity. Other programs such as internships, on the job training and self-employment remained small in scale and fluctuate over the years, indicating limited institutional anchoring. Although total expenditures for ALMM increased considerably in 2024 (€383,680), the average cost per participant slightly decreased compared to 2022 and 2023, suggesting improved efficiency in resource utilization.

Table 24. Registered unemployment of PwDs in Albania

	2025	2024	2023
Registered PwDs seeking employment	3.428	3.13	2.956

Source: NAES and EC Progress Report on Albania 2025

As presented in Table 24, the number of PwDs registered as jobseekers increased, from 2956 in 2022, to 3,428 in 2024. Improvemetn in this indicator demonstrates greater engagement of PwDs with employment services and increased trust in public institutions. However, these developments have not yet translated into sustained growth in employment of PwDs.

Table 25. Inclusion of PwDs in different ALMM programs in Albania

Program	2024	2023	2022
Employment Incentive Program (EIP)	103	40	48
Jobs	276	204	18
Professional training	94	119	83
Total	473	385	149

Source: NEAS, Albania

Table above indicates a substantial expansion of ALMM in Albania, with total beneficiaries trippled from 149 in 2022 to 473 in 2024. **The most pronounced growth occurred within the *"Jobs – employment in the open labour market without incentives"* component, reflecting a strategic shift toward direct employment placement and stronger labour market integration.** While professional training program remained relevant, their relative share declined in 2024, suggesting a reorientation from preparatory interventions toward immediate employment outcomes.

Yet, given that less than 20% of registered PwDs were included in ALMM in 2024, it is evident that the Albanian PES remains in a phase of institutional strengthening, therefore more resources are required to be invested in this direction.

Albania has adopted multiple strategic documents that directly address improvements to PWD lives, including its National Strategy for Development and Integration 2022–2030[93], and Policy Paper on Disability Assessment Reform 2019–2024.[94] **Albania's National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities 2021–2025 and National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (NAPPWD) 2021–2025**[95] presented an important policy driver of PwDs social inclusion in Albania. Under this reform a new bio-psycho-social disability assessment system (using World Health Organization ICF criteria) was piloted and rolled out across Albania by 2023, replacing the old medical model for determining disability status.[96]

[93] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390365
*[94]https://www.researchgate.net/publication/398320028_INCLUSION_OF_PEOPLE_WITH_DISABILITIES_IN_SOCIAL_PROTECTION_SYSTEMS_IN_ALBANIA_AN_ANALYSIS_BASED_ON_POLICY_AND_LEGAL_FRAMEWORK_*
[95] https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/natlex2/files/download/115629/ALB-115629%20(EN).pdf
[96] https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_690%20Albania%20report.pdf

Government of Albania's priorities in the VET and employment of PwDs are outlined also in (i)the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023-2030[97] with specific measures on inclusion of PWD in the labour market and skills development, and the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan ; (ii) National Implementation Plan of the Osnabrück Declaration that aim at transforming the cash assistance scheme into an integration; (iii) National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2021-2025, (iv) National Strategy on Social Protection 2024-2030 and its action plan approved in the end of March 2024.[98]

Priorities on VET and employment of PWD are outlined within the framework of Albania's Economic Reform Programs (ERP) 2025-2027, while it responds to the EU integration requirements for the country.The ratification of the UNCRPD by Albania, represents also a significant milestone in promoting and safeguarding the rights of PWDs in Albania including .... the right to work on an equal basis with other members of society, and in a working environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities..." (CRPD art. 27). **The Government of Albania has reformed the disability assessment system, and the new bio-psycho-social assessment scheme has been extendedthroughout the territory**, establishing 37 regional assessment commissions composed of 120 medicalstaff and social workers, as well as 9 staff members for 3 appeal review commissions in Tirana.[99]

PwDs in Albania receives Disability allowance and other disability cash benefits. Persons with paraplegia and tetraplegia receive: ALL 13,600 per month (cca 160 EUR) for the beneficiary; ALL 13,600 per month (cca 160 EUR) for the caregiver; ALL 20,000 per month (cca 170 EUR) for a hygiene and sanitary supplies package. Blind persons receive: ALL 14,700 per month (cca 125 EUR) for the beneficiary; ALL 14,700 per month (cca 125 EUR) for the caregiver. Persons with intellectual and physical disabilities are assessed by the Biopsychosocial Assessment Commission. Benefits are granted based on four levels of disability assessment: mild, moderate, severe, and profound. Disability benefits range from ALL 8,960 to ALL 17,900 per month (cca 95 – 153 EUR). A part-time caregiver receives ALL 12,000 per month (cca 103 EUR); a full-time caregiver receives ALL 17,900 per month (cca 153 EUR).

A PwDs may also be entitled to the following benefits:(i)Reimbursement of electricity and/or telephone service costs; (ii) Exemption from the annual tuition fee for: students who have an official decision confirming their entitlement to disability benefits; and students who have at least one parent with a disability; (iii).Persons with disabilities who attend school or vocational training receive 200% of the basic disability allowence, while those enrolled in higher education receive 300% of the basic disability allowance;(iv) Access to social services, employment mediation, and vocational training through cooperation agreements with the National Agency for Employment and Skills (AKPA), local government authorities, regional education offices, the Albanian National Association of the Deaf (ANAD) for sign language services, and other relevant institutions.

The Albanian Constitution guarantees PWD rights, stipulating equal employment (Article 49) and mandating modification to structures and infrastructure to accommodate the disabled as well as vocational training, social integration and continuous improvement of living conditions (Article 59).[100] The Law on Protection from Discrimination prohibits discrimination based on disability, calling for reasonable accommodation, defining the denial of necessary modifications to living and business spaces as discriminatory (Article 5).[101]

[97] https://arkiva.financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/National-Employment-and-Skills-Strategy-2030_EN.pdf
[98] https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/natlex2/files/download/116463/ALB-116463.pdf
[99] https://www.esap.online/docs/230/rcc-esap-3-performance-of-the-western-balkan-six-regarding-the-european-pillar-of-social-rights-2025-review-on-albania
[100] https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/Albania%20Constitution.pdf
[101] https://rm.coe.int/lmd-updated-version-english-translation/1680a0c1fc

Albania's legal framework for social inclusion of PwDs remains fragmented. Law No. 93/2014 "On the Inclusion and Accessibility of Persons with Disabilities," guarantees equal opportunities and prohibits discrimination. Law No. 121/2016 on protection of PwDs reinforces non-discrimination as a core principle. However, Albania's legal framework on the rights of PwDs is partially compliant with the UNCRPD. **Albania has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD on an individual complaints' mechanism.**[102]

Several analysis and studies[103] pointed out that PwDs in Albania remain significantly underrepresented in the labor market. Discrimination, inaccessible infrastructure, limited education and vocational training opportunities and insufficient employer incentive all contribute to PwDs distance from the labor market in Albania.

ALMM in Albania are governed by Law on Employment Promotion No. 15/2019[3] and DCM No. 554/2019[104], with implementation coordinated by Albania's Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES)and the Ministry of Economy, Culture, and Innovation (MECI).

Law No. 15/2019 introduced the quota system and replaced the previous Law on Law No. 7995 (1995) on Employment Promotion. **The quota system mandates employers (both from public and private sector) that one PwD must be employed for every 25 employees, and an additional one for every 50 employees thereafter.** Employers are entitled to receive subsidies for any workplace modifications undertaken and tax exemptions on PwDs salaries if they employ PwDs. Employers who fail to comply with the obligation of employment of PwDs must pay an amount equal to the **minimum wage for every person/month they were obliged to employ. Funds are transferred at a special account of the Social Employment Fund** which should be used for financing of training, self-employment and workplace adaption for PwDs. Though foreseen by the Law on Employment Promotion, **Social Employment Fund is not yet established years after its legal basis was established.** Unlocking the potential of this fund is essential for driving structural change and promoting long-term inclusion of PWDs in the labor market.

[102] EC Progress Report on Albania: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/fe9138b7-90fe-4277-a12c-3a03f6d1957f_en?filename=albania-report-2025.pdf
[103] https://www.adrf.al/images/publications/Alternative_Report_to_the_UN_Committee_on_the_Rights_of_Persons_with_Disabilities.pdf, pg 34- 36; https://www.adrf.al/images/publications/Monitorimi_i_planit_kombetar_te_veprimit_per_personat_me_aftesi_te_kufizuara_2016-2020.pdf pg 39-47; FINAL-Draft_NESS_Annual-Progress-Report_2023_30.10.2024.pdf, pg 35-36, EU Commission 2024 progress report of Albania, pg. 40 https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2024_en
[104] https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/natlex2/files/download/115638/ALB-115638.pdf

In 2023 Amendment (Law No. 47/2023) expanded the definition of "special groups" and included family members for PwDs and established cumulative criteria for youth underage of 29. Also, focus of PwDs employment measures are on skills, being aligned with EU directive, improving the labour market inclusion of PwDs in Albania.

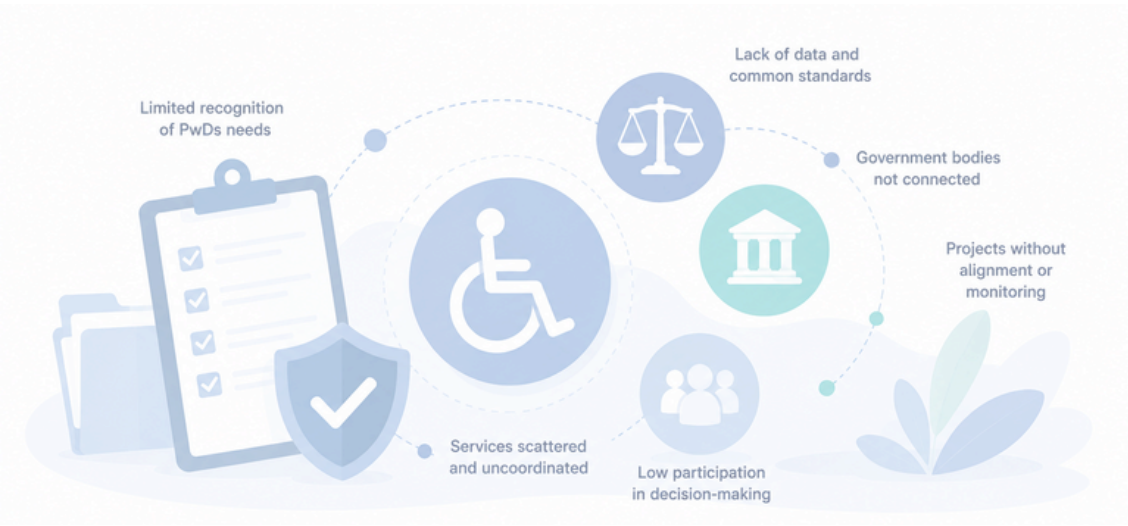
Albanian legal framework does not envisage existence of the institutes such as professional rehabilitation enterprises or work centres/protected workshops and focus is more on inclusion of PwDs in open labour market measures.

Law No. 93/2014, Article 13(e) recognize the **National Council on Disability (NCD)** as a national council body which makes suggestions and provides recommendations to improve the legislation related to the protection of the rights of PwDs. NCD is established in February 2015 and is chaired by the minister who covers disability issues. It is **composed of 17 members of who 7 members are individuals with disabilities, 5 are representatives of organizations of people with disabilities and 2 representatives of organizations for PwDs.** Nevertheless, there is insufficient representation of people with disabilities in the NCD, as well as in policy-making and decision-making bodies related to the welfare of individuals with disabilities.[105] No evidence on participation of private sector representatives in the work of NCD were found.

The terminology and data reported in the 2023 NAES Bulletin are not aligned with Eurostat methodology. The reporting format consistently uses the term "employment promotion programmes" to refer to ALMPs, creating a mismatch with Eurostat's classification standards. While participant data are sometimes disaggregated by gender and, at the aggregate level, by age, they are not broken down by specific ALMPs. Moreover, the age groups applied do not follow Eurostat's required categories (15 - 24, 25 - 54, 55+).[106]

Albania is also characterized by significant number of international and national organizations active in PwDs social inclusion. Several international organizations, including the UNDP, UN Women Albania and EU advocates and funds projects for socio-economic inclusion of PwDs. International and national CSOs (e.g., Albanian Disability Rights Foundation - ADRF, Down Syndrome Albania - DSA, Jonathan Centre, Help the life association, Save the Children Albania, Caritas Albania) have also provided project-implementation support for PwDs socio – economic inclusion. Additionally, religious institutions (notably, the Catholic Church) have promoted their own initiatives as well.

One of the most prominent organizations for PwDs is the **Albanian Disability Rights Foundation (ADRF)** established in 1996 as a leading cross-disability organization recognized for its work in advocacy, lobbying and provision of services for PwDs to improve the quality of life and promote the equal opportunities for PwDs in Albania.



[105] https://smartbalkansproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Raport-ANALYSIS_COMPATIBILITY_LEGAL_FRAMEWORK_CRPD.pdf
[106] Ibid

According to 2021 Census data, there are a total of 94.412 PwDs in North Macedonia representing almost 5% of the total population. However, the data from the Survey on income and living conditions (SILC) conducted by the Statistical Office of North Macedonia shows that **around 31.5% of the population has some form of disability.**[102] According to the register of the Employment Agency of North Macedonia, 1,193 persons with various types of disabilities were registered as unemployed at the end of 2024. out of which 392 were women.[103]

National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2023 - 2030 (National Strategy for PwDs) is the most comprehensive disability policy document adopted to date. CSOs, particularly organizations of PwDs (OPDs), have played an essential role in shaping North Macedonia's disability policy. Representing the collective voice of disability groups in policy processes, with the **National Council of Disability Organizations (NCDO) serving as an umbrella coordinating body.**[104] Manifesting the **UNCRPD principle of "Nothing About Us Without Us", 27 OPDs actively took part in drafting the National Strategy for PwDs.**[105] Even though North Macedonia has ratified UNCRPD, it still needs to align its legal framework with European Accessibility Act.[106]

One of the key reforms envisaged National Strategy for PwDs is the **harmonization of data collection across social protection, health, education and employment sectors** and support for more accurate monitoring of rights implementation, including establishment of a unified **National Disability Registry as core to central reforms.** Among the reforms undertaken, **central role plays envisaged replacement of the traditionally medical assessment model** with an International Classification of Functioning (ICF) assessment model which utilizes a biopsychosocial framework. To better ensure consistent application of assessment criteria and strengthen linkages between disability certification and employment services, **reforms in 2023 have led to established of a Central Disability Certification Coordination Unit (CDCCU)**.[107]

North Macedonia's **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy**[108] plays a leading role in improving disability rights.[3] The **Employment Service Agency** of North Macedonia is main public institution accountable for activation of hard to employ groups including PwDs. At the same time **ZAPOVIM is association of sheltered employers in North Macedonia established in 1972** aimed to improve the capacities of PwDs for inclusion in labour market.

The Law on Employment of Persons with Disabilities regulates the special conditions for employment and work of persons with disabilities (Official Gazette of North Macedonia, No. 44/2000, 16/2024, 62/2005, 113/2005, 29/2007, 88/2008, 161/2008, 99/2009, 136/2011, 129/2015, 147/2015, 27/2016, 99/2018 and 103/2021).[109]

[102] https://www.esap.online/download/docs/Performance-of-Western-Balkan-economies-regarding-the-European-Pillar-of-Social-Rights-North-Macedonia.pdf/27a146c62ecf1ac0ca147996dc3ebd10.pdf
[103] Ibid
[104] https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/disability/sr-disability/cfis/care-support-children/subm-care-support-children-sta-22-north-macedonia-en-version.pdf
[105] https://mia.mk/en/story/government-adopts-national-strategy-on-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-20232030
[106] https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/267b368e-6b55-4a42-bb72-6395593de4da_en?filename=north-macedonia-report-2025.pdf
[107] https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/northmacedonia/brief/enhancing-social-protection-in-north-macedonia-reforming-disability-assessment
[108] Ministry of social policy, demography and youth since June 2024

According to this Law, when employing a disabled person, an employer is obliged to create appropriate working conditions and adapt the workplace depending on the type and level of education, and the type and level of disability of the person (Article 5).

Table 26. Financial support for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs in North Macedonia

Financial support for professional rehabilitation and employment of people with disabilities			
Period	Allocated (EUR)	Spent (EUR)	Percentage
2024	5.814.313,80	2.405.683,12	41,40%
2023	5.523.564,30	2.020.215,15	36,60%
2022	2.833.232,50	2.158.494,44	76,20%

Source: North Macedonia PES

Allocated funds for PwDs increased sharply in referencing period, more than doubling from 2022 to 2024, demonstrating strong financial commitment of North Macedonia to employing PwDs. Fund absorption dropped after 2022, with execution rates falling from 76.2% to around 40%. The growing gap between allocated and spent funds might indicate that budget expansion has outpaced the system's ability to utilize resources effectively, limiting the impact of financial support measures.

Unlike other WB economies, North Macedonia does not apply employment quotas for PwDs, relying instead on employer incentives such as wage subsidies, reimbursement of taxes, and providing financial assistance of adapting the workplace.[110]

However, Article 6 of the Law envisages the existence of **Special Fund** which can be used for **improving the working conditions of PwDs, adaptation of the workplace, procurement of equipment necessary for employment of PwDs, the provision of a work assistant for a disabled person and job training for both employed and unemployed persons with disabilities.**[111] Financial resources for functioning of Special Fund are ensured through legal provision that 10% of funds collected through employment contribution are transferred to sub-account of the Employment Agency of North Macedonia not later than 30th of the month for the previous month (Article 15).

[110] https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/northmacedonia/brief/enhancing-social-protection-in-north-macedonia-reforming-disability-assessment
[111] https://av.gov.mk/employment-of-disabled-persons.nspx

Table 27. Special fund for employment of PwDs in North Macedonia

	Special fund (EUR)			
Period	Allocation	Utilization	Percentage (%)	No. of companies contributing to Special Fund
2024	7.032.134,52	5.814.313,80	82.68	71.453
2023	6.258.822,12	5.523.564,30	88.25	71.529
2022	5.360.889,12	2.833.232,50	52.85	71.827

Source: North Macedonia PES

Special fund grows regularly representing the stabile financial framework for employment of PwDs. In referencing period, we track variations in utilization efficiency with 2023 as turning point with highest efficiency. At the same time, number of companies contributing to the Special Fund is stable underpinning the fiscal sustainability. However, **absorption of the Special Fund still remains a challenge for North Macedonia** and should be a strategic orientation supported by different programs for employment of PwDs.

The Law in North Macedonia primarily regulates special employment conditions and emphasize employment of PwDs within sheltered enterprises[112]. A sheltered enterprise[113] is defined as a company with at least ten employees, of which minimum 40 % are PwDs, registered as a sheltered enterprise with the MLSP and North Macedonia PES.

Table 28. Number of sheltered enterprises and PwDs in North Macedonia

Period	Number of sheltered enterprises for employment of PwDs	Number of PwDs included in sheltered enterprises
2024	211	2.247
2023	212	2.27
2022	219	2.363

Source: Заедница на заштитни друштва на Македонија, ЗАПОВИМ

Table 29. Number of PwDS and type of support in sheltered enterprises in North Macedonia

Period	Employment of PwDs		Workplace adaptation	Purchase of equipment		Total allocated funds
	Funds (EUR)[114]	No. of new PwDs		Funds (EUR)	No. of new PwDs	
2024	603,028.40	65	0	1,279,023.51	25	1,882,051.91
2023	500,292.34	60	0	1,090,028.46	26	1,590,320.80
2022	482,947.71	63	0	762,890.15	22	1,245,837.86

Source: Заедница на заштитни друштва на Македонија, ЗАПОВИМ

[112] Трговски друштва за вработување на инвалидни лица - заштитни друштва
[113] By the legal provision on work of this form of sheltered enterprises, they are mostly similar to companies for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs which exist in Serbia
[114] Original financial data provided in MKD. Exchange rate: 1 MKD = 0.01622541 EUR

Total funding of the sheltered enterprises records a 51% surge from 2022 to 2024, driven primarily by a huge increase in equipment spending which in 2024 was account for 68% of the total budget. Despite this financial growth, the number of PwDs included in sheltered enterprises has remained static, averaging 63 people annually.

Table 30. Costs and number of PwDs included in ALMM in North Macedonia

	2024	2023	2022
Self-employment of PwDs	7	17	30
Creation of new jobs	20	13	25
Training	21	32	22
Work engagement	17	27	24
Total	65	89	101
Costs (EUR) [115]	104.702,31	111.734,05	231.062,25

Source: North Macedonia PES

From the above table we record decline in PwDs coverage and costs for ALMM in North Macedonia over the course of three years. Most program show downward trends in coverage. However, self-employment program experienced the most pronounced reduction in coverage (from 30 to 7 PwDs), indicating either institutional capacity constraints, limitations in design of the program or lack of interest in ALMM by PwDs.

We also register that North Macedonia PES included 255 PwDs in 2022 - 2024 period using ALMM which is slightly higher compared to sheltered enterprises coverage (188).

Table 31. Average cost for employment of PwDs with ALMM and sheltered enterprises

Period	Average cost per PwD	
	ALMM[116]	Sheltered enterprises
2024	~€1,611 per participant	~€9,277.36 per PwD
2023	~€1,256 per participant	~€8,338.21 per PwD
2022	~€2,288 per participant	~€7,665.84 per PwD

Source: Calculation of the author

When costs per PwDs in different labour market mechanisms are compared we observe that the average cost per PwDs in sheltered enterprises is substantially higher than in ALMM measures. In 2024, the cost per PwD in sheltered enterprises (~€9,277) was nearly six times higher than the ALMM. Cost gap suggests that ALMM program function primarily as shorter - term activation or transitional interventions, while sheltered enterprises represent more intensive, long-term employment support mechanisms requiring higher per-PwD investment.

[115]Original data are in denars, but converted in EUR based on official course of denar on 31.12. for each year.

[116] Employment funds included only. No costs for purchase of equipment were included in this calculation.

Registration rates of unemployed PwDs are significantly lower than those of persons without disabilities, partly because **registration requires in-person attendance at North Macedonia Employment Service Agency premises, which are generally inaccessible.** Additionally, individuals living in institutions, group homes, or other forms of supported living, as well as adults with disabilities attending day centres, are not registered with the Employment Service Agency.[117] Another serious challenge for ensuring employability for the PwDs is their legal capacity. Many of the persons who were de-institutionalized are certificated as "incapable"[118]

The UNDP is currently financing and supporting the piloting of the professional rehabilitation centres (REHA Centres) in Skopje and Strumica to improve the empowering of persons with disabilities to directly access jobs in the open labour market.[119] With the new reforms the Government of North Macedonia is trying to move to implement professional rehabilitation and active employment policies[120] The Government's plan is to start drafting a new Law on Employment of Persons with Disabilities which will have a quota system and a new system for vocational rehabilitation[121]

Like other WB economies, the North Macedonia has a government established body (not envisaged by the relevant Law on PwDs) which promotes the rights of PwDs. **National Coordination Body (NCB) anchored within the Ombudsman Office is mandated to monitor the implementation on UNCRPD.** However, PwDs are not included in the work of this body which underscores its representation character.[122] No evidence on participation of private sector representatives in work of this body are found. Capacities of these bodies needs to be strengthened so they can perform their function and PwDs can fully exercise their rights.

In order to obtain a full picture on labour market inclusion of PwDs, in table 32 is given detail overview of different mechanisms used by WB economies.

[117] https://unprpd.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CR_Macedonia_2021-2ce.pdf
[1]Ibid
[1]__https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/625871581303655307/pdf/North-Macedonia-Social-Insurance-Administration-Project.pdf
[1] https://unprpd.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CR_Macedonia_2021-2ce.pdf
[1] Ibid
[1] https://unprpd.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CR_Macedonia_2021-2ce.pdf

Table 32. Overview of main mechanism for labour market inclusion of PwDs in WB region

Country	Central PwDs register	PwD Employment Quota system in place	Budget fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs	Professional rehabilitation centers	Work centers, protected workshops (sheltered employment)	National Council for PwDs	Ratified UN Convention on Rights of PwDs	Psycho-social disability assessment in usage	Law on PwDs date adoption
Albania	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Partially	Yes	2019
Bosnia and Herzegovina	No	Yes (FBiH, RS, BD)	Yes (FBiH, RS, BD)	Yes (FBiH, RS, BD)	Yes (FBiH, RS, BD)	Yes (BiH level)	Yes (BiH level)	No (BD yet to define)	FBiH (2010); RS (2012); BD (2025)
Kosovo	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Under reform	2019
Montenegro	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Under reform	2008 (amendments in 2010, 2011 and 2016)
North Macedonia	Under reform	No	Yes (Special fund)	Not by the Law (Under reform)	Yes (224 sheltered companies)	No	Yes	Under reform	2000 (amendments in 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2016)
Serbia	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	2009 (amendments 2013, 2022)

Labour market inclusion of PwDs in EU

European pillar of social rights stresses that people with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures living in dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs **(Principle 17, European pillar of social rights). [123] Beside this legal act, on EU level a Strategy for the Rights of Persons of Disabilities 2021-2030 is roof policy document on inclusion of PwDs.**

Eurofund meta-analysis *"Report on disability and labour market inclusion integration*: *"Policy trends and support in EU Member States"* from 2021, has assessed over 150 PwDs labour market inclusion policies across EU. The report was written at the end of the European Disability Strategy 2010–2020, the launch of the new strategy and the evolving situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic so we can positively rely on its findings. Some of the **key findings of the report are:**

- Despite legislation prohibiting discrimination, PwDs participate less often in the open labour market and are more at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Their integration into the labor market is a dynamic process involving interactions between organisational (demand side), personal (supply side) and contextual (institutional) factors

- EU member states implement different policies, and they belong to four key groups: support for job creation (supply and demand); support for individuals with disabilities (employees, jobseekers) (supply side); support for employing organisations (demand side); and support for the institutional environment (context)

- Key obstacles to the employment of PwDs include disability-related stereotypes, bureaucratic difficulties in accessing the available services, lack of strategic vision in governance, insufficient monitoring of policy implementation, limited training resources for employers and lack of specialist support

- EU governments are increasingly focusing on a capacity - based approach that supports the full integration of PwDs into the open labour market

- Employers play a crucial role in hiring, managing and retaining employees with disabilities. Their attitudes and openness to diversity and flexibility are prerequisites for the successful inclusion of people with disabilities.

The same analysis identifies **main EU PwDs labour market inclusion policy pointers:**

- ***Policy needs data, information and clear definitions*** (MS should collect comparable, robust and granular data, broken down by disability type)
- ***PwDs should be at the centre of the policy*** (all measures providing labour market support should have a disability inclusion perspective)
- Support is useful when it is visible, inclusive and accessible (reasonable accommodation should be made available to PwDs to enable them to perform their work, in the workplace and at home)
- ***Coordination between policy areas based on a life-cycle approach must be at the core of service design and provision*** (while the labour market participation of PwDs should be supported and promoted, adequate and inclusive social protection mechanisms must be in place)

- **Results come about through strategic and financial commitments**
  - Financial resources should be made available by the EU and within each Member State in line with a disability rights perspective
  - Organisations representing PwDs and CSOs should be assisted in providing full support for labour market inclusion through adequate training, financing and staffing
  - Pilot projects should be encouraged to test the effectiveness of measures, and funds should be provided to scale them up if successful
- **Responses must be relevant to the present, but ensure a forward-looking perspective** (as forms of work evolve, attention is needed to ensure that people with disabilities can access them equally, with inclusive technology at the core of policy responses

Germany - Federal employment agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit)

Pilot project: Local agencies and Jobcentres of the German PES tested post-placement support in different stages. It was piloted in one local Jobcentre of the German PES (implemented in cooperation with a county) in 2011 and in two Jobcentres between 2012 and 2013. Following the positive results of these pilots, the project was further tested in 18 Jobcentres and nine local employment agencies between 2013 and 2014.
Main challenge: in 2008, only 55 % of new employment relations lasted longer than six months.

Objective: The objective of the post-placement support is to maintain employment and avoid a return to unemployment status of PwDs.

Solution: The support for PwDs includes individual employment risks at an early stage, placing support/prevention measures in place, and continuing counselling for up to 6 months once the jobseeker has found employment. Post-placement support is implemented with already existing PES staff resources and available PES funds.

Other actors, such as public authorities and the employer, will be included in finding solutions if required, e.g., local authorities offering childcare, specialist integration services for PwDs or public health services offering preventive health promotion measures.

Post-placement support extends the fourth phase of the traditional four-phase counselling model of PES support after the integration into the labour market. The model consists of:

- Phase 1: Profiling based on occupational strengths and possible barriers to employment
- Phase 2: Jobseeker and job counsellor agree on a goal based on the profiling exercise
- Phase 3: An integration plan is drawn up that entails targeted actions
- Phase 4: Implementation of agreed measures and efforts to sustain them: with the customer's consent, the counselling approach continues for six months after placement in employment.

Focus of post placement support within pilot project was phase 4 of the model, management of risk in becoming unemployed again. Post placement service support includes:

- Assistance in the first days and weeks of employment. If necessary, additional qualifications based on the employers' needs are arranged
- Reconciliation of work and family by guiding the PwDs towards support offered by other partners in the process, for example, childcare from local authorities
- Further counselling regarding training or working with employers to support 'on-the-job training'
- Support with mobility aspects, for example, making the customer aware of car-sharing or employer support to cover parts of their transport costs
- Help with options to extend fixed-term employment and work with the employer
- Support with job transitions, considering newly gained skills and qualifications.

Elements of Good Practices

- Extensive follow-up counselling for six months after employment
- Risk assessment and preventative measures put in place
- Coordination of support with PES, employers, local authorities, and other agencies on a need basis
- Rapid transitions to other employment if a person becomes unemployed
- Flexibility is given to counsellors to determine who gets the support and to each PES office to determine priority target groups.

Estonia - Workability reform: a way to enhance employment opportunities for people with long-term health problems or disabilities[124] [125]

Challenge: Until 2016, only a minimal number of PwDs was registered with the PES as jobseekers. The workability reform aimed for the systematic activation of this target group. High workload on PES counsellors was one of the challenges Estonian PES was faced including inactivity of PwDs.

Objective: the model was piloted, and then, in response to the reform, the Estonian PES changed its service model by extending its active measures and reforming employment counselling. There are now three types of employment counsellors: job mediation counsellors, case managers, and disability employment counsellors. The workload has decreased, and each disability counsellor is responsible for not more than 100 clients which is considered as ILO good practice ration (1:100).

Solution: Implementation of various interventions across the employment sector such as:

- Identification of jobseekers with reduced work capacity (10.400 by 1 April 2019)
- Specialised/adequate staff and IT resources. A new service model of disability and chief counsellors - 130 disability employment counsellors currently support the target group
- Lower caseloads and more time allocated for counselling
- A range of new measures (work-related rehabilitation, peer counselling and supported employment).
- The design, conceptualisation, implementation, and follow-up of the workability assessment concept. The assessment focuses on what people can do rather than their limitations.
- The introduction of benefit payments based on individual workability - a flat rate amount with earnings-related reductions **(Workability Assessment and Allowance)**
- Activation - anyone at least partially able to work is required to be active and either work, study or look for a job with the help of the PES office.
- The design and implementation of support mechanisms for employers and persons with reduced workability.

Costs are covered by the state budget, PES budget and ESF.

[125] https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/improving-the-provision-of-active-labour-market-policies-in-estonia_31f72c5b-en.html
[126] Thematic paper_TRW_activation of the inactive.pdf

Workability Assessment and Allowance

The precondition of being granted the workability allowance is an assessment of workability by the Unemployment Insurance Fund. The work ability allowance is granted to a person aged 16 until retirement age who are assessed as either having no or partial workability. If assessed as having no work ability the person automatically receives the workability allowance.

People who are assessed to have partial workability must meet at least one of the following conditions to get the allowance:

- Working (including self-employment)
- Looking for a job, i.e., registered as unemployed and meet the activity requirements
- Studying for primary, secondary, vocational or higher education
- Raising a child under the age of three
- Caring for a family member (children, parents or spouse) with a severe or profound disability or a disabled person who needs assistance
- Receiving support for creative activity from the artistic association or the Ministry of Culture
- Residing in a social welfare institution which requires 24-hour special care
- Being an outpatient or inpatient undergoing treatment (including rehab) or substitutive punishment or sanction
- Be in compulsory military service, alternative service, or reserve service.

Allowance levels (from 1 April 2023)
The calendar day rate of work ability allowance is EUR 18.60.

- No workability - receive 100% of the daily rate - averaging EUR 558 per month.
- Partial work ability - receive 57% of the daily rate (EUR 10.602) averaging EUR 318.06 per month.

No workability allowance is paid for the current month if the previous month's income exceeds EUR 2.310,12 for partial work ability and EUR 2.790 for no workability.

A calculator developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs helps the person calculate the estimated amount of work ability allowance. Monthly payments (for the previous month) are paid to the bank account or by post by Unemployment Insurance Fund offices.

Malta - PwDs Job carving

The first effort in labour market inclusion of PwDs in Malta was made in 1969, when the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act (1969), was introduced. This legislation also included the creation of a register for PwDs and **the quota system of 2% for companies that employ twenty or more employees.** The PES provider in Malta, Jobsplus is accountable for maintaining PwDs Register. Every PwD has a certificate of registration as sufficient evidence of their disability. Companies also have an obligation to maintain its own PwDs register.

Challenge: Even though Disability (Employment) Act has existed for forty-five years, the Act had little effect with regards to the employment of PwDs in the private sector. The main reason for this gap was that the Act was not enforced until 2015. PwDs were mostly employed in public sector and private sector companies opted for financial fine instead for employment of PwDs.

Solution: In 2017 a reform in labour market inclusion of PwDs was pushed through amendment of Persons with disability Act (Cap.210)[126] and The Equal opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act (Cap.413).

Key aspects of the legal framework in 2017 included:

- Employers (both public and private, except government entities) with 20 or more employees are required to ensure that at least 2% of their workforce are registered persons with disabilities
- Employers who do not meet the quota must pay an annual contribution of €2.400 for each unfulfilled position, up to a maximum cap of €10.000 per employer
- The National Employment Agency (Jobsplus) is entrusted with the enforcement of this quota
- The funds collected from private sector contributions are administered by Jobsplus and used to set up the Lino Spiteri Foundation (linked to Malta PES) which provides training and assistance to PwDs to find employment
- The Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act (Cap. 413), enacted in 2000, makes it unlawful to discriminate against a PwDs in employment matters, including hiring, promotion, training, and conditions of employment, and mandates "reasonable accommodation" in the workplace
- The government offers incentives such as wage subsidies through the Access to Employment (A2E) Scheme and fiscal incentives for employers who hire PwDs.

As a consequence of the enforcement of the 2% employment quota for persons with disabilities in Maltese enterprises, a substantial number of enterprises wanted to integrate persons with disabilities. **Due to the gap between the "requirements" of existing vacancies and the "preparedness" of the disabled jobseeker, job-carving was adopted.[127]**

In essence this consists of creating a new job out of the existing portfolio of vacancies/jobs within an enterprise. The "carving" exercise is driven by the enterprise requirements and the existing competencies and skills of the registered jobseekers with disabilities. This is coupled with pre-employment efforts such as training and work exposure schemes offered by Jobsplus to improve the employability and preparedness of the registered disabled jobseeker.

[126] https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/210/eng/pdf
[127]https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet%3FdocId%3D19407%26langId%3Den&ved=2ahUKEwi2w5aXnMSRAxWH9AIHHTxEO1sQFnoECBYQAQ&usg=AOvVaw0DEUR5YFNnucEXtpiGzFuN

Job - carving consists of carefully examining occupations and workflows of a given enterprise, the development of a new job profile, which may constitute elements/tasks from other jobs/workplaces and the placement of candidates (singular or groups) with disabilities that possess the relevant competences.

Short term impact: As of April 2018, 278 suitable jobs had been created for jobseekers with disabilities using the job - carving approach.[128] In 2024, 174 PwDs was employed through its various services.[129]

In Malta there is no single fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs, rather several programs available for employers administered by Jobsplus and Lino Spiteri Foundation.

Key programmes are:

- Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF): The LS foundation is a public private partnership between JobsPlus and Empower Coop Ltd, formally established in 2015. It implements various programs including job carving, tailored guidance and skills development, on the job coaching, pre-employment support, etc.
- Access to Employment Scheme (administered by Jobsplus, wage subsidies to employers who hire PwDs)
- VASTE Programme II (implemented jointly by Jobsplus and LSF)
- Fiscal Incentive Scheme (fiscal incentive equivalent to 25% of the person's basic wage, up to a maximum of €4.500 annually)

[128]https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-06/ESF%20TP%20Paper_Job%20Carving%20and%20Job%20Crafting.pdf
[129] https://linospiterifoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/LSF-Annual-Report-2024-Website-version.pdf

Conclusions

WB economies have recorded moderate progress in labour market inclusion of PwDs in the past few years. However, performed analysis of main PwD labour market inclusion mechanisms across WB region demonstrates that **PwDs continue to face persistent structural, institutional, and labour market barriers that limit their employment opportunities and broader socio - economic inclusion.**

Despite differences in institutional arrangements and labour market policy maturity, almost all WB economies share similar mechanisms for labour market inclusion of PwDs and consequently similar challenges in that regard. **Across the WB region, employment of PwDs remains characterised by low participation in the open labour market measures, strong reliance on quota systems for employment of PwDs, financial incentives and sheltered (protected)s employment.**

Although most of the WB economies have in place and/or developing various employment and training programs, the percentage of PwDs who participate in ALMM remains limited. In Serbia, for example, in 2024, ~16% of unemployed PwDs were included in ALMM. In Montenegro and North Macedonia, the situation is even more pronounced, where in 2024, only 38 PwDs/65 PwDs are included in the ALMM. **These data indicate the need to strengthen the institutional capacities of public employment services across the region, but also to develop specialized programs that will more accurately fit to the individual needs of the PwDs.**

From a policy perspective, labour market systems in WB relies significantly on quota systems. However, analysed data shows an increasing number of employers choosing this option instead of employment of PwDs. In Serbia, the number of employers paying contributions to the Budget Fund and overall financial volume of the Budget Fund continuously grows, while the share of funds from the Budget Fund used for employment measures is decreasing and represents 15-20% of overall Budget fund volume.

Similar trends are recorded in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where both the number of employers and available funds for the Budget Fund are growing. **Observed trends suggest that the quota system has limited effectiveness in promoting the actual employment of PwDs.**

In many cases, employers tend to fulfil their legal obligations through financial contributions rather than through employment of PwDs. Additionally, **in WB economies where Budget Funds for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs exist, their governance structures and operational independence remain limited, while transparency in the allocation and use of these funds is often insufficient, reducing their overall effectiveness in promoting labour market inclusion of PwDs.**

Institutional and legal framework for employment of PwDs analysis reveails that **Public Employment Services are dominant providers of employment services for PwDs, with limited involvement of civil and private employment actors** (apart from donor funded projects). Where civil sector is active in employment of PwDs as in MNE case, a Budget Fund resources are used for stimulation of cross - sectoral cooperation through grant schemes.

However, this case presents an exception rather than a systemic practice. **Also, assessed legal framework for employment of PwDs across WB region does not sufficiently stimulate structured cross-sectoral cooperation which could activate more resources for labour market inclusion of PwDs.**

Another shared characteristic among WB economies is the **prevailing medical - based model for workability assessment of PwDs,** which reinforces inactivity and long term unemployment of PwDs. In contrast to EU practices, WB labour market systems still insufficiently assess functional capacity, skills, and PwDs employability potential. **This approach not only limits activation, but also reinforces long-term unemployment, particularly for women with disabilities.**

PwDs sheltered employment models continue to be present in the WB region as well. Although such models may serve as a PwDs social protection function, they do not provide sustainable pathways to economic independence or full participation of PwDs in the labour market.

Institutional responsibility for PwDs' labour market inclusion is frequently fragmented across ministries and agencies, with limited coordination between labour, social protection, health, and education systems. Governance and participation mechanisms also remain underdeveloped across WB region. BiH represents a positive exception at the state level with the existence of the Council for PwD. In other WB economies a permanent advisory body with strong representation of PwDs, employers, and civil society is either ad-hoc, absent or functionally weak with limited capacities to perform its functions. **This limits the incorporation of PwDs experience, employer perspectives, and user experience feedback into policy design and implementation.**

A recurring structural challenge across all WB economies is the discrepancy between census - based estimates of PwDs, registered PwDs in different institutions (employment, social protections records, etc.) and data on PwDs done by different donors active in labour market inclusion of PwDs. **The absence of comprehensive, harmonised, and competence - oriented data significantly constrains evidence-based policymaking, individualization of ALMMs, and monitoring of policy outcomes.**

When benchmarked against EU practices, the WB approach in labour market inclusion of PwDs appears financially driven rather than employment driven. EU evidence underscores that effective PwDs labour market inclusion relies on a combination of enforceable legal obligations, strong employer engagement, post-placement support, reasonable workplace adjustment, usage of assistive technology and integrated service delivery.

Examples from Germany, Estonia, and Malta illustrate that sustained employment outcomes are achieved when **PwDs are supported based on individual needs throughout the entire employment cycle - from profiling, job matching to post - placement risk management and when employers receive practical, operational support rather than solely financial incentives.**

Additionally, full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and adoption of the EU acquis (particularly in the areas of accessibility, non-discrimination, and supported employment) remains essential. Without such a shift, labour market inclusion of PwDs in the WB risks remaining fragmented, underutilised, and insufficient to deliver meaningful and sustainable employment outcomes for PwDs.

Recommendations

Having in mind the conclusions on labour market inclusion of PwDs in WB region, following recommendations should be considered:

1. **Development of stimulative legal framework that promote employment of PwDs at open labour market and shift away from purely financial support to comprehensive support both to employers and PwDs.** In this respect different solutions are available: increase of the "financial compensation" for unemployment of PwDs, increase of the financial incentive for employment of PwDs at open labour market, increase of the tax deduction for employment of PwDs, linking employment measures with other/social services for PwDs (job commuting, childcare, etc.), mandatory employment of PwDs by the public sector with no option for compensatory financial payment, provision of post placement support for PwDs, etc.

2. **Development of institutional framework effective in providing different support and services to employers who want to employ PwDs at open labour market.** One of the institutional solution in that regard could be establishment of specific body/institution providing wide range of services to companies interested in employment of PwDs such as: pre - employment support for PwDs (improvement of social skills, fostering workplace ethics, understanding work-related skills and procedures, understanding tasks related to the specific programme), job carving, recruitment service support, onsite support for employed PwDs, support for employers in application of schemes and other incentives, post placement support for PwDs, risk management for PwDs in becoming unemployed again etc.

3. **Regulation of the Budget Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PwDs as independent body with higher policy and financial autonomy from public employment service and ministries accountable from labour/employment issues.** Financial resources of the Budget funds should be exclusively used for employment of PwDs purpose. When not used in one budget year, should be available for next fiscal years. Financial data of Budget Fund should be publicly available information. Also, having in mind that private sector significantly contributes to the Budget Fund it should be properly represented in management of this body as well. PwDs and organization in this field should also be represented in this body as well

4. **Improvement and/or development of a permanent institution (i.e. Council for Persons with disabilities) at national level as roof body advising the Government in implementation and promotion of PwDs inclusion policies.** This advisory body should include representatives of public, civil and private sector in equal proportion so cross - sectoral cooperation at high Government level is stimulated. Participation of PwDs itself in work of this body is strongly advised so people centred policy approach is ensured in policy making. Role, position and function of this body should be regulated by the Law, and ad-hoc solutions such as Government decisions on work of this bodies should be avoided

5. **Establishment of central PwDs Registers so precise statistical data on PwDs are available (including segregated data).** These advanced mechanisms and statistics would help national institutions (ministries and public employment services) to create highly individualized ALMM and other services based on evidence, effectively monitor their implementation and respectfully adjust them in accordance with achieved policy outcomes.

6. **Employment of PwDs should be mainstreamed in all ALMM implemented by public employment services in WB economies.** This would significantly contribute to implementation of ALMM and service putting the needs of PwDs at top of the hard to employ groups.

7. **Employment through sheltered employment (work centres, sheltered workshops, etc.) should be reserved only for a social protection purpose.** Additionally, terminology in regard to the PwDs in legal framework should be adjusted to fit modern understanding of labour market inclusion of PwDs. In that regard focus should not be medical barriers, rather skills and competences that PwDs possess and could be useful for their employment

8. **Assessment of PwDs workability based on their competences, skills and capacity for employment should be more promoted among WB economies** instead of dominant medical workability assessment approach. Implementation of social/employability approach would reduce PwDs inactivity and reduce risk for PwDs in becoming the long-term unemployed

9. **WB Governments should offer an additional financial support to employers (i.e. establishment of work tech fund)** so purchasing of accessibility and assistive technology is available for employers who wants to employ PwDs at open labour market

10. **More resources should be allocated and invested in awareness campaigns and training programs so prejudice of PwDs employment are reduced.** In this regard, specific role could play public institution as an example of good practice in inclusive employment. Training program in regard to the obtaining practical information, including legal obligation, workplace adjustment, benefits of employment of PwDs should be available for employers as well

11. **All WB economies should accelerate EU accession process focusing on Chapter 19 (Cluster 3)**. Acceleration of EU accession would back up the enforcement of EU and international legal acts relevant for PwDs inclusion **(Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC) and UNCRPD**[130] [131]). At the same time stronger EU accession process would ensure additional financial and technical resources for implementation of different PwDs labour market inclusion programmes and development of social innovation approaches in that regard (i.e. full access to ESF/ESF+ funds).

List of annexes

Annex no. 1 – Labour market questionnaire for WB economies

Annex no. 2 – Key research questions

[130] Kosovo cannot formally sign or ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) since it is not an UN member. In December 2022, the Kosovo Government signed a decision to incorporate the UNCRPD into the Kosovo Constitution. In August 2023, the Constitutional Court accepted the request to add the UNCRPD to the list of international agreements directly applicable in Kosovo, paving the way for its inclusion in domestic law upon Assembly approval.
[131] https://indicators.ohchr.org

The **Empowered – Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Regional Cooperation and Development in the Western Balkans** project is a large-scale regional initiative dedicated to improving the social, economic, and political inclusion of persons with disabilities (PwDs) across the Western Balkans. The project recognizes that sustainable inclusion requires a multi-level approach, integrating regional policymaking, local partnerships, and direct support for PwDs. Through collaboration between government institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector, Empowered will establish long-term solutions to break down barriers that prevent PwDs from full participation in society.

This project aligns with the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)** and supports the EU enlargement process by helping the Western Balkan countries adopt and implement inclusive policies. By bringing together national and local stakeholders, Empowered will create an enabling environment for change, ensuring that the rights of PwDs are protected not just on paper, but in practice.

A key strength of Empowered is its **regional approach**. While each country in the Western Balkans has unique challenges, they share **common barriers to PwD inclusion,** such as limited access to employment, education, and public services. Through **cross-border knowledge exchange** and coordinated advocacy efforts, the project will accelerate progress and support institutional reforms that bring tangible improvements to PwDs' lives.

The project is led by the German organization Arbeiter Samariter Bund Deutschland e.V. and is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany. It will last from September 1, 2024, to April 30, 2028 (a total of 44 months).

Partners:

- LIR Civil Society (LIR CD)
- PREDA Plus Foundation
- Alfa Center
- Community Development Institute (CDI)
- Initiative for Development and Cooperation (IDC)
- Albanian Disability Rights Foundation (ADRF)

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