

Employment Experiences of Students with Disabilities

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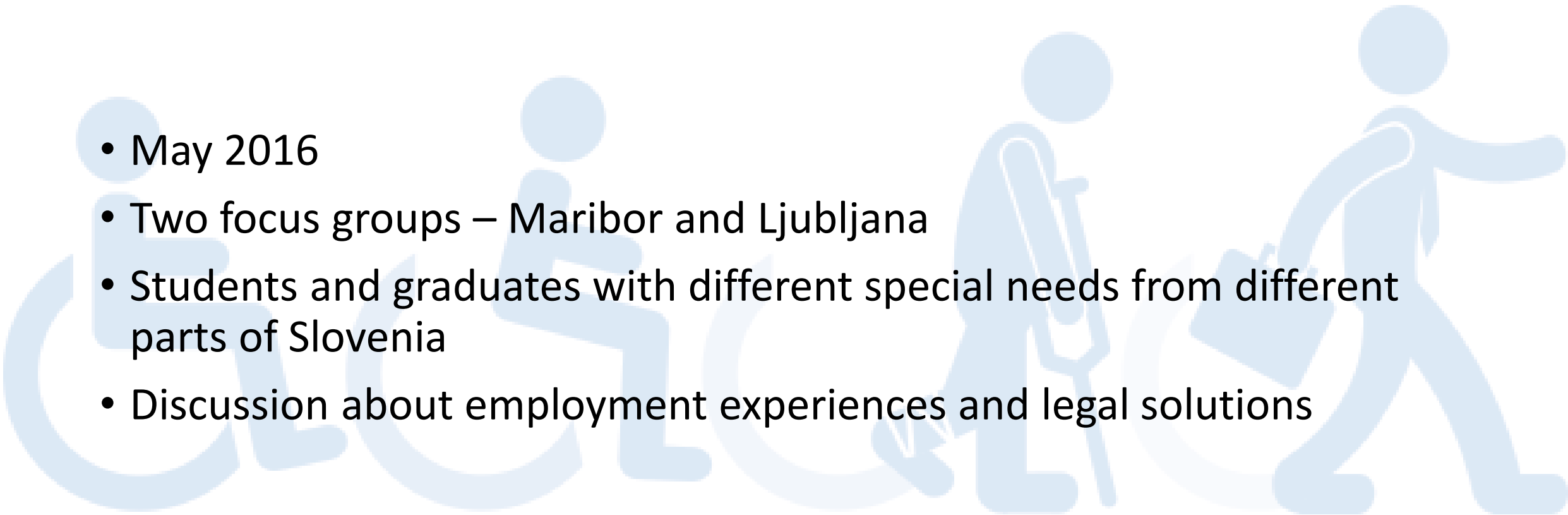
Alenka Gajšt



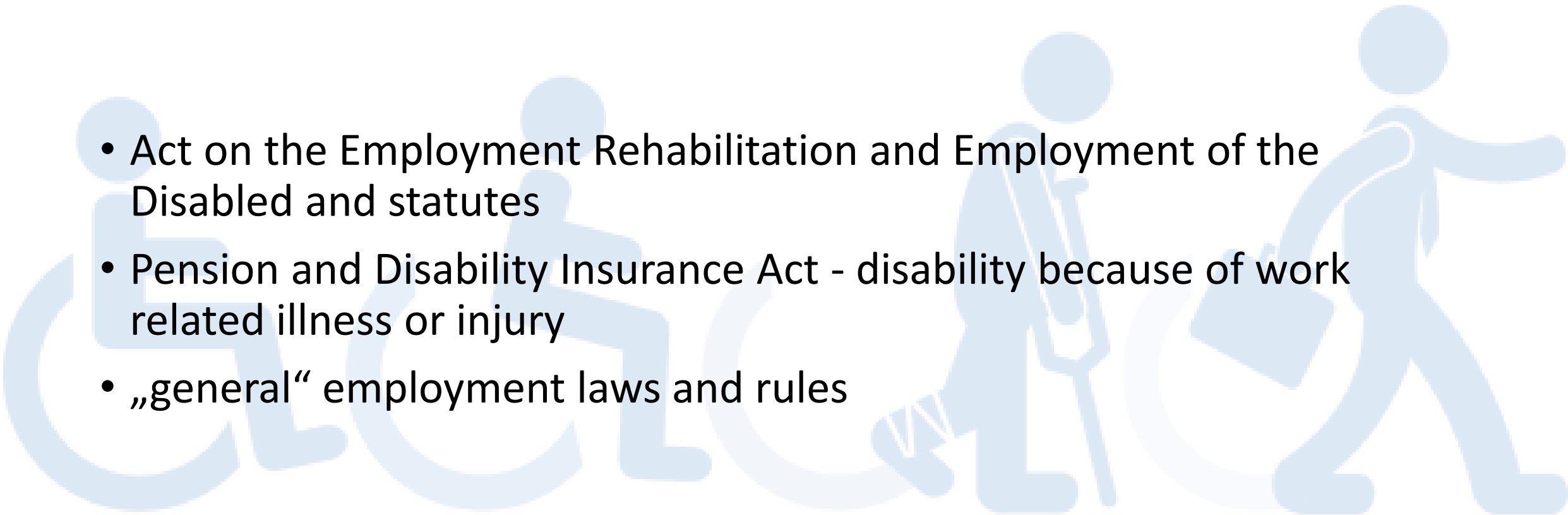
Društvo študentov invalidov Slovenije

Slovenian association of disabled Students

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- May 2016
 - Two focus groups – Maribor and Ljubljana
 - Students and graduates with different special needs from different parts of Slovenia
 - Discussion about employment experiences and legal solutions



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- Act on the Employment Rehabilitation and Employment of the Disabled and statutes
 - Pension and Disability Insurance Act - disability because of work related illness or injury
 - „general“ employment laws and rules



Act on the Employment Rehabilitation and Employment of the Disabled

Purpose:

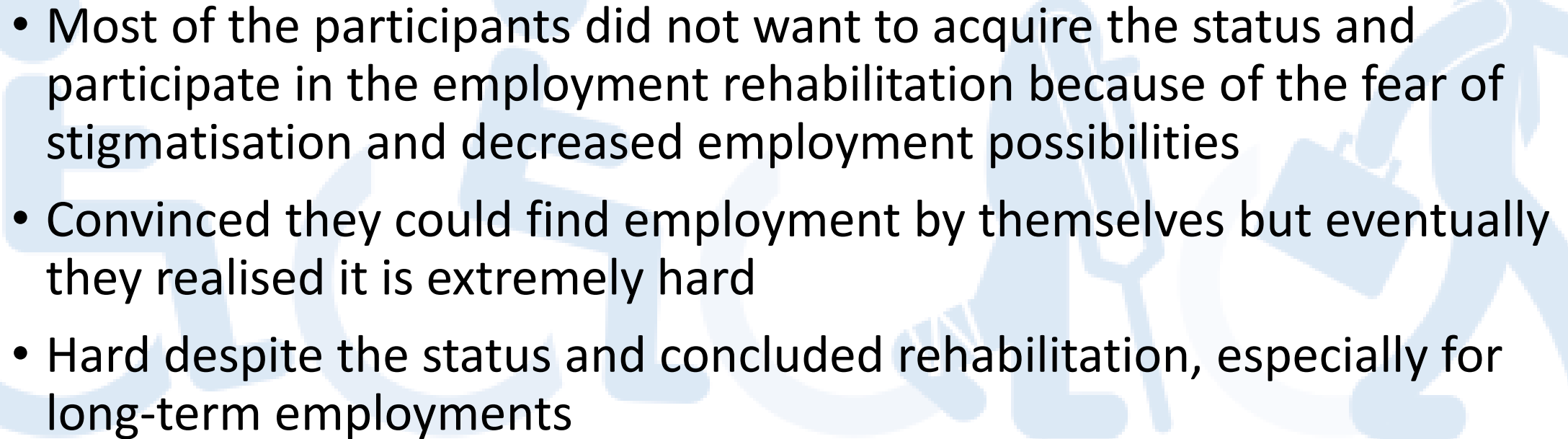
- to increase employability
- to establish suitable conditions for equal participation on the labour market
- to remove barriers and
- to create equal opportunities for persons with disabilities



Person with disabilities

- person who **has acquired the status** of a disabled person in line with this Act or pursuant to other regulations,
- and a person in relation to whom a **competent authority** has, by means of a decision, **ascertained permanent consequences** of a physical or mental disability or illness
- who, as a consequence, has a **smaller chance** of getting employment or maintaining employment or of being promoted



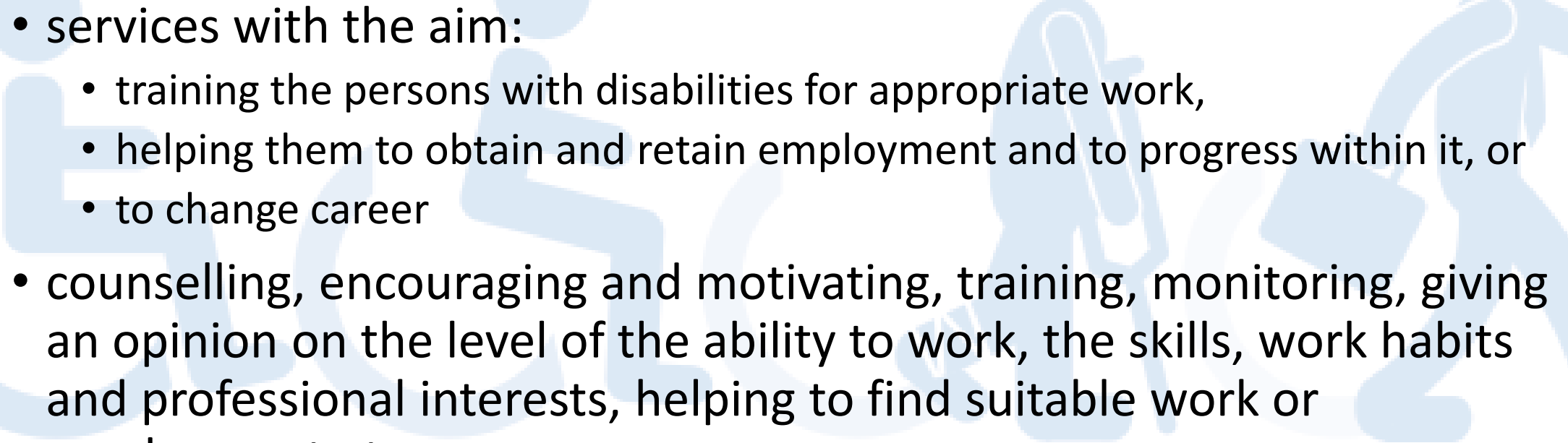
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- Most of the participants did not want to acquire the status and participate in the employment rehabilitation because of the fear of stigmatisation and decreased employment possibilities
 - Convinced they could find employment by themselves but eventually they realised it is extremely hard
 - Hard despite the status and concluded rehabilitation, especially for long-term employments



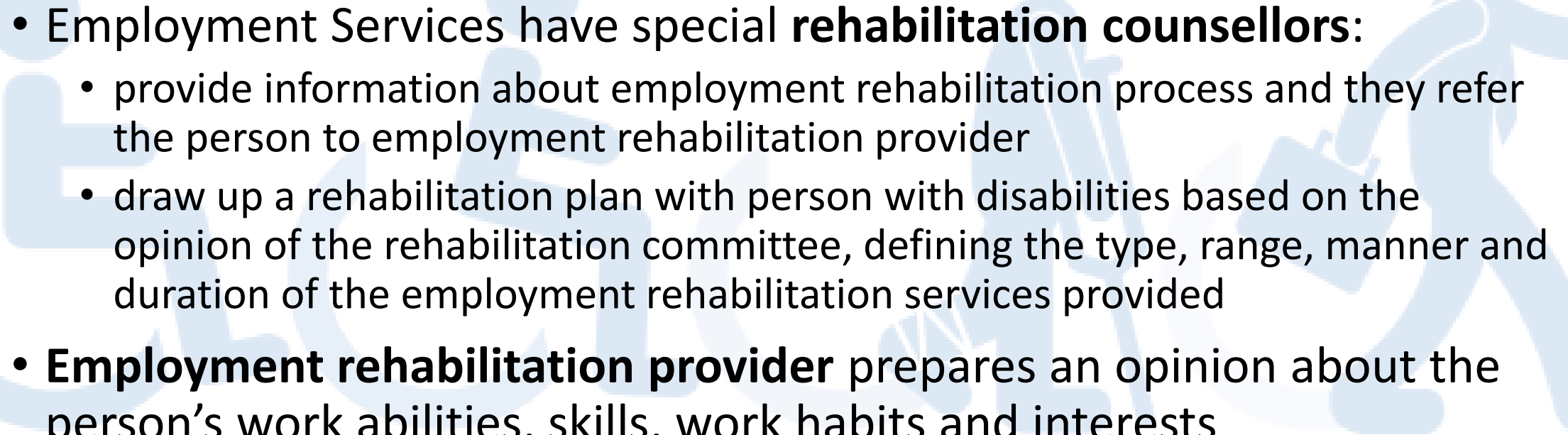
Employment rehabilitation

- A right not obligation although many participants had a feeling they were forced to take part in it because they could not find a job without it
- Only when they do not have a right to equal services in line with other regulations (like Pension and Disability Insurance Act etc.)
- Public service by a network of employment rehabilitation providers
- Financed from the budget of the Republic of Slovenia

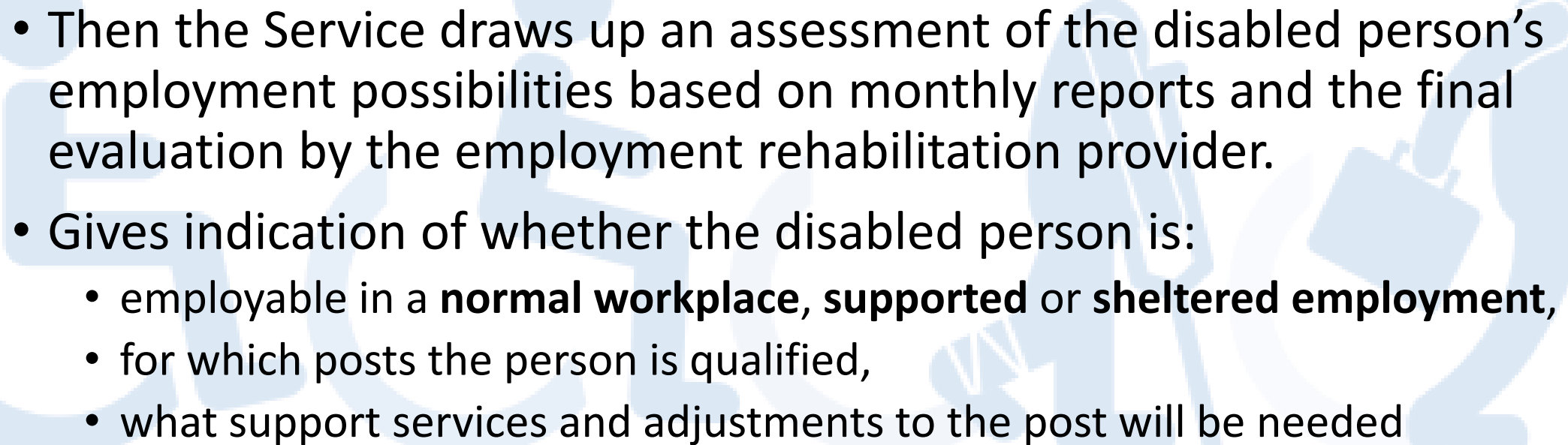


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- services with the aim:
 - training the persons with disabilities for appropriate work,
 - helping them to obtain and retain employment and to progress within it, or
 - to change career
 - counselling, encouraging and motivating, training, monitoring, giving an opinion on the level of the ability to work, the skills, work habits and professional interests, helping to find suitable work or employment etc.



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- Employment Services have special **rehabilitation counsellors**:
 - provide information about employment rehabilitation process and they refer the person to employment rehabilitation provider
 - draw up a rehabilitation plan with person with disabilities based on the opinion of the rehabilitation committee, defining the type, range, manner and duration of the employment rehabilitation services provided
 - **Employment rehabilitation provider** prepares an opinion about the person's work abilities, skills, work habits and interests



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- Then the Service draws up an assessment of the disabled person's employment possibilities based on monthly reports and the final evaluation by the employment rehabilitation provider.
 - Gives indication of whether the disabled person is:
 - employable in a **normal workplace, supported or sheltered employment,**
 - for which posts the person is qualified,
 - what support services and adjustments to the post will be needed



- One participant participated only with rehabilitation counsellor, others visited both counsellors, personal employment counsellor and rehabilitation counsellor
- Participants in Ljubljana were mostly satisfied with rehabilitation counsellor, but not with personal employment counsellor:
 - not very interested in their needs and experiences
 - one actually said that according to her education she is capable to find every needed information on her own
- Although they were satisfied with rehabilitation counsellors they were not satisfied with their knowledge about quota system and education possibilities during unemployment (in Slovenia we have many free education possibilities for unemployed people)
- Pressure from personal employment counsellors about starting employment rehabilitation after a few months of unsuccessful job searching

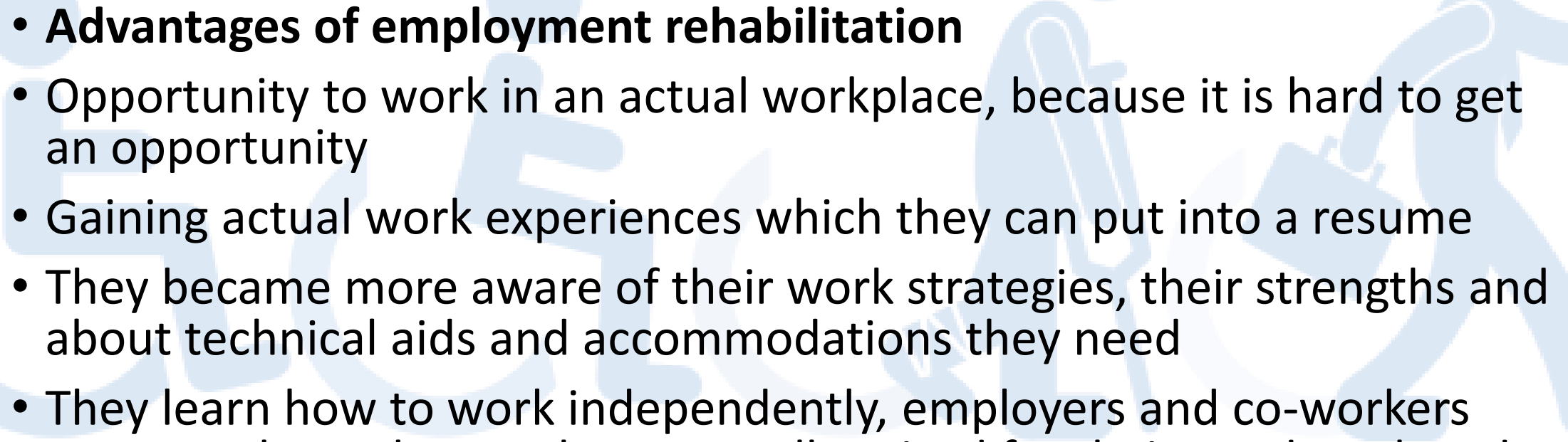




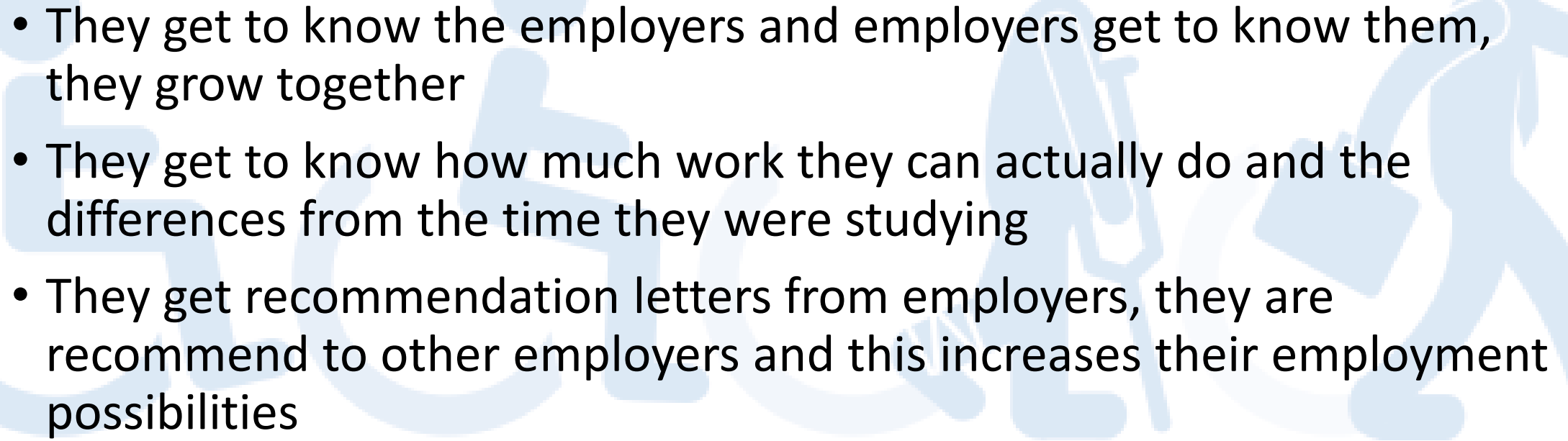
- Participants in Maribor:

- only one was satisfied with rehabilitation counsellor
- they do not do enough and they had to pressure them to get the process moving
- discouraged them by telling them not to rush and that they overvalue their own abilities

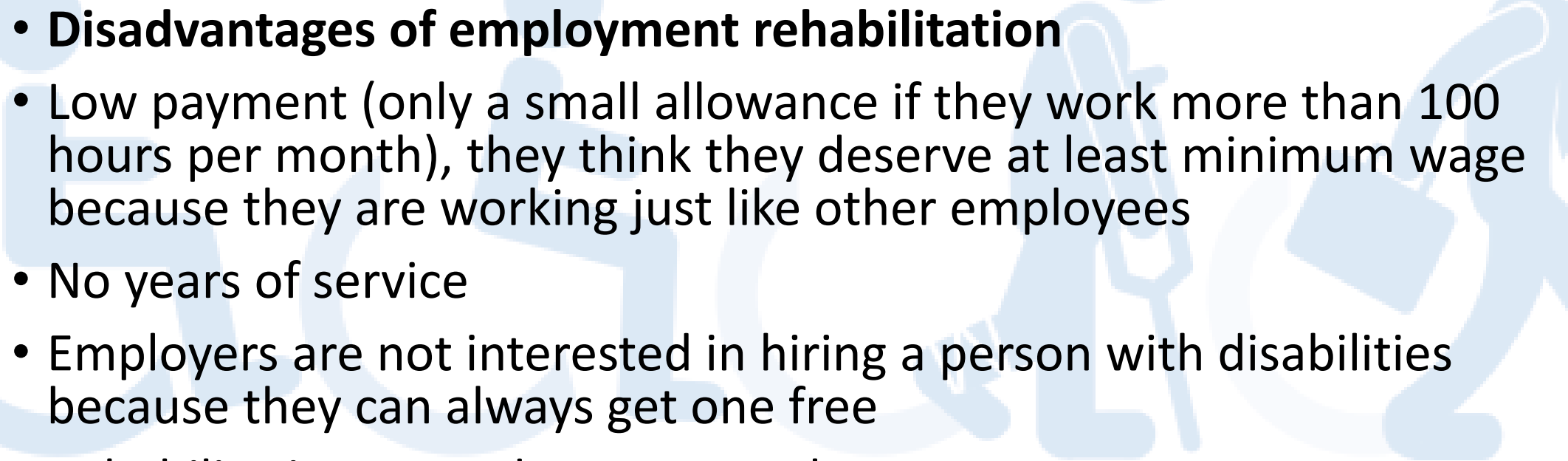


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- **Advantages of employment rehabilitation**
 - Opportunity to work in an actual workplace, because it is hard to get an opportunity
 - Gaining actual work experiences which they can put into a resume
 - They became more aware of their work strategies, their strengths and about technical aids and accommodations they need
 - They learn how to work independently, employers and co-workers start to rely on them – they were all praised for their good work and reliability
 - They feel useful



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- They get to know the employers and employers get to know them, they grow together
 - They get to know how much work they can actually do and the differences from the time they were studying
 - They get recommendation letters from employers, they are recommend to other employers and this increases their employment possibilities
 - They meet new people and expand their social network
 - Employers have no expenses and they can easily be replaced



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- **Disadvantages of employment rehabilitation**
 - Low payment (only a small allowance if they work more than 100 hours per month), they think they deserve at least minimum wage because they are working just like other employees
 - No years of service
 - Employers are not interested in hiring a person with disabilities because they can always get one free
 - Rehabilitation procedures are too long
 - Employers usually do not employ them although they were satisfied with their work



- Enrolled again if they are unemployed again
- In Maribor they were not satisfied with the whole rehabilitation process - too general, not individual enough, do not accommodate disability needs, were not consulted
- Focus on Public Work Programmes - do not provide permanent employment so they are often again unemployed
- They think employment rehabilitation is more successful for those who have less than 70 % of working abilities



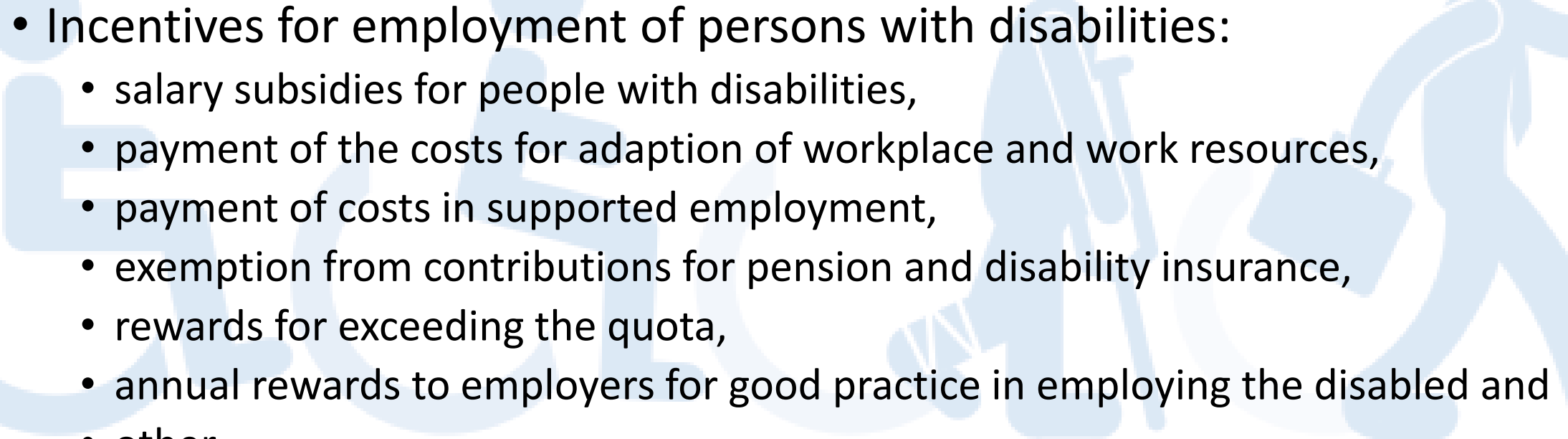
The Quota System and Incentives for the Employment of the person with disabilities

- **Duty to employ persons with disabilities**
- Employers with at least 20 employees
- Exception: foreign embassies and consulates, companies for persons with disabilities and employment centres
- The quota is determined by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia
- Differs with regard to the activity of employers: not lower than 2% and not higher than 6% of the total number of employees



- Substitutional fulfilment of the quota: fulfilled by concluded contract on business co-operation with an employment centre or a company for persons with disabilities
- Employer who does not fulfil the quota must, each month when paying out salaries, calculate and pay into the Fund a contribution amounting to **70% of the minimum salary** for each disabled person the employer should employ

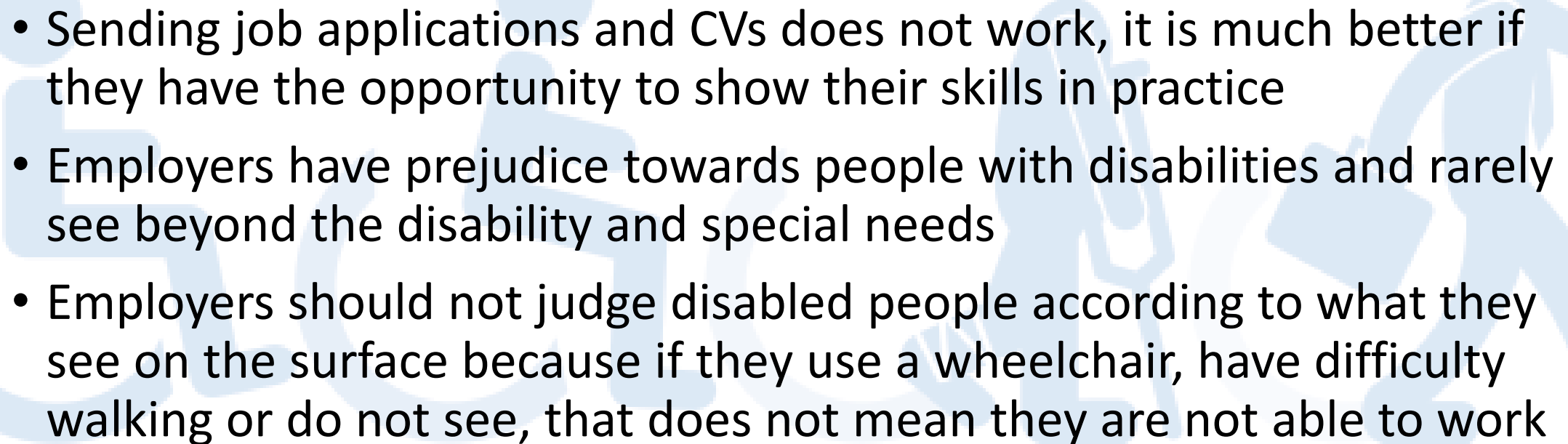


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- Incentives for employment of persons with disabilities:
 - salary subsidies for people with disabilities,
 - payment of the costs for adaption of workplace and work resources,
 - payment of costs in supported employment,
 - exemption from contributions for pension and disability insurance,
 - rewards for exceeding the quota,
 - annual rewards to employers for good practice in employing the disabled and
 - other



- Ljubljana: quota system and incentives for employment are good and suitable; employers rather arrange disability status for their already employed employees with health problems than to employ a new employee with disabilities which makes it harder for persons with disabilities to enter employment environment
- Maribor: not effective; employers rather pay a contribution to the Fund then hire a person with disabilities
- Suggestion of the participants: more focus also on part-time jobs which are quite rare in Slovenia in comparison to other countries



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- Sending job applications and CVs does not work, it is much better if they have the opportunity to show their skills in practice
 - Employers have prejudice towards people with disabilities and rarely see beyond the disability and special needs
 - Employers should not judge disabled people according to what they see on the surface because if they use a wheelchair, have difficulty walking or do not see, that does not mean they are not able to work



Employee/Employee with disabilities/Young Employee



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The most important skills



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Expectations





Open and friendly work environment



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