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## Guidelines/Policy Actions for employers in order to pursue transition of SwD to Work - brochure -





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*School-to-Work Transition for Higher education students with disabilities  
in Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro*



## **School-to-Work Transition for Higher education students with disabilities in Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro Trans2Work**

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## Glossary

TERM	DEFINITION
<i>Discrimination</i>	Discrimination on the basis of disability means any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006).
<i>Inclusion</i>	Inclusion can be seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (UNESCO, 2009).
<i>Equal opportunities</i>	The same chances to take part in activities, access services, etc. with no barriers to equal life prospects for individuals (www.inclusive-education-in-action.org).
<i>Communication</i>	“Communication” includes languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia as well as written, audio, plain-language, human-reader and augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including accessible information and communication technology (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006).
<i>Participation</i>	Taking a part in, or sharing decisions about one’s own life and community – a fundamental right of citizenship (www.inclusive-education-in-action.org).
<i>Barriers</i>	Obstacles that prevent accessing a full range of opportunities limit their participation in society. Disability is often considered to be due to ‘disabling barriers’ which can be addressed by designing enabling, accessible environments. Barriers can be due to attitudes, language, culture, organization of support services, power relations and structures within society (www.inclusive-education-in-action.org).
<i>Accessibility</i>	Accessibility means that people with disabilities should have ensured equal opportunity to use all the resources of the society (Živić et al., 2009).
<i>Workplace adjustment</i>	Workplace adjustment represents changes in the work process or the work environment of persons with disabilities with the aim of putting people with disabilities on an equal footing with other employees (Živić et al., 2009).
<i>Assessment</i>	Assessment refers to the ways professionals systematically collects and uses information about a person’s level of achievement and/or development in different areas of their experience (www.inclusive-education-in-action.org).
<i>Reasonable accommodation</i>	Reasonable accommodation means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure that persons with disabilities along with others have equal all human rights and fundamental freedoms (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006).
<i>Employability</i>	Employability means the ability of an individual to get a job (Živić et al., 2009).
<i>Universal design</i>	“Universal design” means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. “Universal design” shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006).

## INTRODUCTION

The project “School to Work – Transition for higher education students with disabilities in Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro” (acronym: Trans2Work project) is designed to **improve the quality and relevance of school to work transition of HE SwD in Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro**. The goal of the project is to improve the quality and relevance of school to work transition of HE SwD in Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro. Main objectives are: (a) to improve and prepare HEIs services to support SwD to their transition from HE to work following the EU policies, (b) to link Higher Education to “disability friendly” working environments, (c) to assimilate transition opportunities and skills with EU practices and policies and (d) to prepare employers to understand the needs of employees with disabilities in their coping with new jobs. Four main objectives are related to: students, higher education institutions and employers.

Employment is important for every person, including people with disabilities, because it provides different opportunities: learning and development, financial independence, achievement of positive valued social roles, the ability to choose and make life decisions and to obtain their rights. The transition from education to work is a key point in the students’ life, since it is related to their economic and psychosocial well-being and it determines their future. In this regard, the transition from school to work could also be considered as a transition to adulthood. Those who are marginalized and do not have the characteristics that are presumed as necessary by employers are exposed to different barriers regarding their employment and their career development. For persons with disabilities this kind of transition is often very challenging. One reason is the lack of support in this process. **The transition of students with disabilities from education to labor market has to necessarily involve all stakeholders: students, universities and employers.**

Employment is hardly available for students with disabilities than for the rest of the population, and in addition, students with disabilities are more exposed and treated of long-term unemployment. The right to work and employment of persons with disabilities is one of the fundamental human rights and the impossibility of the realization of this right is discrimination. **Employers who employ people with disabilities point out: people with disabilities as employees are highly committed, focused and hardworking** and therefore often serve as a model for other workers (see more in Perin and Baralja, 2015). The organization should develop employment policy in order to provide equal employment opportunities and non-discrimination in hiring, promotion and advancement of development and training.

The challenges that people with disabilities are facing in their everyday lives are not separated from the rest of society. These are issues that could and should be communal. Doing in this way, everyone could be involved in finding collective solutions. This makes Trans2Work project mostly important.

## THE LEGAL BASIS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Laws in all countries where the Project is implemented (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro) are mostly in line with EU policies. However, it is still necessary to improve legislation, in particular the part relating to the mechanisms that have been made to ensure the implementation of these laws. There should be more concrete actions to encourage employers who employ persons with disabilities. **The employer who employs a person with disabilities, in particular, has the right to: tax incentives and financial support. Financial support refers eg. on: one-time material allowances, means for adjusting the workplace and working conditions, co-financing of a part of the salary for an assistant to a person with a disability, and the like.** Examples of laws where you can read more about the rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities, but also employers are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Laws on the Rights and Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities and Employers

SERBIA	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	MONTENEGRO
Law on employment and unemployment insurance (The Official Gazette of RS, no. 36/09, 88/10 and 38/15)	The Law on Vocational Rehabilitation, Training and Employment of Disabled in RS (The Official Gazette of RS 54/09)	The Law on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (The Official Gazette of Montenegro, 49/2008, 73/2010 and 39/2011).
Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities (The Official Gazette of RS, no 36/09, 32/13)	Law on professional rehabilitation, training and employment of persons with disabilities (The Official Gazette of FBiH 34/10)	The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination of Persons with Disabilities (The Official Gazette of Montenegro, 39/2011)

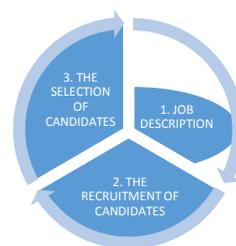
These laws create a prerequisite for better planning, organizing and implementing the transition from education to the labor market of persons with disabilities. Creation of preconditions for the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities and employers is also possible through communication with: employment offices, professional rehabilitation and employment funds, associations of persons dealing with the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities, career centers / support offices for students at universities, etc. **Employment of people with disabilities is a practice that goes beyond legal obligations and demands. It is the strategic commitment of the company whether it wants to strengthen relations with the social community in which it operates and how much it wants to be socially responsible and sensitive.**

## GENERAL ADJUSTMENTS AND PREPARATION OF WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The process of adapting the work environment implies the most common physical but also other necessary change in the workplace. **Adaptation of the workplace includes: adapting the physical environment, technical and technological fitting of the workplace, purchasing the necessary additional equipment and adjusting the work resources, adjusting the time schedule, and applying other means, all in accordance with the capabilities and needs of the person with disabilities. Adaptation can also provide professional assistance, such as support for a person with disabilities when entering or leaving the workplace, through counseling, additional vocational training, workplace assistance and support services, job tracking, personal workflow development, and efficiency assessment.**

The general conclusion of all previously done researches and practices is that the adaptation of the working place in accordance to the needs of persons with disabilities requires a low cost and a small investment with a large amount of concrete benefits for both, the company and the society. These low investments are financed by Government in all three partner countries so employers can count on that too.

To make the employment process of persons with disabilities held in accordance with human rights, the following describes three important steps:



Scheme 1. Three steps in the employment process of persons with disabilities

**Job description** (tasks, required competencies and characteristics of the applicants) is a first formal step in the process of human resource management. In summary, the analysis and job description should pay particular attention to (see more in Matković and Naninović, n.d): a) general information about the job (working hours, necessary qualification, working environment, etc.); b) job description; c) ability to perform the job requirements; d) the desirable characteristics/features, and e) conditions and ability to adapt the workplace. After the analysis of the work environment has been made and the description has been done, the second step follows and that is the recruitment of candidates.

**Recruitment aims** to attract high quality candidates for the job and involves the process of creating and presenting the identity/image of the employer, decide on the recruitment channels and selection of modes of employment with respect to a specific position. Enlistment, or coming to the set of candidates from which the best is chosen by the application of different methods is very important and often quite complex task. To ensure that qualified individuals with disabilities participate in the contest several channels of recruitment can be selected, and **they include: employment bureau, fund for vocational rehabilitation and employment, employment agencies, job portal, associations of persons with disabilities, etc.**

**Possible channels of advertising job advertisement are:** **a) radio advertising** - voice messaging allows people who have visual impairment to hear an advertisement on the radio; **b) Internet advertising** - facilitates the exchange of information especially for people with hearing impairment. Persons with visual impairments can, with the help of a special reader, monitor the entire content on the website; **c) advertising in newspapers** - the newspaper can reach persons with hearing impairments, persons with physical disabilities and the like which further provides a permanent record, and thus gives more freedom in analyzing advertisement. Application forms should also be accessible for all people. Forms need to be inspected to ensure that these are available in alternative formats. Required formats will depend on the needs of the individual, personal preferences and access to technology and can include large writing in print, audio, email, Braille alphabet, compact disc (CD) and so on. Also, candidates should be given a chance, by answering questions, to indicate whether they have any special requirements for adjustment of conditions for realization of the interview.

**Professional selection** is a professional process of selecting candidates based on an assessment of competence of candidates in relation to the job requirements. The criteria for entering the shortlist of candidates should not discriminate against applicants with disabilities. All who participate in the selection process need to understand that the application of persons with disabilities have to be treated fairly, whether it is delivered in standard or alternate format. **It is necessary to analyze whether it is possible to make adjustments so that persons with disabilities are working as efficiently as others.**

## **COMMUNICATION WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

The interview and other selection procedures should be objective and impartial. The aim of the person that asks the questions during the interview is to choose the best person for the job. Therefore, it should be taken into consideration not to miss the potential candidates with disabilities. It is important to should not allow personal prejudices and misunderstandings about

disability stand in the way of a good interview. It is important that persons with disabilities have a fair opportunity to present their capabilities and potential during the interview.

**The interviewer should be familiar with issues related to disability and equal opportunities at the policy level of employment of people with disabilities.** A few additional suggestions for communication during the interview: a) Provide assistance if it seems necessary to help the facilitator (do not insist and do not feel offended if the help is denied); b) it is proper to say a person with a dystrophy, not a distrophic person; c) wheelchairs, rods, dog guides and the like should be respected as personal property or related equipment for persons with disabilities. Do not use them, lean on them or move them, unless it is expressly permitted; d) If you want to assist people with disabilities, always ask them first, wait for the answer, and then, if they accept the help, listen patiently and follow the instructions; e) if the interviewer does not know how to react in a particular situation, it is best to ask the interlocutor, as this does not show ignorance, but emphasizes the desire to respect the person with whom he or she communicates; f) listen carefully and be freely requested to repeat if the person who realizes the interview does not understand what the facilitator has said; g) to speak clearly by looking at the person he or she communicates face to face if possible at the same level (sitting if the candidate is sitting or is much lower than the interviewer); h) address the candidate by name; i) know that people with disabilities often need more time for some activities; j) do not feel sorry for them.

## INCLUSION OF THE EMPLOYEE IN THE ORGANIZATION

All employees should have the same opportunities and the conditions to adequately participate and contribute to the progress and success of the organization, and it seems that quality inclusion of employees in the new work environment is a key. Some of the following behaviors are good examples of how to ensure a successful process of involving a person in the company:

Table 2. Steps for a successful process of involving persons with disabilities in the company:

<p>If an employee is deaf or a person with hearing impairment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Ensure the interpreter of the sign language is available, and if possible provide a sign language training to people in the collective.</li> <li>b) Speak loudly and calmly so that the interpreter of the sign language is able to translate to the person who does not hear and give the person time to respond.</li> <li>c) If a person can read from his lips, turn face to face when he is talking. Speak normally and keep your hands and other objects away from your lips.</li> </ul>	<p>If an employee has a physical disability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Move furniture and other objects in the room to make enough space for a wheelchair, scooter or other travel aids.</li> <li>b) Avoid leaning on aids.</li> <li>c) During long interviews with a person in a wheelchair, sit down so that eye contact can be achieved.</li> <li>d) Push someone in a wheelchair only when a person is asking for it.</li> <li>e) Provide guidelines that include distance and physical</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d) Do not shout.</li> <li>e) Write notes or use gestures in one-on-one discussions.</li> <li>f) Do not assume that a person knows a sign language or can read it from the lips. Ask.</li> <li>g) Reduce background noise and noise that disturbs the silence (eg. tapping with the pencil or paper wrinkling), as the sound amplifier is very sensitive to ambient noise.</li> <li>h) Talk in a silent environment or move somewhere else to make communication easier.</li> <li>i) Provide software that transforms audio into text.</li> <li>j) Equip space with visual signaling and alarms.</li> </ul>	<p>obstacles (for example: give the location and mention stairs that are in it, the sidewalk or the steep hill).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f) Make buildings and other company facilities physically accessible.</li> <li>g) Provide them with flexible working hours.</li> <li>h) Offer the option of working from home, using computers and the internet, but not preventing them from coming to the company if they want.</li> <li>i) Ensure that the personal space of a person with disabilities can easily be changed.</li> <li>j) Provide accessory tools (book and document holders, voice recognition software, custom keyboard ...).</li> </ul>
<p>If an employee is a person with an intellectual disability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Provide support from associates and supervisors.</li> <li>b) Provide additional training as needed.</li> <li>c) Provide audio tracks or software that will remind employees that certain tasks should be performed.</li> <li>d) Provide flexible working hours and share multi-step work tasks.</li> <li>e) Enable notes and audio records from meetings.</li> <li>f) Inform the person to be involved in various social or organizational events that would be enjoyable.</li> <li>g) When in the company of the person, be calm and soothing.</li> <li>h) Offer assistance in overcrowded and noisy environments or high-level situations.</li> </ul>	<p>If the visually impaired employee is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) At the beginning of cooperation, always present yourself.</li> <li>b) If the conversation takes place in the group, name the person you are addressing.</li> <li>c) Speak the usual tone.</li> <li>d) Clearly emphasize if a person moves from one place to another or if the conversation is over.</li> <li>e) Provide space from obstacles.</li> <li>f) Describe the environment to make a picture of the environment. For example, say "The chair is one meter to the right of you" or "There is an obstacle in front of you".</li> <li>g) During joint movement, visually impaired persons hold the other person slightly above the elbow and walk halfway behind it.</li> </ul>

<p>If an employee has specific difficulties in learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) prepare the documentation and information in different colors or in the form that best suits the person,</li> <li>b) Prepare audio records of documents, and try to make a person's tasks and other information verbal (voicemail) and not sent in writing,</li> <li>c) offer and provide assistance if a person declares that he / she needs,</li> <li>a) d) Be patient when someone needs more time to process information and answers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>h) Where appropriate, offer the person to read the information,</li> <li>i) Dog guides are "dogs that work": talking or interaction with a dog is hindering and inappropriate and can be perceived as a very inconsistent act.</li> <li>j) Prepare alternative forms of material (eg. Braille letter, capital letters, audio tracks, or digital formats).</li> <li>k) Enhance the brightness and direct it correctly.</li> </ul>
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**After employment it is very important to ensure a quality induction on the job.** It is important to establish the formal induction process prior to the new employee commencing. For employers who have no experience with persons with disabilities it is useful to contact professional services that could provide more information and advice as well as to introduce employees to work. In case when there is an employee who has a disability that affects communication skills, it is useful to organize a course or seminar on alternative possibilities of communication for the supervised and co-workers. When companies organize seminars, professional support can also be provided by the associations of persons with disabilities.

## **MENTORING IN THE WORKING ORGANIZATION**

Mentoring should be an integral part of the development of the work organization. Mentor can play a key role in ensuring that persons with disabilities achieve work objectives, have access to opportunities for professional development and advancement, and to provide an objective appraisal and constructive guidance. Mentoring is a relationship in which the mentor, through support, advice, friendship and constructive example helps another person to achieve their work and life goals. Mentoring is a relationship built on trust.

A mentor is an experienced employee, who knows the job, expectations of employees, rights of persons with disabilities, has the capability to communicate with other colleagues, has counseling skills, and so on. **A mentor can be a person who is employed in the department for development of human resources in this role. In some cases it may be useful for a person to have another person with disability as a mentor, because the person has progressed on a career scale and, on the other**

**hand, has the experience of people with disabilities in the company.** However, just because they are both persons with disabilities does not mean they will be able to better connect life experience, but in the case when the mentoring system includes a person who does not have a disability. For this reason, all the mentors, whether they are with disabilities or not, must receive training on the rights of persons with disabilities and the exercise of rights before they become mentors. Peer-tutoring is a type of mentoring in a situation where the person is entrusted to take care of the other. This system may include monitoring and assistance by experienced people while learning about the job. It is always helpful for people with disabilities to know where to turn if there is any difficulty or problem. However, the use of this type of mentorship should be evaluated.

## TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Termination of employment can be implemented for two reasons:

- 1) release of the employee from the employer
- 2) getting a resignation from an employee.

The reasons for the dismissal of employees may be different, but the most common are: dissatisfaction with work performance, breach of work duties, violation of work ethics and cessation of the need for certain positions (redundancy), disagreement with the policies or practices of the company, and so on. On the other hand, an employee may quit because: a chance for getting a new job, continuing discrimination in the workplace, lack of opportunities for professional development, poor working conditions, lack of benefits, low income, etc.

**If it comes to a situation where it is necessary to dismiss an employee due to non-compliance of labor standards, it would be good to follow the following procedure (Živić et al., 2009), which will be known in advance to employees: a)** inform the employee that he does not meet labor standards, explain to him why it was recorded and how it can be corrected; **b)** present the employee specific goals for improving performance and period in which to fulfill them; **c)** notify employees that, if there is no fulfillment of the agreed goals, his/her employment may be terminated; **d)** give the employee a chance to improve their work, giving him regular feedback on his/her work performance and the necessary support in the period that the employee is given for the improvement of performance, **e)** after the expiry of the agreed period, make a clear overview and assessment to improve operational performance of employees.

In a situation when an employee wants to quit, it is desirable to arrange a final interview, in order to find out the reasons for dismissal and eventually try to positively resolve the situation to the satisfaction of all. The truth is that no one wants to lose good and well-trained employees. It is very expensive and has a negative impact on other employees. It is important to clarify the reasons for leaving the job and if it is possible to make further efforts to improve conditions in this regard. It is important to ask the employee for his opinion on how to improve working conditions in the future.

## SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES PRACTICES IN EMPLOYING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

CM is a socially-responsible company which had realized a number of projects for the welfare of the BH society in its previous activities. In the same manner the Company started co-operating with the Association "Life with the Down Syndrome". This cooperation resulted with the employment of persons with Down syndrome. The employee and "CM Ltd." signed contract in September last year and this is the first employment contract ever that a person with Down syndrome has signed with employer in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Recognition for the employer who hired the highest number of people with disabilities National Employment Service granted to the company TISZA AUTOMOTIVE from Senta, which in 2016 hired 12 persons with disabilities from the NES evidence and thus made a significant contribution to the employment of persons with disabilities. The said company employed the largest number of people with disabilities using mediation services in employment, *without* the financial support of the NES. The company whose business is the manufacture of electrical and electronic equipment for motor vehicles was established in 2014.

The company **PLODOVI PAK** doo from Kovin, established in 2014, engages in vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities. The core activity of the company is conducted under the program approved by the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs.<sup>3</sup> The company currently has 21 employees, of which 13 are persons with disabilities. The company aspires to being a part of the socially responsible community.

During the last decade, IT companies occupy an important place in the market of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Due to the specifics of their business, those jobs are more than adequate for the employment of people with disabilities who have a passion and desire to learn and to deal with IT solutions. However, "**Mistral Technologies**" is one of the only a few companies in this sector that have been opened the doors for people with disabilities. Currently they employ two persons with disabilities. "Mistral Technologies" is an IT company based in Sarajevo that develops exceptional solutions for web and mobile devices using the latest technology.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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