Panel information

**The Presidency Conference on Integration of People with Disabilities into the Labour Market**

**20 - 21 September 2022, Prague**

**Tuesday 20 September 2022**

**Panel 1**

**Opening**

In the opening panel, we expect a discussion among the Commissioner Dalli and Member State representatives at ministerial level in the context of the European strategic documents on the Strategy for The Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 and The Social Economy Action Plan.

The European Pillar of Social Rights declares that people with disabilities have the right to have an income support that ensures a decent life, right to access services that enable them to participate in the labour market and society, and the right to a working environment adapted to their needs.

Ministers will brief participants on the challenges faced by people with disabilities in their specific countries. They will focus on the access of persons with disabilities to the labour market, particularly to the open labour market. Ministers will comment on the expectations from the European Commission's initiative in the form of *The Disability Employment Package*.

**Panel 2**

**The Disability Employment Package: Stakeholder's perspective**

In the second panel, we will focus on the presentation of *The Disability Employment Package*. We expect a presentation of the Package given by the European Commission, including information on how the Package was developed and the consultation process with relevant stakeholders.

In the discussion, we would like the panellists to focus on the relevant parts of the Package and outline their impact on the employment of people with disabilities, namely, 'Strengthening capacities of employment and integration services', 'Promoting recruitment prospects through affirmative action and combating stereotyping' and 'Ensuring reasonable adjustments in the workplace'. Our aim in this panel is to present the Package as a whole and to place it in the existing context of employment of people with disabilities within Member States. Our aim for participants is to understand what impact the Package may have on employers, organisations and legislation in individual Member States in the future.

Topics for discussion:

* What opportunities arise from the Package?
* What are the main challenges considering all six areas of the Package?
* Contributions of stakeholders to the implementation of the Package (procedures, dissemination of information - working with members etc.)

**Wednesday 21 September 2022**

**Panel 3**

**Services: Strengthening capacities of employment and integration services**

Supporting the employment of people with disabilities in various forms is a key part of increasing the inclusive role of the labour market. The panel highlights the insights of institutions supporting people with disabilities in entering and then remaining in the labour market.

An important area is the pervasiveness of different employment support services and the possibility of their short-term and timely use. Key aspects in this respect are social rehabilitation services, vocational assistance as well as vocational rehabilitation with its support mechanisms.

Specialised school facilities can also play an important role.

Topics for discussion:

* How can public employment services contribute to better labour market outcomes for people with disabilities?
* What are the motivations for people with disabilities to engage in economic activities?
* How can career guidance services facilitate entry and transition into the labour market?
* How to ensure good coordination between social and employment services?

**Panel 4**

**Social enterprises: Alternative forms of employment and pathways to the open labour market**

On 6 July 2022, the European Parliament approved The Social Economy Action Plan presented by the European Commission in December 2021. The involvement of social enterprises in the employment of people with disabilities is particularly strong in the Czech Republic. However, in other Member States, the social economy also makes a significant contribution to the employment of people with disabilities.

Employer support in the journey to strengthen the work skills and practices of persons with disabilities is crucial to achieve their full inclusion in the open labour market. We see inclusive social enterprises as the last stage before a person with a disability is included in the open labour market.

In the context of the Action Plan, we perceive as important to award public contracts to social enterprises, thereby strengthening non-financial support for their development, as well as supporting social innovation and subsequent systemic change.

Topics for discussion:

* What is the role of social enterprises in the employment of people with disabilities (including sheltered employment and other forms of supported employment)?
* What are the key elements of shaping pathways from sheltered employment to the open labour market (including integrated employment, sustainable employability in the labour market)?

**Panel 5**

**Employers: Facilitating hiring and reasonable accommodation**

This panel aims to describe and share good practice in supporting the recruitment of people with disabilities and reasonable adjustments to the workplace.

The COVID - 19 pandemic helped to demonstrate the possibilities of home-based employment on a large scale. Social partners' data shows that employers are increasingly embracing flexible forms of work, such as teleworking. This trend can also be used to promote the employment of people with disabilities. As well as the trend to expand teleworking, sufficient workplace adaptations often enable the creation of part-time work and the associated extension of the adaptation process to the organisation, which directly reduces the turnover of employees with disabilities.

Topics for discussion:

* What are the motivations for employers to recruit persons with disabilities? And how to increase them?
* Modern technology and flexible working - an opportunity for people with disabilities?
* Limits to employing people with disabilities in the public sector and how to reduce them.

**Panel 6**

**Health and Safety at work: Retaining persons with disabilities in employment**

Within the framework of the standards for the employment of persons with disabilities, it is necessary to maintain a heightened level of attention to occupational health and safety.

In the event of a deterioration in health during the course of employment with one employer, a very strong motivation for employees with disabilities is to modify the job, working hours or other parameters, or to transfer to another type of work. The disabled employee thus remains in contact with his/her existing social environment and is not predicted to does not have use the social safety net of the state.

Adaptation to a prospective employee with a disability on entry is reported to increase   
the loyalty of the disabled employee to the employer in the future.

Topics for discussion:

* How to work with chronic illness and other health issues in the workplace?
* What are the possibilities for adapting workplaces to people with chronic illness/disabilities?
* What are effective occupational rehabilitation programmes effective?

**Panel 7**

**Conclusions**

In the final panel, we expect a summary of the future involvement of The Disability Employment Package and an outline of the implementation of The Social Economy Action Plan in practice. Developments in this area in 2023, both at Member State level and the European Commission's plans, will be discussed.