

## People with disabilities in the focus of countries' employment, education and training policies – and of the European Year of Skills



Cedefop, with other European actors, has investigated policies and services supporting people with disabilities in their learning and working careers. The Covid-19 pandemic years accelerated the digitalisation of workplaces and services, offering new opportunities to people with disabilities to access essential services online. Yet, for some groups, service accessibility remains a challenge. To support the inclusion of people with disabilities, the EU has taken action to strengthen their rights and improve their access to the labour market and education and training:

- The *European Parliament* adopted resolutions on

the [Protection of persons with disabilities through petitions](#) in 2021 and [Towards equal rights of persons with disabilities](#) in 2022.

- The *Commission*, along with the [European Pillar for Social Rights Action Plan](#), published its [Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030](#) and created the [Disability Platform](#) which brings together experts and organisations united in combating discrimination and supporting people with disabilities. On 6 September 2023, it proposed a [Directive establishing the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities](#) which will be considered by the European Parliament shortly. It is part of the Commission's [Disability Employment package](#).

- The *Council*, with its 2022 [Conclusions on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market](#), has invited the Commission and Member States to take further action to increase the employment rate of persons with disabilities and their participation in education and training.

Cedefop has supported this renewed policy process from the outset, focusing its related work on lifelong guidance policies and practices for people with disabilities. Cedefop has gathered examples of relevant practices from across Europe in its online [Inventory of Lifelong Guidance systems and practices](#) which monitors progress in key policy areas and informs policymakers, practitioners and researchers about an array of different approaches.

[Cedefop's latest Briefing Note on Lifelong guidance for people with disabilities](#) showcases some good practices in Member States and beyond, contributed by independent field experts, and offers policy pointers for further action.

Cedefop underpins the European policy process with its research, evidence of best practices across Member States, and policy advice



Cedefop's [briefing note](#) shows that across the EU, lifelong guidance for persons with disabilities has the potential to close employment and training gaps. Career support services are varied and include skills assessment and development, job coaching, self-awareness and confidence building, career planning, support for reasonable accommodation of workplaces and supported employment arrangements. They enable people with specific needs to participate in training and to enter and remain in the labour market. Nonetheless, the employment rate of persons with disabilities remains low compared to that for persons without disabilities.

More action is needed in the following areas:

- Career development and lifelong guidance should provide meaningful access to employment, learning pathways and career planning for all.
- The sharing, upscaling and mainstreaming of successful policies and practices across regions and countries should be encouraged, with priority given to universal services.
- Partnerships for improving inclusion must be closely coordinated and aligned with client requirements, providing integrated measures to meet complex needs.
- Integrating diversity policies that have clear definitions of disability across career guidance providers and partner organisations is key. People with very different disabilities need inclusive communication tools (and support to use them) to access to physical and virtual services.
- Building career management skills and key competences for all must begin early in life. They develop self-awareness, confidence, adaptability, and meaningful decision-making, and can serve as a bridge to adult employability, particularly where complex barriers are likely to arise.
- Collection of coherent, comparable national data is critical to improving services and addressing knowledge gaps on the learning and working careers of people with disabilities.
- A common EU terminology is needed for cross-country research, evidence collection, policy

development and knowledge sharing.

- A better knowledge of discrimination mechanisms can help strengthen the preventive and enabling role of career guidance and ease participation of people with disabilities in mainstream VET and adult learning. It can help raise informed awareness.
- Cedefop's review of policies and practices in Member States suggests more could be done to monitor and evaluate approaches that account for clients' goals and steps, and career progress, in career guidance (increasing individual self-awareness, self-efficacy, autonomy, and ability to source career information). Improved monitoring and evaluation involving career practitioners, related professionals and service users should feed back into policy making and service improvement.
- User-centred approaches should be enhanced.

## More information

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[Join us](#) at the event [Skills, skills, skills!](#) organised by Cedefop, Eurofound, ETF, EU-OSHA and ELA in partnership with the European Parliament and the European Commission in the Parliament/Spinelli building 1E2 on 20 September 10.00-12.00.

And register for Cedefop's forthcoming flagship conference [Mind the gaps – skills and learning in a changing world of work on 12 October 2023 in Brussels](#). It will be accompanied by Cedefop's key publication for the European Year of Skills, [Skills in transition](#) which tracks ongoing and future labour market trends based on our 2023 skills forecasts, sectoral foresights, and big data-powered analyses.

See Cedefop's work related to the [European Year of Skills 2023](#).



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